

# *Philippians 2:3-5*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/10/2007*

## **How can we maintain unity in the church? Part II**

### **Prayer**

Father what a wonderful privilege it is to come before You, to come before the living God, to boldly come before Your throne and to receive grace and find mercy in time of need. We praise You that You were so gracious to reach out, to save as Lord God through Your Son Jesus, that you loved us so much that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We praise You for that and we thank You, and Father as we look into Your Word we pray that You would open our hearts and minds to understand the Scriptures. Father we pray that with humility and laying aside and setting aside all wickedness and all guile that we would receive the Word implanted, Lord God, so that that You would be glorified in our lives. We ask You to bless this time richly and we pray that we would not only be hearers Lord God, but by Your power and strength that we would do what You say so that You would be greatly magnified and glorified. And it is in Christ's name now we pray. Amen.

### **Sermon**

In the book of James, James shares that there are two wisdoms, there is the wisdom from above and there is the wisdom from below, James 3:13,

***<sup>13</sup> Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup> This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. [James 3:13-17]***

There are two types of wisdom, there is God's wisdom and man's wisdom, and we know in Christ exists all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now we've been looking in Philippians and we've been looking and answering the question "How can we maintain unity in the church?" And it is evident in the book of James that man's wisdom brings about selfish ambition, divisions and every sort of evil thing. And today I believe we are going to see that it is only through Christ, the wisdom of God manifest in the person of Christ through the Word of God, manifest in the believer in Christ, that the body of Christ has unity.

Would you turn your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 2. Now I've talked a lot about the so-called churches' way to create unity, and the pressures from people to compromise their faith and the truth to get along and, we've seen so far that that this is not how God brings about unity in the body of Christ.

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We're studying Philippians chapter 2, and I would like to share the context again concerning this book of Philippians. The apostle Paul is the author and he writes to the believers in Philippi while imprisoned under house arrest in Rome. It's approximately 62 A.D. It's been about 10 years since God used the apostle Paul to found the Philippian church as he shared the gospel with Lydia down by the river and she came to faith, and her household. And then Paul and Silas were thrown in prison and while imprisoned instead of complaining and grumbling they were praising God and singing hymns and God caused a great earthquake and freed them from their chains and the guard was ready to kill himself, and they didn't go anywhere, Paul and Silas. And the guard said to them "What must I do to be saved?" And Paul said "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and then it says that he shared the Word with them.

From that beginning in Europe, the first church established in Europe through the Word of God, the apostle Paul with the Philippian church had been very close. They were the only church that had shared with him during certain times in his missionary journeys, and they certainly were certainly very concerned about the apostle Paul. And certainly that concern, also manifested itself in their concern "Was the mystery being hindered because Paul was in prison?" And Paul shares in the beginning of this letter first of all, he's thankful for God's past work in these Philippians, he's so thankful that they share in the furtherance of the gospel, and that he was confident that God would complete His work in these Philippians. And Paul prayed for their love to continue to abound, as we saw a few weeks ago, within the guiding limitations of knowledge and all discernment.

And then we saw that Paul's terrible consequences God had used to bring about the pioneer progress of the Gospel, that Paul desired that Christ would be magnified in his circumstances no matter what. Whether he lived, to live is Christ, whether he died, that Christ will be magnified, to die is gain. He would gain Christ. And Paul shared to these Philippians that ultimately these circumstances that they might have thought were hindering the gospel, God was actually using to bring about this progress of the Gospel. And Paul rejoiced greatly in the midst of those terrible circumstances. And then Paul moved the focus from his circumstances to the Philippian's, revealing that they will suffer too, and that their mindset should be the same mindset as his. Paul desired in every shape and every form that Christ would be magnified.

Now we saw that Paul desired them to live in a manner worthy, as heavenly citizens, to live worthy of their great calling (as Paul would say to the Ephesians) in which they have been called. We saw two weeks ago that they were to stand firm in the truth, Paul exhorted them, they were to strive together for the truth and they were not to be afraid of the opposition to the truth because that very opposition was a sign, or a demonstration by God that they were saved and their opposition was damned as he would say.

And then we have at this point, Paul shifting the focus from their suffering now to the issues that are going on within the body that could inhibit them in the ministry, that could prevent the ministry, that could pull their focus off Christ, which would be disunity in the church. And certainly there were some situations within the church, two women Euodia and Syntyche, two faithful ladies who were following

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Christ but were having a dispute that was so great it had gotten to the ears of the apostle Paul through Epaphroditus. And certainly the danger of any body is disunity and factions and divisions, and as James to say "every sort of evil."

