

United in Christ Phil. 2:1-4

Thesis: To help us learn to be united in Christ.

Introduction:

- A. Paul had just encouraged us to let our “conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27).
- B. In trying to teach us how to live, he tells us that we need to be united in Christ.

I. To fulfill the purpose of Christ, we must be united (2:1-2).

A. If we are united we will have the same love and be of one mind.

- 1. We must have the same love.
 - a. Our love is not for the things of this world, but rather it is for Christ and the things of God.
 - 1) Our desire is to be pleasing to Him.
 - 2) Mt. 10:37 (Remember the words of Jesus) - He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.
 - 3) We must love Christ more than our fellow man.
 - 4) If we all would do this, we would find great unity.
 - b. Paul reminds us that there is great comfort in this love (2:1 - “comfort of love”).
 - 1) We can take comfort in the fact that we are not alone in this world.
 - 2) There are others who are trying to achieve the same goal that we are.
 - 3) We can gain encouragement in the fact that we have the same love for God and one another.
- 2. We must have the same mind.
 - a. To have the same mind means that we think the same way about the things of God.
 - 1) This does not mean that we cannot have our own opinions about other things.
 - 2) But it does mean that when it comes to the things of God, we must be united in our thoughts.
 - 3) We do this by following the word of God in the things of God.
 - b. The Bible continuously encourages us to be united in the same mind.

- 1) **Phil. 3:16** - Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.
- 2) **Rom. 12:16** - Be of the same mind toward one another.
- 3) **I Cor. 1:10** - Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

B. The only way to be united is to have the mind of Christ.

1. As Paul talks about being united, he reminds us to be like Christ.
 - a. **Phil. 2:5-8** - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, {6} who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, {7} but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. {8} And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
 - b. We must have the mind that Christ had on this earth.
 - c. Paul does not say, "*Be united; now go figure out what you want to do.*"
 - d. Rather, Paul tells us that we are united when we follow the mind and will of Christ.
3. **Jn. 17:20-23** (Jesus prayed for this unity to be in His disciples) - **I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; {21} that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. {22} And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: {23} I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.**

C. We have an example of this unity in the early church.

1. **Acts 1:14** - These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
2. **Acts 2:1** - Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
3. **Acts 2:46** - So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
4. The point is that the early church was united; and because of this unity, it prospered.

II. To be united, we can do nothing “through selfish ambition or conceit” (2:3).

A. If we are going to be united, we cannot seek after our own gain.

1. The implication by Paul is that we do not do things that cause strife or division in the Lord’s church.
 - a. In fact, the original word that is used means, “intrigue, i.e. (by implication) faction” (Strong’s).
 - b. The Bible warns us about such an attitude.
 - 1) **Js. 3:14-16** - But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. {15} This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. {16} For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.
 - 2) We are told to avoid such people.
 - a) **II Tim. 2:23** - But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.
 - b) **Titus 3:9-11** - But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. {10} Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, {11} knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.
 - 3) **Rom. 2:8-9** (Those who seek their own glory will be punished in hell) - but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness-- indignation and wrath, {9} tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;
2. Far too many times, members of the Lord’s body will try and promote themselves over others.
 - a. Instead of having pure motives, they work so that they can be considered great.
 - b. If someone else is trying to do something for the church, they will try and destroy it because they do not receive any glory from it.

B. We must esteem others better than ourselves.

1. We must humble ourselves and not think too highly of ourselves.
 - a. Humility has always been a requirement of God.
 - b. **Rom. 12:3** - For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.
 - c. **Js. 4:6, 10** - Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” {10} Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.
2. We must esteem others better than ourselves.
 - a. To be united, think of others as being better than ourselves.
 - 1) This goes against the thinking of the world.

- a) The world always wants to be the best.
- b) If someone has to tear down someone else to become the best, then that is just the way it has to be.
- 2) However, with God, we must give preference to others in the church.
 - a) **Rom. 12:10** - Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;
 - b) **Mt. 7:12** - Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
 - c) **Mt. 22:39** - “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”
 - d) **Rom. 15:2** - Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.
- b. We must look to the good qualities that others have.
 - 1) We cannot focus on the negatives in others.
 - 2) We must look at them and think of them for who they are: our brother or sister in Christ.
 - 3) If we did this, we would no longer try to find the faults of others; but rather we would look for the good.
- c. This would solve most problems in the church.
- 3. Again, notice the example of Christ.
 - a. Jesus put the needs of others ahead of His own needs and desires.
 - b. Jesus shows us what it is like to humble ourselves before God.

III. To be united, we must look out “for the interests of others” (2:4).

A. There are times when we must look out for our own interests.

- 1. We, as individuals, are responsible for our own actions.
 - a. We are going to be judged according to our own actions.
 - b. Therefore, we must make sure that we are being faithful to God.
- 2. Jesus teaches us that we must look out for our own interests.
 - a. **Mt. 7:3-5** - “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? {4} Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? {5} Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye.”
 - b. This does not mean that we are selfish; but it does mean that we must make sure that we are living the right kind of life.
- 3. **II Cor. 13:5** (Paul also tells us to look out for ourselves) - Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.

B. To truly be united, we must also look out “for the interests of others.”

- 1. Because we are seeking the same goal and reward, we must be willing to look out for the best in others.

2. This applies to all aspects of our lives.
 - a. If we know that a brother is living in sin, we have an obligation to confront them and help them through it.
 - 1) **Gal. 6:1** - Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
 - 2) **Js. 5:19-20** - Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, {20} let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.
 - b. **I Cor. 10:24** (With regards to conscience) - Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.
 - c. **Heb. 10:24** - In talking about the assembly, we are encouraged to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."
 - d. **I Cor. 13:5** - Love "does not seek its own."

Conclusion: