

Unity in the Church (2)

The INGREDIENTS to Preserve Unity in Your Church

Philippians 2:2

****READ THE TEXT****

INTRO-

Introductory Illustration

- A number of years ago, a man gave a personal testimony of his attitude toward the church - as a young man --- and it sadly reflects the attitude of many today:
 - "When I graduated from my church's high school youth group, I started visiting around. I loved God and had big dreams for how I wanted to serve Him, but I didn't see any reason to get too involved in just one church.
 - By then, I thought I knew all there was to know about church, and I wasn't impressed. Most churches struck me as OUT OF DATE and OUT OF TOUCH. There had to be better, more efficient ways to accomplish great things for God.
 - So it becomes -- that people get busy, they're tired, weary from a long week, and find other and more enticing things to do on Sundays than meet with God and His people..."
 - ***this common -- and tragic & selfish & deceived -- way of thinking is *everywhere!**

➔ **But I believe The key to ****ALL**** Godly conduct is ***right thinking*** (Rom 12.2)**

- **Greek word: φρονέω**- way of thinking; a mindset; a disposition.
 - ♣ can describe not only a "thinking manner" but also a person's whole attitude and disposition of the mind.
 - ♣ One's thinking and mindset cannot be seen in isolation from the overall direction of his life.
 - ♣ The verb φρονέω describes NOT ONLY the intellect but also a movement of the will. (it's the *thinking patterns that affect a person's disposition & direction of life/conduct).
- v.2 - Paul says that his joy is made full when the church has "The SAME MIND" = the same mind in the body is the MIND OF CHRIST.
- God created & designed us to be **THINKING** people.
- Our minds are not empty, a vacuum, or inactive.

- Rom 12.2 - we are to constantly be transformed by the renewing of our minds
 - We are EITHER thinking *constructive thoughts or *destructive thoughts.
- **Consider this** - We are either reflecting on the day (and on others, circumstances, etc.) with **SELFISH** thoughts (like how people have mistreated us) **OR** we think **UNSELFISH** thoughts (how we could / or did serve people and meet their needs & excel more).
- ➔ ****WE MUST ALSO BEAR IN MIND THAT OUR SINFUL FLESH AND SINFUL NATURE makes us PRONE to think the **BEST of ourselves and the WORST of others** and we must SEEK daily & deliberately & dependently upon God's grace to REVERSE that pattern thru prayer and self discipline.**
 - ➔ **Let us remember:** *The Bible presents us with this GLORIOUSLY amazing and RELATIONALLY wonderful TRUTH = There is ***NO PROBLEM that God cannot solve***.*
 - ➔ NO situation is hopeless or beyond repair --- WOUNDS can be healed, FRIENDSHIPS can be restored, RELATIONSHIPS can be reconciled and cemented --- when 2 people HANDLE ALL ISSUES, PROBLEMS, CONFLICTS, AND DISAGREEMENTS GOD'S WAY (in Scripture, e.g., here in Phil 2.2).
- **So we've gotta put off (slay, kill, cut the head off these sins)**
 - ➔ **1. retaliation** --- when we're hurt, our immediate tendency is to strike back, take revenge, make them pay, retaliate. *Retaliation is ALWAYS sin against the other person (but more than that, against God).
 - ➔ **2. inaction** --- sometimes the sin is not so much by fighting back but by just *doing nothing*. When there's sin and conflict and hostility and a breach in a relationship, it must be confronted and discussed TRUTHFULLY IN LOVE so that reconciliation and forgiveness can take place.
 - ➔ **3. unwise confrontation** --- there may be a disagreement that is brought up or attacked in the *wrong way* and at the *wrong time* and with the *wrong attitude*. We strive to respond to others in a godly & wise & biblical 'Proverbs-like' way.
 - ➔ **4. self will** --- it's the attitude of "if i don't get it my way, and the way and the time and the manner that *I* want it >> I'm gonna get mad." And often, this self-will, self-driven, self-centered, self-worshiping lust can drive & dominate a person and ruin harmony in relationships (in the home, in the workplace, and in the church). Conflict arises from **selfishness**.
- In the place of these sins, we are told in the NT to...
 - ➔ **Rom 12.16 - we are to be of the same mind**
 - ➔ **Rom 15.5 - we are to be of the same mind**
 - ➔ **1 Cor 1.10 - we are to all agree, no divisions, but be made complete in the same mind (to think the same way).**
 - ➔ **Phil 1.27 - with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.**

THESIS — The goal is to be “of the same mind”

Fulfill my joy by being of the same mind. HOW??

- ✓ how do we maintain the 'same mind' mentality in Christ's church??
- ✓ how do we cultivate UNITY/MAINTAIN and preserve unity?

