

**Conducting Ourselves in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel
(Unity and the Church)
Philippians 2:1-4
Part Two**

We are now studying **Phil. 1:27-2:18**. In this section of Scripture Paul shares with us what it means to “conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” The first element of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel is “standing firm in one spirit, with one mind.” If we are going to make a claim to living the Christian life as it should be lived, it must include standing firm. But what does this mean? It means that we will first of all “strive together for the faith of the gospel.” We saw this at the end of **V. 27** and it also involves us being “in no way alarmed by our opponents” which we saw in **V. 28**. In other words, all of us, as God’s people, need to be committed to getting the gospel out no matter what the difficulties. If we do this we can consider ourselves as “standing firm.” The second element of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel is our pursuit of church unity. We saw this in **Phil. 2:1-4**.

How are these two elements related? In order for a church to stand firm in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, that church needs to be united.

Last week I shared with you that in over the 28 years I have been at Valley Bible Church we have had two major internal conflicts. During those two conflicts we were unable to stand firm for the simple reason that we were divided. Rather than corporately pouring our energies into proclaiming the gospel of Christ, we were as a church pouring our energies into addressing the issues that were causing the conflict and healing the wounds that came as a result of that conflict.

How is Phil. 1:27-30 tied to Phil. 2:1-4? A church will not be able to stand firm until it stands united. Standing united is not easy. Standing united is not natural. Certainly we see the evidence of this continually in every human institution. Whether it is a family, a corporation, a country or even a coalition, people inherently find it extremely difficult to work together and this, unfortunately, at times is even true of Christian people.

If this is so then how can we as a church continue to remain united? It is by appreciating the truths contained in **Phil. 2:1-4**. Let us read this passage, **“If there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, (2) make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. (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.”** Philippians 2:1-4 is not simply a call to unity but a formula for unity. We have begun to examine this formula and to look at it’s various components. Hopefully in doing this we will consider our own lives and be able to see if we are well prepared to live in harmony with our brother and sisters in Christ, whether that is in our family, in a Christian organization or the local church. What is the first component of this formula?

The first component of the formula is right motivations. Paul begins to address the topic of unity by outlining for us several different reasons why we as a church should strive to be united. Let us read **Philippians 2:1**, **“If there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion.”** Each of these “ifs”, in this verse, are what grammarians call first class conditions, and therefore they should be understood to mean “because.” “Because” there is encouragement in Christ, “because” there is consolation of love, “because” there is fellowship of the Spirit, “because” there is affection and compassion.” Because of all these what? Look at **V. 2** **“Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in the spirit, intent on one purpose.”** In other words, because of all these things in **V. 1**, because of all these various motivations in **V. 1**, strive for the unity described in **V. 2**.

The first motivation is “encouragement in Christ.” What does the verse say, **“If there is any encouragement in Christ”** or in other words **“because there is encouragement in Christ”** then do what I am instructing you to do in **V. 2**, which is to strive for church unity.

The word translated “encouragement” (PARAKLESIS) means “to call to one’s side.” Yes we are to stand firm striving together for the faith of the gospel, but we do not need to do this alone. Christ has come alongside of us and hopefully by depending upon him in every situation of life, we will find encouragement in both good times and in bad times. And because we are experiencing Christ’s constant abiding encouragement we should therefore what? Strive for church unity. Our striving for church unity is a concrete expression of gratitude for all the encouragement that we have received and are receiving in Christ.

Hopefully you have been practicing the presence of Christ this week. Hopefully you have by faith turned to Christ in the good times by giving Him thanks, and in the bad times and asked Him for help. And in all of these times, whether good or bad, you have found personal encouragement. If you have, then you are well prepared, as an expression of gratitude, to pursue church unity. You might think that we must be about done with the area of motivations as it relates to the striving for church unity, but we are not. There are more. My hope for this message as we continue to examine these various motivations is that you will become even more prepared in your mind and spirit to pursue unity because of the time we spend together this weekend.

What is the second motivation that Paul lists in **V. 1**? The second motivation is “consolation of love.” Let us again look at **V. 1** but this time we will read the second phrase. **“..... if there is any consolation of love”** or in other words **“because there is consolation of love.”** Paul is saying, **“Because there is consolation of love”** do what I am instructing you to do in **V. 2**, which in essence is telling us to strive for church unity.

Our ongoing relationship with Christ as a source of encouragement has been established by the first motivation. But Paul is not yet finished developing this thought. In using this next phrase, Paul reemphasizes the thought of the encouragement that Christ continually brings to our lives in the good times and the bad times. But in this phrase he paints a fuller picture of that encouragement. And he does this by adding the phrase, “consolation of love.”

What does the word “consolation” mean? The word “consolation” (PARAMUTHION) fundamentally means “to speak to someone” or “to speak to someone by coming close to his side,” and always in a friendly way. People might like to come alongside of us to encourage us but it may not always be in a friendly way. There are people who have tried to encourage me in the past just because it was their job. There have been people who have tried to encourage me in the past and they may have truly cared, but they did it in a very harsh way. (Story of my high school basketball coach yelling at me).

Christ has lovingly come alongside us in a friendly way. Why? Because he loves us. Let us again look at the verse. Paul does not simply say, **“if there is any consolation”** or in other words **“because there is consolation”** but rather he says, **“if there is any consolation of love.”** Or in other words **“Because there is consolation of love.”** The friendly encouragement that Christ continually brings into our lives in the good times and bad times, flows from His love for us. Jesus has not come to our side to encourage us in some sort of bureaucratic or official capacity or in a harsh way, but in a very personal, caring way as person would his friend.

