

Unity Through Humility

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[0 : 01] Are we working together or does pride sometimes get in the way? In today's message we are going to be in the book of Philippians and we are in chapter number 2.

And as we go through this book we see Paul, the Apostle Paul, giving a very moving encouragement to humbly work together for the cause of Jesus Christ as he is writing this letter to the Philippian church.

And others is the key to this portion of Paul's letter. And the question, why did Jesus die on the cross? Others.

Why should we do what we do? Others. You know sometimes people can rob us of our joy. The people in Rome, Philippians chapter 1 verses 15 through 18 as well as the people in Philippi as we're going to see later in this letter were the people who concerned the Apostle Paul the most.

And when Epaphroditus brought the very generous gift from Philippi and the good news about Paul's concern for the church family, he also brought some bad news about some disunity in the church.

[1 : 25] There were some who were going through some difficult problems. Apparently there was a double threat to the ministry. There were people that were coming in and who were teaching some false doctrine.

Philippians chapter 3 verses 1 and following. But there were also some disagreeing members in chapter number 4, the first three verses. And what Euodia and Syntyche were disagreeing about, we're not sure.

Or maybe one of them wanted to be, or maybe they both wanted to be the president of the missionary guild, or maybe they wanted to sing the solo in the choir. We don't know what their problem was.

And by the way, their names, Euodia and Syntyche, mean fragrance and fortunate. Well, they weren't living like their names, were they? They were having a disagreement with one another.

But Paul knew what some church workers don't really understand. And that is there's a difference between unity and uniformity.

[2 : 31] There's a difference between unified and being uniform. True spiritual unity comes from within. It's a matter of the heart.

But uniformity, on the other hand, is pressure, conforming to pressure from without. That's why Paul opens this section here in chapter number 2.

And he appeals to one of the highest spiritual motives possible. And he is saying that they are in Christ. Since the believers are one in the body of Christ, this ought to encourage working together in unity and working together in love, not division, and not rivalry.

In a very, very gracious way, what the Apostle Paul is saying to the church is, your disagreements reveal that there's a spiritual problem in your fellowship.

That's what this unity, that's what this pride is showing. And it's not going to be resolved by rules. And it's not going to be resolved by threats.

[3 : 42] It's going to be resolved when people get their hearts right with Christ and when they start serving for others rather than serving out of selfish motivation or selfish pride.

And he wanted them to see that the basic cause of their disunity, the cause of their problem was selfishness. And the cause of selfishness is pride.

We think about ourselves. We think about ourselves more than we think about others. There can't be any joy in the Christian life when we put ourselves above others.

Now, the secret to joy in spite of circumstances is the single mind. We saw that in chapter 1 where the Apostle Paul was in prison. He was in chains. But yet he was able to experience joy despite his circumstances.

The secret to joy in spite of people is the submissive mind. Because when we have a disagreement with someone else, and if we are submissive one to another, and if we put their needs ahead of our needs, and we are submissive one to another, we will still be able to have joy even though we have a disagreement.

[4 : 56] See the difference between unity and uniformity. We don't all have to think alike. We don't all have to agree to be in unity. We just need to be pulling in the same direction for the same purpose.

That's what unity really is. So this verse where he is saying, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but he said, in loneliness of mind, let each esteem others better than ourselves, is the key to what the Apostle Paul is going to be talking about in this portion of his letter.

It's Christ first. That was the single mind. And then it's others next. So Paul, as the sole winner, we see Paul as a sole winner in Philippians 1, and we see Paul the servant in Philippians 2.

So it's important that we understand by what the Bible means by humility. Paul is talking about humility here in chapter number 2, in the first few verses.

The humble person is not the one who thinks little of himself. He simply doesn't think of himself at all. I think it was Andrew Murray that said that.

[6 : 14] It's not that we don't think of ourselves much. He says we don't think of ourselves at all. We put Christ first. We put others ahead of ourselves. Do you realize that humility is the grace that once you think you have it, you've lost it?

