

Intro: Do you know what the main reason for disunity is in the church? Many say it's doctrine or legitimate differences of opinion. But according to Paul, the problem in Philippi is not doctrinal disputes, but rather selfishness. Putting me first instead of last. Remember (last week) how pride is the greatest joy killer there is.

- Unfortunately, our disunity is affecting the progress, or advance of the G (Wed., Jan. 9/08 post in USA Today & chats). Imagine P's grief of reading this!
- In 2:1, Paul urged his readers to act on the relationship they have w/ another b/c of what the Lord has done for them all (encouragement thru reminder of grace).
- In 2:2, Paul describes this action as making his joy complete *through* cultivating a single mind (which happens when they reflect on 2:1 ['in light of...']).
- In 2:3a, Paul shows us that humility is the necessary ingredient for 'one-mindedness.'
- In 2:3-4, Paul shows the Philippians what this humble singleness of mind looks like *practically* as they live together in community.

What will make P's joy complete: the believers' joyful living in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, which necessitates humble, other-focused unity. That's what we call love. When you love someone, you love it when they're happy, & when they're rejoicing. And he wants to rejoice in their joy, and he wants them to rejoice in his joy, b/c he loves them. He wants them to experience that kind of joy that God intends in every Christian congregation.

This morning, the HS is asking us to become gardeners who cultivate joy that redounds unto glorious gospel-living fruit. Any good gardener knows that good soil, fertilizer, water & sun are good; root rot, weeds, rocks & insects are bad. To produce a good harvest, we must cultivate the good & remove the bad.

1. The First thing to be cultivated in our Gospel Garden: Unity

In 2:1, P says the same thing 4 ways: look to the gospel of Christ!

In 2:2, Paul says the same thing 4 ways: be united for the gospel of Christ!

το. αυτο. fronh/te – cf. 4:2; Rom. 12:16; 15:5; 2 Cor. 13:10

- The verb means “to think,” but not only, or even primarily in the intellectual sense. It equally involves one's emotions, attitudes, and will. Hence, this expression cannot mean that Paul here pleads uniformity of thought or that he insists on everyone holding in common a particular opinion – a demand that by its very nature would contribute to dissension.
- Paul is thus asking for a total inward attitude of mind or disposition of will that strives after the same thing, namely a unity of spirit & sentiment in which powerful tensions are held together by an overmastering loyalty to each other as brothers & sisters in Christ (*WBC*, 86).
- Such unity will only come when Christians are humble & bold enough to lay hold on the unity *already* given in Christ & to take it more seriously than their own self-importance...and to make of those deep differences of doctrine, which originate in our imperfect understanding of the Gospel and which we dare not belittle, not an excuse for letting go of one another or staying apart, but *rather*

an incentive for a more earnest seeking in fellowship together to hear & obey the voice of Christ (Cranfield, 75-76).

th.n avth.n avga,phn e;contej – denotes the P's reciprocal love, which answers to Christ's love (“the *same* love”). From context, it is clear that such love has special reference to believers turning their attention from themselves to others in the congregation & their needs (O'Brien, 178).

- Cf. 1 John 3:16; 4:7-12

su, myucoi – to be united in spirit is to live in selfless harmony w/ fellow believers in place of strife & self-interest.

- Illustration: Like tug-of-war: many can become one united force

το. e]n fronou/ntej – “intent on 1 purpose” speaks of a life directed to a single goal.

- Based on 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27 = the need to be ‘gospel oriented’ in all of life.

Illustration: Christina & I have different backgrounds in how we were raised. We have different & even opposing ways to bring up Elisha. But we agree & are united in this one thing: that Elisha be brought up in the best way possible to glorify God.

The 4-fold appeal in 2:1 is to lead to a 4-fold result in 2:2. However, in 4 different ways P repeats the same idea over & over again, hoping that they will get the point.

