

Session 5: Unifying the Brotherhood,

Philippians 2:1-4, “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

The danger for every healthy church is “disunity.”

Three (3) great causes of disunity (v. 3-4)

1. Selfish Ambition...people in the church who work not to advance the work but to advance themselves. Great pastors and princes of the early church beginnings were so very careful not to strive to please family, friends, or self...but to work in harmony with others to share the plan of salvation. They kept the “main thing the main thing.”

- ✓ Far from being filled with ambition, the great men of the Christian faith (servants in lieu of leadership) were filled with a sense of their own inadequacy for high office.
- ✓ Every young preacher boy should be alert and aware that they are to stay away from the “3 Gs” as they are trying to mature in the ministry for the Lord:

Gold, Girls, Glory!

1st G—Gold. The love of money is truly the root of all evil. Be aware, servants of the Lord, make decisions for good, not gold.

2nd G—Girls. Many preachers have fallen into sin by getting involved with the opposite sex; many pretty young girls and/or married women love to break-up wholesome Christian marriages by worshipping sex in lieu of Jehovah God. Be faithful to your spouse and remember the Joseph principle... “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin

against God?" Genesis 39:9b (NIV). For those preachers who have yet to be married, stay pure and love the Word more than the world's attractions.

3rd G—Glory. All accolades, praise, and worship should be for the glory of God. A preacher's ambitions to be seen, heard, and prosper for their own glory will be brought down low. "Haughtiness" the Lord hates.

*Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, a **haughty** spirit before a fall."*

MAKE SURE CHRIST IS IN THE CENTER OF YOUR PLANS!

2. Desire for Personal Prestige...Can be an even greater temptation than wealth.

- ✓ *To be admired and respected, to have a platform seat, to have one's opinion sought, to be known by name and appearance...or to be flattered, are for many people most desirable things.*
- ✓ *The Christian should desire to focus men's eyes not on himself but on God.*

3. Concentration on Self...if a man or woman is concerned first and foremost with his or her own interests, they are bound to collide with others.

UNITY AND WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE GLORY OF THE GOD SHOULD BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK WITH THE LORD!

THE CURE FOR DISUNITY FOUND IN 2:1-4

PAUL'S FIVE (5) CONSIDERATIONS WHICH OUGHT TO PREVENT DISHARMONY:

1. The Fact that we are all in Christ should keep us in unity.

- ✓ *No man can walk in disunity with his fellow-men and in unity with Christ.*

2. The Power of Christian Love should keep us in unity.

- ✓ *Christian love is that unconquered good-will which never knows bitterness and never seeks anything but the good of others.*

3. The Fact that they share in the Holy Spirit should keep Christians from disunity.

- ✓ *The Holy Spirit binds man to God and man to man.*

4. The Existence of Human Compassion should keep men from disunity.

- ✓ *Disunity breaks the very structure of life. Marriages, families, churches need to have compassion flowing from their heart...a heart that has been changed.*

5. There Can Be No Happiness for Paul (Nor should it be for us) if there is disunity in the Church which was dear to him and to us...if we know Christ as the one who hates disunity amongst the brotherhood.

CONCLUSION OF PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4: DISUNITY WITHIN THE BRIDE OF CHRIST BREAKS THE HEART OF GOD THE FATHER!

Paul's final word in this session of Scripture is especially relevant: "Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (2:4).

A prominent and most relevant word is the verb "look" (*skopeo*), which means "to pay careful attention to, look out for, notice." Just as you might take out a magnifying glass and observe in detail (look) at the old pictures you or someone else took of your family many years ago, you know what it is like to look closely at the details of the loved ones you cared for and still think about, even though many are already with the Father.

God wants you to study and observe believers to an even greater extent. I think maybe He then wants you to prioritize their interests

before you do your own. This will fulfill the Scripture, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Many Christians, however, assume that we are to pursue the interests of others with all that is within us... and yet, end up neglecting those who are most important to us. Although loving others and helping them in time of need is an admirable Christ-like quality to have, it is important to understand that this can often lead to the neglect of one’s marriage, family, and personal walk with Christ. Sad to say, this is done in the name of ministry!

It is far better to care for your own physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs so that you can care for others for many years. However, Paul is telling us to not be selfish and unbecoming to fellow travelers in this world by always taking care of self before opening ourselves up to sharing our gifts and time with others.

Do you look out for the interests of others? When you talk to others, do you talk about yourself or them? God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. He expects you to listen much more than you talk.

The goal should be to ask questions such as:

- **How are you doing spiritually?**
- **How is your marriage and family?**
- **Is work going well?**
- **What has God been teaching you?**
- **How can I be praying for you?**
- **Do you pray more for others than you do yourself?**
- **Do you find satisfaction in seeing your spiritual children surpass you in the work they are called to do?**

- **Do you want other life-giving evangelical churches in your community to succeed as much or more than your church?**
- **Do you study the persecuted church and lift these precious brothers and sisters in Christ up in prayer? If so, you're applying this verse.**

Comment: *On the hit TV show, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, whole communities work together to provide a new home for a family in need. It is amazing to watch the cast and crew of the show as they rally the town, the builders, and each other in order to complete the project within seven days. Then, when it's time to bring the family home, all those people get the chance to celebrate the accomplishment together. Even viewers feel they have a chance to participate in the celebration.*

Now, imagine the excitement and joy we would experience as a community of believers if we banded together in the name of God to effect change in our homes, communities, states, nation, and world! It would be remarkable to see what would happen if we all worked together for God's purpose.

TRUE JOY WOULD BE EXPERIENCED BY ALL WHO WERE TOUCHED BY THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE TO WORK TOGETHER TO BLESS OTHERS!

Life is full of observations...good, bad, and ugly. The question is, "How will we handle what we see, hear, and experience?" Will we just let God handle it...or will we do our part and "partner" with God to bring about what is "that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God?"

Paul gave us some specific instructions on how we are to conduct ourselves in this fallen world. He gave them; but, we are to accept and do them!

Those who
walk with God,
always reach
their destination