And now at this point we came to chapter 1 in which we saw Paul's exhortation for them to walk in a united fashion, and I'm going to review a lot of what we shared last week and then move into verses three and four in the latter portion of the message. Last week we saw that we, first of all, needed to before we sought to be like-minded, we needed to be motivated (as Paul would say) to like-mindedness by the benefits that we have in our relationship with Christ. Verse 1, chapter 2,

**<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, [Philippians 2:1-5]**

Just reading that passage ought to convict us already as we see the mindset that we should have in Christ. Now remember we saw last week that Paul begins this encouragement, this motivation to like-mindedness by sharing four truths that are common for all believers and he uses this "if" statement. And in the Greek we saw that it was a first-class condition, well what does that mean? "IF", And it is assumed to be true," fully fulfilled. "If there is any encouragement in Christ and yes there is." If you were reading the Greek language that would be how you see it.

Now let's look at those four things just briefly and review these four truths that encompass the reality of every believer, that should motivate us to be like-minded. He begins, "If there is any encouragement in Christ." We saw last week that that word "encouragement" *peraklesis*, this coming alongside one, coming alongside could be translated exhortation or consolation and we saw that God through the Word of God exhorts and encourages and consoles through His Word by the power of His Holy Spirit, and he says "If there is any encouragement in Christ and there is." If you're a believer in you've been encouraged, exhorted, consoled through the Word of God by the Spirit of God, if there is any encouragement in Christ, then he goes on "Then make my joy complete by being of the same mind. If there's any encouragement, and yes there, is if this is your common experience in Christ, and yes it is, make my joy complete." And then he goes to the second portion here, "If there's any encouragement in Christ (and there is), if there is any consolation of love (and there is), then make my joy complete."

Folks, every true believer has been consoled or has experienced God's tender mercies, His subtle prompting, His graciousness through His demonstrated love in the person of Christ, if you are a believer in Christ you have experienced God's tender consolation of love that persuades you, it persuades you to walk with Him. Just the mere fact that God would love us so much that he would send His son, we being

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wretched wicked sinners worthy of death, that He would die for us, that He would love us so much, this is a persuading influence for every believer. "If there is any consolation," that word we saw last week has the aspect of gentle persuasion in it if there is any consolation of love, and there is, then make my joy complete by being like-minded or same minded.

And then he goes to the third truth that is common for all believers, as we review. "If there's any encouragement Christ (and there is), if there's any consolation of love (and there is), if there is any fellowship Spirit (and there is), then make my joy complete being of the same mind." We saw that fellowship of the Spirit, this word, *koinonia*, participation, sharing. It speaks of communion, that every person who has come to faith in Jesus Christ is given the Spirit of God as a pledge and He resides with us forever, He's a guaranty, He's the down payment of the completion of our salvation, the redemption of our bodies. And we share now, and we can fellowship with God through His Spirit, and we can have fellowship with one another because we have His Spirit, we can have oneness because of the Spirit of God. And if this is true about you, and it is believers, then make my joy complete, being of the same mind.

Then we saw the last of the if-statements, "If there is any affection and compassion (and there is)." This affection and compassion, the heart, the bowels of compassion, the tender mercies of God in Christ. We saw last week that those tender mercies came in the person of Christ, Luke chapter 1. A tenderhearted, merciful God reached out, convicted you and convicted us of our sin and the Savior Jesus Christ. If you have experienced His tender mercies, and if you're believer you have, then make my joy complete being of the same mind. These are wonderful motivations for every believer to be like-minded in Christ, and that is how Paul starts this passage by sharing these truths about us in Christ that are common to every believer. Now folks, if you haven't been convicted by the Word of God, you're not saved. If you haven't experienced His tender mercies through the salvation that is in Christ, obviously you are not saved. If you do not have fellowship with the Spirit you are not saved. If you've not experienced His love you are not saved. And folks, if you're not saved there is no unity because you are separated from God because our sin has caused a separation between us and God, but God was so gracious to send His son to die for us, to take care of our sins.

So this was the motivation for unity, first of all, our common truths that encompass every believer, that we should be rejoicing, and that we shouldn't be forgetting what we should be focused on. And then we see at this point, as we looked at last week, that Paul reveals the defining mark of true unity, and I believe it is the mind of Christ, the Word of God manifest in the believer.

