

Philippians 2:1-2

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/3/2007

How can we maintain unity in the church? Part I

Prayer

Oh Father, what a blessing it is to sing about You and to sing about Your Son, to sing about what You have done through Him. We praise You that He is a great Savior, that He is Lord of all, that He is worthy of all Praise. Father we thank You so much that You loved us so much that You would send Him to die for us, Father, that He would voluntarily come and yield His life to bear our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to You. Father we praise You for that. And Father as we look into Your Word today I just pray that You will help us to come before You and Your Word with clean hearts, that if there's any selfishness, bitterness, anger, irritation, whatever it may be Lord God, that You would help us to confess that and know that You are faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And Father I pray we wouldn't be distracted, that You would help us to pay attention to what You are saying through Your Word. May we give you honor and glory by our response to what You have declared to us through Your Word today. Thank You now, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sermon

When the Apostle Paul was talking to the Corinthian church, he was concerned because they were listening to other influences. They were listening to influences of false apostles. They were listening to those who were coming along, and their affections were driving them to follow these false apostles. And Paul shares in the middle portion of chapter 6 (of 2nd Corinthians), he talks about the fact that we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and in the context he was talking about the fact that they were yoking themselves with these false teachers who were non-believers. And we've applied that to marriage, and certainly that does apply, but ultimately Paul basis is argument on the fact that we have nothing in common with those who do not know Christ. We have nothing in common with those who are not of Christ. And now with that in mind, certainly we understand that there are going to be divisions between believers and non-believers because we have nothing in common, we're not going to be thinking the same way, we're not going to be acting the same way if the Word of God is working in our hearts and lives. But sometimes we naively think that in the body of Christ there will not be divisions, and if you've been a Christian for very long you'll understand that there are great divisions within the body of Christ.

A few months ago at our men's bible study, we met in a restaurant in Vancouver and after the study a person came up to me and asked me where we were from, and I shared the church we were from and what we were doing, we were studying the Bible. And he said, "Well we gather together each week, we are the Clark County Holiness Association, and it is our desire to unite the churches in this area." And so after he said that I said "Well how do you plan to do that?" And he said "We need to get together and we need to set aside our differences and find our commonality." At that point I asked him something to the effect "Are you going to be studying the Word of God in these meetings?" And he basically kind of

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hemmed and hawed and really didn't have an answer to what I said. And it was obvious that these meetings were not centered around the Word of God but centered around their paradigm of how they could bring unity to the church.

Now I want to ask you a question, is that how God brings unity to the church, through believers gathering together, setting aside their differences, trying to get along? Is that how we have unity in the church? I don't believe so. And I think we're going to see today that churches are not united through compromise, but they are united by having the same mind, the mind of Christ as revealed in the Word of God. So with that in mind, I think today's passage, we were going to look at Philippians 2:1-2 but actually it goes all the way through verse 8. If we could sit here all day I'd love to teach through the whole thing, but we only have time for the first two verses today. But remember they're tied together with what is going to be said later on. And that leads us to what I think the question "How can we maintain unity in the church?" And this is Paul speaking to the Philippians, to the body of Christ. Would you turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 2?

Now if you remember the context for the book of Philippians, the Apostle Paul is the author. He is writing this letter while under house arrest. He is imprisoned in Rome for the Gospel. He is in chains. He is most likely chained to a pretorian guard 24/7. His imprisonment has caused the entire guard, which is probably a few thousand men, to hear the Gospel and to hear about Christ. And in this place, as in prison, He desires and has an affectionate concern towards those He has ministered to, and that would include the Philippians. Acts 16 describes the founding of the Philippian church in about 52 A.D, about ten years before this letter is written. And what we call Paul's Second Missionary Journey, Paul received His marching orders from a vision to go, to cross the Aegean Sea to Philippi. And at that point he met a lady at the river, Lydia, and she was the first European convert. Also because he cast out a demon in the slave girl, he and Silas were put in prison. And at that point, God released him through a great earthquake, the Philippian jailer realizing that he was going to be killed by the Romans for letting his prisoners go, he was going to kill himself, and he said "What must I do to be saved?" And Paul and Silas said "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And then they shared the Word with him and his household.

