***The Fulfillment of Paul's Joy, No. 1 - PH36-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:1-4***

Please turn to Philippians 2:1-4. The apostle Paul has expressed his satisfaction with the Philippian Christians and with their Christian service in the midst of the angelic warfare. Paul has reviewed four things which are true about the Christians in Philippi. He says, first of all, that they have a comfort in the Lord in their sufferings for Christ. Secondly, Paul says that these Philippian Christians enjoy the tender solace of a God they love. Thirdly, he says that they are in temporal fellowship with God the Holy Spirit, in partnership with the Holy Spirit, because they are filled with the Spirit. Fourthly, he recognizes that they have a feeling of Christian goodwill and of pity for one another.

At this point, the apostle Paul calls for the Philippians to bring his joy to fulfillment--to fill the thing out and to bring it to completion. He does this by appealing for four things which he asks of them on the basis of the four things which he has just declared are true of them. So as we have pointed out, Philippians 2:1 is the statement of conditions which are true, and Philippians 2:2 now declares conclusions on the basis of these things which are true, which would result in his joy being fulfilled.

**Mental Attitude**

We've already looked at the first one. We will just briefly review these things which would complete Paul's joy. There are four factors. First, he says, is to be like-minded. We pointed out that this was the Greek word "phroneo." "Phroneo" meant to be united in a certain mental attitude--that mental attitude being divine viewpoint. Paul says, "I call upon you, if you want to really make me happy, that you congregations, all over the city of Philippi, wherever you are as saints, that you operate on a divine viewpoint mentality in your church."

I don't know if you've ever been in a church where they have operated on human viewpoint mentality, but it is a gross experience to be with a group of believers like that. Talk about snarling dogs; animal level operations; competition; and, political maneuverings. You've got it there in human viewpoint mentality congregations.

So Paul says that all of your mental attitudes are either human viewpoint or divine viewpoint. Every congregation is characterized as a whole by one or the other. He calls upon them to have a divine viewpoint expression.

**Love**

The second thing that he calls upon them in verse 2 is expressed as "having the same love." The word "having" is the Greek word "echo." It is present which means that they are constantly to have this kind of love. It is active. It is up to them to decide to have it. The participle is a way of expressing a principle of truth. What kind of love is he talking about? There are two kinds. Well, we look in the Greek and we find that it's this word "agape." "Agape" love is a mental attitude. For that reason, we refer to it as a relaxed mental attitude. It is a mind which is free of mental sins and free of bitterness. He calls upon the Christians in Philippi, and thus upon us also, to have the same love. The word "same" is "autos." That means that all members of the congregation should have this kind of love toward one another. Each Christian is capable of "agape" love. God is not asking us to do something that we are incapable of producing. We are fully capable of doing it. The difference lies in our desire for it. Some Christians respond with the active demand here. "Having" calls upon us to make the move. That's why it's active. Some Christians make the move and some do not.

As you know, the word "agape" love must be understood, or you'll get in a lot of trouble. For example, the Bible says, "Love your enemies." For many people, that is the height of inanity when they read that in the Bible. If the Bible had used the word "philos," our other word for love, in that passage that says, "Love your enemies," they would have an argument. That is because the word "philos" is love as it relates to the emotions of the soul. So when he says, "Love your enemies," he is not saying love in the sense of "philos," which is an emotion. That you cannot command. There is no use in the world for you to go around and be intimidated and have a guilt complex because there are some people that you don't care for. There are some Christians that you don't necessarily strike it off with. It does not mean that you do not love them. When God tells us to love one another, He very carefully avoids "philos" in the Scripture. He uses "agape" because "agape" is a love which relates only to the mentality of the soul. Therefore, it is something that we can do.

These two words have been clarified for us because the Greek and Latin languages began to run a rather parallel course in ancient times so that words that were used in Greek found a comparable expression in Latin. One of the excellent preservations we have on the meaning of these two words in the Greek comes to us from the Latin. In the Latin, we also have two words for "love." One of them is "deligo" which is comparable to the "agape" love in Greek because "deligo" in Latin means a mental attitude. It has no emotional connotation. "Philos" is comparable to the Latin word "amo" for love, and that is a word that has an emotional connotation.