2. The 1st thing to be removed in our Gospel Garden: Selfish Pride

2:3-4 – The unity & harmony that P earnestly desires for his readers can be achieved only if they reject all forms of self-seeking & vainglory, & instead humbly regard one another as more important than themselves. You cannot unite for the gospel until you have been humbled *by* the gospel! The key to maintaining this unity is humility.

evrizei, a - ‘selfish ambition’ or ‘selfishness’ that often causes factions. In classical Gk. it describes the attitude of self-seekers, harlots, etc. who, demeaning them-selves & their cause, are busy & active in their own interests, seeking their own gain or advantage. In Rom. 2:8 these people only think of immediate gain (Jam. 3:13-16). Since rivalry is guaranteed to destroy unity, it must go!

kenodoxi, an – vain glory. In Gal. 5:26 = “conceit” (opposite of walking in the Spirit)

- Often referred to the person who assertively, even arrogantly, claims to have the right ‘opinion,’ but who is in fact in error. Such people are thus conceited w/o reason, & deluded. Such people are ambitious for their own reputation, challenge others who disagree, himself jealous of others. Consequently, such people often fight to prove that their opinions are right.
- Cf. Paul's major emphasis on God's glory (1:11; 2:11; 4:19,20). Living for God's glory is living in a manner of the gospel of Christ. Seeking our own glory, which amounts to nothing in actuality is the very opposite.

“In every aspect of the Christian life, pride is our greatest foe & humility our greatest ally” (John Stott). Cf. Eph. 5:21

3. The Soil & Fertilizer in our Gospel Garden: Christ-like Humility

tapeinofrosu, nh – the lynchpin that guarantees the health of the Christian community

- In ancient times, humility was seen in a bad sense & carried shameful connotations of slavery & servitude (cf. 1:1).
- Christ the ultimate e.g. → Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:8 (cf. 1 Peter 5:5).
- Thus humility is the opposite of pride, whose fruit includes selfishness & empty conceit. True humility is inspired by the gospel of Christ (2:1) & is often seen as an attitude of mutual love w/in the church.

4. Two Fruits in found in a Healthy Gospel Garden: 2:3 & 2:4

h`ge, omai – to engage in an intellectual process; “think, consider, regard, count”

- What are we to take into consideration? That others are > important!
- This is impossible to do! The need for the Spirit’s grace in our church! Oh how we need divine assistance to achieve the impossible.

skope, w – to fix one’s eyes upon something w/ deep interest in it (2 Cor. 4:18).

- What are we to fix our gaze & look intently upon? The good of others! What is the good of others? The gospel, cf. 2:21 [Timothy]).
- A distinguishing mark of love is that it is not self-seeking (1 Cor. 13:5).
- The humble mind just mentioned in v.3 cannot exist together w/ selfishness, which has its own interests in view.
- Much modern social & psychological theory is indebted to the notion that members of the human species, like all other animals, are involved in a relentless quest to dominate others in order to survive. So often, we in the church, have been taught that we deserve to made much of and to be made happy, which often comes at the expense of others. Contra the world, the road to greatness in the eyes of God is service to others (Mark 10:45; cf. 9:35). Christian authority especially is to be characterized by service.

Conclusion:

Progression: Before we look to the interests of others, we need to 1st count them as more significant than ourselves. To do this, we must cultivate humility. To cultivate humility, we must look to Christ (both in 2:1 & 2:5), who alone is the generator and motivator for any of our attempts to live in a manner worthy of His gospel.

As Christians we need to look at the needs of others instead of the rights of ourselves. “Indeed the law of the Christian life is renunciation, not self-assertion; concern for others, not concern for ourselves & our precious rights” (Beare).

The best soil for the roots of unity to grow in is humility. Let us remove the rocks of pride & pests of selfishness & the root rot of empty conceit (e.g. of my plants). To salvage the plants, my mom told me I had to replace the soil. But that’s a lot of work

Remember that this is to be seen in the light of evangelism. The world, like Rome and Philippi, is driven by the ungodly pursuit of self-fulfillment. Here Paul is telling the P’s to unite together in humility for service, so that the world will see something radically different. Cf. in Dever’s book, how a *church* living in a manner worthy of the gospel is a great witness. You can’t be united alone, or do humility or service alone. The best & worst things about churches are the people involved in them. Marvin & I are hoping to see us grow numerically. The only problem is that those who will be added to our numbers are imperfect sinners w/ their unique areas of need.

As Ligon Duncan says, we need to be Christ-directed, but other-focused. It’s funny how different people can look to us when we have the eyes of Christ.