

# The Unified Church

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**Bible Verse:** Philippians 2:1-2  
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Our text this morning comes from the book of Philippians 2 and I invite you to turn there with me. After a bit of a hiatus from Philippians, we come back to this book to continue our exposition of it and we come to these first two verses of chapter 2 this morning where the Apostle Paul writes,

1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

One of the joys of pastoral ministry here at Truth Community Church is, frankly, all of you, and the wonderful sense of love and unity that I believe permeates our body. It's a great joy to me reflected even yesterday as so many of you came to support Michael F. in the memorial service for Mary and the joyful kind service that so many people gave to make that happen. It's a delight to be able to do that and that is the way a church is supposed to look. That's what a church is supposed to manifest is this sense of unity that I am describing and which Paul is describing in the first two verses here of the book of Philippians, and what Paul does here as he makes this exhortation to the church in Philippi for them to grow in their unity and to develop it still more, what he does is he lays a theological foundation upon which unity can be built. In fact, the first 11 verses of Philippians 2 are devoted to that very purpose and our unity, beloved, is not based on the fact that we share, you know, certain economic or demographic considerations together, that may or may not be true but it has nothing to do with unity in the church, it has nothing to do with the fact that we live in a common geographic area, it has nothing to do with any of those human factors, that is not the ground of unity in the church, in fact, it's really kind of irrelevant to the whole discussion. No, unity in a church is built on the fact that Jesus Christ did a work of love at the cross to save his people. Our unity is grounded in, it is rooted in, it is found in something that is entirely vertical and is a result of who Christ is and what he has done, and the blessings that he has bestowed upon each one of us who are truly in him.

Now it's not simply a matter that it's a natural result of the work of salvation that Christ did for us, but this is a priority to Christ himself and everyone who names the name of Christ and that is involved in a local church must understand the preeminent priority that

is placed on unity by the Lord himself, and you can see this if you'll turn to the Gospel of John just by way of introduction. John 17, just before his crucifixion, Jesus Christ prayed to his Father. These are his final words before they led him to the place where he would be crucified and he's praying in the fullness of God, the fullness of deity, baring out his heart, as it were, to his Father with whom he was of one mind on these things, and the question is what was in the mind of Christ at that preeminently holy moment? What was he praying for? What did his intercession display about the thoughts that were in his heart as he went to the cross? Well, in part you see it laid out in verse 20 as he prays for his people throughout the ages as we'll see here that his prayer encompassed even us that are here this morning who have believed in him. John 17:20, he said, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone," meaning those that were his contemporaries at the time of the prayer. He looks forward and he says, "but for those also who believe in Me through their word," those who would come to saving faith through the word, through the testimony, through the writings of the apostle, and what does he pray, what does he want for his people? He says in verse 21, "that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." He's praying that his people would reflect the very unity that was found in the Godhead itself. And he goes on and prays in verse 22, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." And what Christ is saying here in this prayer, what he's asking his Father for is that the love and work that Christ was about to do at the cross to save a people would generate among those people the same quality of unity that existed between the Son, the Father, and the Spirit. The people of God are meant to be of a common mind, have common priorities, common affections that bind them together in a way that utterly transcends any kind of national or economic differences, and this love of Christ, this work of Christ therefore in the prayer that he prays creates on us a duty among his people that we would love each other and live together in harmony, and that we would have common interests, common affections, and a common care and concern for each other that would mark the corporate body of Christ and certainly would mark that which is found within a local church like ours.