Once you say, I am humble, you blew it. You are no longer humble. You are exhibiting pride. And I heard a famous preacher years ago who had someone was talking about humility, and he said what you need to do is you need to put on a sandwich board, and you need to walk around town with a sandwich board that talks about Jesus Christ.

And he said, well, that's just really a dumb thing to do. But yet he did it. He put it on, and he did that. And toward the end of the day, he said, well, you know, I don't think there's any other Christian that would do this.

Well, he had lost his humility at that point because he thought that he did some good during the day and that nobody else was willing to do what he was willing to do. So the Apostle Paul yields himself to Jesus Christ as a servant, and he's doing it for the glory of God and to serve and to help others, which we see is the key to Philippians chapter number 2, this word others, verses 3 and 4.

The believer's eyes being turned away from himself when we don't think of ourselves, but we think of others in all that we do, focusing on their needs.

[7 : 56] Now, the submissive mind, there are some who say, well, if you're a Christian, you just need to be, just say, yes, sir, yes, ma'am, and just be like a religious doormat. That's not at all what the Apostle Paul is saying.

Because if you look at the life of the Apostle Paul, he was willing to stand up when things were not right. He was willing to speak up when things were wrong. So it's not just, oh, just do whatever you want to do.

When it's not right, Paul spoke up. When it was wrong, Paul said, you're wrong. But when it was something that was not that important, when it was something that we might disagree, but if we are unified, we're going to be serving the same purpose, and if it's not going to affect eternity, he says we need to be submitting to one another.

Some people try to purchase their friends. Some people try to maintain church unity by just saying, whatever, I'll just go along to get along. It's not what Paul is suggesting at all.

I believe the Bible puts it perfectly when it says, ourselves, your servants, for Jesus' sake, in 2 Corinthians. If we have the single mind of Philippians 1, we'll have no problem with the submissive mind of chapter number 2.

[9 : 14] So let's look this morning as we get into chapter number 2 at Paul's two things. We'll see Paul's declaration and Paul's exhortation. Paul declares something, and then Paul says, because of that, this is how your life should be.

Philippians chapter 2, verses 1 through 4. He says, therefore, what is the therefore therefore? What he's talked about in Philippians chapter 1.

What did he say we were supposed to be? Living as citizens of heaven. Live like we belong in heaven. Our lives need to show that.

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

So let's go back to verse number 1, where in chapter 1, verse 27, Paul had written about living as citizens of heaven. Now he's calling them to show some spiritual unity, just to get it together and stop fighting with one another.

[10 : 34] What we see here in verse 1 is four if clauses. And some people think, well, maybe that can be part of our life, or maybe not part of the Christian life.

The way they're translated in the Greek, we ought to read the word as sense. Paul was taking it for granted that these were part of the Christian life.

So he's saying, if there's any consolation in Christ, if there's any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, Paul wrote about realities, not questionable things.

Paul said, there is consolation in Christ. There is comfort, the comfort of love, by knowing that we are loved by Him. So Paul here piles one phrase on top of another.

He continues on and on and on and this. So these ifs could be read as, not like there may or may not be these things, but in the Greek, they're first-class conditional statements that are assumed from the author's perspective to be true.

[11 : 44] So Paul understood these to be true. William Hendrickson says, Paul says, if, not as if he doubts whether the condition is really true, but simply to emphasize that when the condition is present, the conclusion should also be present.

Verse number three, let nothing be done through strife, or excuse me, through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also for the interest of others. So what is the first thing that we see here?

What Paul does in verse number one, Paul makes a declaration. Paul makes a declaration about what is true in the Christian life.

Now, for those of us who are, those of you who are listening by, by way of the web, you can download our Philippians journal on our website. Simply go to meetfaith.org, go to the Philippians card, click on it, and you can download the journal.

[12 : 55] We add to it every week where we have a little bit of introduction, our notes, and something to go and to get a little bit deeper during the week. And also, for those of you who haven't been using it, to use it with your family when you go through your daily devotions during the week to go a little bit further.

So we have Paul's declaration. He says, Paul wrote about realities, not about questionable things.

