



Bible Study Guide
Sunday, January 13, 2019

Union with Christ

Sermon Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

Study Text: Philippians 2:1-11

Sermon Recap: Ephesians is a wonderful letter, full of God's grace for His Church. In this opening section, Paul deals with the glorious work of God in Christ. Through Christ, we have been reconciled to God, saved out of the death of sin. Paul calls our attention to Christ's work in our salvation, that it was from God, that God chose us to be saved long before the world had ever been made. God had us, the Church, in His mind when He sent Jesus all those years ago. Although we were alone and destitute in our sin, aliens to grace, and orphans from God's goodness, through Christ we are adopted into the family of God with all that rights and privileges that come with it. We have unity, privilege and eternal goodness because we are in Christ.

Sermon Connection: In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul introduces us to a foundational Christian idea: that we are together *in Christ Jesus*. The context of the letter to the Philippians is "community." Paul is writing to the gospel community in Philippi, that is, the church in Philippi. Therefore, because Paul's intended audience is the community of saints, everything in the letter must be read in the context of community. To be *in Christ*, then, takes on a new dimension for us. It means that not only are we *in Christ* individually, but we are *in Christ together* as a gospel community. It is by looking to the example of Jesus that we learn that we are inseparably connected to one another in Him. We also learn how to relate to, love, and serve one another.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To see that the foundation for membership in gospel community is our being *in Christ together*

Lesson Points:

Point 1: Our Shared Humility (vv. 1-8)

Point 2: Our Shared Savior (vv. 9-11)

Point 3: Group Reflection and Prayer

The Context: Philippians, like Paul's other writings, is a personal letter. It is, perhaps, one of Paul's most loving and heartfelt letters. He truly loves the Philippian church. His task in writing is to encourage this church not to love the world as their culture did. He called them to live radically different lives by looking to Christ. Jesus is the One Who began the work of salvation in them (1:6), and He is the One in Whom the Christian life is lived. But Paul presses it further here. He wants the

Philippians to see that being in Christ also includes *being in Christ together*. Salvation reconciles us to God but also to the other members of Christ's Church.

Point 1 - Our Shared Humility (vv. 1-8)

- What does Paul want us to see about encouragement, comfort from love, and participation in the Spirit as it regards to being *in Christ* from vv. 1-2?
- What kind of picture of community emerges from vv. 1-5?
- One of Paul's objectives with the letter to the Philippians was to undo a social/cultural idea that prestige was a good thing, something worthy of our pursuit. How do vv. 5-8 help to undo pride and prestige?
- How should these elements of Christ's humility shape and form our (collectively) understanding of true gospel community?

Point 2 - Our Shared Savior (vv. 9-11)

- What does the "*Therefore*" in v. 9 signify?
- What do vv. 9-11 teach us about Jesus, His work on the cross, His resurrection, and His present standing?
- How does this understanding of Jesus help us better understand what it means to be "*in Christ*" and to be in gospel community?

Group Reflection Activity -

Have someone read 1 Peter 2:9-12. Ask the following questions, and encourage honest response and dialogue...

- In what ways have we been too easily pleased with mediocre community?
- Take turns describing your picture of "*life-giving*" community.
- How might we incorporate some of these ideas in our growth group?
- What elements of gospel community is our group good at, and which ones do we struggle with?
- Why do you think we struggle with certain elements of gospel community?
- Work together to build a mission statement for your growth group that especially applies Parkwood's mission of "*Glorifying* God by laboring together for the *growth* of all believers, while *going* with the gospel to all people(s)" to your growth group.

Intentional Prayer for Community

- Pray that Holy Spirit would open your eyes to see Christ in a fresh way; pray that He would cause you to love Jesus above anyone or anything else.
- Pray that God would reveal to you areas where you have been too easily pleased with mediocre gospel community...perhaps areas where you need to reevaluate your understanding or practice.
- Pray that God would reveal areas of struggle concerning gospel community that you need to work through.
- Pray that God would send someone from your growth group to help you with these struggles.