So with that little bit of background, go back to Philippians with me and in Philippians Paul is calling on this church to live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel. Look at Philippians 1:27 as we do just a touch of review here, just a very brief touch of it. He says, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." He's calling upon them to live in a particular way that would manifest the glories of the Gospel and that would be consistent with the duties that the Gospel creates upon those who believe. And what is it, what is it that is in Paul's mind as he tells them live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ? What is it that's worthy of him? Well, what is worthy in light of the way that he prayed in his high priestly prayer in John 17. Paul goes on and says, "so that whether I come and see you or remain absent," he's saying maybe I'll be released from prison and see you, maybe I'll not be able to come and I'll only hear about you through the reports of others because he's in prison as he's writing this, you'll remember. He says, "whether I come and see you or remain absent," whether I'm there or not is secondary, he says, "I must hear of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit,

with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." He says, "Whether I'm present or not, what I call upon you with my apostolic appeal and my apostolic authority is that you would live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Specifically what I mean by that is that you would be of one spirit and one mind as you strive together for the faith of the Gospel."

Now why did he need to say that to this church at this time? Well, there were rumblings of discontent, there were rumblings of disunity. Look at Philippians 2:14 where he has to tell them, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." In chapter 4, verse 2, he calls out two women by name and says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel along with others whose names are in the book of life." He had to tell them to stop grumbling and disputing obviously because that's what was happening. He wouldn't give them that negative prohibition if that wasn't somehow bubbling up in the congregation; and as you go from that general to the more specific as he tells two women to live in harmony in the Lord, you see that there is conflict that was obviously known amongst the local body as Paul wrote to them.

So what happens as we come to chapter 2 is that Paul is now continuing and building on that exhortation to unity from chapter 1, verse 27, and you see the connection in the word "therefore," chapter 2, verse 1, he says, "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion," he says, "make my joy complete." How do I make your joy complete, Paul? How can I live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel? He comes back to the theme and reiterates and repeats it for emphasis. He says, "by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." He exhorts them to stand fast in one spirit and therefore to complete his joy by joining together, resolving their factions and putting to rest the disputes that were bubbling up in the midst of their fellowship. And beloved, here's the point for today, here's what we all must understand, is that a common salvation in Christ should produce a unified church. Those who individually share in the same spirit, share in the same Lord, share in the same faith as a fundamental matter of their own existence, when they come together as a body of believers, that shared faith, that shared indwelling of the Holy Spirit should spill over so that there would be a harmony among the body that is reflective of the harmony that exists in the Godhead so that this teaches us something of great and profound significance, that disputing and division in a church is a serious matter before the Lord.

Now I prefaced my comments here today by what I truly believe and know to be true as far as I know anything about what's happening within our church. I believe that we have a unified body. It has been a long time since I've heard anything approaching grumbling or disputing amongst you blessed people, blessed in the sense that I'm so grateful for you, and so please understand that I come in the natural course of exposition, for one thing, I come in a spirit that is encouraged by what I see happening in the life of our body but also to be faithful to the text and to reiterate the significance of what God's word says on this matter. So you must understand my heart as I say these things and why we are saying them. I am not here to scold or correct anything based on what I know of anything that's

happening in our church, but what we must understand together is and what we come together to guard if these things are true, we realize that we must be diligent to protect them, we must be on guard against either injecting that into the body through our own carnal attitudes and carnal words, or be careful to extinguish little sparks of fire that might come up when you hear complaints and say, "Wait a second, this is not where we go. This is not what the body of Christ does. We don't speak against each other this way. We love each other here. We care for each other here because this is a reflection of what salvation is meant to do, is to create that spirit among the people of Christ." And this is not about what we prefer, it's not that we're afraid of conflict as a body or anything like that, we place the priority on this because this is what Christ wants. This is a major reason why Christ bled and died for his people was to create a body of people who would be unified and harmonious in their attitudes toward one another and be a reflection of the Godhead itself in the way that they respond to each other. And I'll have more to say about that at the end of the message, but let's just look at this passage for now.

Common salvation in Christ should produce a unified church and there's a vertical dimension to it as there often is in Scripture, there is a vertical dimension to it that plays out in a horizontal way. So what we see in verse 1 and for your first point if you're taking notes here today, is you could just write down the phrase "united in Christ." United in Christ. Let's look at it again there in verse 1 where Paul says, "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion." What Paul is doing here is he's laying out four statements that set the ground for unity. If, and you can see it marked off by the word "if" there, you see it four times in the verse, if there is any encouragement in Christ; number two, if there is any consolation of love; number three, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit; four, if there is any affection and compassion.