So he appealed on the basis of encouragement from being united with Christ. Secondly, the comfort that we receive from his love, fellowship with the spirit, and then tenderness and compassion.

So we take verse number one. As we look at verse one, he says, if there be any consolation in Christ or comfort in Christ, it's from a Greek word that when Jesus used that word, it was a word that was related when he referred to the Holy Spirit as the counselor or as the comforter.

It was taken from the word *paraclete*, the one who comes alongside and helps. It's mostly used in the form of encouragement. So what Paul is saying is, if there's any encouragement by being in Christ or from being in Christ, so it's literally, if there, therefore, if there be, therefore, any encouragement in Christ, or if you have any encouragement from being united in Christ, does knowing that you're in Christ encourage you?

[14 : 45] I hope so. It should. So he says, if there's any encouragement by knowing that you are in Christ, this was a gentle appeal from the apostle Paul, and that appeal to their common experience in Christ.

Since each believer had received this work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, he uses this based on their appeal to unity. He says, you're all part of the same body. You're all in Christ.

You all receive the same gift of life from him. So why not work together? You're all in the same boat. Why work at cross purposes? He says, we're one.

We're together. So in other words, have you experienced encouragement from being in Christ? Evidence that the, evidence that experiences, or is experienced by loving one another.

The second thing he says is, they each had comfort from his love, or from God's love, most likely.

[15 : 51] God's love in people's heart produces the spiritual unity in our lives. Because we may have a disagreement with someone else, but if we love them the way God loves them, we can still disagree, or we can disagree and still have fellowship, if it's something that is not of a doctrinal nature, of a scriptural tenet, such as the deity of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace through faith.

If we disagree on some of the minor things, I don't think that honors Christ at all. Because there are some things we may not really learn until we get to heaven.

We might learn there are probably a few things that we believe that God is going to correct, because we don't believe them fully. We don't necessarily understand, because there are so many ways that people can look at Scripture that is not, there are some things that Jesus had to describe and explain to his apostles.

And it wasn't until Jesus explained it in simpler terms that they were able to understand. So fellowship of the Spirit as well. We see in verse number one, a result of the Spirit's permanent indwelling ministry.

We see that in 1 Corinthians. This might be the fellowship that comes from the Spirit, just as encouragement comes from Christ. And it can also mean our cooperation with the Spirit.

[17 : 20] You see, when we serve one another, we're cooperating with the Holy Spirit. We're going to learn tonight, as we go through our, in our small group this evening, in Corinthians chapter 12, where the Apostle Paul talks about spiritual gifts, talking about the unity of the church.

All the gifts are different, but they have one purpose, to help one another, and to build one another up. And when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and use our different gifts, but when we use it for the right purpose, we're serving one another, and we're cooperating with the Holy Spirit, and that in turn produces unity within the body of Christ.

So in Paul's declaration, he talks about consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, if any, fellowship of the Spirit. And then Paul also talks about bowels of mercy.

You probably have that in your translation. The Greek word *splanchna*. Now, we get the word spleen in our English from that Greek word, but he's really talking about affection.

And we've talked about this in our small group a few Sunday evenings ago. Most of the time, when we feel our emotions, we feel it in our gut. You know, not necessarily our heart.

[18 : 42] You know, we talked about there's a possibility that on Valentine's Day we shouldn't be, you know, giving little red hearts. We could give, you know, little red stomachs maybe.

I don't know. But when the Bible talks about our affections, when the Bible talks about our emotions, he said the seat of our emotions is our stomach. Because when you get upset, you get an upset stomach.

When you love someone and you just see them, you get butterflies where? In your heart? No, you get butterflies in your stomach. So he's talking about a movement of the Holy Spirit.

It's in our bowels. Gives a new meaning to the movement of the Spirit. But he's talking about if there's any one of you, now remember, this is taken as a true condition.

He says, since you are showing affection towards one another, if you are showing mercy to one another, he says, it is going to be building unity.

[19 : 49] And the noun rendered mercy here signifies an outward expression and deep feelings and compassionate yearnings and actions. If we really love one another in the body of Christ, we're going to work for them.

