

Unity in the Church (1)

The Glorious Foundation for Unity

Philippians 2:1

****READ THE TEXT****

INTRO

Introductory Illustration

- **Unity is good! It is pleasant! It is good when our hearts are strung together & interweaved in the bond of selfless love!**
- A church may be theologically healthy but relationally disunified. *May God guard us from such a tragedy!*
 - How do we attain unity? *Thru selflessness!* Unity through selflessness!
- The NT presents many clear texts (and longer discourses on unity)!
 - Such as: Eph 4:1-6; Col 3:12-16; John 17; James 4:1-10; Ps 133
- **Rom 15:1-13 — self denial FOR OTHERS!**
 - The will of God (1-3)
 - The Word of God (4-6)
 - The ways of Christ (7-12)
 - The will to obey (13)
- O let us hear & heed these important realities!
- **The TRUE obstacle to unity is NOT having differing opinions but SELF-CENTEREDNESS.**
 - all conflict arises at some point between persons because of **SELFISHNESS** at some point in the conflict.
 - 1 Cor 10.24—let no one seek his own good, but that of others
 - 1 Cor 13.5—true love does NOT seek its own
 - Rom 12.10—give preference to one another in honor
- When we talk about Unity, Joy, Humility & Togetherness = there must be some things *already present*.
- **So we come to Philippians 2 - philippians 2 is the HIGH POINT of the epistle.**
 - it is the **Christological** peak of the epistle

- it is the **discourse/literary** peak of the discourse.
- it is the **highest peak** in the whole mountain range of the Philippians (Phil 2.1-4 is the *Mt Everest!*)
- The Word "IF" could just as well be "SINCE".
 - It's *NOT* questioning whether you have these; it's more stating that because you DO have them & currently enjoy *being in this state*.
 - We could render it: "SINCE these things are most assuredly true, then..."
 - verse 1 lays the GROUNDWORK for all of vv.2-4.
- **Mac says:** Phil 2.1-4 is "the most concise and practical teaching about **unity** in the New Testament."
 - Eph 4.3 calls believers to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"

Background to Phil 2.1ff

- So when we look at the full discourse of Philippians, we can find a paragraph that is the GLUE holding all of the pieces together.
 - PHIL 2.1-4 is the discourse peak of the entire letter.
- 2.1 - intensive concentration of FOUR SUCCESSIVE "**if** clauses" [**since these are true of you*] and then a command - FULFILL my joy (2a)
 - All the phrases in vv.2-4 repeat the call to unity!
 - *THEN>>> after this "peak" -- Paul offers some exemplars of this selfless attitude that is the *key* to unity (2:5-30)
 1. Jesus (2:5-11)
 2. Timothy (2:19-24)
 3. Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
 4. Possibly Paul himself (2:17-18)
- Thru this paragraph in 2.1-4 - Paul conveys the theme that is *stamped* on almost every paragraph in the book -- **UNITY THROUGH SELFLESSNESS!**
 - And this **happily catapults us to the gospel!** Thru the selfless love & sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have UNITY/union/peace with God!
 - We are to "put on love which is the perfect bond of unity" > we can do this b/c GOD loved us & gave his son for our sins & raised him up for our justification! O rejoice!

I wanna encourage you in rehearsing for you 4 existing realities that you RIGHT NOW ENJOY...

One commentator said: "*In 2.1 Paul urges his dear friends on the basis of objective *realities that have already occurred in their own experience*"

THESIS — 4 existing & glorious realities that make up the FOUNDATION for unity!

1. You enjoy Encouragement in Union with Christ
2. You enjoy Consolations from the Love of Christ
3. You enjoy Fellowship with the Holy Spirit
4. You enjoy Affection & Compassion from God

And because you have all these things (v.1)... You can fulfill all the following (vv.2-5)

- be of the same mind, w/ same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose (2)
- not selfish, or conceited, but humble and selfless (3)
- not looking out for self but for those of others (4)
- and having the attitude of Christ Jesus (5)
 - >> YOU *CAN* do this

I. YOU ENJOY ENCOURAGEMENT IN UNION WITH CHRIST (1)(comfort in Christ)

A. Constantine Campbell wrote a dissertation on the believer's union with Christ in the Greek preposition/language & he defines the UNION with Christ in 4 terms: **union, participation, identification, incorporation.**

1.UNION - faith union with Christ, mutual indwelling, trinitarian love & blessing and wedding/covenant notions

2. PARTICIPATION - the partaking in the events of Christ's narrative -- work, suffering, death, resurrection, life

3. IDENTIFICATION - our location in the realm of Christ and their allegiance to His lordship (where He is, we are; and we submit to him and identify with Him)

4. INCORPORATION - gathers the corporate dimensions of membership in His body

a) Some Scriptures: Romans 6:3, 4, 8; 8:17; 1 Cor 6:15-16; 1 Cor 8:6; 10:16-17

b) 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:27-28; Col 2:12-13; 2:20; 3:1; 3:3-4

John Murray: Union with Christ does NOT mean we are incorporated INTO the Godhead. That is faulty thinking. But all that Christ IS *is ours*.