Now understand something about the language that he's using here. When he says "if," when you and I say "if," it sometimes implies a sense of doubt or uncertainty. That's not the construction here at all. These statements are not implying doubt. Paul instead is assuming that they are true. It's another way of saying since these things are true, then there are consequences that follow from it, and what he's doing here is this, he is probing deeply into the nature of Christian salvation and he is setting forth a multifaceted motive for these believers to overcome the existing division in their church, and what is true – let me say this and just kind of plunge a little bit more deeply and personally in the kitchen of your life – is that these are things that are true within a Christian home even, within a Christian marriage, within Christian parents and Christian children. These are things that go to the very core of the relationships that we have with other believers, especially within a family environment, and this multifaceted motive helps us see why we can overcome division and also why we must overcome it for the name of Christ. You see, these spiritual realities have inevitable consequences.

So when Paul says if there is any encouragement in Christ, well, of course there is encouragement in Christ, right? He loved us and gave himself up for us. That's encouraging to our hearts. We realize that God has acted on our behalf and that encourages and refreshes our spirit. Well, if there's any of that in your heart, hold the

thought, he says let me add to that. He says if there is any consolation of love, if you are bound together in Christ, if we all share together in Christ and there is consolation in that, there's a common union in the Christ who loves us, well if that's true, and it is, that is true, hold that thought, he says, okay, encouragement in Christ, yes, hold the thought. Consolation in love, yes, hold that thought too. He goes on to say if there's any fellowship of the Spirit, if we have a partnership and a common life in the Holy Spirit because he indwells every believer, say is that true, that is true, Paul. Well, hold that thought. You say, "Wait, I'm holding three thoughts already here. How broad do you think my mind can be?" Well, how broad is salvation in Christ? Encouragement in Christ, yes, hold the thought. Consolation in love, yes, hold the thought. Fellowship of the Spirit, yes, hold the thought. At the end of verse 1 there, if there is any affection and compassion, if there's any mutual kindness at all that flows from these realities, he says, hold that thought and now take them all together. If you have any of these things. Oh, and by the way, you've got all of them. If you had any of them, what I'm about to say would be true but you have all of them so it's even of a greater perspective on it. If you have any of that, he says, show it where it's really needed. There is a realm within the church, he says to them, there is a realm in the church where this needs to be displayed right now. It's an application of his exhortation to live worthy of the Gospel and what you must see is this, is that these spiritual realities that he is describing in verse 1 are what undergird his call to unity. You see, he doesn't go directly and say, "You guys work it out," which is what we sometimes do as parents, right? You get a little bit frustrated and say, "I don't...you kids just work it out. I don't want to deal with this anymore." That's not what Paul is doing here. He is patiently explaining to them and reminding them of spiritual realities that they know to be true. Look at the fullness of what Christ has done for you in your salvation, look at the wonder of having the indwelling Holy Spirit, look at all of the assurances of love and kindness and affection that that pours into your heart as a result of God being gracious to you in your salvation, he says. Be aware of all of those things and those realities then becomes the basis for the command that follows in verse 2. He says because these things are true, do this.

