

Good evening! As Beau introduced me in the greeting, my name is Brad. I am an intern here. I first wanted to say if you're new, if this is your first time... I know Beau welcomed you, but I wanted to welcome you as well, and I wanted to also say tonight's sermon is primarily for our church members and regular attendees, so if this is your first time, I trust the Lord has a word for you as well, but I just wanted you to know up front the target audience of my sermon tonight is members.

Church family, the series we're in that I'm kind of piggybacking off of (technically, not really, but I am a little bit), *The Dearest Place on Earth* about the church, is really, really dear to my heart. The reason it's dear to my heart is The Village Church family, and specifically The Village Church family located here in Denton, was the first local body I ever became a part of after becoming a Christian. This is the only church family I even know in that respect.

This is where I was baptized. This is where I found my first home group. This is where I was able to receive grace from you after sinning. What I had as head knowledge of God's grace for me I saw played on the ground level in relationships with people. It was the first biblical community I'd ever been in. Actually, it is your love for me that made me fall in love with you to the point where I actually wanted to be a pastor.

So whether I know you personally or not... Some of you I know really well. Some of you, I just recognize your face. Some of you, this is maybe the first time I've seen you, but know you've had a profound impact. The Lord has used you as grace on my life to draw me close to him and remind me of the gospel. So just being able to walk through the text with you today, to be able to have the Lord speak to us through his Word together, is really exciting and humbling.

Anyway, when I first became a Christian about eight years ago now, I had a real problem adjusting to the relationship issues that changed from being a nonbeliever and having relationships with people, and then being a believer and having relationships with other people who are in the church family. How did that work? How did that operate? I knew I was supposed to be more like Jesus, I knew I was supposed to be Christlike, I knew I was supposed to love my neighbors, but how that played out in each context was confusing for me.

When I first became a Christian, I was actually a baseball coach. I knew what it looked like to love the players well, to try to motivate them well, to encourage them. Then the home context... I became married

soon after I became a believer, so then what it looked like for me to love my wife and be Christlike to my wife... That context was completely different than how I loved the players on the field. How I talked to the players on the field and how I talked to my wife... Those were two different contexts, and I saw that go really badly really quickly.

Early on in our marriage, probably a month in, I come home from practice. I'm excited and a little bit frustrated, so I begin to communicate that with my wife. I'm telling her the story about that, and I'm being animated and talking to her just like I would one of my coaches I'm working with. She literally starts crying and says, "Why are you yelling at me?" I didn't know what to do. "I didn't feel like I was yelling at you. I was just trying to tell a story of my day." She says, "You cannot talk to me like that." I don't even understand, so it's like, "Okay." I had to adjust. It was confusing for me.

Then that even leaks into my local church family, where there are people with different backgrounds and different preferences and different giftings and different personalities. Now the different contexts I'm seeing people in and the different personalities, how I love those people in the details of that context... I don't know what I'm doing, and I don't know what that looks like in every single case.

What does it look like when I have a conversation with somebody at our Sunday gathering versus in home group? Whether I saw them on the street, just out on the square or wherever it was, the context was different, and it changed a little bit of the conversations. So I was walking on eggshells half the time, trying not to say the wrong thing, trying not to offend anybody, trying not to be too awkward. I'm an introvert anyway, so I get awkward really quickly. Sometimes I just stop talking and walk away from the conversation just to save face a little bit.

So it was an internal struggle for me, and I felt guilty. "I'm not loving people the way I'm called to love people, and I'm not able to reach out and serve people the way I feel like I'm called to serve people, because I'm confused. Is there anything in Scripture at all that would be the lens and the fabric that would run through every context of our social relationships together?" Praise the Lord, there is, and that's what I'm going to be preaching on tonight.

I have two questions I'm going to ask of us, and then I'm going to answer them right away, and then we'll go through the text. Here are the questions that are imperative for our local church family: *How are we as members of this local church supposed to live together, and what is the mindset, the attitude, that should drive the relational culture of our church family all the time?* Where I'm going to get the answers to those questions is in Philippians. I'm going to be in Philippians 1:27-2:11.