If we really feel that love toward our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will want what's best for them. We will not want to hurt them by our words. We will not want to talk behind their back.

We will not want to do anything that would discourage them or discourage others from thinking highly of them. So he says, we need to be building unity.

And part of that takes place through the affection and the mercy and the love that we have toward one another. So it's on the basis of this four-part declaration, the Apostle Paul says, is grounded in divine certainties.

The Philippians knew God's comfort in crisis. They'd experienced consolation in Christ's love in the midst of their sufferings and their dangers.

[20 : 56] Theirs was a participation, a common sharing in the gospel. And they had participated together in being looked down by those around them.

And they had been blessed in their ministry. When God began His good work in their midst through the preaching of the gospel, they had received God's tender mercies as well.

So since they had been blessed with all of these mercies in such a significant way, let's listen to the exhortation. Paul's exhortation in the following verses, verses 2, 3, and 4.

So Paul's exhortation, verse number 2, he says, since this is true, now, make me happy. Since this is true about what you have in Christ, from the Holy Spirit, and in your love for one another, he says, fulfill my joy.

It'll make me so happy if I see you becoming more and more unified together. Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

[22 : 14] So in verse number 2, what he, based on what he declared in verse number 1, Paul's now telling his readers to show in practical ways the unity that they have in Christ.

He says, I want you to do some things to prove and to show that you love one another. The expression of that spiritual unity, he says, would make his joy complete.

He says, if you start showing that love to one another, I'll feel like I've done my job, and it will make me happy. It will fulfill my joy.

He's expecting them to be like-minded, have the same love, be in one spirit, and be in one purpose. Even though Paul's in prison, he's rejoicing in the Lord.

But he said, I'd rejoice even more if I hear the next go-around when someone comes and tells me that you're actually getting along. And you're getting along because you love one another.

[23 : 14] You're getting along because you're part of the same body and you're not working at cross-purposes with one another. Sure, there had been a little bit of difficulty in the church.

Not much, but a little. And Paul wanted them to be of the same mind. To be of the same mind is to let the mind of Christ be in you.

Let the attitude of Christ be in us. We'll look into this attitude of Christ as we go on. Verse number five says, let this mind be in you. Let this attitude be in you that was in Christ.

When he died on the cross, when Jesus Christ came to earth, and when he put on human flesh, and when he was willing to go to the cross and die, the attitude that Christ had was, I could have not, I could have stayed in heaven and retained all my glory.

His attitude was, what I'm doing here is more important than staying up in heaven and retaining my glory. It's more important for you if I, and the famous kenosis passage, the emptying of himself.

[24 : 25] Jesus Christ emptied himself of all his glory and all the abilities that he had to the point where he said, I'm willing to do this for you.

He could have taken himself off the cross. He could have performed the miracle, but he chose not to. Instead, he allowed himself to be nailed to that cross. He allowed himself to die.

God the Father on the third day raised him up again through the power of the Holy Spirit and proved that God was satisfied with that payment. So as we look into the attitude of Christ, when we go into verse 5, it'll allow differences of expressions.

It'll allow us to use our spiritual gifts in different ways. Difference in methods, difference in service, difference in minor doctrines, in the way we, because we may not be able to prove everything that we believe, and we'll stop beating each other on the head because we disagree with him.

If we have the mind of Christ, we'll agree on the major tenets of Scripture. We'll be able to work together for the cause of Christ as the body of Christ. He says, fulfill my joy.

[25 : 40] Be like-minded. Not uniformity, but unity. We're here for the sole purpose of sharing the gospel and building the kingdom.

Having the same love, one for another. Not self-love, but love for one another and being of one accord. Now we go to verse number 3. He says, let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.

Your Scripture might say that in your translation. He says, let nothing be done through selfish ambition nor conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

So in verse 3, you remember that Paul mentioned this before. He said there were some people who were preaching Christ out of what? Out of strife and envy. They were preaching Jesus because they said, well, why does Paul have all these converts?

We'll go and do this and we'll get all the glory. Paul said they were doing it out of strife and envy, but Paul said, that's okay. As long as Christ is preached, he said that is going to be fine.

