

Philippians 2:1–4 (NKJV)

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Each of us, each week, live **our lives** in **our own skins**. We live in **our own heads**. No one but God really knows what we are thinking. No one but God knows our real motives.

So Paul tells us how **he** lives. He tells us what is going on in **his** private space. He says **for me**, when I am living, when I am **making my decisions**, when I am **going through my week**, when I am **choosing**, this is **how I do it**. To live is to **live for Christ**. He is telling us that he lives under the authority of the word of God, in view of God, for the glory of God. Living for Christ is how he **defines** what his life is **made up of**. If you were to take Christ out of his life, his life would be devoid of everything that matters to Paul. That is what is happening in Paul's thinking every day. That is a picture of his inner world.

Then in verse 27 of chapter 1, Paul tells the Philippians how they **too** should live. They should all be submitted to the Holy Spirit and should be regarding their lives with a shared outlook, an outlook like Paul's where to **live is Christ** and to **die is gain**. They are to prioritize the gospel and the kingdom of God. Whether the world kills you for it or not, keep this mindset.

In chapter 2 Paul is digging deep into the motivations for doing just this.

Why is he doing this? Because he knows we all live **our own lives** in **our own skins**, in our own heads. And getting **what we "intend to do"** into what we "**really**" do is not easy to do. Isn't that our struggle.

So Paul does not **just pray** for this to happen in the Philippians. He **does** pray. And that is a big part of ministry. But he does not **JUST** pray. Here Paul appeals to things that are **deeply motivational** to action. He addresses people's brains. So the therefore is based on **what Paul prayed**, **how Paul lived**, and what he is **telling these Philippian believers** to believe and do. The way to spiritual growth is through a person's mind with Holy Spirit inspired **truth** and the Holy Spirit's **work with that truth** in our hearts. It is always by God's truth applied by God's Spirit. Both are necessary.

So Paul says

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

I read that the word “if” here, based on how it is used, really means “if this is true, and it is”.

So we could read the if’s like this:

If there is any consolation in Christ, and there is

If there is any comfort of love, and there is

If there is any fellowship of the Spirit, and there is.

If there is any affection and mercy, and there are.

Then fulfill my joy by being like minded.

Paul is appealing here to the clear advantages and blessing we get by being in Christ. It looks like the first two refer to what we get **from Christ** and the second we get **from the Holy Spirit**.

There is no believer that does not have these things granted to him. He may or may not enjoy them as deeply as he could. But they are part and parcel of salvation by Christ. Let’s look at each.

From what I read it looks like each of the first three should be read in a way that they refer both to what **Christ** has **given** to the Philippians and also to something the **Philippians** and **Paul** both share in. And they are likely referring to **resources that are needed, provision** that is **needed** as a result of their **suffering together** for the gospel that he talked about last week.

The last phrase, **affection and mercy**, due to how it is worded probably refers to only to what the Philippians and Paul have for each other. This is mutual affection and mercy.

consolation in Christ-

The word for consolation is the Greek word paraklesis. The Holy Spirit is often called the comforter in scripture. It is a derivative of this word. It means a coming alongside for aid. A good example is when the good Samaritan came alongside the Jewish man that had been robbed. That is the kind of picture we should get.

So Paul is saying, if Christ has ever come alongside you to comfort you when you were in distress. Let that motivate you.

Paul says something very similar in

2 Corinthians 1:5 (NKJV)

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

Well every believer has at least one example of that. We were suffering at sins demands. We were all doomed to damnation for being a sinner and doing sins. We all needed **someone** to come alongside of us and meet our need. And that is what Christ did when he took upon Himself the wrath of God that should have been ours. So we have **all** received that consolation.

But since then, all of us have met life circumstances where we needed help. Our persecution has not been as severe as many in the world. But maybe we needed forgiveness and restoration of fellowship from current sin. Maybe we are suffering one of life's trials. Maybe we just need encouragement that we are ok with God. We need our hope and joy restored. And Christ has done that for us over and over again. Sometimes even sending people with the truths we need to hear. Sometimes by answering our prayers when we call out to Him.

The suffering comes and followed by the suffering comes the consolation of God lovingly treating our wounds and providing us a path to restoration.

comfort of love-

The word for comfort here is similar to consolation. It means speaking closely with someone to give comfort or solace. And in this phase it means this kind of comfort that **real love grants to us**.

Again it is probably appealing to those experiencing persecution. But I think any kind of suffering would probably apply. Paul is basically saying if the love of Christ has **ever reached you and delivered to you a message** of comfort to where you were given **whatever is needed** to face your situation. You were given a perspective from a message that met your deepest need, by someone who knows you well. If we were ever given that by Christ, then we should apply what Paul says next.

Paul stated this a little differently in Romans where he said:

Romans 5:5 (NKJV)

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Next

fellowship of the Spirit-

The word for fellowship is Koinonia. This is intensely sharing something in common, in such a way that the thing you hold in common is more important than anything else. We have so many things in common in the Holy Spirit. We are temples of the HS, he is our seal and guarantor, our spiritual power, He

provides spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit, He helps us in our weakness. He intercedes for us. We are to be filled with the Spirit. We were all baptized into one body by the Spirit and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

It is always good for us to look around and realize that the people in this church who know Christ have a spiritual reality about them that is far greater than any of their other traits. While we cannot **see the Spirit**, we can see the effects. But that **Holy Spirit** is very real.