Do you have a personal sense of this? Certainly the writer of the hymn “He Lives” did. Listen to the words of this song, “I serve a risen Savior, He’s in the world today; I know that He is living whatever men may say; I see his hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer, and just the time I need Him, He’s always near..... He lives. He lives. Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way.” Is this how you see your relationship with Christ? If it is, how can you not be motivated to pursue church unity, knowing how important it is to Christ? Again I need to emphasize to you the importance of seeing our obedience to Christ as a response to a personal relationship with the Lord and not as a response to some arbitrary rule. Certainly King David understood this point.

Listen to the thoughts of King David in **Psalm 51** as he reflects upon his sin with Bathsheba. Listen to the words of David, **“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. (2) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (3) For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. (4) Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight.”** David responded in this way because his obedience or disobedience was a very personal thing between himself and God based on his confident assurance of God’s love for Him.

This is the way it needs to be in our lives. Because of Christ’s constant and abiding friendly encouragement that flows from His love for us in the good times and in the bad times, we should want to please the Lord by being obedient to Him, which of course in light of the context here in **Phil. 2:1-4** means that we would want to strive for church unity.

Even as I am sharing this you might be saying to yourself, “This is not how I respond. Yes, I know that I may not have done a right thing but I don’t feel this anguish that you are talking about in respect to failing Christ.” Why would this be? The answer is very simple. Your mind is not on Christ and His love for you, which is expressed by His constant friendly encouragement in every situation and circumstance of life. It is on everything else but that.

What is the third motivation that Paul lists for us in **V. 1** to motivate us to strive for unity? Let us again look at **Philippians 2:1** **“If there is any encouragement in Christ (and there is), if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit (and there is).”** The third motivation is “fellowship (KOINONIA) of the Spirit.” Paul is making a transition from focusing the Philippians’ attention from Christ to the Holy Spirit.

You might wonder at this point why Paul changed his focus? Let me ask you this question: does the Holy Spirit desire unity in the church? And what would the answer to that question be? Of course! The Holy Spirit not only desires church unity, He is the source of church unity (1 Corinthians 12:13; Eph. 4:3). What does **1 Cor. 12:13** tell us, **“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”** Because he is the source of unity this is why the Apostle Paul in **Eph. 4:3** says, **“Being diligent to preserve What? the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

Why did Paul change his focus from Christ to the Holy Spirit as he lists various motivations for the Philippian church to pursue unity? Very likely because the Holy Spirit is the source of church unity.

What does Paul say about the “fellowship of the Spirit”? The word “fellowship” (KOINONIA) comes from a Greek word meaning “common.” What do we share in common with the Spirit? We share His life in common. Listen to **1 Cor. 6:19** **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”** Christ told His disciples that he would not leave them nor forsake them. But then immediately after saying this He ascended to the right hand of His Father. How could He be at the right hand of His father and at the same time be with His disciples? He is able to do this through the Holy Spirit or the helper.

I am not making this up. Listen to **John 16:7**, **“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”** Who is the helper? The Holy Spirit is the helper. And when he comes he takes up residence where? He takes up residence in our lives and why was he sent into our lives? To help us. In fact it is through the Holy Spirit that Christ’s encouragement is ministered to us (John 16:14,15). Listen to **John 16:14**, **“He (The Holy Spirit) shall glorify Me (God the Son); for He (The Holy Spirit) shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. (15) All things that the Father (God the Father) has are Mine (God the son); therefore I said, that He (God the Spirit) takes of Mine (God the Son), and will disclose it to you.”**

What is the third motivation that Paul gives us in **Philippians 2:1** to cause us to strive for church unity? The third motivation that Paul gives us is the fellowship of the Spirit or in other words His ministering presence in our lives as he brings help to us in the time of our need.

What is the fourth motivation that Paul gives the Philippians? The fourth motivation is “affection and compassion.” The question that we need to ask is, “Whose affection and compassion?” I

believe that it is the “affection and compassion” of the Holy Spirit. It is true that it could be referring to the affection and compassion of Christ but this would not be consistent with how the verse has unfolded. In order to be consistent, it would appear necessary to understand the phrase “affection and compassion” as elaborating on the “fellowship of the Spirit” just as the phrase “consolation of love” elaborated on the “encouragement in Christ.”

The Holy Spirit has affection for us (Romans 8:26-27). Listen to **Romans 8:26-27, “And in the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; (27) and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”** The groanings of the Spirit are not produced out of concern for Himself but rather for us.

It is a wonderful thing to know that people are praying for us. But be assured of this that no one is praying for us more fervently than the Spirit Himself who is said to be “**interceding for us with groanings too deep for words.**”

The word “affection” comes from a Greek word (SPLANCHNON) which referred to intestines. It came to refer our capacity to love at the deepest level. This word was used in Philippians 1:8 to refer to the affection of Christ, but here it appears to be used to refer to the affection of the Holy Spirit. But not only is the Spirit’s presence in our lives characterized by a deep affection for us, it is also characterized by compassion. Again look at the verse, “**if any affection and compassion.**” The word “compassion” (OIKTIRMOS) can also be translated “mercies,” and refers to the manifestations of the “affection” in various yearnings and actions. In other words, because of this great affection He is continually helping us. Certainly by leading us into understanding and applying the truth of God’s word, by filling us with all those wonderful virtues that He Himself is characterized by, by assuring us that we are in fact the children of God. The Spirit of God never rests in His ministry in our lives.

CONCLUSION

Why should we strive for church unity? The bottom line is that it has very little to do with us getting something for ourselves and it has much more to do with our desire to please the Lord in light of all that He has done for us.

Is this how you feel? Then if it is then you will completely understand and respond to **Phil. 2:1, “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), if any affection and compassion (and there is)..... (2) make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”**