For some of you, it may seem really weird that I'm picking the last three or four verses of Philippians 1 and then going right into Philippians 2. The reason I'm doing that is this is one of the unique situations where the separation of the chapters isn't really helpful as we see the flow of thought. Actually, the flow of thought Paul, the writer of Philippians, has is the same in 1:27 all the way through chapter 2, so I want to make sure those come together for us. Anyway, let me pray for us, and then we'll start to go through Philippians together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you. You are so good to us and so gracious. When we are faithless, you are faithful because of your loyal loving-kindness to us. We realize as a fallen broken world we're sinners and this isn't heaven, but at the same time, you come down to meet with us here. You come down to meet with us as a church family.

So would you send your Spirit to draw near to us, that we may draw near to you and worship you, that you may teach us your Word, that we may be obedient and faithful, that we may display to the world and our city how great a God you are and how merciful and gracious you are. So Holy Spirit, would you just come weigh on all of us? In Christ's name, amen.

All right, we're going to be in Philippians, as I said. If you have a Bible, if you have an iPad, if you have a computer, if you have a smartphone... Anything you can get the Bible on I would recommend you take that out and follow along with me through the text. That's for two reasons. First, I'm not going to leave Philippians the entire time I'm talking tonight, so you're going to be able to follow along all the way through, and I'm going to continually go back to that.

The other reason is it's a helpful reminder for us that we're actually looking at God's Word, we're hearing God's Word, that it's not this geek-off-the-street intern who looks like he's 15 teaching me something; it's actually the Lord who's teaching us in the text. It's a simple helpful reminder if I can look at it. I'm continually reminded throughout the rest of our evening that God has a word for us, and it's a life-transforming word.

Let me set it up quickly. The writer of Philippians... His name is Paul, one of the apostles. Philippi is the church he is writing to. It's in northeastern Greece. At the time he's writing this, Paul is actually in prison for proclaiming the gospel. He loves this church in Philippi, and he doesn't know if he's ever going to see them again. He may die in prison. He may be executed. He doesn't know what the end is going to be, if he's going to get out of there or not.

So when he writes to the Philippians... If you think it may be the last thing you say to somebody or the last conversation, you're going to make sure it's important. You're primarily going to have one point you want

them to know. We see this all the time in movies, or we send our kids off to college and we'll say one thing to them. This happens romantically in movies all the time. To kind of let you in on when the prime of my life was, when I was 13 years old, a movie I really loved was *Forrest Gump*. Has anybody seen it, followed it? Yeah, it's a great movie. Tom Hanks, Academy Award winner in it.

Anyway, in this movie Forrest Gump has this best friend whose name is Jenny, and he is about to go to Vietnam. He's telling his childhood friend Jenny, "I'm about to go to Vietnam." She doesn't really care about the conversation at the time until he says, "I'm going to Vietnam." She stops and turns around, and she has one thing to say to him: "If you ever get in trouble, if you get scared, you run. You just run as fast as you can and you don't look back."

Sure enough, he's in the jungle. There's a firefight. His platoon is getting shot up. His lieutenant tells him, "Get out of here," so he just takes off running. He just runs straight through the jungle, and he finds safety. Then he looks around, and there's nobody else in his platoon around. So he runs back into the jungle, and he not only saves himself, but he starts picking up his fellow soldiers and taking them out of the jungle. He not only saves himself, but he saves part of his platoon as well.

Then his best friend in the platoon... His name is Bubba. He finds him, and Bubba is shot up. So he picks Bubba up, and he takes him out. There's a good chance Bubba is going to die. He takes him out to safety, and Bubba is bleeding out. Forrest doesn't know for sure if Bubba is going to die, but he has one last word for Bubba. He looks down at him and says, "Hey, Bubba," and Bubba looks back and goes, "Hey, Forrest." And then he dies. His last word is "Hey."

Forrest, in the narration of that movie, goes, "Man, if I'd have known he was going to die right there that day, I'd have found something better to say to him." My 13-year-old little boy heart... I'm laughing and crying. I'm laughing, and I'm embarrassed that I'm crying, because my boys are there. It just affected me as a little boy. I was like, "What are you doing?" You felt bad for the character, because he just didn't know any better. Paul is not going to make that mistake. Paul is going to make sure he says to the Philippians what he wants to say to them. So let's look at it, starting in chapter 1, verse 27.