Now we just step back a little bit as believers together here and we refresh our mind about how precious Christ is to us and we realize that we value and we cherish him for the fact that he loved us and gave himself up for us. We appreciate the physical and spiritual sufferings that he underwent on our behalf, in our place, as our substitute, and we realize that he did a wonderful act of self-sacrifice that we did not deserve out of love for us because he wanted to bless us with eternal salvation, right? All of these things are true, right? These things are undeniable, right? Yeah, of course. These things are absolutely true. Well, what that does is that creates, that acts like a tenderizer on your heart and causes you to see earthly conflict from a different perspective. You see it from a different angle. You see it in light not of what you wanted horizontally or remembering the past hurts that someone has afflicted upon you, rather than defining relationships by that, your mind is overwhelmed and takes as its first principle, its first founding premise for human relationships is look at all at what Christ has done for me. Look at how good he has been and all of the spiritual blessings that have been showered upon me in him, and that creates a spirit of gratitude that the Spirit of God uses so that you want to be like Christ and reflect what he did for you in the realms that he has given to you in your life.

That includes your difficult relationships. Rather than digging in your heels over the conflict, your hearts are softened in light of what Christ has done and that's what Paul is pointing out here in chapter 2, verse 1, he says remember all of these wonderful things that Christ has done and realize that those spiritual realities have implications for horizontal unity within the body of Christ. That's what he is saying here. You are united in Christ, that is a spiritual reality. That's not a command. He's giving an indicative here. He is making a statement of fact here when he says because these things are true, he establishes that foundation before he goes on to address the consequences of that unity in Christ.

So with that in mind, we can now go to our second point where having been united in Christ we see now in point 2, we are united with each other. And so Paul here, let's look at verse 2, in light of those things that he said in verse 1, he says "make my joy complete." That's the real command here, he says, "make my joy complete by," what means, and he gives them four, there are four corresponding appeals that he makes that correspond to the fourfold conditional statements that he was making in verse 1, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind," 2, "maintaining the same love," 3, "united in spirit," 4, "intent on one purpose." And so he's brought them up to the mountaintop and they stand on this high ground in Christ. Now he tells them look out on the valley, look at the vista in front of you and see what this high place of spiritual privilege means for what you see in front of you.

Now in the first chapter, stepping back from the unity theme for just a moment here to kind of pick up on the flow of Paul's thought here, in the first chapter, you'll remember that Paul spoke freely and often about the joy that he was having in prison even though his circumstances were adverse. Look at chapter 1, verse 3, he opens up on a theme of joy and it's important for us to remember that Paul is imprisoned at this time. He does not have freedom of movement. His own circumstances are adverse outwardly speaking as he writes this letter to them. That's going to become important here in just a moment. But as he's writing from prison, he says to them in his opening words in verse 3, he says, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all." And so immediately he draws them in with this magnetic contentment that he is expressing, this magnetic joy that he says, and he says that joy expresses itself as I pray for you. As I remember you in prayer, I thank God for you and the memory of you and my relationship with you fills me with unspeakable joy. I am so glad in you and that is the opening salvo, if you will, that he gives in the letter. He's speaking to them from a position of love and joy.

He goes on in verse 18 and speaks further about his joy as he speaks about some of the opponents that are causing him trouble and he says in verse 18 as he reflects on them, he says, "What then?" At the end of verse 17 he said they think they're going to cause me distress in my imprisonment. He says in verse 18, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as

always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." So he opens up praying with joy. He says, "I rejoice even in the midst of those who oppose me." And he goes further and says, "Not only am I rejoicing now, I will rejoice in the future because I'm confident of what Christ is going to do." In this first chapter he has just spilled joy out all over the place. He had a big pitcher of joy in his heart and he just dumps it out and it just flows everywhere and permeates everything that he says. So picture the church getting this for the first time and they're sympathetic and they're concerned about Paul because he is imprisoned. They sent Epaphroditus to take a gift of love to provide for his needs and to express their love and support and care to Paul, and Epaphroditus comes back with this letter and Paul says, "I'm overflowing with joy. You make me joyful, Christ makes me joyful. I'm going to be joyful in the future. I write from a very full heart as I speak to you in this letter," he says to them. Well, that just draws you in, doesn't it? There's a certain attraction that joy and love has that nothing else can compare to.

