

“RPM”

Today we come to the climax of Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

That’s hard to believe, considering the fact that Paul has already penned some of the most memorable passages ever written in the entire NT in this one letter.

- I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (1:6)
- For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for your sake that that I remain in the body. (1:21)
- Therefore 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. (2:1-2)
- In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!  
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. (2:5-10)

- Therefore, my dear friends...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to fulfill his good purpose. (2:12-13)

- Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at the goal... but I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (3:12-14)
- For I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation... I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. (4:13)

That's some pretty stiff competition that our passage is up against. How can our text today compete with that?

All that stuff we just read about "rejoicing in the Lord," "praying at all times and being anxious about nothing," and "thinking only on those things that are pure, noble, and just," is good stuff, but it doesn't come close to topping some of the things Paul has already said in this letter.

I would have you know that as good as "rejoicing," "praying," and "mediating" on the goodness of God is, even this is not the climax of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

### **The Most Important Verse in the Book of Philippians**

The climax of Philippians is Philippians 4:2.

- I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, (*probably Epaphroditus, since Paul was sending him back home to Philippi*) help these two women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel...

That is the climax of this letter.

What? You got to be kidding me?

How can that verse be better than all the other stuff that Paul said?

It is not better, but it is **more** important. That one little verse, to a great extent, reflects why Paul wrote Philippians.

He wrote it with this chief aim in mind- to broker peace between these two women. If you have been here for most of these sermons from Philippians then you will recall that I have mentioned this rift in the church between these two women, Euodia and Syntyche, on several occasions.

When Paul talked earlier in the letter about being "one in the Spirit," "united in the cause of the gospel," and "having the same mind as that of Christ Jesus," who "humbled himself" and set

aside his own needs for the sake of others, Paul was saying all of that as a build up to what he said in v. 2

- I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these two women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel...

Paul is wise, diplomatic, and tactful in how he wrote his letter. He did not come out of the chute blasting these two women for their division, but rather he addressed their problem in a roundabout kind of way that slowly softened them and the congregation to finally hear what he had to say to them.

All the prior words of this letter were nothing less than a build up to preparing these two women and the church to hear and accept Paul's exhortation for them to be unified in Christ. Now these ladies were ready to swallow the pill that Paul had for them.

We do not know what the problem was between these two women. The only thing we do know is that they were committed Christians, dedicated to the gospel, and possibly leaders in the church. They had a falling out and Paul wanted them to be reconciled in the Lord. That is why this verse, which strikes us as so plain and vanilla, is actually the climax of the whole letter.

It may not be fancy, but it is the **most** important thing that Paul penned in Philippians.

### **Centering Our Lives on Jesus Christ, So That We Might Be Reconciled**

The church must be reconciled and Christians must be reconciled; and that way that happens is through laying down one's arms and submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his ways for our lives, as given to us in His Holy Word.

Apart from centering our lives around him, (*which really means that we must center our lives around his Word and not any kind of vague feelings or concepts that we might have about Jesus that are usually quite different than what the Bible says about Jesus*) apart from us doing this there will be no reconciliation. But if Christ is the axis upon which our lives rotate around, then there will be reconciliation.

I have called this message RPM. It stands for revolutions per minute. It refers how many times a certain part rotates around a fixed axis. We think of it most often when we think of our car engines, how fast that car motor spins around and around in one minute.

But for this sermon I want to think of the fixed point of axis as Jesus. He is the one these two women's lives need to rotate around, and he is the one our lives need to rotate around. If we are centered on him as our point of axis we will be reconciled, but if not we won't be reconciled. Jesus must be the focus of our RPM's.

But for us our RPM's are not revolutions per minute, but rather they are rejoicing, prayer, and mediation.

Paul is telling this these two women, the church, and us today, that the key to our unity is Jesus and the way we experience his unifying and reconciling power in our lives is through rejoicing, praying, and mediating. We are to do that over and over again, minute by minute, day by day, week by week, year after year, spinning around the axis of Christ, just like that spinning car motor, by rejoicing, praying, and mediating on the Lord.

If these two women will do this, if the church will do this, and if we will do this, then we will be reconciled and unified in Jesus Christ. These three things will keep us close to our axis, our hub, and consequently we will be united in our Lord.

How so?

### **Rejoice**

Notice what Paul said about rejoicing in verse 4. He didn't just say rejoice, nor did he say rejoice in your favorite team, tv show, hobby, or book. Paul said rejoice in the Lord.

Rejoicing in the Lord is rejoicing in Jesus! That is keeps us close to the axis and that changes us.

There is much to rejoice in Jesus about. How about our salvation? There is someone who gave his life for you. His name is Jesus. You were God's enemy because of your sin, but still, Jesus gave his life for you. You might find a brave person, here or there, who will die for a comrade, but Jesus is so different than us sinners. Jesus dies for his enemies. Only a loving God can do that and that's what Jesus did for you. And by doing that he wiped out your enemy status before God and he saved you, if you have trusted in him. Because of our salvation there is much for us to rejoice about. But not only does Paul tell us to rejoice in Jesus, he tells us to do it always. That keeps us close to the hub, close to the axis. We must rejoice daily in Jesus. This will change us and this will lead to reconciliation.

### **Pray**

In v.6-7 of the text Paul tells us to pray. Again notice what he says. He does not just say pray to God generically, but rather he teaches us to pray to God specifically, about everything, including our dissention and broken relationships; and through that prayer will experience the peace of God (shalom), which really means we will experience reconciliation, because that is what peace is. It is reconciliation that "transcends all understanding."

Notice also that our prayer life is to be rooted around our axis, which is Jesus, because Paul tells us that our prayers will serve as the means by which our "hearts and minds will be guarded in Christ Jesus." And finally notice in this section that Paul, just as he does with rejoicing, addresses the matter of frequency. Just as we are to always rejoice, so too are we always to pray.

Paul says, “but in every situation,” we are to pray. Our prayer lives are to be constantly spinning around Jesus.

## **Meditate**

In verses 8-9 of the text Paul address the matter of the “M.” In this portion of the text Paul tells these two women and the church, and us today, that we ought to meditate on things that are “true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.” “If anything is excellent or praiseworthy” that is where our focus ought to be.

That exhortation sounds kind of generic on the surface, but if you read this whole letter in its context you will find out what those kinds of things are.

In fact, at the beginning of this message, I pointed out some of those famous passages, and it is those kinds of things that we ought to meditate upon. So really what is “true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable” is Jesus. We are to mediate upon him by mediating upon all of the wonderful things that Paul has already told us about in this letter.

## **Conclusion**

If these two women and this church, and if we will who live our lives today, will do these three things over and over again, just like that spinning motor, our lives will move closer and closer to the destination that God has for us, just like a car that is moving down the road.

That’s what the RPM’s do. When that crank shaft spins around and around the motor moves and the wheels begin to roll. Then we start getting to where we are going.

Likewise, when we rejoice always in Jesus, when we pray always in Jesus, and when we mediate always in Jesus, our lives will move closer and closer to our destination point, which is reconciliation and peace with both God and one another. But the key is Jesus. He must be the axis upon which our lives of rejoicing, praying and meditating must always revolve around.

All glory be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One whom we come to know and love through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.