We saw the foundation of the Philippian church in those events when God had opened Lydia's heart to believe. Paul was very close to this Philippian church and they were very close to him. And they were most likely very concerned that his chains were hindering the Gospel. And Paul writes them back, and in this letter he shares with them that he is thankful that God has been doing His work in them, their faith and love. And he is also confident that God will complete the work that He has begun in them. And then we saw that Paul shared the paradigm of how God works through His people. That He uses the sufferings He allows to glorify and magnify Christ. And Paul wasn't concerned in any way of the hindrance of the Gospel because of his chains. But he knew that his terrible circumstances of imprisonment was part of God's grand plan to spread the Gospel. And he says there has been a pioneering progress of the Gospel because of his chains. And Paul desired that no matter what happened, whether he died because of chains and trials and ultimately execution, or whether he lived

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on, he desired that Christ would be magnified and exalted no matter what. Paul rejoiced that God used his seemingly restrictive circumstances to advance the Gospel mightily.

And I think we saw we need to look at our circumstances in light of the Word of God and respond in light of the Word of God, understanding what the Word of God is doing through those circumstances. And then we saw how we can experience joy in the midst of suffering. That even though we go through difficult circumstances, that we are not here for ourselves as Paul would share, "To live is Christ", to be here alive in the flesh is to serve Christ and His body, and anything else is not of God. And to die is gain because if you're living for Christ when you die you gain Christ, you gain it all. But Paul loved the Philippians and he loved the Lord and he knew that if he was to stay on there would be fruitful labor for him concerning their faith and progress in the faith.

Now last week we saw that Paul desired the Philippians to think the same way he was thinking concerning their circumstances, because of the inevitability of suffering they were to stand firm in the truth. They were to strive together for the truth and they were to not be fearful or afraid of the opposition, which ultimately would be a sign to their opposition of their destruction and a sign of these Philippians' salvation, that they were truly saved. We saw that indeed those who desire to live Godly will be persecuted. And Paul desired to live in a manner worthy of their great Gospel calling in a manner worthy of their heavenly calling, and I believe at this point he jumps from that point to our passage today, which we're going to see I believe how to maintain unity in the body of Christ. And we're going to see what true unity looks like.

Now within that I think we're going to see today two specific things, we're going to see the basis and motivation for same-mindedness, or unity, and we're going to see the defining mark of unity. And later on, next week Lord willing, we're going to see the means of unity and we're going to see the perfect example of like-mindedness and unity in the person of Christ. So then how can we maintain unity in the church? I think first of all, we need to understand and be motivated by the basis for unity, Christ, and our benefits of our relationship with Him. Let's take a look at verse 1 of chapter 2.

¹ If therefore 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. (We're going to end their today, but I want to keep reading a little bit because it's not disconnected from what we'll look at next week) ***³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 2:1-5]***

And then that wonderful passage that hopefully we're familiar with, and if not, hopefully we will be familiar with. Ok, so did you notice in the first verse we have four "if" clauses, "If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, IF there is any consolation of love, IF there is any fellowship of the Spirit, IF

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there is any affection and compassion.” There are four if-statements. And I think we need to understand that these if-statements are not hypothetical statements, statements that “Well maybe there is, maybe there’s consolation of love, maybe there’s encouragement in Christ?” In the Greek language there are ways to convey certain conditions with if-statements and it’s what they call a first-class conditional. What does that mean? It means “if”, and this is assumed to be true and fulfilled. You could almost translate it “since”, but they don’t translate it that way because the way Paul declares this helps us understand the focus that he has.

So ultimately Paul’s intending to say “If this, and it is true, then do this” ultimately. So then we have four if-statements. “If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ (and there is), if there is any consolation of love (and there is), if there is any fellowship of the Spirit (and there is), if there is any affection and compassion (and there is)” and then there’s the then-statement, “then (obviously) make my joy complete (how so?) by being of the same mind.” If these things are true, then Paul exhorts them to make his joy complete. Well his joy was tied up in the progress of these Philippians in the faith. He wasn’t looking for certain joy in ministry of His own desires, his joy was tied up in seeing people becoming more like Christ. “Make my joy more complete.” How so? We’ll see, by being of the same mind.

Now before we get into these four statements specifically we need to recognize there is a therefore in the beginning of verse 1, “If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ...” Now it’s hard to tie in where this “therefore” applies. Usually we say what’s it *therefore*? But sometimes it’s a little more difficult than that. But I think here Paul has just exhorted these Philippians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. In light of their temporal sufferings that they are experiencing, Paul has made it clear that Christ is glorified through our sufferings, and that in that Christ is being magnified, and that brings joy. Therefore he’s saying “Make my joy complete by responding the right way in these sufferings.” And ultimately the right response in suffering we’ll see is the Christ-like response, as Christ suffered to death, being obedient to death, to bring about God’s will and accomplish our redemption. And so too, the body of Christ will suffer, but we must in that suffering have the mind for Christ so that the will of Christ is done.

