

Paul's Desire

Philippians 2:1-4

INTRO:

Several years ago when I preached on **1 John**, a new believer told me he could not do what John required because he just could not love everyone. He committed a mistake we often commit. We take something that has a specific application and make it so comprehensive that we cannot possibly accomplish it.

In our text here in **Philippians 2**, Paul did not write to a church with high speed internet and cable television. He wrote to a church that basically contained all the Christians in Philippi. He taught them these principles so they could properly relate to other believers in the church.

I. Paul's Desire for Their Unity (v. 1-2)

II. How to have Unity (v. 3-4)

I. Paul's Desire for Their Unity (v. 1-2)

A. **Philippians 2:1-2** says, *"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."* Paul wanted the Philippians to be united. He gave several reasons why they needed to be one in mind. Each of these conditions is a "first class condition." This means, Paul did not doubt the truth of these things. He knew they were true. Paul wanted to bring them to the Philippian believers' minds. Because these things are true, the Philippians and we should want to be united.

1. The Philippians should desire unity because of the comfort and encouragement there is given in Christ. The Lord Jesus does not just save us. He comforts and encourages us.

Christ does this through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. Paul wrote a little about this in **2 Corinthians 1:3-5**.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."

2. The second condition is an expansion of the first condition, *"if any comfort of love."* This like the first is not easy to describe, but all who actively walk in relationship with Christ knows something of this comfort. How blessed are we when we know that God is for us and no one can be against us? These folks understood a little of the wonder of God's infinite love for them.

3. Third, they were to be united because they had fellowship in the Spirit. ***“Since there is fellowship of the Spirit.”*** The Philippians had learned by experience what John talked about in **1 John 1:3**.

“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

4. The fourth motivation for fellowship was their own experience. God’s tender love and mercy toward them.

B. What were they to do because they knew and experienced these things?

“Fill up my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Philippians 2:2).

They needed unity in their thinking. The word mind means to think. Wiersbe makes a very helpful distinction here. He notes that there is a difference between unity and uniformity. Unity comes from within us, while uniformity is forced on us from the outside. Paul does not want them to look and act the same. He wants them to have the same value system on the inside. A value system, given to us by God Himself is the source of our unity.

II. How to have Unity (v. 3-4)

A. Now that the Philippians understand their motivation for unity in mind, Paul then outlined very carefully how to obtain unity. **(Philippians 2:3-4)**

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

B. If they were to be united in thinking, the first thing they must do was to get selfish ambition and self-centered thinking out of their minds. How could they do this? The answer is to center their lives on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Do you remember John the Baptist’s statement in **John 3:29-30**?

“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”

It is not so much that we decrease. It is that the Lord becomes so important to us so that little room remains for our own ego.

C. If the Philippians are to have unity, they must put other believers first. Paul wrote, ***“in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”***

The issuer here is attitude.

1. When it comes to other believers, we must show honor to one another. This is not feeling poorly about ourselves, it is putting others ahead of ourselves for Christ’s sake. I particularly like **Romans 12:10** in the **ESV**.

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

2. Why should I do that? They should do this ultimately because Christ did that for us! **Philippians 2:5-11**. If Christ did this for us, what would we be willing to do for Him?

How do we treat other believers? Do we experience the things that Paul described in **verses 1-2**? Are we motivated to put one another first in our lives?

What should our assemblies look like if we do this? Not uniformity, but unity.