I have a black light at home. You can look at an area of the house in daylight and you cannot see anything different than anywhere else. But when you shine the black light on it, some things will glow. They get exposed. If there was such a thing as a flashlight with a SPIRIT LIGHT that we could shine on people, every Christian would light up when that light hit them. There is a spiritual reality about that person that is **invisible** but not **ineffectual**. And that Holy Spirit presence makes them **fundamentally different** than all those people around them.

So a Christian is to view each other that way. If you have the Holy Spirit in you, that makes you different. If **someone else** has the Holy Spirit in them, **they** are different. And you can think of a church as being a **Holy Spirit club**. Where all the people with the Holy Spirit come together so they can bask in that which they have in common. They are understood because they have this in common.

These last three were provisions we receive from God and we receive from each other.

Now we move to the trait that we only share with each other. We have the Holy Spirit in common but this is what we give and receive from each other.

affection and mercy-

The word for affection is that word in Greek for bowels. But it means a deep emotional caring for each other. Have you had believers who deeply care for you? It is more than just a decision to **do you good**, although **that** is vital too. But these are people who **look after your interests from the heart**. They simply **care** about you. And they do the things that people who **care about you** would **do**. Have you had that? Have you experienced that? Do you know that there are people **who feel that way** in the church right now? Well Paul wants that knowledge to move you into action.

And then mercy. Paul uses the word oiktirmos. It pretty much means **compassion**, it is the kind of compassion God has for us. It is concern for the damages done to us by our enemies and by sin. Have you had a brother or a sister hear your confession, and feel for loss you have experienced because of your sin or another's sin against you. Were they agreeing, **yes** you did blow it.

Yes Christ deserves better. **Yes** we need to beat this together. But they just feel for the burden that sin has placed on you. Their heart is right there with you. I think that is what Paul is describing here. It may **be more** but it is not **less** than that.

So Paul is saying, even when you are persecuted, even when you are suffering, if you have **experienced** any of these things, if you know that any of these things **are true**, if you have understood that you gained a blessing from **any of these things**, then do what I say next. Let that **motivate you** to do what I say next. Remember how I talked about us all living in our own world. Well Paul is addressing that **inner world**. We do things for reasons. Paul is addressing our motivation here. He is giving us reasons **to change**. He is directing us to reasons that should be **running through our minds** when we begin to think about what he tells us to do. He is giving us **obedience fuel**. He is adding another perspective we may not have considered.

We might look at what Paul says next and say, well yes, but. And then give our reasons why we **cannot** or **will not** do what he says. What Paul just gave us are 4 “**yes, but**” removers. And here is what these “**yes, but**” removers are to compel us to do.

2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Fulfill my joy.

We already know that Paul has great joy at the Philippians progress so far. They are a poster church for Paul. They are loyal. They are spreading the gospel. They are loving Paul.

But Paul knows of some internal struggles. And those struggles are **slowing down** the spread of the gospel. So Paul says if you want to make me as happy as I can possibly be, if you want to most carry out my deep heartfelt desire for you, then do this. Fix what is broken and get your act back together.

Have you ever gotten into an argument with someone and said things like, You always do this or you never do that. How has that worked for you? Notice how Paul deals with these people. While he gives the admonition that is needed, he appeals them to **build on** what they are **doing well** by **doing it more**. We might learn from this to **do the same** with each other. While we all **often** fail, we certainly do not **always** fail. So we need to keep that in mind as we help each other do better. Build on the successes and obediences. Paul is doing this well. So Paul tells them, there is something here you guys need to do more work on. And I just gave you 4 reasons for why you **should** work on it. And it would make

me so happy to know that **in everything** you guys are moving in the direction you need to head.

We see Paul's minister's heart revealed. Paul celebrates their successes and he has deep concerns about the dangers of failure. And his joy won't be as good as it can be as long as they are languishing in some area that could result in disaster. It is like when you have a sick child. When are you happiest? When you know they are getting better. That is what Paul's love for these folks is like. That too is how our ministry to each other should be like as well.

What does he tell them they need to do:

**by being like-minded,
having the same love,
being of one accord, of one mind.**

If Paul were to show up in our service this morning, and if he knew about our church, I suspect this might be his sermon to us. Of course we would need to include verses 5-11 as well, which I hope we get to next week.

We all have a tendency to get **self focused**. We all get absorbed with all the stuff **we have to do** and how we will take care of **our responsibilities**. And it does not take long until that focus influences everything. Our **to do list** can easily become more absolute to us than **the Bible** is.

Then give it a little more time and we begin to evaluate others based on what we think they should **give us** instead of how we can **meet their needs**. We focus on how **difficult** they are or how **little they respond** to our kind gestures. We begin to be easily miffed and offended. And we begin drawing conclusions and putting people in categories.

That is where flesh goes. When we give up the struggle in our inner world, that is easily where we end up. We evaluate everything, not based on what **this will do for God's kingdom**, but how respectful something is for **my kingdom**.

