

The Benefit of being United with Christ

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Preacher: Ken Farnen

[0:00] Philippians chapter 2 because I wanted to jump off of that because what I'm so amazed about! that Old Testament passage is the thought words. You know what we think! is really who we are. That's what Descartes say. I think therefore I am.

That's the philosopher. But what he was basically saying is because I think I know I'm real. I'm alive. And God created us in his image and likes to think. And the things that we think affect how we live. They really do.

That may sound like psychobabble to some of you. But that's the way it is. If you think in a particular manner it's going to be a self-fulfilling prophecy for you at times. But also with God it's important for us to think the thoughts of God.

So we're thinking of his thoughts and his things. And so the scriptures Philippians 2. And I'm going to quote the first four verses and then we'll look at the next four next week. The last part talks about the same word is used here.

He says to be like-minded in verse 4. The word is phreneo in the original language. And then what it says later have the same attitude of Christ. Which really that's the word phreneo. Which means think the thoughts of God. Think the thoughts of Jesus.

[1:02] Think God's things not the things of the world. And so that's sort of what this what our sermon is going to be about today. So he says the apostle Paul says there. And these are great words for the church the body of Christ.

And we can tell the way that he's talking here. That there seems to be some struggle in the church body. Can you believe that? That people don't get along with each other in church. That can't possibly be true. It's a reality.

We don't always get along with each other. And there's reasons for that. But that's so Paul's dealing with some of those problems in the church. And he says this. If any of you have any encouragement for being united with Christ.

If any comfort from his love. If any fellowship with the spirit. If any tenderness and compassion. Then make my joy complete by being like-minded.

Having the same love. Being one in spirit and purpose. And then here's the kicker here. Which we all need to think about. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

[2:00] Instead consider others as better than yourself. Think not only to your own interests. But also to the interests of others. So Paul is what he's basically saying. There's an if then. This is a clause.

If this is true then do this. So we see the if then. And if there's anything good that's having the benefit of being part of Jesus Christ. The benefit of being a believer. The benefit of knowing Christ as your savior.

If you have any benefit from those things. Then do this. And so what he says there is to get along with one another. And to be like-minded one with another. There's many parts to that.

But let's just start talking with the word united. And what are the benefits of being united with Christ. The phrase here in the original language is en Christo. Which means to be in Christ.

It doesn't actually use the word united. But it says if you are in Christ. And that phrase is used many times by the apostle Paul. And the importance of us being in Christ. And what are the benefits of that. That's what this passage talks about.

[2:55] But he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 13. He says we've been baptized by the spirit into the body of Christ. So when you trust Jesus as savior. You know by the way this is really important for you to know.

You're not saved because you come to church today. I'm glad you're here by the way. It's good to see you. But you're not saved because you're here at church today. You're not saved because you go to this particular church. Or that particular church.

You are saved when you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins. And that you can do nothing to save yourself. Except throw yourself at his feet and say I need Christ. I need Jesus to be my savior. That's how you're saved.

And when you believe immediately in your heart. You are united with the living God. That may sound crazy. And this is not some mystical thing in the sense of a spirit.

But God we are united with Christ now. It's not just me that lives. Galatians 2.20. I have been crucified with Christ. I died with him. I was buried with him.

[3:49] I was raised with him to newness of life. And I live. What does Paul say? But I don't really live. The life I live is by faith in the son of God. Who loved me and gave himself for me. So the way that I live is by living his life through me.

Not my own life. I've given up my need and desire to be in control. Oh, I have not given that up.

Have you given that up? The need to be in control of your life? No, I have not given that up.

But I know that I'm supposed to give that up. I'm in the process of giving that up. And I understand that the only way I can really do anything effectively for the Lord is if it's him doing it through me.

Not me and myself. And many times, even when we were here at Cascade Mountain Bible Church. You know it's been 26 years ago we left here? It's hard to believe. It's been that long. Anyway, we left here 26 years ago.

And even here at the church there were many times we would try to make something happen. And throughout the years I'm trying to make something happen. If we work harder it's going to happen. If we do more. And the harder I work sometimes the less anything happens.

