

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

Lynn and I have many wonderful memories together but very early in our relationship there were some rocky times. The very earliest conflict I can remember was shortly after we had begun dating and the conflict was over ice cream. The problem was not whether or not we wanted ice cream but rather over where to get it. Now you have to remember that we were in the courtship portion of our relationship and in light of this I believe that I made a strategic blunder in choosing the place I chose to go. I chose to stop at “Thriftys” which had a selection of maybe 12 flavors of ice cream which cost a very reasonable 5 cents a scoop. The problem with this was I knew that Lynn’s preferred choice would have been to go to “31 Flavors” which obviously would have given her a better selection. The reason I chose not to go there was the ice cream at “31 Flavors,” when Lynn and I were dating, was 24 cents a scoop. Somehow in driving up to Thriftys I got the definite sense that Lynn took exception to my choice. I don’t remember exactly how she communicated this. It might have been just from the vibes that I imagined she was giving off. But no matter how I thought she communicated it, I know that I became irritated and most likely communicated my displeasure in words that were not very gentle.” At that point we were off and running. Here we were, two professing believers in the midst of a conflict, a stupid conflict which should have never been. And the passage that we will be examining this morning I believe will really drive this point home. Not only will the passage drive home the absurdity of it, but also what should have happened.

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.” Paul is sharing with us how our lives should look in light of our profession of faith in Christ. And what should be very clear to us as we study this passage is the fact that as we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, our lives will definitely stand out from the world around us. Hopefully you have already begun to see that this is true in the little bit of time that we have spent examining this passage.

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.” And certainly we can see how this particular element sets us apart from the world. They are striving to be wealthier. They are striving to be more comfortable. But hopefully we are striving to introduce the world to Christ, our risen Savior and Lord. This desire will impact all our interactions with unsaved people whether that is in our family, in our neighborhood, or at work. Standing firm, which is the first element of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ will

dramatically set us apart from the world. What is the second element?

The second element of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel is our pursuit of church unity. If we are going to make a claim to living the Christian life as it should be lived, it must include not only standing firm but striving together for church unity. We saw this in **Phil. 2:1-4**. This is the present passage that we are now examining. 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.”** This passage is not simply a call to unity but a formula for unity.

If we understand this formula and apply it to our lives, we will once again set ourselves apart from the world in a very dramatic way. The world finds it very difficult to stay united. They continually find themselves at odds with one another, whether that is in their families, within their neighborhoods, or within their places of employment. But this should not be so for the church. This should not be the case with those who are professing to be born again Christians, even when it comes to ice cream. Hopefully the church will be a place of incredible harmony, a place of wondrous peace and certainly all this is possible if we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. And of course if we are successful in doing this, we will dramatically set ourselves apart from a world who never can figure out how to get along and never seem to be able to work together in any concerted way.

We are in the process of breaking down this formula for unity in Philippians 2:1-4 into its basic components. The first component in the formula for church unity is right motivations. 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 or in other words “the condition of reality. With this understanding, the verse could be read this way, “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** which are in fact true, because of all the blessings listed for us in **V. 1** that the Lord has poured out upon our lives, then strive for the unity that is described in **V. 2**.

This morning we will now move from the motivations that Paul gives us in **V. 1** to strive for unity, to examine the description of unity itself. The second component in the formula for church unity is a right description (Philippians 2:2). Within this description are various marks; within this description are various characteristics that help us to identify the unity that Paul is talking about when it is present or absent, depending on whatever the case might be.

The first mark of unity is “being of the same mind” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Let us look at **Phil. 2:2**,

“Make my joy complete by being of the same mind.” The key to unity is thinking alike. We see a similar thought shared with us in **1 Cor. 1:10**. Listen to this verse, **“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.”** Why was Paul exhorting them to think alike? Listen to the next verse, **“For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you.”** The key to unity is thinking alike. But even though this is true, it still does not tell us what “being of the same mind” or “thinking alike” means.

Is this talking about being able to agree about where we go for ice cream? This might be a very small part of it, but certainly it is not at the heart of it. I can assure you that even when we agree on surface issues such as where to buy ice cream, that it is very possible for us to still experience conflict and not even be close to experiencing what it means to be of the “same mind.”

Is this talking about doctrinal unity? Certainly it involves doctrinal unity because our view of doctrine will hopefully in fact shape the way we think on a deeper level than simply our choice of where to buy ice cream. But even doctrinal agreement will not necessarily produce what Paul is talking about in **Phil. 2:2**. I can assure you that even when we agree on something as significant as biblical doctrine, it is still very possible for us to experience conflict and not even be close to experiencing what it means to be of the “same mind.”