**"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.**

**So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.**

**Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**

**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

For those of you in here who grew up in the United States, how many of you have gone to other countries, either on a mission trip, on vacation, or whatever it is? Oh wow. A hand popped up. We have confidence at the end. That's great. Okay, now I'm going to ask you to raise your hand one more time. How many of you in here when you went to that other country were aware the people in that other country knew you were from America? Yeah, everybody. They know right away. It's like there's a radar on you. "American."

Like me? I just reek USA. I don't know what it is. I don't know why. Well I *do* know why. Do you know why? Because we're Americans. That's what we are. We're raised in this culture. You naturally are going to look, act, and behave like your culture. Every culture does this. Every culture, even if they don't want to bring with them parts of their culture, naturally brings their culture with them wherever they go. That's a natural, normal thing to do.

Sometimes people get frustrated with Americans because I guess we're arrogant sometimes, and that's maybe true, but what Paul is telling the Philippians in verse 27 is to be the citizens of heaven that you are. Walk like it. Talk like it. Be it. You are citizens of the kingdom of God. Take that culture with you wherever you go.

The language in this verse is a bit confusing in the translation, because it says, "**Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...**" He's not saying you can possibly live in a way that makes you worthy to receive the gospel. That's not possible. We're never worthy to receive the gospel. We're sinners saved by grace. That's not what he's trying to say there.

Maybe another way you could understand this would be for him to say, "Live in a manner that demonstrates you think the gospel of Christ is ultimate worth." It's the highest value. When you walk and talk as citizens saved by that gospel, people see it's valuable. That's a huge subject: to walk as citizens of the kingdom of God. It's hard to get practical into what that looks like in our day-to-day lives, so Paul is going to begin to dive us into what it actually looks like to be citizens of the kingdom and walk worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look at the second half of verse 27. He says, "**...so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel...**" It's together... In one word: *unity*. Striving side by side for the faith of the gospel together demonstrates you're living as citizens worthy of the gospel.

This is the perfect time to note Paul is not writing to individuals; he's writing to a local church body like ours. Essentially, there's a direct connection between walking worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ and being unified, almost like it's not even possible to do this by yourself. There's no framework in the New Testament to even have that, so Paul doesn't even go into it. It's just, "You Philippians as a whole, be unified, which means you're walking worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ and proclaiming that."

*Unity*. What does that even mean? Why is unity so important? Why is it necessary? Paul is going to answer that in verse 28. He says, "**...and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction...**" That nonbelievers aren't in. They recognize that. "**...but of your salvation, and that from God.**"

Everybody striving together for the faith of the gospel is a sign to ourselves that all of us have been saved by grace, that we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven, that we together are in the kingdom of God, and then it's also recognizable to those who are nonbelievers. There's something that can be said about a group of people who are in unity in mind, attitude, and spirit that an individual simply cannot do. It's impossible.

The exceptional person is just that. You're the exception. An unbeliever looks at the exceptional Jesus freak and says, "That person is off the grid of normality. That's not what the normal Christian looks like." When they see a number of believers doing the same thing, being unified in their mindset and their attitudes, in their affections for each other, it's a sign to them this is true. God saves.

I actually want to encourage you that this has been witnessed in our local body and around our city in Denton in numerous stories, in numerous ways. I've heard of them. I haven't witnessed all of them, but I've witnessed one of them. When I first came to Denton, I was working at a coffee shop. When you're at a

coffee shop, you get regulars. One of the guys who became a regular was someone who moved around the United States a lot. I think he worked in oil.

He had just come into Denton. He was nice enough, but that dude couldn't stand Christians. I didn't even have to tell him I was a Christian. I was just making his mocha, and then he was letting me know. He just had horrible life experiences in general. I mean he had seen the darkest of the dark in his own personal life and in being sinned against. He had seen these dark avenues from people who were professing to be Christians. He didn't think what people claimed the gospel could do and change in our hearts was actually true, because he hadn't actually witnessed people who had been changed.