So Cicero, in writing to a friend, for example, about another man at one time said, "I not only love that man, but I like him." He meant, "I not only have a mental attitude of esteem and admiration. I have no bitterness toward this man. I have no ill will. But I also have an emotional attachment for this man. I like him." That's very important. When you marry somebody, you have to start off with this in your relationship. You have to start off with "agape" love. You always have to start off with "agape" love toward anybody. Then "agape" love will move down into "philos" love.

Suppose you have "agape" love. You meet somebody. You don't have any antagonism. You have admiration. You have a mental admiration and appreciation for this person. You meet this girl; she sits down; she plays the piano; and, she thrills your soul. She smiles, and your life illuminates. She gets out on the golf course and she beat your brains in. You have an admiration for her in various capacities. Should you marry her? You might not like her. You could have nothing but admiration; appreciation; and, goodwill toward her, but when it came to marrying her, unless you like her, it's not going to work. It's going to be misery all the way. So that's why it's important to know these words and how they're related. Then you'll understand what it is that the apostle is calling on the Philippians to do, and for us to do.

I could get up here and amuse you with stories. I'm about the funniest person I know myself. I could give you a lot of little cute challenges. When I was in seminary, they gave me scads of outlines. With all of the visiting Bible preachers that the teachers used to bring in, we would end up with scads of little rinky dink devotional outlines that would just thrill your soul. But you wouldn't understand much about the Bible. But if you will think through something like this, you'll get a very great understanding of the Bible. The next time some clown comes up to you and says, "What is this stuff in the Bible about loving your enemies?" You'll say, "I'll tell you what that loving your enemies stuff is about." And you'll explain to them two different words, and the clown won't be quite so funny anymore. You will have deepened his respect for the Word of God because the Bible is a significant book with answers--and workable answers.

So here's what Paul is saying. Paul is saying that we should have this kind of love, which is an "agape" love, which is a mental attitude apart from emotions. This kind of love is used as coming from God in John 3:16, but it is also used as coming from a man in John 21:15-19 and Luke 10:27. You cannot say that "agape" love is divine love. That's not true. Anybody, even an unbeliever, can have an "agape" type mentality where he is free of mental ill will. The difference is that his "agape" love is from a human origin of the old sin nature, and is an expression of divine good, whereas the Christian's "agape" love is a fruit of God the Holy Spirit within his soul. Therefore it is an expression of divine good. The same is true about "philos." This emotional word is used of God and man, both, as it is in the passage of John 16:27.

Your capacity for "philos" love will vary from one Christian to another. This type of love will be subject to your different reactions to the objects of the love. But "agape" love is a quality that you will have, and that all believers will have in the same way. Your exercise of it--the extent of your entering into it--will vary from one Christian to another. So every Christian who is in temporal fellowship will have "agape" love here as the fruit of the Spirit. But "philos" love is going to be dependent upon your spiritual IQ. This is where doctrine comes in to build up your capacity to love. Doctrine comes in and tells you how to secure it through the confession of sins. But "philos" love is something you develop as you take in the Word of God and as you are positive in your response toward it. In that way, a man or a woman becomes a lover even in a physical sense, because their souls are compatible with their partners in love. Their souls become compatible because of the Word of God that they have responded to. And to the extent that they are disrupted in their mentality from God's thinking, to that extent, their physical expressions are also disrupted.

So divine "agape" love is produced in the mind of the soul by the filling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Divine "philos" love results from the filling of the Holy Spirit plus Bible doctrine stored in the human spirit, then flowing out through the emotions of the soul. The local church members are to maintain this mental attitude toward one another. Such a oneness of mental love is readily seen in overt ways. It is doing what you think about somebody. It is doing in the congregation what you think about people. Most congregations, when they use the word "love," are thinking of nothing more than the fact that they have come to some system where they have become compatible in their old sin natures with one another. That's how most church congregations relate to each other. So they talk about a sentimentality that they call love. They talk about a pseudo expression of emotion and they call it love. What they mean is that they have related to each other's old sin natures in a compatible way. The apostle Paul wants the Philippians to love each other with this mental attitude love, and thus to make him happy.