Paul is not looking for a self-centered fix of happiness “Make my joy complete”, he will as we’ve seen, and will see, received his joy from seeing his spiritual children walking in the truth. And on the heels of that statement and that truth he makes these four if-statements that are assumed to be fulfilled and true. So what are these statements? An exhortation in Christ, “If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ.” And again, remember you could say it this way in the Greek language, they would read it this way: “If there is any encouragement in Christ, and there is, then make my joy complete by walking worthily,(I believe) like-minded.”

Now this word encouragement, the Greek word translated encouragement here is *paraklesis*, it carries the idea of calling someone to oneself, *para*, alongside, *klesis* or *kaleo*, to call. It’s translated often encouragement, it’s translated consolation, calling someone to yourself to console them. It’s translated

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comfort, it's translated often exhortation. And I really like what Marvin Vincent, a 19th century commentator in his word studies. He says,

Parakaleo literally means "a calling to one's side to help; and therefore entreaty, passing on into the sense of exhortation, and thence into that of consolatory exhortation; and so coming round to mean that which one is summoned to give to a suppliant—consolation. Thus it embodies the call for help, and the response to the call. Its use corresponds with that of the kindred verb, to exhort or console. [Marvin Vincent]

If there is any encouragement in Christ, and there truly is, make my joy complete. But what is this encouragement, or exhortation, or comfort in Christ? What does that mean? How does God encourage us and comfort in Christ? I think to help us understand that, there's another word that's very close to *paraklesis*, *parakletos*. Some of you are familiar with that word, the *Paraclete*, the helper, the comforter, very similar word. And John uses it in his gospel in chapters 14-16 to speak of the Holy Spirit. And I think if we look at this portion it might give us a better understanding of this *paraklesis* also. This word *parakletos* speaks of a comforter or a helper or literally one who comes alongside to help.

Now how is it that the Holy Spirit comes alongside to help? How is it the Holy Spirit comforts us as believers? Jesus tells His disciples, John 14:26,

But the Helper, (or the Paraclete) the Holy Spirit, (the one who comes alongside) whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. [John 14:26]

The first thing He does in helping us is to teach us and to bring to remembrance what Christ has said. John 15:26,

When the Helper (or the Paraclete) comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me. [John 15:26]

He bears witness of Christ. John 16:7, Jesus says

⁷ "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; (they were concerned about Him leaving) for if I do not go away, the Helper (or the Paraclete) shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. ¹² "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. (speaking to His disciples) ¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. (The Holy

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Spirit will glorify Christ by taking of the things of Christ and disclosing it to these disciples and thus us) ¹⁵ **"All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you. [John 16:7-14]**

The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, the One who comes along side to help reveal Christ, He reveals Truth, He glorifies Christ through the Word of God. Now we must recognize that God's comfort or exhortation doesn't always come in the form which we deem comfort comes. In that John 16 passage we saw that the Holy Spirit also convicts, the Helper, the Comforter convicts the world of sin and judgment. The Holy Spirit convicts us. And oh believer, if you're in Christ it is of the utmost comfort and encouragement to be convicted of your sin and turned towards Christ.

Now as with the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Helper, the Holy Spirit who brings us help and comfort by revealing Christ through the Word, by glorifying Christ through the Word, so too the *paraklesis*, this exhortation we see in our passage, this encouragement, this comfort spoken of in Christ I believe comes through the Word of God. If you want to just turn over a few pages, actually forward, to 1 Thessalonians 2 and we'll go ahead and share about this exhortation. Paul is speaking to a church that he ministered to for a couple weeks and now he is writing back to them and reminding them of the things that he shared to them in the very beginning of their faith. And he's explaining and reminding them of his visit with them and what they did when they were with him. 1 Thessalonians 2,

¹ **For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,** ² **but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.** (What a wonderful verse) ³ **For our exhortation** (or our *paraklesis*, this same word we have in our chapter, if there's any *paraklesis* in Christ, and exhortation in Christ) **does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;** ⁴ **but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts.** (What a lesson there) ⁵ **For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness--** ⁶ **nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.** (They weren't like the churches today) ⁷ **But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.** ⁸ **Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.** ⁹ **For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.** (Earlier he said it's their exhortation, it's their *paraklesis*, and he says) ¹⁰ **You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;** ¹¹ **just as you know how we were exhorting** (*parakaleo*) **and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,** ¹² **so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.** ¹³ **And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received**

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from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. [1 Thessalonians 2:1-13]