Again, "If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if there is any affection and compassion (and yes there certainly is), make my joy complete (how so?) by being of the same mind." How is it that Paul's joy is not looking for a selfish fix of happiness? Paul's heart and mind was summed up in Christ and the things that please the Living God, and he desired them to grow in their faith and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to make his joy complete would be seeing these believers growing closer to Christ, ultimately in the context of like-mindedness. "Make my joy complete (how so?) by being of the same mind."

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Now last week remember we saw this verb “being minded” is actually repeated quite a few times in these few short verses. We have here, verse two, “Make my joy complete by being of the same mind,” *phroneo*. And then at the end of verse two, “...intent on one purpose,” same word, *phroneo*. Then verse five, have this *phroneo* or attitude or mind in yourselves. He’s speaking of the idea of thoughts and thinking, *phroneo*, that’s what it’s speaking of. Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, thinking the same thoughts.

You say how in the world can we believers who are so different think the same thoughts? How can we have the same mind? Verse five gives us the answer, “Have this mind (or attitude) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” What am I saying? It is only when we have the mind of Christ, as we will see, that we are like-minded. And where is it that we find the mind of Christ? In review, we saw this last week that the mind of God is revealed in the Word of God, 1 Corinthians 2:12, as Paul is dealing with the Corinthian church which is out of order and focused on the production of church or whatever it may be, that the flashy gifts. Paul shares that he didn't come with superiority speech, he didn't come with these things that their faith would not rest on man, but he came in the power of God sharing the Word of God. And he expands on that 1 Corinthians 2:12,

**<sup>12</sup> 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, (and he’s going to explain what those things freely given by God are) <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. <sup>15</sup> But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. <sup>16</sup> For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. [1 Corinthians 2:12-16]**

We don’t have the complete mind of God, but God has given us a portion of His mind. He has shared His thoughts to us in His Word. And if we are to be of the same mind, if we are to be Christ-minded we must be thinking the same thing. To think the same thing is to have the word of God dwelling richly in our hearts.

The first application, as we saw in our Romans Bible study of the Gospel, is offering ourselves as living sacrifices Holy and acceptable and well pleasing, and then not being conformed to this world, not allowing the world to squeeze us into its mold, but being transformed by the renewing of the mind. Colossians 3:1-3, says we are to set our minds on the things above, not the things of earth, for we have died and our lives are hidden in Christ. If you have truly been saved you are united to the person of Christ, and if you are united to the person of Christ our minds should be thinking the things of Christ, and that is a command to all believers in Colossians. We must have the Word dwelling richly in our hearts. Folks, some of you have the Word dwelling very poorly in your hearts. All you think about is your life and your own thoughts and your own actions and what you are going to do next rather than the Word of God dwelling richly in your hearts, controlling all that you do and say like that of the blessed

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man in Psalm 1 who meditates in the Word day and night. It's no coincidence that God sovereignly made Psalm 119 the longest psalm, and if you read that Psalm you see someone who has the Word of God dwelling richly in their heart, someone who has the mind of Christ being manifest in their life and in their behavior.

To be same minded as believers, we must have God's truths raining and ruling our thoughts. And folks plain and simple, as I shared last week, biblical unity is based on a true understanding, but not just knowledge alone, a submission to the Word of God. Some people know the word of God really well but they don't submit to it. They don't submit to it in their heart of hearts, they're unwilling to do what God says. Biblical unity is based on true believers thinking the same thing as revealed in the Word of God. When true believers think biblically, when the Word of God is dwelling richly in the heart of true believers, when true believers set their minds on the things above as revealed in the Word of God, when believers submit to God's Word, then there is unity in the body Christ.

You don't have to manufacture it, you don't need to fight for it, you don't need to seek it, you just need to think the same thing as revealed in the Word of God. Do you see why it is so important to be obedient to the Lord's commands, as He shares preach the Word in season and out of season, that we are to be in the Word, that pastors and teachers are to be equipping the saints for the works of service until we gain the unity of the faith, as God uses His word to conform us to the image of Christ, we become united in spirit as we will see.

Now at this point we see actually some defining marks of true unity. He says "Be the same mind," but at this point grammatically he's going to give (this is an English lesson) four participles and an adverb. Well what am I talking about? He's going to modify what "being same-mind" it looks like. What does being same minded look like? Last week we saw two participles and adverb and we'll review those. Today we're going to see two more participles that help us understand what being same minded looks like.