Our highest goal becomes accomplishing everything on our **to do list** instead of asking, **what does God say is important?** How is my life best used for the kingdom? What has God placed on my heart that **I should lead in?** What **need** do I see that **I should meet?** What unnecessary thing have I attached myself to that **I do not need** to do that keeps me from the thing that is **more important?** When our agenda is self based, it pulls us, as a body, apart. It sets us against each other. I begin thinking you should do this thing for me. You begin thinking I should do this thing for you. We want the church to lead and carry out the ministries and outreaches that God has laid on our hearts.

Paul is challenging the Philippians to something completely different than flesh based living.

Paul is saying
be like-minded,
have the same love,
be of one accord, of one mind.

I think if we just look at the English we get most of what we need to know. Paul is saying we need to have the **same mind set**. This is not thinking **all the same thoughts**. This isn't reading the Bible and all of us agreeing on what each passage says and means. There is glorious room for differences there. No. Paul's appeal here is like what Paul appealed to earlier. Viewing life from a priority **bigger than ourselves, outside** of ourselves. It means when we all come together we are carrying with us a priority that says I will lay everything down for the priority of the gospel, for the Kingdom of God. Maybe you don't like how I view a certain text. Maybe you don't like how I greet you or view a life situation. Maybe we have all kinds of differences about all kinds of things. But at the end of the day those differences pale in comparison to the mission **we share in common**.

Paul tells these people what they need to do 3 different ways.
be like-minded, is pretty much to have the same mindset. He will tell exactly which mindset in verse 5.

have the same love is telling these believers to have the same love for each other that they have received and experienced from God. And this isn't just a command given to the rulers. No. everyone is to share this same kind of love from the same source. It is **everyone's responsibility** to be looking for needs and meeting them as they are able. We are to be proactive in this, just as Christ was. He reached out to our world. He did not wait for us to give him a call and ask Him if He could come help out. He **came** to us.

I read a very good quote. It says:

"Love begins when someone else's needs are more important than my own,"

Then Paul says

be of one accord, of one mind.

Being of one accord might best be captured with our English word **soulmates**. It means souls in harmony with each other. I thought this quote from *Dennis E. Johnson* was helpful.

"It is not enough to agree with each other theologically: God actually calls you to care for each other deeply, in a love that binds your souls together so strongly that differences of perspective cannot pull you apart." This strong bond

of affection, grounded in the truth of the gospel, stabilizes believers' relationships with each other so that they can address their differences—whether doctrinal or interpersonal—in patience, humility, and love.

Dennis E. Johnson, Philippians, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, 1st ed., Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 107.

And then Paul brings it back to the **mind**. We should be of one mind. And what we see here is that you and I are required **to be bound**, soul and mind, to each other. It is not just how we think but it should be part **of who we are**. As we look around this church, our obligation toward each other and toward the mission of Christ is huge. It is bigger than we are. It is bigger than our preferences. It is bigger than how we would like to be treated.

Our church is more than a place to go to get what you need to face the next week. It is a dynamic of people living for something so much bigger than themselves that the irritations and shortcomings of each others is small potatoes compared to this massive thing we have in common. That is the idea here. Well we saw it in the positive. But Paul is entirely realistic so we will also see the negative.

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

We will touch on this briefly this morning and continue with it next week Lord willing.

It is so very very easy to see the problem here. Because every one of us wakes to this challenge every day. If you are in a marriage, if you are in a family, if you are in a friendship, what threatens it? The answer. **We do**. Part of the problem in every relationship we have is us.

Flesh wants what flesh wants and flesh is very good at justifying its demands.

Jas 4:1–3. **Where do wars and fights come from among you?** (Why don't we get along? Why do we have divisions and quarrels?) **Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?** (I want what I want and I can tell you why I think I have a right to it. If you loved me you would give it to me. If you loved me you would treat me better.) **2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.**

Paul is essentially saying- knock it off. Cut it out guys. This might seem like a small thing to you, the fact that you can **no longer talk about these things**, the fact that you will **no longer allow it to be a topic of conversation**, the fact that you have **given up with reconciling**. But what is suffering is much bigger than **your little personal quirk**. It is the **Kingdom** of Christ that is affected. It is the **glory** of Christ that is affected. It is the **spread of the Gospel** that is affected. So it is no longer in the realm of a person miff. We are talking about important things.

We are all to come together with the goal of giving Christ what He wants. With **Christ held front and center**. With his **Kingdom** as the important thing. And as us as servants who are so grateful for the **love and consolation** we have received that we are glad to just be of service.

Is this as big a deal to you as it is to me?

Remember this was written to a church that was doing well. But Paul knows what we are like. It soooo easy to lose perspective. It is sooo easy to put our preferences ahead of what is in Christ's best interest. It is so easy to allow self love to evaluate how we should treat others and how to regard their treatment of us.

Paul is calling us to something higher, something better, something nobler.

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1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Maybe a helpful question this week might be, how does my “to do” list reflect the priorities of the kingdom? How does it reflect the welfare of my local body of believers? What ways could the list change to reflect the common mission we share as the body of Christ?