Paul is saying that their exhortation, their paraklesis, their parakaleo was the Word of God. Indeed this is what we see in Romans 15, and we're getting their in our Tuesday Bible Study, and I'll read this for you. Romans 15:4-6,

⁴ For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the (paraklesis) encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ Now may the God who gives perseverance and (paraklesis) encouragement grant you to be of the same mind (see how similar this is to our passage?) with one another according to Christ Jesus; ⁶ that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. [Romans 15:4-6]

It is through the encouragement of the Scriptures, the paraklesis of the Word of God that we can glorify God with one mind. It is through the Word of God that we are exhorted in Christ. It is through the Word of God that we are encouraged in Christ. It is through the Word of God that we are comforted in Christ. It is when the Spirit of God brings the Word of God and speaks to us, we are convicted, reproved, corrected, trained and then we are comforted. If there is any encouragement in Christ, and there is, then make my joy complete being of the same mind. If this is true about you then you need to be like-minded. And thus I believe Paul is reminding them and us of the common experience true to all believers, that the Lord Himself through His Word appeals, exhorts, and consoles and comforts us by His Spirit to walk in obedience through His Word.

Does not the Lord himself exhort and encourage us through His Word? Yes He does. Is this not true about you and I? And Paul says, make his joy complete by walking in like-minded unity. Now folks, I need to share with you, if you claim to be a believer in Jesus Christ and you have not experienced the exhortation and comfort and encouragement of the Word of God in Christ, through the Word of God, if you haven't been convicted by the Word of God, this doesn't apply to you, you're not a believer. If the Word of God has not convicted you, comforted you, consoled you, He says "If there is any encouragement in Christ", and it is certainly true, then do this, if this is true of you. One pastor writes,

*Have you found the exhortation you need from your relationship with Christ? Has He challenged you to live in a different way than you would otherwise? Where would you be if it were not for the challenge of Jesus? Those of us who have come to know Christ have been and continue to be challenged by Christ (And I would add, through His Word).
[Unknown]*

"If there is any encouragement in Christ," that's the first foundational block of unity that we have this wonderful truth, this foundational basis for unity. Now alongside this we see this second one, there is comfort coming from His love. "If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ", and then he says, "if there is any consolation of love", and there is. Another similar word, *paramuthion*, coming alongside and

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speaking tenderly. And also we need to recognize this word *paramuthion* has a sense of persuasion in it, someone who comes alongside, speaks tenderly with a desire to persuade you in right behavior, consolation. It's not just "Oh, it'll be ok, everything will be fine," it's coming alongside speaking tenderly for the purpose of persuading, ultimately as we will see, in unity. And I believe consolation is a good translation here, but it does carry an element of tenderness and persuasion.

Paul appeals to another common experience of true believers to exhort them in unity. If there is any tender, persuasive comfort flowing from his love, then be like-minded, then be of the same mind. If you are a believer in Christ, you have experienced God's tender consolation of love that persuades you. Just the mere fact that God would love you so much that He would send His Son as a sacrifice, that He would die for us, that He would love us so much, that fact persuades us tenderly as true believers to do the same to those who don't deserve it. It is the love of Christ that controls us Paul would say in 2 Corinthians. 1 John 3:1,

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. [1 John 3:1]

Retched sinners, awful sinners, nothing to offer God, saved by grace, underserving of God's love, this love should tenderly persuade us to be like-minded, to be like Christ. "If there is any exhortation in Christ, any consolation of love," and there is. Psalm 103:8,

⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. ⁹ He will not always strive with us; Nor will He keep His anger forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. ¹² As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. [Psalm 103:8-13]

If you're truly a believer, you fear the Lord God. If you're truly a believer you have been consoled by His love, you have been tenderly persuaded. If this is true about you, this basis, then we need to walk in unity. And He continues,

¹ If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, (and there is) if there is any consolation of love, (and there is, and then he says) if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, (and there is) [Philippians 2:1]

I believe he's saying "then make my joy complete by being of the same mind." Now this word fellowship is a pretty familiar word, *koinonia*, it simply means sharing. It speaks of communion or joint participation. *Koinonia*, "if there is any fellowship in the Spirit," if we share in the Spirit of God, and you do, if you're a believer, "then make my joy complete by being of the same mind." When you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you were placed into the body of Christ, you were baptized by His Spirit into the body of Christ, you were given His Spirit as a pledge of the inheritance, a down payment of what God

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would do to finish the job of salvation, He gave you His very Spirit to assure that. Romans 5:5, we see the love of God has been poured out,

...and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. [Romans 5:5]

1 Corinthians 2:12,

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God [1 Corinthians 2:12]

We are partakers. If there is any fellowship in the Spirit, if we share that commonality, and we do, it's the basis for our unity. "If there is exhortation in Christ, if there is consolation in His love, if there is fellowship in the Spirit, and there is, then make my joy complete" Paul writes. It's a plain fact that believers have been given the very Spirit of God and we have this in common, it ought to motivate us to unity, it ought to motivate us to unity.