**One Accord**

Then there is a third thing that would make Paul happy. He says that this is that they should be of one accord. "Of one accord" is the Greek word "sumpsuchos." "Sumpsuchos" literally means "fellow-souled." It comes from the word "sum" which means "with," and "psuche" which means "soul". So it means "with the soul," or the word we would use would be "in accord with" one another (fellow-souled).

Paul calls for a congregation, in other words, whose souls are harmonious. They're in tune with one another because they are all in tune with the Lord Jesus Christ through doctrine. The apostle Paul is not calling upon us to be in one accord because we have tuned up our old sin natures to one another, so that we're compatible on that ground. This is a soul fellowship because we have a unity of the facets of our soul--the mind; the will; and, the emotions. Only the Word of God can produce this kind of soul unity between believers because believers have diverse personalities; they have different tastes; and, they have different interests. The way you get people together as believers on a compatible common ground in the work of the Lord is that you get the souls all united together. There is only one way that a soul is united to another soul, and that is through the Word of God. Paul says that his joy will be complete if the Philippians will reflect the Lord's thinking; the Lord's decisions; and, the Lord's feelings, thus covering the three facets of the soul.

**One Mind**

Then he says there is one other thing, a fourth thing, that will make him happy. That is that they be "of one mind." This, again, is the first word we had ("phroneo"), but used in a little different way. This "phroneo" is used along with the Greek word for "one." It's the Greek word "heis." The "one mind" that he's referring to here, if we were translating this literally, is "thinking the one thing." "Thinking the one thing" is what this is really saying.

So Paul uses the same verb that we began with in referring to the mental attitude that should characterize the congregation as a whole--the mental attitude of divine viewpoint. Now he is stressing here the idea of the believers who in the congregation have divine viewpoint mentality as their base; who are related to each other with a mental attitude of love; who have, consequently, a compatibility of their souls; and, who then can express conclusions in a united way. They reach the same conclusions on various issues. Present tense means there is constant agreement on basic decisions in the congregation. Active means that they choose to follow divine viewpoint, so they arrive at a common thinking because they're thinking the Lord's thoughts. It is a participle. There's a principle being stated. Paul's joy will be completed if the Philippians maintain a rapport in their decisions.

Now that takes some doing--to get a diverse group of local believers in a local church, and find that they can proceed in the ministry and maintain a rapport with one another, as diverse as they may be in their individual personal lives; their tastes; their interests; and, so on. Yet the Word of God says that a local church should not be a dog and cat fight, but it should rather be a place where the most amazing thing in the world is the experience of those who participate. That is that they are coming up with the same basic decisions; outlooks; conclusions; and, so on. If they are functioning on God's viewpoint, then that's exactly what will take place.

Some believers and some local congregations believe firmly in this principle; in the reality; in the happiness that flows to individuals; and, the blessings of the Lord's work that flow from such a united soul quality of expression on the part of believers. Some congregations believe so firmly in this that they have established the policy that they will make no move in that church in any direction until everybody agrees unitedly to make that move. That does open a problem. You may get a few members who are off on human viewpoint. You might get a few members who have negative volition toward the truth. That will create some problems then for the whole group, which has the mind of the Lord as a whole, to be held up while the stragglers get caught up. However, I don't entirely discredit that because I also know that the Lord has ways of handling His business. Any straggler in a local congregation that starts bucking the mind of Christ, I can guarantee you by doctrine and by experience, is going to get jerked out of that congregation by the ends of his hair roots so fast that he won't know what happened to him. All that will be left is his shoes where he was last standing when the Lord took hold of him. And I kid you not.

So it's not too bad an idea to say that if we are a people who are following the Word of God, and we are tied in to God's thinking, then we will move together. We will make a decision. We will face a decision and we will come to a common ground, and there won't be any bucking. If there is somebody who is out of touch with the Lord's thinking, then we deliver him to the Lord's dealing, and the Lord will take care of him. Either he changes his mind or God removes him as a point of friction.

