

THE HUMBLE SAVIOUR

Philippians 2: 1-18

IF, BECAUSE, THEREFORE

At first reading one could view this section of Paul's letter as quite a direct instruction and guide as to how they should be living and operating as a Church and as followers of Jesus.

However, I believe that because of the 'special' relationship that existed between Paul and the Church, his instruction is less about rules and direct guidance and more about the motivation and practical implications of the outworking of faith in their lives.

A lot of the passage is about unity – how to live and operate as a group of people with Christ at the centre, Christ as the motivation and Christ's kingdom as the purpose.

Unity is vital within the Body of Christ, its vital within any organisation. The opposite of unity is DIVISION and divided groups usually fail. The devil always wants division – you see it in the Garden of Eden, within the key biblical families of the Old Testament and you read Paul and Peter preaching Unity in most of the New Testament letters.

Consequently, we must also take it very seriously. Here in Philippians Paul approaches the subject from a different perspective.

It seems to me that Paul has ONE solution for all of the potential issues – IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS.

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I want to break the passage down around 3 words;

IF – The questions Paul poses.

BECAUSE – The reason's Paul gives

THEREFORE – The outworkings he suggests

IF – A simple series of slightly rhetorical questions posed to highlight what is the motivation behind our faith and 'why' we should seek unity at all times.

“..IF you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, IF any comfort from his love, IF any common sharing in the Spirit, IF any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Is your experience of faith based upon the joy, encouragement, love, hope, comfort and compassion found in Jesus?

Is our relationship with Jesus all about US or all about HIM?

If we answer YES its' ALL ABOUT JESUS then Paul encourages us to a life of UNITY. Why, because the things of him that we experience should drive us to want to live lives of love and of unity.

At first glance it can seem to be an almost impossible task – certainly a difficult one. Far removed from the values of our modern world that is all focused on ME.

Paul is keen to highlight the benefits and blessings of the Church family yet puts them together with the requirements that come with those blessings;

- Being like minded
- One in spirit
- Having the same love
- Putting others before ourselves

Not requirements for uniformity but for likeness with Christ. Following his example. *“In your relationships with one another, have the same mind-set as Christ Jesus”*

Unity isn't the goal. I don't believe that we should strive for 'Unity at all costs'. Because, **unity is a blessing** that comes having Christ at the centre of our lives, individually and collectively. Unity is the result of living lives 'one in Spirit', 'sharing the same love' and 'in humility valuing others before yourselves'.

Christian Unity is '**All about Jesus**' - Jesus our motivation, our focus and our vision. Lives full of Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit will more naturally be in harmony, because of who Jesus is.

Paul's question "If.." applies to all of us today – **“IF we want to be like Jesus, then live like Jesus lived.”**

BECAUSE – Paul now reflects on the WHY behind the IF.

This poem in verses 6-11 probably come down through the generations and contains links to Isaiah 45:23 and other passages.

This poem was a very, very early statement of what FAITH is all based on – who Jesus was and what he accomplished. It has over the years become the basis for much theological doctrine of the incarnation of God in Jesus the Messiah.

Throughout history mankind has looked for hero's, people to put on pedestals, to be made into God's.

Alexander the Great conquered most of the known World within a matter of years and was deemed 'divine' by his followers. The Emperor Augustus brought peace to the then known world ending years of conflict. He too was thought of as divine.

Paul wants the Church at Philippi (Gentiles familiar with man-made idols and heroes) to see the true divinity of Christ and to rethink their picture of who God is.