Well let's look at the first three and review those that we saw last week. He says, and actually I'm going to read the passage and I'm going to point out these participles so you can see where they're at. He says, verse 2, "Make my joy complete, being of the same mind, (that's the main portion, that's the main verb) maintaining the same love (that's the first one) united in spirit, (that's an adverb, that's the second one) intent on one purpose, (that's the third one, then there's no verb) do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; (that's the fourth one, and then verse four) do not merely look out for your own interests (that's the fifth one)."

So we're going to review the first three, and we're going to see the second two, and Lord willing we're going to have a real picture of what like-mindedness looks like in real time. So again, the first one we see verse two, "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, (and here's the first description) maintaining the same love." If we are like-minded we're going to be maintaining the same love. The natural consequence of the mind of Christ being manifest in the believer is the same love. When we are like-minded we will love Christ and we will love His truth. When we are same minded we will love the

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same things pertaining to Christ. When we are same minded, we will love one another with the same kind of love, God's love, a love that is not one-sided but is self-sacrificial love. He says "Make my joy complete, being of the same mind," one evidence of that is maintaining the same love.

Secondly, this is this little adverb here, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, (number one) united in spirit..." It speaks of having full agreement, full agreement. The root of the word speaks of the soul, souls being in full agreement. It's not an external unity based on "Well let's all get along," it is a unity that comes from the soul, and obviously in context, it is the mind of Christ manifest in the believer.

Then we saw last week the last portion, the third thing "intent on one purpose," end of verse two. And I pointed out last week that this word is the exact same word as "being minded," it is thinking except it is modified with the word one, "thinking the one thing," thinking the one thing. If you want to be same minded, we will be thinking the one thing. I believe Paul is saying that true unity had a unity of thought. Not that all our thoughts are the same, but that our thoughts are in subjection to the Word of God, and all our thoughts are renewed by what God has said in His Word, it is the mind of Christ. In every aspect of our life, the Word of God should be informing us in how to live. It is by the Word of God that we were brought into a relationship with Christ, is the Word of God, 1 Thessalonians 2, which performs its work in you. It is by the Word of God by which we grow in respect to salvation. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

So we should be maintaining the same love, united in spirit thinking the one thing. Those are evidences, (the first three) of what same-mindedness looks like. And now we get into our passage today where we see the last two and these are where the rubber meets the road, these are where you can really see in action, "Are we same minded or not?" I am going to read back in verse one, then we will read through this passage.

**<sup>1</sup> 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 any affection and compassion, (and there is) <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. [Philippians 2:1-4]**

Now this text in verse three literally reads, there is no verb there, "Nothing according to self-seeking or vain pride," starts out, "Nothing according to self-seeking or vain pride." And then we have the imperative command implied "but with humility of mind let each one regard one another as more important than himself." Notice this verse is speaking, I believe, of the manifestation of same-mindedness. Do you want to know if you are same minded with other believers? This is going to be what is manifest in your behavior. And I believe first of all, we are going to see there is the putting off of

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selfish pride. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit." There's no "do-nothing" in this verse, it says "nothing from selfishness and empty conceit."

Now this word "selfishness" is an interesting word, *eritheia*, it literally spoke of basically a day laborer, or a hireling. And this word was usually used in a negative context, those day laborers or hirelings were in it for their own focus and their own desires. The word carried the sense of one who was out for their own gain without respect to the issues. And it simply spoke of someone who works for money without regard to the issues at hand, or the harm that could be done in what they're doing by such work.

Actually, in secular Greek it was used to speak of self-seeking politicians who would do anything to advance their careers (that sounds like right now actually too) no matter who was hurt along the way. Selfishness or selfish ambition. The word is translated in Scripture different ways, selfishness; it is actually translated "disputes" in Galatians 5:20 in the deeds of the flesh. Obviously selfish ambition leads to disputing, as we saw in James. And it also is translated selfish ambition.

Now Paul uses this very same word in Romans chapter 2 to describe the character of those who are under God's wrath awaiting His judgment. Now Paul shared the character of those of the pagan who had disregarded and suppressed the truth in unrighteousness and did not give God glory or thanks, the evidence that they are under his wrath. Then there was the religious man, the Jew in that time, who was good on the outside but wicked on the inside, and Paul makes sure that they understand that they are under sin also. And in that, he describes them using this word in Romans chapter 2.

