

Unity in the Church (4)

God’s Clear Wisdom to His People on How to Maintain Unity

Philippians 2:4

****READ THE TEXT****

INTRO-

Introductory Illustration

• **I enjoy sports!**

- what would happen if each person on a team came to the venue and *each* *individually* said this...
- "I'm gonna look out for my own interests (my own record, stats, fame, glory, goals, my trophy)
- "I'm NOT gonna look out for the interests of my team"
 - one thing's for sure: they're not gonna win many games.
 - and another thing's a given: they're gonna have all kinds of disunity & frustration internally within the team.

*THE CHURCH OF OUR GLORIOUS CHRIST IS A **TEAM** --> we're a family, a body, a building, a BRIDE, -- a UNITY.

• **Consider how Paul puts this in Colossians 3**

- ❖ **Put off** - vv.5, 8-10
- ❖ **Put on** - vv.12-14, & v.14-17 (*thankfulness*)
- Even Jesus prays for this *unity* among His people (John 17.22-26) > **how?** All those who are loved by God, with Christ in them, those given by the Father to the Son, who behold Christ’s glory who know Christ’s great Name & work!
 - Let it be said that the Spirit of GOD creates this unity when he saves people & puts them into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12.13). Spirit creates unity; We preserve it.

HOW to preserve & enjoy UNITY? (Phil 2.1-4 overview)...

v.2 – **main point** – HOW TO HAVE SUPREME JOY BY BEING OF THE SAME MIND?

by...

1. ensuring that you're IN CHRIST (v.1)
2. maintaining the same love

3. being united in spirit
4. being intent on one purpose (v.2)
5. doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit
6. considering others as more important than yourselves with humility of mind (v.3)
7. not merely looking out for your own interests but also the interests of others (v.4)

THESIS — From Phil 2.4, we see *God's Plan for Unity* — it's really one main divine exhortation, *but stating it in 2 ways* [negatively & positively].

1. Do NOT merely look out for your own personal interests (4a)
2. DO carefully look out for the interests of others (4b)

I. DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS! (4a)

This would be the heart & mindset of PRIDE.

In relationships, some of these heart thinking patterns *CAN* lead to division/conflict if we DO look out for *own personal interests* primarily:

- ✓ I WANT (long for, crave, *need*) THIS...
- ✓ I'm frustrated because I feel like I deserve
- ✓ I'm bitter and resentful because they treated me like...
- ✓ I didn't get what I think I should have received...
- ✓ I finally just sat down, got comfortable; now you call & ask me to...
- ✓ I just really wanna spend my free time doing...

This is easy for us. We just live naturally & we look out *FIRST* for our own personal interests. It's SELF, then OTHERS, then GOD. This is the human, sinful, deprived *default* anthropological makeup.

O let us observe the seriousness of this corruption in our hearts!

The word **look out** [σ κ ο π ο ὦ ν τ ε ς] - The meaning is highly focused and acutely specific --- “pay careful attention to, look out for, be sure to notice...” (BDAG).; it's like saying: ‘don't fix your attention on self with deep interest only on self.’ >> ***Don't be highly focused on “self”***

A. Let our minds scan Scripture together as we see Biblical examples of those who LOOKED OUT FOR THEIR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS.

1. King Saul -- offered sacrifice & disobeyed God (1 Sam 13)
2. Achan --- coveted & took the goods from Ai (Josh 7)
3. Korah & the rebellion -- rose up against Moses, Aaron (and God!) (Num 16)
4. King Ahab - dressed up/disguised himself for battle & was defeated (2 Chron 18.28-34)
5. The Pharisees - Mat 23.1-12
6. Corinthians church - 1 Cor 3.1-4 ; cf. 1:10-17
7. The Rich young ruler -- loved himself and his goods first (Matt 19.16-26)
8. the disciples who left Christ and fled in the Garden (Matt 26.55-56)
9. Ahab & his wife Jezebel who murder Naboth for his vineyard (1 Kings 21)
10. Diotrophes - loves to be first, wants to be first (3 John 9-10)
11. False teachers - follow their own lusts and flatter to gain an advantage (Jude 16)
12. King David - adultery with Bathsheba, covering it up, lying, deceit (2 Sam 11)

B. God isn't saying: “don't care for yourself & your body” = *we will*. But God is saying: *we must not intently focus on “SELF” and only & primarily our “OWN personal interests”*

C. In the book of Revelation we find that THE PREDOMINANT mark of wickedness is PRIDE -- Rev 18.7ff

1. Glorifies self, Lives sensuously, She says in her heart: "I sit as a queen", but it is so bad that God will burn this wickedness up with fire for the Lord God who judges her is strong"! **Wow! Let's not look out for our own interests.**

B.Note v.4 [ἐκαστος] *Each One* - each believer is to take this TO HEART!

1. Nebuchadnezzar looked out for his own interests and God humbled him like an animal for a season; Belshazzar looked out for his own interests & his kingdom was demolished in one night; Alexander the Coppersmith promoted his own interests as he rejected & opposed the true gospel & the LORD would repay him severely. **Let us be on guard against the beginning heart sins of self-love & pride in looking out *primarily & merely* for our own personal interests.**

So what is God's solution?