So as he started to live in Denton, and he started to meet people in Denton, by the Lord's providence he started meeting Christians. He didn't know he was meeting Christians, but they actually listened to what he said, and then when they saw him the next week they would ask him how his trip went or how he was doing. He started to meet more and more people, and they were all Christians, but he didn't know all of these people knew each other, and he didn't know all of these people went to two churches here in the city of Denton: The Village Church and another local body here. He had no idea.

So he's just telling me in the coffee shop of these people he's meeting as time goes by. He's telling me, "Hey, these people like the same music as me. They'll hang out and listen to the same stuff and invite me to concerts and to cookouts. They like the same art as me. They enjoy that. The only difference between my old friends and the stuff they like to do and this group is that after going to a concert, the people here don't like to get high. They just don't do that." I was like, "Yeah, yeah. I don't think so." I didn't let him know I knew those people. I was like, "I don't think so." He just thought that was really weird, but he was attracted to it. He's like, "There's something attractive to it."

Then after a while he went to a barbecue where there was a concert with some local musicians as well. He saw all of these people he was meeting around town who all came to this church and another church in town. They showed up at the same barbecue. He was like, "You all know each other?" Then they started giving each other hugs and were affectionate and checking in on each other, and he was like, "These people genuinely love each other. I've never seen anything like this before. Ever."

His dad called him just to check in on him. He was like, "Hey, Dad. Guess what? I think I'm surrounded by Christians." His dad is like, "Well yeah, that's great," and he's like, "No, no, no. I mean real Christians. Something is changing in me. I think I want to be like them. I think I want to be with them. I want to walk with them." He's telling me this story, and I know a lot of these people in here. I'm like, "Yeah. Got you, punk. Let's go chase the Lord together. Come to church with us."

So he comes to church, and then he joins a small group, and then he joins a local body here in town and is pursuing the Lord. What he witnessed was not an isolated, individual person who was seeking the Lord telling him about Jesus. He was witnessing multiple people who were telling him about Jesus and had a single mind and a single heart and affection for him and for each other. Unity becomes this sign, and we can't do it on our own. That's primarily what Paul is getting at here.

So anyway, unity is still a large topic. Back to my original struggle with, "Okay, how do I live as a Christian in all of these different contexts?" Unity is still fairly vague, so what speaks into the little details of it? What's the lens I can see through? Paul is going to break that down in chapter 2, verses 3-4: **"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."**

Those two verses go through every context in this relational culture we have here in our church family and outside in the city and in the world. It transcends all of it. You don't even have to break these verses down to understand them. The ability, by God's grace, to carry them out... You could be a Christian for 20 minutes or 20 years and understand and, by God's grace, have the ability to do it, and at the same time, without God's grace it's almost impossible to do this.

These are the two verses I like when someone is being selfish against me. I can call them out and go, "Hey, man. You're supposed to be counting me ahead of you. I'm more significant than you, man." That's why I like this verse. Then if I'm being selfish and it gets flipped on me, I'm real quick to forget it's even in the Bible. "No, no, man. No, it's in the Bible. It's in Philippians." "Ph...what? Nah, that's not a real book in the Bible, man. I don't know what verse you're talking about."

That's where I want to go when this happens, because it's just so easy for me to be self-minded and selfish, and these verses strike to the heart and the core of that. I just want to push away from the text a little bit and kind of dig into what some of the things are that hinder us from living out verses 3-4 together, what God would call us to do.

One of the main things is the fact we live in the United States. We have freedoms here in the United States, and it's great. Here in the United States we have the right to...whatever the Constitution allows us to do: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I have the right to do whatever I want as long as I'm not infringing on somebody else's right. So that's a great thing. Don't mishear me on that. That is a good thing. That allows us as believers to pursue godly lives. That allows us to pursue the Lord, to gather here, to tell people about the gospel when we go out. That's a great thing.

The other side of that sword is it can easily sow individualism. It sows autonomy. Individualism and autonomy lead to competition. If I'm pursuing something and you're pursuing something and I want what I want and you want the same thing, we're in conflict now, and we're in competition. Then that sows self-preservation. So now naturally into our days, because of the culture and everybody else who's primarily thinking of self-fulfillment, finding their own pleasure and their own happiness, their own whatever it is they want, this begins to seep into us easily just because we live here, just because we interact with others.