***<sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup> who will render to every man according to his deeds: <sup>7</sup> to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but to those who are (our word here) selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. <sup>9</sup> There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, [Romans 2:5-9]***

He uses this one term to describe those who are disobedient to the truth, who do not believe the Gospel, they are selfishly ambitious and this describes the makeup of those who do not know Christ. It is a self-seeking without regard for others. And here we see that Paul says "nothing from selfishness," nothing from this nothing all. Paul used it earlier in Philippians 1:17 to speak of those who attempted to cause him harm in jail by preaching a true Gospel (which he didn't condemn the Gospel because was correct) but they were doing it out of selfish ambitions. And again, James 3 uses this word also and let us look at that again, what I shared in the beginning of the message. Hold your fingers in Philippians and turn with me to James 3. James poses the question to bring about the conviction through the Word of God concerning the evidence of who is truly wise and who isn't. James 3:13

***<sup>13</sup> Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and (here is the word) selfish ambition in your heart, (other people may not see it, it is in the heart, it is a heart problem) do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. (Do not live a lie if***

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your heart is selfishly ambitious, and now he is going to say where all of this comes from, the origin of this wisdom) <sup>15</sup> **This wisdom is not that which comes down from above**, (and this is the core of selfish ambition, here it is) **but is earthly, natural**, (that sounds ok for our Portland area doesn't it? Well it is not, he really hits it on the head) **demonic**. (The wisdom from below which is manifest in selfish ambition is earthly, natural and demonic. And listen to the results) <sup>16</sup> **For where jealousy and** (and here it is again) **selfish ambition exist**, (it's that heart problem) **there is disorder and every evil thing. [James 3:13-16]**

There can be no unity in the body of Christ unless selfish ambition is put aside. Nothing in our lives as believers should be motivated by selfish ambition, nothing. Nothing according to selfish ambition it says literally, nothing. If it is, it is guaranteed that there will be disunity and disorder and every evil thing. If you do anything to advance yourself in any way the result will be this disorder and every evil thing, and if you are a believer certainly there would be God's discipline for such wickedness. Nothing in our lives is to be motivated by selfish ambition, nothing. The believer is not the function in this way. Now it is a heart problem which we saw in James, sometimes we can't see it from the outside but we certainly can see the results which are disunity and every sort of evil thing.

The believer must, through confession and submission and obedience to the Lord, by His strength, say no to this wickedness. We can put it off like a garment, we have the power the Holy Spirit, we can trust in Christ to deliver us. No temptation has come upon us except for that which is common to man, but God is faithful who will provide a way of escape, that we may endure it. God will deliver you from the temptation to be selfishly ambitious if you seek Him and trust Him and obey Him.

Let me ask you this, is there anything, anything, because the passage says "nothing" from this, is there anything in your life that is driven by a desire to elevate self? Seriously, anything? Folks, this sneaks in, it sneaks in really cleverly in our own desires. Is there any area in your life that you seek to elevate self? Maybe you are doing good things for the wrong motives. Maybe you keep up your house or your yard to elevate yourself in front of your neighbor's eyes? Now certainly we need to be good stewards of things like that, but I am saying maybe you do it to elevate yourself. Maybe you raise your kids in such a way as to elevate yourself in front of other parents, it's a motive. Maybe you work hard at work so as to raise yourself above others? Maybe you serve Christ in such a way so as to raise yourself up in the eyes of others? Nothing from selfish ambition, nothing.

Is there any area folks? And we need to confess it, we need to get it out of our lives, we need to get rid of it by confession. God is faithful and just, He forgives our sins. It is earthly, natural and demonic to elevate yourself in any way shape or form, and it causes disorder and division and all sorts of evil. To be like-minded, to have the mind of Christ, to have the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose, there must be nothing from selfishness, nothing. And then he adds another word, "nothing from selfishness and empty conceit." The word (*kenodoxia*) means vain, *keno*, vain, *doxia*, glory, vain-glory. Nothing from empty glory.

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First of all, he is saying in reality you deserve no glory because it's empty. And secondly, he is saying there should be nothing from empty glory. It speaks of an elevation of oneself which has no real basis in fact. It speaks of glory that is empty, it speaks of an improper estimation of self. Vain glory, nothing from an improper estimation of self. God is mindful that we are but dust, every breath we have is from Him, if we consider ourselves adequate in anything were sinning. Paul said we are not adequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God. You think you can do anything in your own strength and power that is empty conceit, or vain glory, nothing from that. Bottom line it is pride.