To help us understand more of what Paul means when he says “being of the same mind” let us look at the word “mind.” It is a familiar and popular word in the writings of Paul. It is used ten times in Philippians and a total of twenty three times by Paul out of twenty-six occurrences in the New Testament. Paul really likes this word. The word “mind” (PHRONEO) is used by Paul to describe a person’s whole disposition. It not only involves the person’s thoughts but his feelings and ultimately his will which results in him striving after one thing.

Being of the same mind with other people is not easy to accomplish. Getting people to uniformly strive for one thing is very rare on any level. Consider your home. Are you and your wife of one mind? How about your family? Is your family of one mind? How about your place of employment? How about your neighborhood? How about our country? Coming to the place that we are of one mind with anyone or any group of people is extremely difficult but it should be something that as Christians we should be able to accomplish!!

What is the one thing that we should be striving for as Christians? What is the one thing that should draw us together in such a way that we could be described as “being of the same mind?” I believe that we find some help in this by looking at how Paul uses the word for mind (PHRONEO) in Romans 8:4-6.

Let us turn in our Bibles to **Romans 8:4-6**, **“In order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (5) For those who are according to the flesh set their minds (PHRONEO) on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (6) For the mind (PHRONEO) set on the Spirit is life and (What?) peace.”** What do we learn from this

passage of Scripture? That we have a choice. We can either as Christians think on the things of the flesh, or we as Christians can think on the things of the Spirit. We can either think on the things that please us or we can think on the things that please the Lord. Which of these two choices do you think Paul has in mind when he says in **Phil. 2:2** **“Make my joy complete by being of the same mind?”** Certainly it is choosing to think or dwell on the things that please the Lord rather than ourselves.

What does it mean to be of the “same mind”? “Being of the same mind,” to Paul, means that we are wholly committed to setting our minds on the things of the Spirit seeking to please the Lord rather than ourselves (Romans 8:4-6). And of course if we choose to do this it will have a dramatic impact on all our relationships. Rather than having our flesh controlling our relationships, the Spirit will be controlling our relationships.

What happens when we set our minds on the things of the flesh? What happens when we set our minds on the things that please us? We will reap the deeds of the flesh. What are the deeds of the flesh? Let me read for you **Gal. 5:19-22**, **“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, (21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”** If we fail to get beyond living our lives simply to please ourselves, or in other words, setting our minds on the things of the flesh, it will be impossible to enjoy peaceful relationships. But if we can get beyond this by seeking to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, by living a life pleasing to the Lord, then we will reap the fruit of the Spirit. And what is the fruit of the Spirit? Listen to **Gal. 5:22** **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love , joy , (What?) peace.....”** We will not only be able to enjoy peace inwardly but we should also expect to enjoy peace in our relationships with others who are like-minded or in other words peace with those who are of the same mind with us.

What have you chosen to fix your mind on? Have you purposed to fix your mind on the things of the flesh, seeking to live a life pleasing to yourself? Or have you purposed to fix your mind on the things of the Spirit, seeking to live a life pleasing to Him? Some of you might say, “I would like to say that I have chosen to fix my mind on the things of the Spirit but my mind is very feeble and weak.” This may very well be true, but when the Scriptures call us to fix our minds on the things of the Spirit, it is really a call for Him to do this through us. **1 Cor. 2:16** says, **“For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”** In Christ we have all the resources we need in order to accomplish His will for our lives. We have the resources in Christ to set our mind on the things of the Spirit because we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). It is not a matter of if we can but simply will we.

CONCLUSION

Paul is giving to us in Phil. 2:1-4 a formula for unity. He gives us the right motivations in Phil.

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2:1 and he describes for us the unity that he is exhorting us to pursue in Phil. 2:2. He begins describing that unity by calling Christians to be of the same mind. This is the beginning of the challenge that Paul is setting before us in this description.

When I took Lynn to Thriftys, I did not take her there because I only had a dime in my pocket. I took her there because that is where I wanted to go. I had the money to take her to where I knew she would have preferred going but I chose against it. And when I thought she did not seem grateful for the nickel scoop of ice cream that I was willing to provide her, I reacted and punished her for it. I failed the challenge that Paul is giving us in Phil. 2:2.

How had I failed? As a Christian I chose not to operate according to the mind of Christ. I did not choose to set my mind on the things of the Spirit. I chose against living my life in a way that would please the Lord. And in doing this I in effect chose to set my mind on the things of the flesh. I chose to live my life in a way that pleased myself and I reaped what I sowed.

Certainly I hope that I would not continually repeat this failure in my marriage or in any of my relationships. I hope that you would not as well. How can we be motivated not to do this? **“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) (2) Make my joy complete by being of the same mind Make my joy complete by fixing your mind on the things of the Spirit rather than on the things of the flesh, make my joy complete by being of the same mind.”**