It's impossible for us to create such a unity. That's self-evident, isn't it? That is because before a church service is over, some members are going to probably think that this is such a wonderful quality that we really should have it. You would suggest that maybe we should have a little party where we can all get together and fellowship so we can establish this unity of spirit. When the average church speaks about a common movement among its people, the first thing it thinks about is a little social life together. But this will not produce it. The things of this life are not the basis for our thinking one thing in spiritual things. I don't care how many parties and how many socials you have. There's nothing wrong with those things, but they are not the ground of establishing a common unity in spiritual outreach. That's public relations promotion stuff. It does not secure rapport in the soul. Socials do not draw a congregation together. Only what God has provided in grace through the ministry of the Holy Spirit is what will draw a congregation together.

So if you try to match up these four points, it looks something like this: You remember that Paul has used the word "if" which we have translated "since." He gave us four "ifs." And if you match the "ifs" over to the conclusions on the other side, it seems to have perhaps some significance.

**Unity**

Paul says, "Since there is such a thing as comfort in Christ, a comfort which gives us the ground that appeals for divine viewpoint response on our part, you would make me very happy to be united with a divine viewpoint mentality through the daily use of the grace system of perception by which you build up this mentality in your soul. If there is such a thing as a comfort in Christ that appeals for a divine viewpoint response, then it would make me happy to see you as a congregation operating on a divine viewpoint mentality."

**Love**

Secondly, Paul says, "Since there is such a thing as the solace of 'agape' love, the encouragement of 'agape' love, then it would make me happy to see you functioning on 'agape' love."

**Harmony**

Thirdly, he says, "Since there is such a thing as a fellowship that comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit, it would make me very happy to see that you are harmonious of soul. That is, the Holy Spirit is controlling all facets of your soul--that you are one-souled."

**Goodwill**

Then he says, "Since there is the feeling of goodwill and pity that I do see among you in Philippi, it would make me happy, since that is true of you, to see that your minds are reaching the same conclusions, and that you have good emotions from minds which are on divine viewpoint thinking. I want to see you have such a soul rapport that your feelings are the expressions of the pity and the goodwill of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't want your goodwill and your pity to be stemming from your human good side of your old sin nature."

**Mentality**

Now, what does this say? There is a result for Paul in all this. Since these four things are true, then he feels he can call for them to do these four things. Why? Because the result for him would be joy fulfilled. Note that each of these conclusions, as you run your eye over them, reflects one's mental attitude as the key issue. Be united with divine viewpoint mentality. That's the condition of your mind that you should be concerned about. If you get that straight, other things are going to be straight. You should be functioning on "agape" love. It's a mental attitude. So again, it's your mind that's the issue that you should be concerned about. It should be harmonious of soul. All the facets of your soul are controlled by the mentality. What your will and emotions do in God's order is under the control of the mentality. So again, it's a divine viewpoint mentality for believers to be united in soul, and for your minds to reach the same conclusion again. It's a mental factor.

Now, how often do you hear preaching where people are told, "Now Christians, if you want to please the Lord, leave this room today and get your mentality straightened out and in conformity with God's thinking." No, you'll hear a lot of preaching that says, "Now Christians, do you want to please the Lord? Then stop doing this; stop doing that; stop going here; stop thinking that; get your paint brush outside; and, get yourself all painted up nice, but leave all your rotten, distorted mental sins right there where nobody will see them." You go ahead and kid yourself that somehow you are now compatible with God, and He is blessing when you are pleasing Him.

Each conclusion reflects one's mental attitude as the key issue, and that is the key issue in all of our lives. Rear your children to understand that the key issue in their lives is what they think. Then pour into their minds, in one way and another, by your attitude and your example, as well as your instruction, the things that are going to make their minds a source of blessing.

(Philippians 2:1-2 is the basis for an exhortation which occurs later in the book at Philippians 4:2-3.)

