

Text: Philippians 2:1-4

Title: Like-minded Humility in the Church

Truth: Given what we have in Christ, we must be unified in humble concern for one another.

Date/Location: Sunday 1/16/2022 at FBC (rev. 7/7/2010 and 8/4/2010)

Introduction

Verses 1-2 is about a mindset of like-mindedness. Verses 3-4 are about humility and looking out for others, showing how the mindset of verses 1-2 work out in a practical way.

Verses 5-8 describe the example of Christ, who is the best model of the humble mind exhorted in verses 3-4. Verses 9-11 show how God exalted Christ after his humiliation. We looked at these verses around Christmastime.

The context sets the table for us. In 1:28-30, Paul mentions adversaries, suffering, and conflict. The believers are united with Paul (even Christ) in these experiences. Amid this, though, Paul desires them to be more united with one another because there are some shortcomings in that area of the church's life.

Paul is dealing with cause and cure for contentions and strife among Christians. The solution hearkens back to verse 27, just 4 verses before 2:1, in which Paul exhorts conduct worthy of the gospel, including that they share one spirit and one mind striving together for the gospel. This is fleshed out in the following four verses.

I. Verse 1

Philippians 2:1-2 Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

A. *If* is not a hesitant *if*, nor an *if* of mere possibility, but an *if* assumed to be true, i.e., assuming you are a Christian then you do have these things, and certain things should follow. I perceive that this verse has escaped the understanding of some of us over the years. It is not meant to be taken in isolation from the rest of the verses,

as if it merely gives some nice things that we have as Christians—encouragement, comfort, fellowship, affection. Rather, these qualities are the reasons and foundation to why we can and should be like-minded and humble with one another. They drive that kind of behavior in our lives. Common spiritual resources yield a unified spiritual outcome.

- B. Consolation is translated as encouragement in most English renditions. However, *consolation* and *encouragement* in English are both too mild because the idea is not to lift one's spirits from a low or discouraged state. Rather, the notion is that there is an *impetus* toward humble unity that comes from being in Christ. Being in Christ raises encouragement to an exhortation, an urging. This impetus or stimulus toward like-mindedness comes from being united with Christ. That refers to the "technical sense" of being "in Christ." When a person comes to faith in Christ, they are brought *into* Christ and *into* the Church of Christ, which is His body and bride, His people. This union emboldens us in a belief or course of action. In other words, being in Christ is a "Christian exhortation" that demands we be like minded with one another. If we share the same "union" relationship with the same head, then we should "get it together."
- C. Comfort = console, solace, and here, encouragement fits well. This comes from Christian love (just like the exhortation above came from being in Christ). Brotherly love is a key factor that brings believers to like-mindedness, reducing or alleviating tension between them.
- D. Fellowship = Close association involving mutual interests. The Holy Spirit is shared within all believers and produces a fellowship between believers.
- E. Affection = tenderness; Mercy = compassion, sympathy. The Spirit of Christ produces a concern and love for other members of the family of God. This is another basis for spiritual unity. See the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23.
- F. The *if*, again, reiterates that these things indeed are real, and they form the basis for the command that follows. Christians have these

resources or “drivers,” if you will, to be able to carry out the instruction of verse 2. Being in Christ, knowing God’s love, having the Holy Spirit, and sharing affection and mercy toward one another have major implications for how we live.

G. Note that Paul never throws out truth. We are to be unified, but we must be unified around the right things!

H. Do these qualities mark *your* life?

II. Verse 2

A. Paul has great joy over the Philippian church’s faith and God’s work in their midst (1:3-6). Paul is joyful in their faith, fellowship in the gospel, and progress toward ultimate sanctification. But there is something lacking because of some contention in the church. He is not denying the joy that he has, but rather saying that he would have even more joy if he could see the difficulty worked out of the Philippian church. He urges the church to make his joy complete.

B. Think for a minute through the list of unities that Paul exhorts:

1. Like-minded. Thinking the same way? Contextually, this refers to the mind of Christ (verse 5). If we all share that mindset, then we all have a like mind. This is a common command in Scripture. See Phil. 1:27; Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Peter 3:8. There is a basic kind of agreement in our thinking on things. We do not look at basic issues of life in radically different ways. We share the outlook on the overall plan of God and worldview of things about us.
2. Same love. If the same mind connects to Christ, then having the same love seems similar in that we share the same love toward one another that Christ showed to us.
3. One Accord. This means harmoniously minded, working together in agreement toward a common goal. Note that harmony is not unison, but harmony can have great unity because of how its parts mesh together wonderfully. We can have unity without sameness.

4. One Mind. This goes back to the first item on the list and speaks of a single-minded purpose. We think and act in a way united to show Christ directing our activities.

C. With the verse 1 resources at our disposal, we can handle any conflict or contention in our relationships and come to a place of agreeing with one another, sharing Christian love with one another, and having a single mind.

But if we have a stronger love for ourselves or our ideas than of the things we learn from Christ, we will have severe difficulties in the church (like Philippians 4:2?).

D. Think about applying this to a difficult person; a spouse; child; etc. Of course, if not both are Christians, then it may not be possible to reach one accord.