There's a place for competition in our world. Inside the local church, rivalry and self-preservation is not the context, but we bring it into our context here in our church family, because we're still living in the United States. What we struggle with outside... When we come together we bring that with us, and it seeps into our minds and our affections as a default mode. I don't even have to think about being selfish. I just naturally begin my day being selfish.

I don't know if you're like me at all, but I wake up in the morning, and my first thoughts, oftentimes, are, "How did I sleep last night? Did I sleep well? How do I feel right now? What do I have to do today? I sure hope my wife changed my daughter's diaper so when I get out of bed I don't have to. Man, I sure hope my daughter is not screaming or crying so I don't have to deal with the hassle of a crying baby." I'm just infested with self as soon as I begin the day. It is my natural, default mode.

If I don't call out that default mode, if I don't have brothers and sisters who are encouraging me, what happens is that default mode I wake up with characterizes my day, and then it characterizes the next day, and then my weeks and months, and then my years, and pretty soon that characterizes my entire life, and I'm enslaved to self. So then I'm just a self-idolater, and that's all I do. That's enslavement.

For Christians, this is something that until Christ comes back, we're just going to struggle with self often. Sometimes things we know we're going to struggle with probably until Jesus comes back, or until we go to be with him, can be seen as light, as if we don't really need to put those things to death, that we don't need to work at those things. I'm going to read a quote about how important putting to death the desire for self is. It's from D.A. Carson who's a New Testament scholar here in the United States. He did a commentary on Philippians.

In this section this is what he writes. I'm reading his because it's just a little harsh. I'm like, "I didn't say this; he did." He says, "Christians and church members who only think of what they want demonstrate a Christ-denying attitude." Oh my gosh. When I first read that as I was studying I just stopped. It was convicting. He's not saying you're denying the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. What he's saying is the way you live is not congruent with it. It's the exact opposite of it.

I want to pull back and ask some diagnostic heart questions of ways we could bring this into our local church family without even recognizing it, without even being aware of it. Here are some questions I have for you. When you came to service (this one today or *any* service), how did you decide if you came to the Sunday gathering or not? What was your primary motivation? Was it primarily self, what you hoped to get out of this?

Paul is going to leave us open that we pursue things for ourselves. He says in verse 4, "**Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**" There's an aspect where, yeah, we're going to naturally be doing that, but is that primarily the only thing that's your decision maker, that's bringing you?

What about home group? If you show up to home group or not show up to home group each week, whatever the decision is, is the primary motivating reason self? "I'm not going to get anything out of it this week, so I'm not going to go," or "I'm tired, so I'm not going to go," or "I'm going to get something out of it, so I'm really excited to go." Is it primarily self?

What about just regular biblical community? "I need to be around people because they give me things. They bring something to my life I can't get without them, so I need people," or "I'm an introvert, so this is convicting for me," or "Why don't I hang around some of my community sometimes? It's because I need to withdraw. I need rest. I need to get away a little bit." Is why you pursue biblical community primarily self?

Another one is what about things that bother you, little complaints, suggestions you have for other people at work, home, family, church family? Is the primary reason you're making a suggestion or have a complaint because it only bothers you, or is it because it's hindering your brother or sister who is to the right or left of you? Things are going to bother you, but is it the primary reason we voice our concerns? "They're just my own concerns, and this bothers me."

As I thought about myself, as I thought about some of my heart issues behind where I fall into self and selfishness, there were two things I felt like my heart naturally would go to without even maybe being on the top of my mind. The first one was a fear, or maybe being petrified, of being meaningless, like if I didn't pursue my own status, my own significance, I could lose my value.

If I actually did what these verses were calling me to do, if I laid down my life, if I considered somebody else more significant than me, then in this dog-eat-dog world of the American culture where people are competing against themselves there's a good chance I lose my significance, I lose my value, or people won't look at me as valuable or as significant as I think I may be.

I may lay down my life and somebody may just walk right over me and leave me there, and nobody is going to come pick me up. That's under-rooted in my heart. I wonder if that's more than just me. I often make decisions based out of that fear. "Hey, I know what this is calling me to do; I just think I'm going to get left in the dust."