Quite simply: "We may say that the Christian lives IN CHRIST, draws all vital power from him. Indeed: "To be IN CHRIST means to belong to, to serve, to be ruled by Christ" (Barclay) (in Campbell, 387)

II. YOU ENJOY CONSOLATIONS FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST! (1)

(consolation from His love)

A. **What kind of "consolations" do we have?** In Christ's love (Eph 3.14ff).

1. Consolation - a peace/solace comes by His love

B. His love comforts you in the following ways:

1. Sovereign predestination is undeserved (Eph 1)

2. supernatural incarnation for your redemption (Gal 4)

3. Divine wrath has been appeased (Heb 2.17)

4. required righteousness is yours by imputation (Rom 1.17)

5. ceaseless mediation by your Intercessory Priest (Heb 7.25)

6. Numerless promises to gladden, strengthen, and uplift your heart (Rom 8.35ff)

7. unending depths of Christological glory (Isa 9.6)

III. YOU ENJOY FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

(communion/fellowship w the Spirit)

A. 1 Cor 12.13 - we were all baptized into one body -- all made to drink of one Spirit.

We are sharers with the Spirit, partakers with the Spirit. He indwells in us and we walk in Him! We have a commonality with and a bond and an intimate likemindedness and togetherness with GOD THE SPIRIT!

B. Luke 10:21 - Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit & it produced worship!

C. Like the doxology in 2 Cor 13.14 - the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all
What an association, partnership, common sharing we have with GOD!

1. We enjoy sweet communion WITH the Spirit of God

2. We bathe in the 'sweet, overflowing love of the Spirit' (Rom 15.30)

IV. YOU ENJOY AFFECTION AND COMPASSION FROM GOD (1)

(compassion & mercy) = they are so close it's hard to distinguish them. It could as well be: we enjoy *Compassionate Mercies*.

A. Affection—σπλάγχνα— could be translated compassion, tenderness, inward heart-affections, emotional love.

1. Ps 51.1 - In God's compassion he blots out our transgressions

Ps 103 - like a Father, the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him

2. Prov 28.13 - he who confesses & forsakes sin will find **compassion**

3. Matt 9.36 - Jesus had **compassion** for those who were distressed, dispirited, sheep w/o a shepherd.

B. compassions of God — οίκτιρμοί— also: 'mercies'

1. Rom 12.1 - by the **mercies** of God, present your bodies

2. 2 Cor 1.3 - our God is the Father of **mercies** & the God of all comfort.

3. James 5.11 - the Lord is full of compassion & mercy!

C. Note both words are **plural**! The ongoing, everflowing, ocean-like waves of God's *wondrous affections and compassions for you!*

An additional Thought about v.1-

What a motivator this would be to be reassured of your:

- 1. encouragement from your union with Christ**
- 2. consolations from the love of Christ**
- 3. communion with the Spirit**
- 4. affection and compassion from God**

> and then: let's pursue unity, peace, selflessness together!

Theme = UNITY THROUGH SELFLESSNESS.

v.1 - shows the WORKING of GOD in modeling this for us.

- ❖ you have union with Christ *because of the selfless working of Christ!*
- ❖ you enjoy the consolations of the love *because of his sheer selflessness & sacrificial love*
- ❖ you enjoy fellowship w/ the Spirit *because of the Lord's initiating & saving mercies*
- ❖ you have affection & compassion not *b/c you deserved it, but b/c of God's bounty!*
>Eph 5.1 - be imitators! What a love & gospel!

all that he's gonna command & ask in vv.2-4, it's all predicated on *WHAT THEY ENJOY (in v.1) BECAUSE GOD HIMSELF **FIRST MODELED** THIS IN LOVING US IN A SELFLESS/SACRIFICIAL/SELF-GIVING WAY.

This means we must guard against & slay these “Unity-Killers” — (1) retaliation, (2) inaction/laziness, (3) unwise & hasty confrontation, (4) self-will; having it your way.

It is the **'fearless unity of faith'** > at all costs, we maintain it!

Ps 133.1 - Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!