3 necessary actions / ingredients >>

1. Reciprocal Love (maintaining the same love)
2. Inner Harmony (united in spirit)
3. Gospel-Orientation (intent on one purpose)

I. RECIPROCAL LOVE! (2)

By maintaining the same love!

τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες

A. Note the following (*all building on Phil 2.1 - what we have!*)

1. A **Received** Love - *in Christ* (v.1)
2. A **Satisfying** Love - happy in Him! (v.1)
3. A **Sacrificial** Love - this same love for one another
4. A **Selfless** Love - others better (v.3-4)
5. A **Communal** Love - must occur in the *church body*

B. Col 3:14 - put on love - it ought to *bleed thru us*.

C. 1 Thess 1.3 - labor of love - like a strainer where *love just strains out of ALL of us to all the brethren*.

a) Take the Love that Christ has SHOWN & lavishly pour it out on others -- whether you think they deserve it or not; whether you feel like it or not.

b) True Love - 1 Cor 13:4ff...

- (1) NEVER holds a grudge
- (2) ALWAYS pursues reconciliation
- (3) LAVISHES forgiveness immediately & unconditionally
- (4) NEVER keeps a record of wrongs
- (5) ALWAYS believes the best (never suspicious/assuming the worst until proven otherwise)

B.1 John 3.16

So there must be *reciprocal love*

II. INNER HARMONY! (2)

By being united in spirit

σὺμψυχοι — 'together souled'

A. United in Spirit

1. no divisions, no strife, no conflict, no anger, no resentment

2. no self interest --- *knit in the deepest part of our being*.

a) Like a house: *same strong, mighty foundation - but walls may be painted differently, rooms may be different & serve different purposes = but if BUILT on the same foundation: the differences all work together in ONE house! (it's complete!)*

B. Total Harmony, Love, Unity, Togetherness, Fellowship (in the deepest level)

1. FULL ACCORD, FULL HARMONY, SPIRIT-worked-UNITY = far beyond opinions, these are SPirit-worked beliefs in TRUTH.

C. Means: to live in SELFLESS harmony with fellow believers. By definition, it excludes personal ambition, selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, and the countless other evils that are the fruit of *self-love*.

- D. ___ We are to be *together-souled*** - founded on God's Word, tolerant of other believers (differences), exceedingly patient with one another, always believing the best of others (not being suspicious, or assuming the worst), and seeking to love them *to Christ*.
- 1. O may God give us *inner harmony & a Joint-Souled culture at SLCCC.**

III. GOSPEL-ORIENTATION! (2)

By being intent on one purpose

τὸ εἶν φρονουῖντες - lit. "**thinking the One Thing**"

A. ___ *thinking* // intellect & will // direction of life

B. Thinking the Same Way - what does God want

1. it speaks of a LIFE directed towards a **single (one) goal**.

a) It's like a marathon of *RUNNERS* -- may have different shoes, different colors, different clothes, different feelings = BUT ALL RUNNING TO THE SAME GOAL/FINISH LINE. >> That One Goal is the focus here!

2. The **ONE THING** (given the context of Phil 1.27ff) focuses on the need for members to be ****gospel oriented**** as they relate to and care for one another.

❖ May Our MINDSET, our Disposition & our Direction of life all be GOSPEL-ORIENTED.

C. The Gospel saturates us -

1. Col 3.1ff - set our minds on things above >> together.

D. ___ It's living a LIFE that reflects a NT commitment to Christ's body -- the Church. ***If we are to be gospel-oriented, then everyone***

1. attends regularly

2. seeks peace (Rom 14.19 & James 3.18)

3. edifies others

4. warns and admonishes others

5. pursues reconciliation

6. bears with others

7. prepares for the ordinances (baptism/communion)

8. supports the work of the ministry in faithfulness in utilizing spiritual gifts (Rom 12.6-8)

E. It's impossible to do these things (& thus be *gospel-oriented*) if one is disassociated with or isolated from the church body. But in so far as people grow together, hear the Word together, and all pursue the same end/goal in all things >> ***unity is maintained & preserved.***

O what glorious wisdom from Christ for believers. *Ingredients?*

1. Reciprocal Love (maintaining the same love)
2. Inner Harmony (united in spirit)
3. Gospel-Orientation (intent on one purpose)

CONCL-

Concluding Illustration

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer gives a final & sobering word for us all...

➡ "IT IS by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and His sacrament. Not all Christians receive this

blessing. The imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely, the proclaimers of the Gospel in the heathen lands stand alone. They know that visible fellowship is a blessing.

➡ They remember, as the Psalmist did, how they went 'with the multitude to the house of GOD , with the voice of joy & thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival" (Ps 42) ...

➡ Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living in common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: "IT IS GRACE, nothing but GRACE, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren".

• Let's remember the privilege of the gathered church so that we don't pick at & tear apart those within the gathered church.

• **But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal 5.15).**

By God's grace, let's preserve UNITY together!