In Philippians 2:3-4, we have the expression of Paul's joy. How will this joy be expressed? In verse 2, Paul said, "You would fulfill my joy if you would do these four things." Now he proceeds in verses 3-4 to express the things that would be coming out of this congregation--that would be coming out of the individual believer--which would produce the completion of Paul's joy because these are the things which would be a fulfillment of the right mental attitude. These are really great. There are three of them:

1. **Humility**

The first one is the attitude of humility. We find this in the first part of verse three where he says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory. The Greek actually does not have the word "let" in it, nor does it have the word "be done." Those are inserted in English to try to smooth out the translation. Literally what the Greek says is, "Nothing through strife or vainglory." It is not the nature of Holy Spirit-led Christian service to operate through strife and vainglory. Paul points out what would fulfill his joy. The first thing that would find actual expression among the believers in fulfilling his joy is to do something which is not natural to human beings. That is that they do not operate through strife and vainglory.

The Greek balances two mental attitudes in the Christians which make Paul unhappy. One is expressed as strife and the other is expressed as vainglory. Both of these would not contribute to his joy, but to his unhappiness. It's a balance. The Greek has "nothing" / "or" ("medeis" balanced over "mede"). These two little words are just an indication that he is balancing these two attitudes and saying, "Neither this nor this would make me happy."

The word "through" is the Greek word "kata." This word is actually repeated after each one of these signal words here: after "nothing"; and, after "or" in the Greek. It is there because it means "according to." So what he is saying is let nothing be done according to strife, nor let anything be done according to vainglory." He is actually stressing the fact that here is a standard; here is a rule; and, here is a principle. It applies in both situations. It applies to the matter of vainglory. It applies to the matter of strife.

Let's take a look at these words themselves. First of all, "strife" in the Greek is "eritheia." What that word means is simply "rivalry," or "a self-seeking attitude." The word connotes dividing up into rival factions in the local church. So a good translation is factiousness. Let there be no factiousness in the local church. It is the same word which was used back in Philippians 1:16 where it is translated as "contention." He was talking about the Christians who were in Rome who were preaching out of factiousness in order to cause sorrow for Paul who was in prison. A Christian can preach the truth, but with a deliberate intent of causing divisions in a local church. A Christian can stand for a position of truth in a local church, but with a specific purpose of causing divisions within the church. It's an unholy rivalry. Faction makers are the carnal Christians who are trying with human viewpoint techniques to correct something that maybe needs correcting in the local church. Faction makers are spiritually blind, but they convinced that it's other people who are blind.

The Lord may be asked to make things right and you may trust Him to do it. Human viewpoint Christians prefer to create some kind of following to do it. It is one thing to discuss a problem, for example, in a board meeting; in a church council; or, in a church congregation meeting. It is something else to be going around to this one and to this one; and, over to this person's house and this person's house. Pretty soon you have a bunch of clowns who have gathered together and they have created a faction.

It's no honor to you if somebody comes in and does that. I've had members on boards in this church over the years past who thought that it was commendable to them because they were the people that dissatisfied malcontents in the church would go and speak to. They didn't know that all they were indicating was that they were faction sympathizers. They were the factious crowd on the boards, and therefore people spotted them. They smelled them out like a vulture smells a piece of rotting flesh. His eyes go all aglow, and they zero in on you. It's no honor to you when somebody comes and asks you to join a team of opposers of anything in the local church. Paul says, "Don't do things through dividing up into sides."

Secondly, he says, "Don't do it through vainglory." Vainglory comes from a word that means "empty" and a word that means "glory." We may translate it as "groundless conceit." This refers to the pushy attitude seeking a superficial glitter in the eyes of human viewpoint people--the immature carnal-minded. There are certain people who just find a great satisfaction in this kind of short-lived glory. They like to be stars among God's people.

They're the kind who like to come to church, and they deliberately calculate how they're going to dress. So they come walking in some morning, and they're wearing a leopard's robe all the way down to the floor. And everybody comes up and says, "Is that a leopard's robe you're wearing all the way down to the floor?" And they say, "Yes, it is." Then the lady's husband says, "And I shot it." The Bible says you're going to get what you're looking for. You'll get the vainglory. Everybody will be aglitter. All the kids will come to the Berean Academy Monday morning saying, "Did you see Mrs. So-and-so with her leopard robe?"