Do you remember what we saw in the Romans Bible studies, we looked at Galatians chapter 6, this little verse stuck in the middle of oven exhortation to bear one another's burdens and take care of the needs of those teaching? Galatians 6:2-3,

***<sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. [Galatians 6:2-3]***

If you think you are something when you are nothing you deceive yourselves. Nothing motivated by empty conceit or glory. Nothing you do should be motivated by the fact that you think you can do it, that you have the capability to do it. "I can do that!" Nothing. As believers we are to be totally dependent on Christ, we are to be abiding in Christ, His word abiding in us. We are to be yielded, entrusting Him to work through us, and He is faithful to do so. One-mindedness has nothing to do with selfishness or vain empty self-elevation. Is there any area in your life where you think you are something when you are nothing? Is there any area of your life that you do not give God glory or credit or give Him thanks? There is the test whether you think you are something or not you, do you give God the credit and the glory for what He does?

Maybe you're pretty good at your job, maybe God has given you great musical talents? Maybe you are a pretty good parent? Maybe you are a pretty good kid? Maybe you are a good preacher or a good servant? Maybe you are good at some type of task or skill? I hate to break it to you, but apart from God nothing and no one is good, only God is good and only the things that God does through you are good. For if we think we are something when we are nothing we deceive ourselves. And nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, if you do, there is going to be disunity, we won't have the same mind, there will be factions, divisions, all those things if that arises in every relationship you have within the body of Christ. Whether it is in your family, your marriage, whether it is in the church body, whatever it is, nothing from these things, it has to go, we need to trust God when we are tempted to deliver us from these temptations. Nothing from these things.

Now in contrast to putting off this wickedness, Paul shares that, I think, we should be putting on a humble mind. Verse 3,

***<sup>3</sup> Do nothing (or nothing) from selfishness or empty conceit, but (in contrast to that wickedness) with humility of mind (that's the context) let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; [Philippians 2:3]***

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The contrast in the middle of verse three, “but” instead of wicked self-elevation and aggrandizement, and motivation, we are to with humility of mind let each one of you regard one another is more important than himself. This word “humility of mind” actually speaks of low-mindedness. It’s not just the word humility, it is humility of mind. Do you see how all this pulls together, same-mindedness. Now we must have humility of mind. And folks Paul is not speaking of a fake, false humility of the one who says “I’m nothing, I’m no one, I’m nothing, I’m just a servant of Christ.” There is not a fake, false humility which is ultimately pride, as he warns against in Colossians 2. He is speaking of a true humility of mind.

You say “What is that?” What is a humility of mind? What is a lowering of mind? What does it look like? I think our text explains it the best. It has to do with regarding one another as more important self. Here is humility of mind, let each of you, that is everyone, not a few, that is everyone, it is not just the congregation, and the pastors don’t have to do this, or the elders, it is everybody. Let each of you regard one another is more important than himself.

This word “regard” speaks of considering or thinking; again, the the mind. Regarding something, it speaks of making a decision after weighing the facts. When you truly recognize who you are in Christ, that you are really nothing apart from Christ. We are so blessed in Christ, but apart from Christ we are nothing. When we truly recognize who we are, then we should come to the conclusion that others are more important than ourselves. That is humility of mind, a proper recognition of who we truly are in Christ, and thus an elevation of others, who have a proper estimation of oneself before God is to see others as more important than yourself. That’s true humility, and we are going to see next week that true humility is not separated from obedience in the example of Christ. That He was obedient, humbled Himself to the point of death, death on a cross. One Pastor, Dwight Edwards writes,

*True humility is not putting ourselves down but rather lifting up others. If we concentrate on lifting up others, putting down ourselves will take care of itself. As we go through life exalting Christ and others, then genuine humility will be inevitable. If we exalt ourselves then God will take care of our humiliation for He promises to humble the proud. It is much less painful to do it the first way (rather than the second).*

True humility happens when we regard others as more important than ourselves. When we see ourselves in light, weighing the facts on who we truly are in light of what God has said through His Word. And Scripture is replete with commands for believers to be humble; believers are actually called the humble in the Old Testament. It is a description of those who have truly come to faith, they are the humble. Ephesians chapter four

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<sup>1</sup> **I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you** (exhort you, beg you) **to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,** (first thing) <sup>2</sup> **with all humility** (or literally “humility of mind, lowness of mind) **and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, [Ephesians 4:1-2]**

Colossians 3:12

<sup>12</sup> **And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility,** (or lowness of mind, same word) **gentleness and patience; [Colossians 3:12]**