[4:47] And then all of a sudden, boom, stuff starts happening. It's over here. It's God working through his spirit in some way. And so we go over there and just be involved in what he's doing. Rather than trying to make it happen ourselves. Christ through us.

But we're united with Christ. By the way, we're never going to get through this until 2 o'clock. You guys are going to miss the final. The final. No, we'll be done. But we are baptized into the body of Christ.

And when that happens it's a union that takes place. So it's not me anymore. It's Christ and me together. I am in Christos. In Christos. I am in Christ. And we share in his identity.

His death is burial. His resurrection. And we also are a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5.17 Behold, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. Behold, all things, old things are passed away.

All things have become new. Your life is new. You get a fresh start. A fresh beginning. And when we're in Christ, we are a new creation. And there's also no condemnation. Romans 8.1 is a beautiful scripture where Paul says, Therefore there now is no condemnation for those who are in, en Cristo, in Christ Jesus.

[5:51] There's no condemnation. That's a beautiful thing, isn't it? I am in Savior. It's my salvation comes through Jesus Christ. There's no condemnation. So all these things are benefits to being in Christ.

And we're going to see these as we go through it. But there's a union there. In short, the Apostle Paul, to be in Christ means, is defining the reality of what it is to live the Christian life.

It's transformative. First of all, if you are in Christ, your life will be changed. It is transformative. It's also personal. He loves you. And the transformation is happening personally for you.

It's corporate. We are together here corporately. What a blessing even today to see some old friends and sing music and have fun with an accordion and a banjo of all things. With the body of Christ, there's a corporate reality and blessing of being united together, one with another.

And so there's the corporate aspect of it. And we have a union with the crucified, risen Lord. And it redefines our identity, who we really are. Our identity is redefined.

[6:51] And also it gives us security in our salvation, unites us together as believers, and it gives us the power to live a holy life. I can't live a holy life on my own. But with the power of Jesus within my heart, I can live in a righteous and a godly manner for him.

There's lots of other ways we can consider. But what I want to say is, I don't think we realize on a daily basis how fantastic this reality is, that you are united with Christ, the Son of God.

You are united with Christ. That is a beautiful and amazing thing. So we are united. Let's move on just for time. Let's go on to the...

So he says, if you are united with Christ, we are in... Sorry, that's my daughter Molly calling to ask why I'm not there to take her to McDonald's this morning. And Carrie has never seen my phone before.

I just gave it to her. I said, you are now in charge of my phone when I preach. But my daughter Molly, we go to McDonald's every Sunday on the way to church. She gets a large coffee and a... Anyway, it doesn't matter.

[7:57] So that's why she's calling right now. She has Down syndrome. If you don't know, she's 26, but she's a blessing. Anyway, so if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, the word here, encouragement, comes from the French word, let's try to say it, encourageur, encourageur, I don't know how they say it in French.

I never took French, but encourageur is the word. And it means to make strong. The prefix en means to make or to put in, to put something in, and encourage means heart, courage and heart, strength.

So to encourage is to bring courage to another person, to put it into their life. And so that's what we think of Barnabas.

He was the son of encouragement, son of encouragement, so he would encourage, he would bring strength and courage to other people. And I don't know how many times I can say, people in this room right now have brought courage to my life. Friends and loved ones that have brought me courage to be able to continue to keep going because there's times when I don't have the strength anymore.

But he says, if you have any encouragement for being united with Christ, and Jesus as my soul, in my soul is my encourager. Then, and comfort from his love.

[9:09] We'll try to go through these a little faster this morning. The word there is parakletos, which John uses it as a noun. Paul never uses it as a noun. He uses it as a verb.

But as a noun, it means a paraclete, a person who comes alongside of you like a lawyer. And that is used in, by John in the book, Gospel of John, when Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit who is going to come.

He'll be a paraclete. He'll be one that speaks on your defense. He'll be one that convicts you of sin. He'll be one that encourages you. So he does all those things. Paul uses it, the word more, to encourage one another.

Not as a noun, but more as a verb. And we see it in four different contexts. We'll just go through them quickly. The first one is, in suffering, 2 Corinthians 1, verse 3 and 4.

You can just write it down. We'll turn there now. Where Paul says, talks about, the God of all comfort has comforted us wherewith we may also comfort others. That's the word. That's the word paraclete that's used there.