The other one for me is entitlement. I did this or that, so I deserve something. "I worked hard today. I put in a full eight-hour day. I deserve to come home and be relaxed. I shouldn't have to take care of my daughter. I shouldn't have to take the load off my wife." Or if you're at home with your kids... "I've been with my kids all day. When my husband or my wife gets home, I deserve to have a rest from my kids. I deserve this." Entitlement.

Or in our relationships... "I served you yesterday; I deserve to be served today. If I'm not served today, then I'm going to be angry, and you're going to feel the wrath of my anger against you. I'm going to remove some of the things in our relationship until you give me what I want out of this relationship." We just feel entitled.

If it's true that I need to claw my way to the top, that I need to fight for my own significance, that I need to prove I'm worthy, that I'm worth anything... If this is true, it makes complete sense that we think about self. You have no other option. You should do that if that's true. The thing is, brothers and sisters, Christians, it's not true. It's not true, because Jesus Christ already laid down his life for you and me, status-hungry people.

When we lay down our lives, when we consider one another more significant than ourselves, we're not the first ones to do it. Jesus Christ was the first one to do it. When we follow him in those steps, we're following and mimicking our Savior. We're following and mimicking the greatest being who created the heavens and the earth and the universe and everything. That is so beautiful and so glorious and so God-glorifying. When you lay your life down, you don't lay it down by yourself; you lay it down with Christ. That's Paul's point in verse 5. He says:

**"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."**

Where he is we join him. That's the freedom we as Christians can walk in when we mimic the mindset and attitude that moved Jesus Christ to humble himself to be in our form so he might come and save us. That is awesome, that we as human beings get to do that and live that out. There's nothing better than to be able to do that.

Here's what also happens. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ... When he laid down his life for us, he took it back up, and when we lay down our lives, when we consider one another more valuable than ourselves, we will be exalted with him, because our significance and our value and our status is bound up with Christ.

I don't have to fight for my status. I don't have to fight for my significance. I know how the story ends. The end of Revelation: "They will reign forever." Jesus said in Matthew 23:12, "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Those who humble themselves will be exalted." When Christ returns, we will go be with him. We will be seated with him in the heavenly places. Knowing how the end is affects how I do life now. It means I'm not left in the dust if I lay down my life, and I'm not the first one to ever do it.

Paul here is actually going to give us a really practical mindset, a really practical attitude, for where we can begin to do this as individuals and as a church family. This wasn't part of the original text, but in verse 25 of chapter 2, if you look at it, he gives us an example of two people, himself and his fellow coworker, Epaphroditus. This is what he says as he's writing to the Philippians:

**"I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill."** Epaphroditus is distressed about the Philippians because the Philippians heard he was ill. Man, I hardly ever do that. When I'm sick, I hope people notice I'm sick and come over and write me stuff.

That's not the mindset of Epaphroditus. That's not the mindset of Christ. It's, "Man, my brothers and sisters are worried about me because I'm ill, and I don't want them to worry about me. I'm distressed." Then Paul says in verse 27, **"Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."** This was mind-blowing for me. What Paul is saying is that grace on his friend is grace on himself.

How often do we think of that, that God's grace on somebody else's life in our corporate family, in our church family, is grace on you individually? I never think that way. *Ever*. I know I'm called to rejoice and be happy with them, but I don't view that as grace on me. But that's exactly what Paul is saying. He's getting back to this idea of unity. What happens for you, what God does in your life, he's doing in my life. Your struggles are my struggles, and your joys are my joys.

It's a remarkable simple mindset, a mind shift, of the way he's looking at the Philippians and the way he's calling us to look at each other and the attitude he's calling us to have for each other. To have this attitude

requires a supernatural love the world can't give us and doesn't understand and that's radically different than the world. We're going to talk about that next week. Let's pray.

Father, we just thank you for your Word. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you humbled yourself and came down and rescued us, that you didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but you just rescued us. So Lord, would you be with my brothers and sisters this week as we go? Would you give us the mind of Christ? Holy Spirit, would you move in us the mind of Christ and help us to find joy in following in the footsteps of our Savior in mind and in attitude, that we would find joy in it, that you would be glorified in it. It's in Christ's name, amen.

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