At this point Paul gives us the last intended truth for those in Christ that should motivate us towards like-mindedness. "If there is any encouragement in Christ, (and there is), if there is any consolation of love (and there is), if there is any fellowship of the Spirit (and there is, and then lastly), if there is any affection and compassion (and there is), then make my joy complete." This word affection, literally is bowels, it speaks of the inner organs. It was used to speak of the heart. It speaks of tenderheartedness or affection. The word compassion speaks of compassionate mercy. There's a few different words translated mercy in the New Testament, this is not your usual word translated mercy. This speaks of compassionate mercy. It speaks of a display of concern over one's misfortune. If there is any heartfelt compassionate tenderhearted mercy, if that's true, we should be like-minded; if that's true about you.

Now these two words, affection and compassion, used together usually speak of tenderhearted mercies. Paul used these words in Colossians 3:12 to speak of a compassionate heart. It is only the believer in Christ that has experienced the tenderhearted mercies of God and the compassionate heart of the Living God. It is only the believer in Christ who has experienced God's compassion towards them in their helplessness. When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, God reached out in His compassion when we were not following Him, when we did not want to know about Him, we didn't care about Him no matter what we said or did, God compassionately reached out to our helpless state of sin and death.

Indeed Luke shares these two words together to describe the coming of Christ in Luke chapter 1. And as he is talking about John the Baptist who will make a way for the Lord, we see here in this prophecy by John's dad, we see, Luke 1:76, speaking of John the Baptist,

⁷⁶ "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; ⁷⁷ To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ Because of (and there's these words) the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, ⁷⁹ To shine

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upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." [Luke 1:76-79]

It's because of God's tender mercies that we are saved, a compassionate heart to those who are helpless. If this is true about you, if you've experienced His tenderhearted compassion, if you've experienced these basic truths about being in Christ then you should be striving to have the mind of Christ as we will see. Every believer has experienced God's tender mercies. Paul is saying that these are common to believers, exhortation in Christ, tender love from the Father, fellowship with His Spirit, and His tender mercies, these should motivate us to be like Christ, to be Christ-minded.

One pastor puts it this way, Dwight Edwards,

"Based on the (exhortation or) encouragement which is in Christ, the comfort which comes from divine love, the oneness (fellowship) of those drinking from the same Spirit, and the tender mercies of God, they are to live a certain way. They are to live in love and harmony, not because of their natural fondness for one another (though that may be there), but because of their divine responsibilities as members of the household of God. This unity is not the result of natural oneness but supernatural bonding. This is why Paul's appeal for unity begins by focusing upon their relationship in Christ, not their relationship towards one another.

He doesn't start out "Here is why you should be united, because of all that you guys have in common with each other", no! It's what we have in Christ. Paul's appeal begins with the focus on their relationship with Christ. And that's where everything for the believer needs to be. Now one side note, there is another motivation for unity and it is the joy produced in seeing that unity. "If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any affection and compassion, (and there are), make my joy complete." The Apostle John writes in 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than this", nothing made him more joyful than this, nothing did, "than to hear of my children walking in the truth." 3 John verse 4.

And I tell you right now, I have no greater joy than to see this body walking in the truth and I have no greater burden in my heart than when I see someone whose focus is off of Christ, and I hope it is that same way for you. When you see someone who is walking with Christ, it should bring you great joy, and Paul says "Make my joy complete, fulfill my joy by being of the same mind."

So then we have the motivation and basis for unity, these truths that permeate and apply concerning every true believer, these should motivate us to Christ-likeness. And I want to ask you, do you share in these benefits? Are you convicted by the Word? If you've never been convicted by the Word of God, you're not saved, you're not saved. And if you're not being convicted by the Word of God, you're either hardened by the deceitfulness of sin or you're not saved. If there is any exhortation in Christ, are you being persuaded by His love, the fellowship of the Spirit and His tender hearted compassions? Do you share in these benefits. We are encouraged and convicted and exhorted by Christ through His Word, that brings comfort, we are tenderly persuaded by His love, we are sharers of His Holy Spirit and thus

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can have fellowship with God and other believers. We have experienced His compassion and tenderhearted mercies through the forgiveness of sins, brought about by the person of Christ.