So that's what leads into this command and then in verse 1 of chapter 2, he's laid out this encouragement and consolation and fellowship and affection and compassion. He has just overwhelmed them with all of these positive demonstrations of what is in his heart and the positive realities of what Christ has done for his people. Do you see it? It's just written all over the pages of what is said here. Now then, that makes his gentle appeal in verse 2 of chapter 2 all the more remarkable. Look at it there with me in light of everything that we've said, remembering that he is in chains to a Roman soldier who's watching guard over him. In chapter 2, verse 2 he says, "make my joy complete." Oh, it hits you right in your heart. "You say for all of these wonderful realities and for all that you have said, Paul, there's something lacking? There's an aspect that is missing? That your joy as great as it is, it's not full to the brim? The pitcher isn't completely full?" And there would be a natural sympathy as soon they hear that command that says, "Oh, Paul, what's lacking? What else is needed in light of all these things that you've said?" He says, "make my joy complete." The original reads "fulfill my joy, make it better. There's still something missing," he says. "That joy of which I spoke, my friends," he says, "it's mixed in with some concern and with some sorrow. Something is lacking here. My joy isn't complete because something in you is not complete." And his tender appeal there, "make my joy complete," adds incentive for a godly response to the command that he is about to make here. Everything about Paul's letter and his personal interaction with them should dispose them to respond in a positive way. Everything about the unity in Christ that he had just been describing in verse 1 should lend to a desire to respond and obey and therefore the four results that are coming in verse 2 correspond to that fourfold basis that he had given in verse 1.

Look at it now with me. He says, "make my joy complete." At this point the reader of the letter and even for us today as we think about life in the local church here today and life within our Christian homes, everything should condition us to utterly put aside any resistance to what is said and to embrace everything that this man has to say to us. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ. He writes in love and joy. He's reminded us of what Jesus has done for us and all of the benefits that flow from that and now remembering that he is writing under the Holy Spirit and expressing the very mind of God with the words that he says, he says, "make my joy complete." We're at a point now where we say, "Speak,

Lord, Your servant listens," like Samuel said in the days of Eli. "Speak, Lord. Here I am. Send me. Lord, whatever You ask, it couldn't be too much in light of everything else that's been said." There is this powerful motive that the Spirit works in the people of God when they understand these things and Paul says, "Here's what would make my joy complete. I don't need any more resources from you. I'm not asking for anything personally. I'm asking for you to do something amongst yourselves that I care deeply about." He says in chapter 2, verse 2, look at it, "make my joy complete by," here are the means that you can do that, "by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." He's calling them in this verse and Christ is telling his church through these words that his people, the people of Christ are to have a conscious intent to pursue common ideas, common commitments, common affections, common feelings that produce harmony in relationships.

Time out here. If as you sit next to someone here today or as you contemplate life in the body of Christ, if there is a resentment or a grudge or bitterness that is directed toward anyone in the room, this passage is speaking to you. If there someone that you try to avoid that's part of the body, you go the other way when they're coming or whatever it is, you know what I'm talking about here, to the extent that there is that kind of bitterness and avoidance and resentment and those kinds of things, this passage is addressed to that very perspective. And there's a redundancy in Paul's thought here. Look at verse 2 with me. Look at the things that point to oneness in what he says: same mind, same love, united in spirit, one purpose. The repetition of that concept is showing what his emphasis is. He didn't say it once or twice or three times, he said it four times and the redundancy builds a sense of anticipation and urgency about the matter. And so you're disposed toward Christ, you're disposed tenderly toward Paul, you see the realities and there's nothing left to do but to pursue what he's calling for.