E. Since all believers have the foundational items mentioned in verse 1, the outworking of that should look quite similar across the world and cultures. Obviously, there will be appropriate differences for culture, but there is a common link because there is a common Lord, common Spirit, common love, and brotherly affection in the Christian faith. Like an artist or musician or designer, you can see some of their style come through in the diverse things they create. They are unified by certain character traits. It is the same with the Lord's creation of the church.

III. Verse 3

Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Here we learn how the mindset of verses 1-2 works out in one practical way. Love is not in word only, but also in deeds and reality.

A. Selfish ambition refers to a self-promoting rivalry or ambition. It was used by Aristotle to speak of "a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means." Strife or contentiousness cannot be

excluded from the range of meaning. It could be an individual or a party/faction within the church trying to promote itself.

- B. Paul suspected a problem in the church related to unity and a lack of unity because of selfish ambition was the likely source (4:2-3).
- C. Conceit is a vain or exaggerated self-evaluation, vanity, excessive ambition, self-promotion. It is based on nothing—vanity. It is without true grounds, but the practitioner does not realize that.
- D. Both words are indicative of an essentially selfish and thus sinful core motivation. Neither of these come out of love for Christ or love for brothers or fellowship of the Spirit, but instead love for self. Neither of them are like the characteristics displayed by our Savior in verse 5-8. To the contrary, He displayed...
- E. Lowliness of mind refers to modesty and humility. Someone who is self-effacing is reluctant to draw attention to himself. Love for God promotes love for others. Love expresses itself in lowly service done gladly. It is a modesty, yet it does not reduce itself to a level of false humility where more praise will be gained because of the service rendered, nor does it attempt to gain favor by flattery. The Lord is this way (Matt 11:29).
- F. Regard or esteem refers to how we think, considering something as true. We consider others better than ourselves, meaning that we choose to treat them as of surpassing, exceling, superior value.
- G. Is this consideration then something that is not actually true? Is it just a fiction to help relationships go more smoothly? The point is not that the Bible tells you to think a wrong or untrue thought; it is to think of others as better than yourself (and treat them that way) because that is the humble thing to do. Whether they are better than you in some particular way or not is not really the issue; your estimation of their value is not relevant, and you really shouldn't even do it. What we are talking about is your level of *care* to the person relative to your self-care.
- H. Take yourself off the pedestal in your own mind; put Christ there (not another person!); then follow his model by being humble and serving the needs of others instead of yourself.

- I. If you have a whole church full of people with everyone thinking better of others than themselves, you can hardly have a church with problems in it! But a lot of problems come from someone having their own "great idea" or "knowing more than the next guy" or "I'm so offended by that person..." or whatever.

IV. Verse 4

- A. Paul further clarifies verse 3 by explaining a next step: if you have the mindset of verse 3, you will truly be concerned for the things of others, not just your own things. You will pay careful attention to and notice their concerns. This is a natural outgrowth of the attitude that was enjoined in v. 3 and which itself grows out of the resources we have in 2:1. It is the antidote to selfish ambition.
- B. That attitude does not mean that we do ignore ourselves or not take care of our own NEEDS, but it does mean that these things do not swallow us up so much that we do not consider the interests of other people as well. Naturally we will have to take care of ourselves, but the basic focus in life is not centered around ourselves.
- C. Again, if you have a church full of people (or a family full of people) who are taking into serious consideration the interests of those around them, then things will be good.

Conclusion and Applications

1. Here is an idea: if you sense that you are doing something for selfish reasons, stop what you are doing and do not do it. Consciously choose to do something else.
2. If you desire recognition from others or higher-ups, you must ask yourself "Why?" Probably it is a selfish reason. Note that working hard because that is your Christian duty and receiving recognition as a side-effect is a different thing than working hard to get recognition. Allow God to see fit to raise you up before your peers. Don't strive for it yourself.
3. If you are wanting a more public place in ministry or of some other department of life, check to make sure you are not seeking that for selfish reasons. If you cannot say wholeheartedly that you want to

serve the Lord better where you are, or if you get to the other place, look out.

4. Do you want something so much that you will trample other people to get it? What about them--are they worth your consideration?
5. Do you have the attitude, "How can I regard others better than myself when I am actually better than them?" Consider the arrogance of that attitude. How do you know you are better? In every area of life? Are you a better Christian? More like Christ? A better servant of God? A better evangelist? A more faithful prayer? How about knowledge God's word?
6. And even if in some area you are actually better, the godly Christian mindset is to be humble and not take notice of those comparisons. Because of your compassion and affection for others and your humble mindset about yourself, you look at them and consider them as better than yourself. This is not a lie, but it is a humble recognition that A) you probably don't know yourself as well as you could and how you fall short of God's glory; B) you probably don't know the other person as well as you need to to make a good analysis; and C) in light of that lack of proper information, you should put yourself aside and regard others as better.
7. Are you so busy with "your own things" that you never serve other people?

Unity comes from setting yourself aside! Unity comes through humility. Unity is taught us by the love of God and fellowship of the Spirit and our union with Christ.

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