There are people who seek that kind of vainglory in position. They like to be like Syntyche and Euodia, struggling with one another as competitors to be stars in the sun, and they'll tear each other to shreds, and they'll use other people against each other to do it. Paul says that this pushy attitude is out of place. It's human viewpoint recognition which is being esteemed above the Lord's glory. Christians here are motivated by lust for praise. When you get Christians who like praise, they're troublemakers in the local church, and they cause factions.

So we may translate this as, "Nothing according to the standard of factiousness or group rivalries; nor, according to groundless deceit." Proverbs 25:6-7 has an exact comparison for what Paul is speaking of here. We have a parallel passage on this in Luke 14:8-11 in the ministry of the Lord which you can read on your own.

1. **Harmony**

There is a second thing that Paul says would make him happy, and he calls that the attitude of harmony. In Philippians 2:3, he says, "But in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself." The word "but" is the Greek word "alla." It introduces a contrast to the negative statement which we have just read in the first part of verse 3. "In lowliness of mind" is the long Greek word "tapeinophrosune," and it simply means humility of mind. It is a state of mind which is grace oriented, and therefore it is relaxed, and it is not seeking to exalt itself. This is actually saying "by means of a lowliness of mind."

Plato in classical Greek gave us this definition: He said that this word means "that state of mind which submits to the divine order of the universe, and does not impiously exalt itself." As you know, the world's attitude is to be arrogant, self-assertive, and to impose your will on other people at all costs. Instead, the Word of God here says, "In lowliness of mind (in humility of mind), let each esteem other." The word for "let each esteem" is the Greek word "hegeomai." "Hegeomai" means "to lead before the mind," which gives us the idea "to consider or to regard." It means "to consider or to regard other people constantly and actively as a way of life." It is a constant esteem chosen on the basis not of emotion, but on the basis of external fact. The word "others" is "allelon" which means "each other." So it says, "To consider or to regard each other mutually." Consider each other how?

He says, "Better than themselves." "Better than" is "huperecho." "Huperecho" means to be superior. We are to consider other Christians as excelling ourselves. This is present tense, which is to be your constant attitude in a local church. It is active. You are to decide to accept this viewpoint. It is participle. It is a principle stated. Our natural spirit of competition leads us to want to cut people down to discredit them. This is not easy for us to look at a congregation and say, "You know, everybody I see out here is superior to myself. Everybody I see out here excels over myself. I look at Charlie Boozer. He's better than I am. It's hard to believe, isn't it?" Charlie Boozer is better than every one of you here, as a matter of fact. You find that even harder to believe. You didn't think it was so much that he was better than I was. But the truth of the matter is he is. Sometimes it would be hard to determine exactly where, but he is. That's the point of this passage.

The Bible is saying that we are not complete entities in ourselves. We have areas of strengths, but we have areas also where we are not so hot. We have areas where we can do things well, and we have areas where we can do things very poorly. But the person sitting next to us is the person that God has placed in that body who can do well what you do poorly. In that respect, that person excels. So if you are a divine viewpoint person, you will recognize that you can look out at a congregation, and no matter who it is in that congregation, there is something in that person's capacity; personality; life experience; or, background where that person is better and more capable than you are. He can do the job that you cannot do. Yet, this is a hard attitude for us to come by, to see that other people in the congregation are superior to ourselves. Instead, we prefer to champion our ways and our qualities as being all superior.

This doesn't mean that you ignore your own capacities, nor does it mean you ignore the fact that other people have limitations. It is necessary to determine where we excel in the Lord's service. It is necessary that our arrogance does not ignore the superior capacity of other Christians in other areas. Our spiritual achievements are all of grace, so it's all the Lord's doing. So we exalt Him, whether it is your superiority or somebody else's. This will cause us to be ingrates if we do not recognize that God has given us people associated with us who can do things in some area that we cannot do.

A local church is to be a community of believers where no one is looked down upon. Each believer has his capacities; he has his potentials; and, he has his place of expression. We are to have an attitude of mental humility and mutual esteem in a local church which produces harmony. That's what Paul is after. If you respect each other's capacities, you'll have a harmonious church. That's what Paul is saying, and that makes him happy.