[26 : 49] He said, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. That's what the term vainglory means. We don't use that term anymore, but people know exactly what we're talking about when we talk about selfish ambition or when we talk about being conceited.

I would probably venture to say that the problem in most churches are not doctrinal problems. The problem in most churches is due to strife and envy.

It's not due to doctrinal differences where, you know what, I don't believe what you believe, but it's mostly where I didn't get the recognition that I thought I deserved. I didn't get the position that I wanted.

I didn't this or I didn't that or I didn't get my way in this or I didn't get my way in that. So a lot of times church problems and most of the time church issues are over things that are not necessarily doctrine and most of the time not even spiritual.

They're not even over spiritual things at all. And there are churches that are split over differences of opinion about the way they did things rather than over spiritual things.

[28 : 05] Now if we could follow this admonition, let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, I think we would solve 90 to 100% of the problems in most churches. If there is a doctrinal issue, we use Scripture and we deal with it.

Deal with it the way Jesus said to deal with it. Deal with it the way the Apostle Paul said to deal with it. But if we don't like the way something is being done, either do something about it or get with the program if it's being done for the right reason and the right purpose.

If we're doing something through strife in the church, we'd better not do it at all. The same is true if we expect to be recognized. There are a lot of people who do things in the body of Christ, do things in church in order to be recognized.

And if they don't get recognized, they get upset, they get their feelings hurt, and they move on. Well, they didn't appreciate what I did.

Well, if they were doing it for that reason, they were doing it for the wrong reason. Now, it's nice to be noticed. It's nice to be recognized. And I think we need to recognize people. I think we need to publicly encourage and thank people for doing things.

[29 : 23] But if for some reason, and sometimes we get in trouble with that because we forget someone and that someone gets their feelings hurt. So sometimes it's, thank you everyone for doing everything that you do.

And it covers everyone. So do Christians really need to be recognized and complimented and commended for everything they do?

Well, the Apostle Paul said, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. Let's encourage one another, but let's be careful why we're doing what we do.

And he says, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself. Now, maybe this was the problem between Euodia and Syntyche.

Maybe they were, maybe they felt they were being put down by the other. Maybe they felt that they weren't listening to their, their side of the story. Who knows what it was? Paul didn't see fit to let us know what their issue was.

[30 : 26] But either way, the problem was most likely personal, personal preferences. Could have been personalities. We're not really sure what it was about.

But if this, if this verse were obeyed, I believe it would solve most problems in most churches. Let nothing be done through strife or our selfish ambition or conceit, but rather lowliness of mind.

Humility is steaming others. Now, is that easy to do? No. To always think of others better than we think of ourselves.

That's not to think of yourself meanly, meaning, I'm nothing, I'm worthless. That's not, that's not at all what the Apostle Paul is talking about. But he's saying in relation to another person, I'm going to submit myself to them and I'm going to do what I do for their best and for their good and for the honor and to the glory of Jesus Christ.

And then in verse number four, he says, let each of you look out not only for his own interest. So is Paul saying not to think of ourselves at all? He says, you've got to take care of your family.

[31 : 50] You've got to take care of your own interest. But he says, don't do that only. Not only for his own interest, but also for the interest of, what's that word?

Others. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Others. Why do we do what we do for others? An important word.

Others is the key to this passage. It's the Christian faith really that made that word others important. In most other cultures, what is the virtue that is seen above all things?

I. What I can do, what I can accomplish, especially in America, what I can accomplish. Look at me. Look at what I've done. Look at how successful I am.

And it's amazing. We see that especially in social media today. People curate their pictures. Most people do.

[32 : 55] They show themselves happy. And they show themselves in the best light possible. I really don't get the selfie thing.

We took a selfie last night at the rodeo. But it was to send to Catherine's mom. Not to post on social media. Not that it's wrong.

If you did, I have no problem absolutely at all with that. But the thing that most people do is they'll take a selfie. Oh, I don't like the way that looks.

They'll take another one. Oh, the lighting wasn't just right. And they'll take another one. And then they take a step back and fall off the Grand Canyon or something.