Oh believer, Paul begins this exhortation to like-minded unity by reminding us of this common experience of those in Christ. If this is true of you, than we should have the same mind, we should strive to be like-minded ultimately. It ought to motivate us to unity.

Now I heard nothing of these truths from the Clark County Holiness group gentleman, there was nothing about these truths of commonality from the Word of God. There was nothing about the truths in Scripture that would bring unity to the body of Christ, but this is how Paul begins His exhortation for unity, in sharing these wonderful truths about us. So how can we maintain unity in the church? Understand and be motivated by the basis for unity, and that is Christ and our benefits of the relationship with Him. And I think secondly we need to recognize the defining mark of true unity. What does true unity look like? We're going to see it's the mind of Christ manifest in the believer.

Getting back to verse 1, "If there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, any affection and compassion (and there are all these things, they're all true), make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintain the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose." He commands them, "Make my joy complete." How so? By being of the same mind, thinking the same thing. How are they to make his joy complete? He says "By being of the same mind." And literally in the Greek, it's with the result that you'll be like-minded. This is why my joy will be made complete. Now this word for "minded" here is an important word, it's actually used twice in verse 2, it's translated "mind" here and it's translated "purpose" at the end of the verse. And it's also in chapter 2 verse 5 where it says "Have this attitude which was in Christ Jesus", it's really the same word, "have this mind." The word is *phroneo*, and it literally means "to think", "to hold an opinion of", to have thoughts or attitudes of", it just means to think. Paul is saying that his joy will be fulfilled when they are, we will see, same-minded, thinking the same thing.

What does true unity look like? Is it a group of pastors meeting together, compromising their faith so that they can get along? I don't think so. Is it a denomination? Is it a creed? Is it a potluck? Is it a program? No. True unity is being in like-mindedness we will see, ultimately having the mind of Christ. And you ask, "How can we who are so different think the same thoughts?" Oh, don't you remember the motivation Paul gave for our unity was based on our relationship with Christ, as revealed in the Word? And the next thing he says in context is "Have the same mind." And then he says "Have the same mind" in verse 5, if you look down to verse 5 of chapter 2. "Have this (same word) thinking (*phroneo*) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Now for some of our versions I think it's very unfortunate that this same word within the context of four verses is translated three different ways, mind, purpose and attitude. It's the same word, it means thinking or mindset that was in Christ Jesus. So what am I saying? It's only when we have the mind of Christ that we are like-minded. And you say "How can we have the mind of Christ?" I'm glad you asked that. If you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, we'll take a look, we'll start at verse 12. Now the Corinthian

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church was very excited about those who were good showmen and could speak really well and minister in a flashy way, and they were all focused on the flashy gifts, and they were all out of order, and there were all kinds of problems in the Corinthian church. And Paul shares the basis for his exhortation which was not from persuasive speech or any of these things, but ultimately from the power of God. And as he continues he again explains what really was at work and what would be at work in them, we'll see in 1 Corinthians 2:12,

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. ¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; (the non-believer does not accept the Word of God, they don't understand it, he says) for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. ¹⁶ For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? (Who has known God's mind?) But we have the mind of Christ. [1 Corinthians 2:12-15]

We have one portion of the mind of Christ revealed in the Word of God. We don't have His complete mind, we don't understand His thoughts, they're so much higher than ours, His ways are so much farther than ours, but God has chosen to reveal a portion of His mind in Scripture and we see that concerning the person of Christ. It is all about Jesus Christ, and we have the mind of Christ in the Word. So how can we be same-minded? To be like-minded, to be same-minded we must deliberately choose to be obedient to the commands in Scripture to renew our minds with the Word of God. Folks, we only have unity when we are thinking biblically and thinking in accordance and behaving in accordance with the Word of God. Romans 12:2,

² And do not be conformed to this world, (don't let the world squeeze you in, don't by default become like the world, self-centered, selfish, that's it) but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, (notice the renewing of your mind, your thinking) that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. [Romans 12:2]

And the passage that, Dennis read earlier,

¹ If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. [Colossians 3:1-4]

Every exhortation to right thinking comes on the heels of what God has done for us in the person of Christ. Set your minds on the things of above. Let the Word of Christ dwell richly. And folks, there's a lot

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of people where the Word of Christ is dwelling poorly, or it's not dwelling at all. To be like-minded, to have the same mind is to have the Word of God dwelling richly, where we are united by the Spirit of God and the Word of God is in us as we think the same things, and that is why at this point in this body there is so much unity, and it is such a blessing. Because people are submitting to the Word of God and our commonality does not come in our personalities or whatever is being done, it comes in the fact that we are submitting to the Word of God, and that's where true unity comes from as we have the mind of Christ as revealed in the Word of God.