1. **Helpfulness**

Then there's one more: the attitude of helpfulness. In Philippians 2:4, Paul says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." The word "look" is "skopeo," and it means "to consider." The word means "to fix your attention on something with interest." It's the source of our English word "scope" which means "aim" or "goal." The word implies a mental consideration. It's something you've given thought to. It's present. It's a constant attitude of mind. It's active. You as a Christian do this. It's participle. It's a principle stated.

We have several contrasts set up to emphasize this. He says, "But" over against "not." This is "me" over against "alla." It says, "Every man," (each one). This is "hekastos" over against "hekastos" again. It's repeated--each one. This is in order to stress that individually we must consider what other people are doing, and the situation of their lives as well as our own. This does not mean we are to violate their privacy or their volition.

It has a third one, and that is "his own thing." This is "heatou" (of himself) matched against the things of others ("heteros"). These in the Greek are just one matched against another, to give you this contrast, Don't be zeroed in on the things of life that are devoted to your own situation, to the total ignoring and indifference of the situation of other people.

This is not to say that you do not care for your own things, and that's why he uses the word "also." It says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." That means in addition to your own. So the point is to be ready to be helpful to others in the local church, but do it as unto the Lord, because sometimes being helpful will not be appreciated. For this reason, Hebrews 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Your readiness to consider the best interests of others will not always be appreciated, but if it's done as onto the Lord, then it won't make any difference. To be preoccupied with your own interests makes us guarded with people.

I can almost always tell a person who is violating this principle. This is the kind of person you go up to and you want to ask them to do something. You want to ask for some help or some service; you make your approach; and, right away there's a guardedness. What they're doing is waiting to find out what you have for them before they open themselves up to you. This is because their spirit is not to consider the things of other people if it in any way encroaches upon their time to consider their own things. Your beneficiaries may be lacking in values, and they may label you as wanting to run things because you want to be helpful.

Proverbs 25:11-14 illustrate this attitude of helpfulness: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." You can be helpful to people first of all, verses 11-12 say, with your advice. Advice from human viewpoint frame of reference is not worth much at all, but advice from a divine viewpoint frame of reference is worth very much. In fact, it says, "It's like apples of gold in a setting of silver." So divine viewpoint advice is timely advice, and it has the beauty of apples of gold in the setting of silver. It has the beauty that comes to a woman who wears fine jewelry and enhances her appearance.

No one should be too quick to have a mouth to speak who has not first had ears to hear the Word of God well. There are a lot of people who are willing to give you advice who aren't competent to give you advice. Sometimes they may be people who are very close to you. But unless they have divine viewpoint steeped in their souls, you'd better be suspicious of their advice. They're not giving apples of gold. They're giving you rotten apples that the cores have been cut out of, and they're giving them to you on paper plates. They're giving you dime store jewelry. It looks like the real thing, but it is not. The word "fitly spoken" is advice which is divine viewpoint corresponding to the need of the recipient at that moment. Wise reproof comes from a wise reprover.

In verses 13-14, you can be helpful in another way, and that's with service: "Like the coal of the snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his master." On a harvest field in the Middle East, when harvest time comes, it's hot. So it was a refreshing thing for a master to send a servant up into the mountains to bring snow down, to have a refreshing cool snow cone for the folks who are out there in the fields in harvest. The Bible says that that kind of refreshment on a hot day in a harvest field is what comes to our hearts in our experience with people who are faithful, and who do their job of service to us.

He also says in verse 14, "Whoever boasts himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain." It's the picture of failure in service here in the fact that he boasts of a gift which he cannot deliver in service. He is trying to do something that somebody else can do better. It's like clouds and wind, which promised rain in a Middle East context, and yet it does not produce. The Bible condemns being inconsiderate of the things of others by raising hopes which you cannot fulfill for them, and which they cannot realize.

So, the apostle Paul says, "You will make me happy if you will find this threefold expression within what you do: first, that there would be the attitude of humility; secondly, the attitude of harmony; and thirdly, that there would be the attitude of helpfulness with advice and with service."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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