II. DO CAREFULLY LOOK OUT FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS! (4b)

>> **Just have a baby! and you're launched into this sphere (whether you're ready or not!)**

- Romans 12:10 - give preference to one another in honor
- Rom 13:10 - LOVE does NO wrong to a neighbor; therefore, LOVE is the fulfillment of the Law.
- Rom 12:16 - Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do NOT be wise in your own estimation.
- 1 Cor 10:24 - let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.
- 1 Cor 13:5 - true love does NOT seek its own (=not self-seeking).
- ****Lev 19:18** - "You shall love your neighbor as yourself... I AM THE LORD"

A. Ultimate Example is CHRIST in the Garden of Gethsemane!

1. took disciples with him > pleaded w/ them to watch & pray
2. anguished of soul & prayerful for 3 hours
3. begged the Father to remove the cup of everlasting wrath
4. But- he went on, suffered, drank the cup, to the dregs!!!! He took all of God's anger for us!

B.The very heart of the gospel is is CHRIST's **crosswork on our behalf**, for our interest, for our benefit. **Luke 19:10 [seek & save the lost]!**

C.*A wonderful psalm that deals with the Servant of the LORD doing "God's Will" = **Psalm 40**—

1. v.4 - the man who makes God his trust
2. v.7 - I have come
3. v.8 - I delight to do God's will

a) **The result???** Hebrews 10:5-10 - v.10 - Christ offered his body once for all!!!

You think: that's great: but what about me?

D. *HOW DO I DO THIS???

 Gal 5:13 - thru love we are to serve one another

1. v.14 - for the whole law is fulfilled in this one word = you shall love your neighbor as yourself.
2. v.15 - but if you bite/devour one another ... beware that you're not consumed by one another
3. v.16 - WALK IN THE SPIRIT, and you'll not carry out the desire of the flesh.

E.In Relationships -- how to preserve UNITY? (in the church, in the home, w/ other believers)

1. Plead for divine grace! (**pray!**) - God help us!
2. Study the life-changing Word! (**meditate!**) - Word guide us

3. Rehearse the greatest commandments! (**focus!**) *Remind us!*

a) love God!

b) love others!

E. So how do we do this? In the Church, how to be others' centered. Some ideas:

✓ _____ arrive early & stay late to help setup, cleanup, meet & greet.

✓ _____ intentionally endeavor to be as prepared as you can be & as punctual as you can be to meet w/ God's people in worship

✓ _____ seek to be intentionally observant as to how you can initiate acts of service to other members in the flock

✓ _____ consider doing something generous, sacrificial as a family for another cfbc family periodically

✓ _____ refuse AT ALL TIMES and at ALL COSTS to give in to gossip, slander, backbiting & speaking badly of others (or listening to it)

✓ _____ if a decision is made, rather than permitting the mindset of "I don't like/prefer...", rather, try to think: "this benefits the church corporately by..."

✓ _____ remember the fellow members are your family: we are teammates, not opponents; we are family, not enemies.

✓ _____ personally prioritize holiness and the more the flock grows in holiness, the closer we get to each other as we grow closer to God.

✓ _____ pray regularly thru the membership list & also for your leaders.

G. Indeed, a biblical counseling resource gave these helps:

1. **remember:** The heart of pride is focused on "self." Proud people believe they deserve better than what they've received. They become sorrowful, resentful, and even jealous of other people and their successes.

2. Pride breeds self pity, which is a major component in depression. Typically, people who struggle with pride will live life based on how they feel and expect everyone else to accommodate them and adapt to their moods.

3. those who battle with PRIDE often have little JOY in their lives. because living for self NEVER satisfies.

4. **SO >> Here are some suggestions to grow in serving others:**

a) *Do one thing a day for someone you ordinarily would avoid.* Seriously.

b) *Go out of your way to help another person.* Seriously - intentionally - thoughtfully -- do it!

c) *Give up something you want to do for the sake of another's pleasure.* Really!

d) *Consider the opinion of a person you think is "beneath you" and follow his or her suggestion.* Happily & humbly!

James 3:14-16 – (esp v.16) jealousy and selfish ambition

➔ **SOURCE** = in the heart

➔ **SINS** = arrogant and lie against the truth

➔ **STRIFE** = where jealousy and selfish ambition exist = there is disorder and every evil thing

****HOW DO WE FIGHT AGAINST THIS?**

1. remember our **POSITION IN CHRIST (2:1)**

2. remember the HUMILITY OF CHRIST (2:5-11)

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CONCL-

Concluding Illustration

- ***Cultivating & preserving unity will be modeled for us & shown here.*** It all starts with v.5
 - Christ!
 - (1) Example of Christ (Phil 2.5ff)
 - (2) Example of Paul (Phil 1:22-25)
 - (3) Example of Timothy (Phil 2.20-22)
 - (4) Example of Epaphroditus (Phil 2.30)
 - **Indeed** = note also Paul's example in 2 Timothy 2:10 - I endure all things for the sake of the elect.
- Look to Christ as our Chief and Perfect Example!