The way that Paul wrote this text shows that this crucial priority can't be mentioned just once or twice, this is of supreme importance. Remember what we talked about, what we looked at in John 17, Christ himself praying for unity? Do you see the build up to it in what Paul says here in Philippians? And you know what happens when you read the rest of the New Testament? You find this priority written all over the pages of the New Testament. Let me just give you three examples. Romans 12:5 says, "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Ephesians 4:3, "be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Colossians 3:14 says, "Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." So there is this – watch this, beloved – there is this corporate aspect of being a Christian that is elevated high in priority in the pages of Scripture. As individuals, we come to the body of Christ to share in the life, to benefit from the ministry, to contribute to the ministry. There is this surpassing emphasis that we understand that the body, a local body of true believers in Jesus Christ is a sacred place that is to be treated with respect and reverence and to be handled with care, and to be handled with a conscious awareness of the importance of the nature of relationships within the body. This is utterly undeniable in reading the New Testament.



Now what that means for us here today, what it means for you here as you join together with us this morning, some of you are visiting, we're so glad that you're with us, but this has a particular implication for those of us who call this our church home, let's step out and just think about the way people generally think about church life and then dive back into that for a moment. If the average Christian was asked this question, "What does it mean to live a worthy Christian life," and you just asked them that question cold without any of the context that we've developed here this morning, and honest, earnest, sincere Christian, I've never conducted a study on this or anything but I believe that it would certainly come along these lines that many would respond with thoughts of their external behavior, you know, that I live a moral life, that's worthy of Christ. Okay, that's good as far as it goes. Maybe some people would think that they are of this bent that they're evangelistic and that I'm sharing my faith in Christ. That's really good. That's really important. You know, I need to read my Bible. I need to pray. Good. Good. Yeah. Yeah. That's all true but there is a common thread through these things that I want you to recognize and what I believe would be especially in America, would be the common Christian response to that question, what does it mean to live a worthy Christian life. It's all individualistic. It's about what I'm doing or what I'm thinking or how I am living. I don't drink or chew or go with girls who do, is something I heard decades ago. Sorry, it just popped into my mind there. You know, just that outward conformity to rules. You know, or I'm reading my Bible or I am praying and I'm living, therefore, a Christian, a worthy Christian life.

Now those things certainly have their place, beloved, but what I want you to see and what should be obvious to you in light of everything that Scripture has said to us this morning, is that those things are individualistic. They are isolated. They are a silo standing alone in the middle of the field. And what Scripture calls us to when it specifically says conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, make my joy complete, it talks about a worthy Christian life in the context of contributing to the unity and harmony of a local body. There is a corporate dimension to it. We don't simply look at it in ourselves and what I'm learning and what I'm growing in or what I'm saying in my stuff on social media. No, it's not that at all. Scripture tells us that there is a contribution that every Christian is to make to a local assembly of believers and that their contribution is to be a positive one that has an edifying building up impact on the others that are in that body, and that that is what a worthy life looks like for those who are Christians. So that, so that in one sense in this context that we're talking about here today, what good is it if someone is having a really wonderful consistent devotional time in their lives but they're absent from the body of Christ or when they show up they stir up problems and divisions and complaints? What good is their private devotions if the actual outworking of their life is creating disunity and disharmony in the context of a local body? That is utterly meaningless. It is totally contrary to what Scripture says should be a key priority in the Christian life. We can't simply congratulate ourselves because we're following our Bible reading plan or I'm praying 20 minutes a day or whatever it is that flips your switch. We can't be satisfied with our private exercises of devotion and be blind to the nature of our participation in the body of Christ. Jesus Christ has brought us to forgiveness and peace with God to his shed blood. He has created unity within you and I, within you and me

vertically before God and the teaching of Scripture is that is to spill out all over the place in body life in a local assembly.

And so, beloved, think about your life here this morning. Look at your family relationships. Consider your interactions in the local church. You know, and let me just say this too, that it's about more than just showing up and filling a pew and walking out. People across the world come to church and yet they are still individualistic in their approach. You know, we come in a little late, we go out a little early and we're out and we don't interact with anybody. Got my dose of preaching today. Really? Is that what Scripture is describing, a self-centered approach that does nothing to contribute to the life of a body or the needs of those that are around? This is utterly foreign to the concept of a Christian church biblically defined, beloved.