Folks, plain and simple, biblical unity is based on a true understanding and submission to the Word of God. It's not just head knowledge; it's a submission to the God of the Word and the Word of God. Biblical unity is based on true believers thinking the same thing as revealed in the Word of God. When situations come up, we think biblically and we respond, yielded to the Word of God and the God of the Word. Do you see why pastors must preach the Word? Why that is so crucial? Ephesians 4:11,

¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (what for?) ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; (and here's one of the goals) ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, [Ephesians 4:11-15]

The Word of God brings unity in the body of Christ. When we think Christ-minded, when we have the Word of God dwelling richly we will be like-minded. Do you see why it's ludicrous to attempt to have unity apart from anything other than the teaching of the Word of God. If we want to have unity in churches then we need to be having our Bibles open and we need to be going to the Word of God and submitting to the Word of God. When true believers think biblically, when the Word of God is dwelling richly in their hearts, when believers set their mind on the things above, not on the things of earth, when believers submit to God's Word, when true believers have the mind of Christ then there is unity. You don't have to manufacture it, you don't need to seek it, you don't need to fight for it, you just need to think the same as revealed in the Word of God. This is the defining mark of true unity, the same mind. Literally Paul says, "Thinking the same thing." When situations come up in my life, I'm thinking what God has shared in His Word. I am the blessed man, we are the blessed man or woman who meditates on the Word day and night.

Now it's important to understand that Paul translates this participle "being in the same mind", in a subjunctive mood. Well what does that mean? It's the mood of possibility, it's a possibility that you will obey this command, there's a possibility you won't. There's a possibility these Philippians would be same-minded, based on their relationship in Christ, and there was a

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possibility that they would reject that message. It's very serious stuff. And it's also important to note that this same verb "being same-minded" is in the present tense which speaks of a continual like-mindedness. We are to continually be like-minded.

Do you wonder why you don't get along with your spouse at times? Certainly sin is the issue there, but do you wonder why you don't get along with other believers at times? Do you wonder why there is unity lacking in churches? It's because Christ is not reigning in the heart by means of His truth, sin is reigning, and selfishness as we will see. The Christ-mindedness that is revealed in the Word is a servant, selfless *agape* attitude, rather than the selfish, worldly attitude.

And I want to ask you, are you continually renewing your mind with this truth? If you're not in His Word all the time, you're going to become like the world. And if not, conflict, disunity and sin will abound in all your relationships with other believers. Now with the world you might get along with just fine at that point.

Now if we still don't understand what same thinking means, Paul now modifies this word "thinking the same thing" with two participles and an adjective, we'll see that. He says, back to our passage, "If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion (and these things are true), make my joy complete by being of the same mind." Same thinking. Then he says, first modification of that same thinking, "Maintaining the same love." It's not a separate command, it's connected to that verb "being of the same mind."

Now I don't like the NASB translation here, it says "maintaining", and I know that the title of my sermon even has the word maintaining in there, but what it really says is literally "having the same love." The natural consequence of being same-minded is that we're going to have the same love. That's an evidence of what same-minded is like; we're going to have the same love. We are going to be same-minded, we will love Christ and we will love His truth. We are going to be same-minded, we will love the things, the same things in the matters pertaining to Christ and His church. When we're same-minded we will love one another with the same kind of love, God's love. We will love one another and this will be mutual, not one sided if we are same-minded. To truly have the mind of Christ implies that the love of Christ is manifest in you also.

Do you love Christ? Do you choose Christ over all else. Do you love His Word? Do you choose His Word over all else? Do you love His people? Do you choose His people over all else? If not, the mind of Christ is not manifest in you. This should be a wakeup call, something's wrong, there's sin, there's selfishness. Later on he's going to say "Don't do anything according to your own selfish interests, but with humility of mind regard others as more important than yourself."

Now the second mark of being like-minded here is being in full agreement. "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind (that's the main verb, then in Greek it's modified) by maintaining the same love (and it's modified again now by an adjective which is) united in

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spirit." Now is this united in spirit, is this a group of people cheering on the Lord together, is that what he's talking about? The word is *sumpsuchos*, which is soul. With soul, with one soul, united together at the root of our being. Not an external, forced union based on bologna as we see in many of these attempts to have unity in the church. It is a deep rooted union of the soul based on the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Word is translated more often than not "full agreement." It's full agreement concerning Christ. It's full agreement concerning the truth that He has revealed. Without full agreement there is no like-mindedness. Are you in full agreement with the Word of God?