Put it on, renew your mind with the Word of God concerning who you are in Christ, trust Him to live through you put it on. And how does this look? “Let each one of you regard to one another as more important than himself.” The apostle Peter makes it clear that all of us are to clothe ourselves with humility, that's what we should be wearing when someone sees you, they see your clothing right? When someone sees you, the real you, what they should see is humility of mind. 1 Peter 5:5

<sup>5</sup> **You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. [1 Peter 5:5]**

You have a proper estimation of yourself before God, and He gives grace to get through. He gives you grace to do what He wants you to do, He gives you grace to live the way He wants you to live, He gives you grace to follow Christ. Back to our passage,

<sup>3</sup> **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another** (weight the facts concerning your true position and regard one another...) **as more important than himself; [Philippians 2:3]**

Now this word “more important” translated the Greek is *huperecho*. What is that mean? *Huper* is “above,” *echo* is “to hold.” You have “holding one above.” It really speaks of surpassing or supreme. It is actually translated “surpassing” later on in Philippians 3:8 and 4:7. Philippians 3:8, speaking of the surpassing (*huperecho*) value of knowing Christ; speaking of the peace of God which (*huperecho*) surpasses comprehension. It is something way over and above, and we are to look at others and hold them way over and above ourselves. Unless we do that we will not be united.

With lowness of mind, a proper recognition of self, we are to think of others as surpassing, we are to hold them above ourselves. Folks, this is, as we will see, the mind of Christ. It is not selfishly ambitious, as He was not, completely sinless. It does not vainly exalt oneself, for He did not do that, but it properly regards oneself as lower than others by holding others above oneself. And this command again is not for a select few, not a few out here that we need to do this, it says middle of verse three “each of you,” that is every single one of you, God is commanding you through His Word to do this, if you don't do this you are sinning.

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Let me ask you and ask myself, are we obeying this command? When you came to church this morning, did you consider everyone else here as above yourself? Did you come here for your own benefit alone? Certainly we look out for our own interests but also the interests of others. Did you come to church for your own selfish edification or for serving others? When someone says "What time is best for you to get together for this meeting or that?" do you in turn see what time is best for them? And I could go on and on and on with practical applications of seeing others as superior than yourself. And folks we fall short so greatly in this area, and I believe that's why Paul addresses this area right away because it is at the core of our sin, which is pride. Regard one another is more important than yourself. The context is the body of Christ. He (Paul) is talking to believers. And folks, we need to take these commands to heart or disunity and every sort of evil will prevail within this body.

Now what does this look like in real time? What does it look like to see others as superior? Is it being a doormat lying down and letting people walk all over you? What does it look like to actually see others as more superior? Verse four,

**<sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. [Philippians 2:1-4]**

Here we see what this humility of mind of "regarding others as more important" looks like in relationship to man. Now, next week we are going to see how humility of mind looks like in relationship to God, which is obedience. He says here "do not merely look out (this is the fifth participle or fifth description of same-mindedness) looking out." The word is in Greek, *skopeo*. Maybe we get our word "scoping something out," I mean it is possible, I don't know if that's the case, but certainly sounds like it. But this word *skopeo* means to "keep a watchful eye," "to notice carefully," "to watch out."

We certainly do that with their own interests right? We notice carefully what things we need right? We are very careful, we are very conscious of the things that we need. We are very conscious of our own personal interests, and Paul doesn't say "Don't stop doing that," he says "Don't merely just do that for yourself, but look out, scope out, carefully watch for the interests of others, their best interest, keeping a watchful eye. That's what humility of mind looks like in real time, you're more concerned about others. Now I need to make it clear, he is not speaking of a worldly system of serving others, he is speaking of a believer so moved by the word of God and his relationship with Christ that he sees others as more important than himself, and his concern is for them rather than self.

In a corollary statement to selfish ambition and empty conceit there is a watchful eye for the interests of others, not just looking for self, but for others. And in the context he is speaking to believers, this is the body of Christ. We are commanded to keep a watchful eye for the interests of others. And folks, on a side note, you cannot obey his command when you're not together with believers. There are so many commands in Scripture, and so many people are so disobedient just because they're not around. Scripture says in Proverbs, "He who separates himself seeks his own desire," that's that selfishness.