Now look, you confess the name of Christ and I'm glad you do, and remember what I started out, I'm not aware of anything divisive in our church as I stand here today and I wouldn't say that if I didn't, you know, if there was anything contrary, but are you carrying grudges over past offenses? Are you harboring resentment over past infractions? Are your words sharp and biting to the people that know you? That is not the spirit of harmony that Paul is describing here. That's not the same mind. That's not the same love. That's not united in spirit. That's not intent on one purpose. And my Christian friend, these things ought not to be because what we do when we're acting that way is elevating the animosity over the realities that we have in Christ, temporary, passing, earthly animosity over the eternal reconciliation that Christ has accomplished for it. Beloved, what Scripture tells us throughout is that the realities of salvation, being united in Christ, should produce a unity in each other and with each other, changing the division into love. That's it.

That's what it's about and you and I, one of the ways that we continue to grow as a church is to understand that our Christian life is intended by God to be lived out in the context of being a contributing participant to a local body of believers, not simply attending but contributing to it according to the time and the resources and the abilities that God has given to you, and in doing so with a spirit of service, a spirit of love, a spirit of kindness that Paul goes on to say in verse 3, we'll look at this next week, he says regarding one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. I'm getting ahead of myself by 168 hours here but, beloved, that whole mindset that I was describing that I think is common in Christianity, my prayer life is good, my Bible reading is good, whether it is or not who cares, that's not the point for now, it's just measuring it all by what's happening in my own individual private Christian life, that is not the way to be thinking about it at all. Scripture points you in the opposite direction. Don't merely look out for how you're doing, look out for how your brother or sister in Christ is doing and do something to contribute to it. So my greater point is just to remind us through this text that the element of body life is an intrinsic part of being a true Christian and someone who doesn't understand that or does not respond to that is missing something really fundamental in a way that's pretty concerning to me as a pastor. How can you not see these things in God's word and how can you not respond to them?

Now what I said earlier, you know, is just to remind us that Scripture takes us beyond that consumer mindset that says, "What's in this church for me?" I mean, I realize no one thinks about it in quite those crass and crude of terms but that's exactly what people do. They show up and they ask, "What's in this church for me? Do the programs attend to what I want, what my family needs? What's in it for me? Does the preaching appeal to me?" You know, and it's just me, me, me, me. What's in it for me? Let's change the question and I'll apply it in this way. We have, you wouldn't know this, we have many many people that are at various stages of our membership process and it's a delight to see and reading the applications has been a wonderful encouragement. I don't know how many there are that are pending but it's a good number for a church of our size, and many people are just at different stages in that membership process and this isn't directed at them, I'm just talking in principles here, when someone comes to a church, when you come even to this church, your mindset according to Scripture should not be so much what's in it for me but rather this, if there's any encouragement in Christ, if there's any consolation of love, if there's any fellowship of the spirit, if there's any affection and compassion, the real question should be when someone comes and considers involvement and even membership at our church, the real question that should be at the forefront of the thinking is this: how can I contribute to the love and unity of this church? Of course, you're coming to receive spiritual ministry, that's assumed and that's a necessary part of it, but that's not the exclusive question that should be asked. The question should be as you picture somebody coming in and observing and saying, "Ah, I see what I like. I like the doctrine of this church. I see what's happening here. This is where my priorities and affections are like also." Now when you pivot from that recognition, the question becomes not so this is going to be good for me, the question comes and says how can I participate in that? How can I add to it? What can I give that will make it even better?

Your bodies are here today, my friends, and that's really good. I know a lot of people are watching in illness over the live stream. Our prayers are with you. Your bodies are here today, my friends, and that's really good but in light of what we've seen from God's word today, the greater question is where is your heart today in these matters?

Let's pray together.

*Thank You, our gracious Lord, for Your work of love at the cross of Calvary. To the extent that we each share in that by faith in Christ, dear Lord, let us be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

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