Why? Because we want to look good for others so that others will think of us more highly. Right? So at least be careful.

[34 : 00] Be mindful of what we do and why we do it. very seldom will someone post a selfie of themselves first thing in the morning before they get out of bed.

Right? Why not? It ain't pretty. And so we always want to put our best foot forward and we always want to look better.

And sometimes we do that almost to the exclusion of not letting people know when we're hurting. and not letting people know that we're real people.

And sometimes we have problems. Sometimes we have little disagreements at home and sometimes it gets a little heated. But we don't want people to know that because we want to show people to others that we're perfect Christians.

And we never misbehave. The problem with that is then we send a false picture of what Christianity is like.

[35 : 03] And to those who might be feeling I have a problem and I'm not happy with the way things are. I would like to turn to Jesus but I can't be perfect like them.

But when they hear oh you struggle too? Yes. But I turn to Christ and I pray and I trust him and he helps me get through these difficult times.

Oh okay well that makes sense. That makes more sense. You're a human and so am I. And Paul is saying look out for others.

Don't look out only for your own interest but look out for the interest of others. Christ came to this earth for others. We do what we do for others.

And Paul explained how humility can be expressed in verse number four. Instead of concentrating on ourselves each believer each follower of Jesus Christ should be concerned more about the interest of others in the household of faith.

[36 : 06] We also see that in Romans chapter 12 and verse number 10. Now looking out for our own interest comes naturally doesn't it? No of course not.

That's why we need the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. We don't need any instruction on how to be self-centered and selfish. selfish. We don't need to be taught in that virtue because it's not.

And we do it naturally. We do what comes naturally. We are to keep an eye out to discover ways we can serve one another.

Look for ways we can help someone else in the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 6-2, carry one another's burdens. Carry each other's burdens.

And he said in this way you fulfill the law of Christ. When we do things to help and make another burdens easier a little bit to carry, he says, so you will fulfill the law of Christ.

[37 : 07] When we began our study in this letter to the Philippians, we said that what was the theme? Joy. Joy is the common thread throughout Philippians.

It starts off in the first chapter. We see joy all the way through. Joy in spite of circumstances, chapter 1, and in chapter 2, joy in spite of the other people in our lives.

And Paul says, you can fulfill my joy by getting unified, serving together, loving one another, and having the right attitude.

Now, when we began our study, we saw, like we say, joy. And there are churches that use this word joy as an acrostic. What do some of you think of? Jesus, others, and you.

But what do we do commonly? We put it backwards. We have yourself first. So it's not instead of Jesus, others, yourself, very often we try to have Paul's joy when we reverse the formula and it can't be done.

[38 : 14] We can't spell joy by putting yourself first, putting y first. So, what's next? As we wind this down, let's get it together.

Be unified. Let's realize that this thing we call the church, the body of Christ, is not about us. It's about Jesus Christ and it's about what his plan is on earth.

It's about the Savior. It's about the faith of the gospel. We saw that last week. The gospel also is another prevalent theme in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Joy throughout. The word gospel is used throughout this letter to the Philippians as well. It brings us back to the Great Commission, our purpose as the church, making disciples, teaching them, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Everything that we do, our one purpose as a church, everything we do in our teaching, in our training, in showing mercy, exhortation, fellowship, is to equip one another to share the gospel with a lost and a dying world and to make disciples.

[39 : 31] It's really all about unity. And we achieve unity through humility. Unity through humility.

Let's pray. Father, this morning we've gathered together in your name to learn about you. Help us to be able to think of others first. Help us to be able to realize that unity is not the same as uniformity.

We don't all have to be the same. We don't all have to look the same. We don't even all have to believe the same. But we all need to believe the same thing about you. We all need to be a part of your body in order to fellowship together and serve together.

So I pray, Lord God, that you would, that we would be humbling ourselves before you have to humble us.

Lord, help us to be able to work together with one purpose and one goal. It's to build your kingdom here on this earth as you, as we cooperate with your Holy Spirit.

[40 : 45] Father, we pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.