If you're not in the body of Christ, it is an indication that you are selfish, that you are self-seeking and you need to repent. But you say "When I get close to people I get hurt." Folks that is still the mindset of

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self-centeredness. I praise God Jesus was willing to be hurt and suffer for our sake. You say "But I'm shy," I tell you, you are thinking of yourself more than others. Folks, we are to be scoping out, looking for the best interest of others in the body of Christ, and I think in a different way the writer of Hebrews says this very thing, and he connects it with "Not assembling with one another" in Hebrews chapter 10 if you just hold your Bibles and flip with me to Hebrews chapter 10, and we will start at verse 24. Again, part of the applications of being able to boldly come before the throne we see in Hebrews. Hebrews 10:24,

**<sup>4</sup> and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,** (That takes some scoping out to do folks, that takes some noticing of other people, it takes some watching out for the best interests of others. You can't do that in your house by yourself, and here is the corollary statement) **<sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.** (And the statement is basically if keep apart from everyone, it is an evidence that you are not saved) **<sup>26</sup> For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,** **<sup>27</sup> but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. [Hebrews 10:24-27]**

If you are selfishly ambitious and do not want to be around the body of Christ, that is like those who don't know Christ, and I would examine yourself to see if you are in the faith. He who separates himself seeks his own desire. Folks, we are all tempted, we are all the same, common temptations, and you put yourself out, you are going to get hurt. That's okay, trust the Lord, He uses those things as Paul shared earlier to magnify Christ. Get hurt, trust Christ in it and allow Him to work through you. Let me ask you, are you walking with humility of mind, or you self-seeking?

So how can we be united in the body of Christ? First of all, I believe we need to be motivated by the basis for our unity which are these truths that are common to all believers: If there is any exhortation or encouragement in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, tender mercies, if these are true about you then we need to be same-minded. If that's really true, be same-minded. That is the defining mark, it is the mind of Christ manifest in the believer. And how does that look in real time? There is a putting off by the power the Holy Spirit of selfish sin, and putting on the mind of Christ, seeing others as more important than yourself.

Now there are some of you here this morning who live your life consistently in a selfishly ambitious way, and I would say to you examine yourself to see if you are in the faith. That's how nonbelievers live, that's all those who don't know Christ, that's the wisdom from below which is earthly, natural and demonic. And a self-centered mindset in Scripture always describes those who do not know Christ. And if that is true about you, God's wrath is upon you, but God is a gracious God, that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for your sins if you believe in Him, trust in Him, repenting of your sin, accepting Him, crying out to Him as a Savior, He will save you.

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And there are some of us here who are believers who are sinning. We are sinning, we are convicted, and we should all be convicted by this. There should be areas in our lives we go “Man, I am self-serving here, this is totally wrong, Lord, I'm sorry, oh Lord please forgive me.” God is a gracious God, praise God we are forgiven, praise God He puts our sins as far as east is from the west. When we are convicted of our sin and we go to Him and we confess, we are forgiven. Just confess it, “Lord God, I'm sorry. That attitude is totally wrong, I am just thinking of myself, I am sorry Lord, I am sorry.” And there are some big evidences for people here that maybe the self-centeredness has taken root, and that is a staying away from the body of Christ.

And I want to encourage you, can't scope out and look for the needs of others above yourself, we can't consider or stimulate others to love and good deeds if we are not together. And that is not to make you feel guilty, “Well gosh, people haven't seen me around, so I feel more guilty of it, or I better go for other church or something.” Just confess it, and ask God where He wants you to be, and be obedient and step out in faith do it and trust Him, for He is faithful.

Our passage says,

***<sup>1</sup> 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, (and there are) <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this attitude (or mind) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, [Philippians 2:1-5]***

### Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. I thank You Father that You use Your word to convict us. And Father You reprove us, and I just pray that this would have reprov'd all of us, Lord God, that we would all be convicted of areas where we are selfishly ambitious and exhibiting vain conceit. Father and likewise, I pray we would all be convicted of where we are not seeing others is more important than ourselves, where we are not regarding and looking out for the interests of others, and I pray we would be a body that is actively looking out for the interests of others. And Father, I do praise You for those who are doing this in this body, and I pray they would excel still more. I praise You for those who are being obedient. Father, I pray as a whole we would do this together. Father thank You for Your word, Father help us to recognize it is not through our own power and strength that we can do this, it is through Your Spirit by Your word as we abide in Your Son, that You accomplish these truths in our lives. Thank You for Your word. Convict us this week, convict us every day, correct us Lord God that we would be on track train us. And I pray this body would hunger and thirst for righteousness, to walk with You in a right way for Your glory. Thank you now, we pray this in Jesus' name.

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