Now the last thing he modifies, this being same-minded is "thinking one thing." "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, (he explains it) maintaining the same love, united in spirit (or literally full agreement, and the last portion here) intent on one purpose." And that word purpose is "mind," it's the same word, *phroneo*. And it's modified with the adjective "one." He's literally saying those of the same mind think the same thing, that's intent on one purpose, you're intent on one purpose. Thinking one thing. True unity consists of a singular focus of thought. We saw that perfectly, and we see that perfectly in the person of Jesus Christ as He came to do the Father's will and the Father's will alone.

Paul is saying that true unity has a unity of thought. Not that all our thoughts are the same, but that our thoughts are all in subjection to the Word of God. Folks, Romans chapter 8 reveals, and Paul goes so far to say that the way you think really shows who you really are. It's a test.

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh (speaking of those non-believers) **set their minds on the things of the flesh**, (if you set your mind on your life and your stuff all the time you're according to the flesh) **but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.** **⁶ For the mind (phroneo) set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,** **⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so;** **⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** (And then he says for these Roman believers) **⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.**
[Romans 8:5-9]

On what is your mind stayed? That's a test whether you have the Spirit of God. We will be truly united as a church when we have the same mind, as revealed in the Word. Do you remember what Jesus said to Martha in Luke 10? Luke 10:38.

³⁸ Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. **³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word,** (very important, listening to the Lord's word) **seated at His feet.** **⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do**

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all the serving alone? (This is really a lesson for next week's sermon too) ***Then tell her to help me.***" ⁴¹ ***But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴² but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. "*** [Luke 10:38-42]

It said that she was at Jesus' feet listening to the Lord's Word. We are to have a unity of thought together, intent on one purpose. Listen to what Paul says later on in Philippians chapter 4, this is a command by the way.

⁶ ***Be anxious for nothing,*** (Don't worry about anything, God commands you right now, and if you do it's sin, and there are consequences to sin, we've all experienced that. But here's God's provision) ***but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*** ⁷ ***And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** (And he says) ⁸ ***Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,*** (only God is worthy of praise, these are qualities of Christ) ***let your mind dwell on these things.*** (That's one-mindedness, there will be unity when we do that. There will be disunity when you worry, when you sin.) ⁹ ***The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.*** [Philippians 4:6-9]

So, true unity is based on the mind of Christ, revealed through His Word. Do you understand what true unity is? So how can we maintain unity in the church (within believers)? We need to first understand and be motivated by the true bases for unity which is Christ and our relationship with Him. And then we need to recognize the defining marks of true unity, it is the mind of Christ manifest in the true believer. And I want to ask you, do you share the benefits that permeate the life of a true believer? Are you convicted by the Word? Are you persuaded by His love? Do you have fellowship with His Spirit and of His Spirit? Have you experienced His tender-hearted compassion through the forgiveness of your sins? If you haven't, you don't know Christ, no matter what you say, no matter how many prayers you pray, you don't know Him because that is centrally true to those in Christ. And I would exhort you to go before the Lord and repent of your sin and trust in Christ and receive and experience His tender-hearted mercies in the person of Christ, dying for you and forgiving your sins. What a wonderful walk it is for the believer; we need to believe, we need to be reminded of this. We are encouraged and exhorted by the Word. We are tenderly persuaded by His love, we are sharers of His very Spirit, we have experienced His compassion and mercy. This is the basis that should motivate us to continue on and be like Christ, this should motivate us to be like-minded. "If therefore 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, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."

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Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. And Father I pray right now for anyone in here who has not truly experienced the common realities for everyone in Christ. I pray for anyone here who has not been convicted, exhorted, trained, rebuked by the Word of God. I pray for anyone here Lord God who has not been fully consoled by Your love. I pray for anyone here who has no fellowship with You because they don't have Your Spirit. And I pray for those who also have not experienced Your tender-hearted mercies in Christ, that they would recognize they're sinners, that they are in need of a savior, that whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved if they believe in Your Son, if they cry out to Him, You will save them. And Father, for those of us who are in Christ, may we remember the tremendous benefits we have in our walk with You and desire to walk in unity with the same mind. Father I pray we would have the mind of Christ, that we would have the Word dwelling richly in our hearts so that You would be greatly glorified through every situation you allow in our lives. Father, thank You for Your Word now, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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