[10:11] So God has comforted us so we can comfort others as they go through their struggles and trials. And that's certainly true. As a pastor, when I go to help other churches and pastors, pastors are supposed to be perfect.

Did you know that? Supposed to have it all together, right? Supposed to not make any mistakes. No, everybody knows that's not true. But you kind of want your pastor to live a little better than you do possibly. Maybe.

But the reality is, we cannot. We cannot. And we have struggles and we have trials too. So when I go around, I come around and talk to pastors. I say, I'm here for you.

I don't want any money. I'm not trying to get anything for you. I'm here to give you, give to you. Give to you encouragement and help you. And we give money through Julie's Fund. We made a fund in my wife's name where money can be given for counseling.

And I believe there's about six to eight pastors, some pastors, some wives across the country who have taken that money to get counseling because it's really difficult for them to say, I need help to their congregation or to other people.

[11:14] So we're trying to do those sorts of things. That's what we're doing. But encouragement and comfort, we're trying to comfort. And that's one of these words, the word apparently coming alongside these people, comforting in suffering.

That's the one way the word is used. It's also used as divine intercessor where Paul says in Romans 8 that the spirit of God helps us in our weakness. He intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words to express.

And I've thought of that as well. There's times I don't know what to pray. I'm going to say, all you can say is help. That's all you can say. And God knows your heart and his spirit speaks to your spirit with words you don't even know what you're saying.

You're not saying anything. But God is giving you comfort through his spirit who dwells within you. It's also used for exhortation and teaching where the Holy Spirit guides the church.

That's in John also where Paul uses it that way. And assurance of sonship, Romans 8, 15, where it says the spirit is a helper to secure our relations, help us to know that we are the children of God.

[12:16] So those words are used. Next is fellowship in the spirit. Fellowship with the spirit. The word is *koinonia*, which is the fellowship that's coming together. It's participating together and the encouragement that comes from the body of Christ.

When we were in Spokane, Julie was going to have our third child, Molly, and we went to get an ultrasound. When we lived here in Leavenworth, we didn't make enough money to get an ultrasound.

We were, so, and that was okay because I think we paid cash for the babies at Central Washington Hospital. They took cash. It was just quick, easy. It was cheaper than it is today for sure to have a baby.

And Julie didn't have any super complications for her birth, so we just paid for it. Well, we got to Spokane, and I had insurance that would let us get an ultrasound. And so we got an ultrasound for Julie, and they said, come back.

We need to do another ultrasound. And, of course, we were concerned about that. And then they said, you know, they pulled us aside afterwards, the second ultrasound. They said, we want you to know that one of the ventricles, I didn't even know that your brain had ventricles.

[13:20] I knew your heart had ventricles. One of the ventricles of the brain of your baby looks larger than it should be. We think there's an abnormality. What do you call it? When the hormonal, no, no.

What are the things that come together? What's the word? You guys know? Birth defect, basically. Yeah, yeah. Anyway, there's a phrase, and I clearly cannot remember what it is.

But, and so they said, they wanted to give us an opportunity to do something to terminate the pregnancy, if you can imagine that. And we just sat there and said, we were kind of shocked that they would give us that option, and we just said, no, we are believers.

We believe that God created this baby. Whatever the baby is, we will receive that child. And then when the baby was born, when Molly was born, and I didn't believe it was true. These guys, they don't know what they're talking about.

And Julie did believe it. So Julie came to grips with the reality like she normally did before I did. And I said, I won't believe it until it happens. Well, Molly was born. I looked at the nurse, and the nurse kind of nodded her head.

[14:25] I could kind of tell as well that Molly had Down syndrome, and she was born. I just know that Kevin Grady was a man in our church in Spokane. He was taught one of our young adult Bible classes at the church.

I walked out of the door almost immediately, and Kevin was walking down the hall, and he just gave me a hug. I remember I just wept. And he just gave me a hug. That's all he did. I didn't say anything.

And the fellowship with the Spirit, and the encouragement, and the comfort, all these parts of being in the body of Christ, we're brothers and sisters in Christ. And we show that kind of love and compassion for one another.

And I felt that in a real demonstrative way that day. I felt it many times over the years. But I just want you to know, as he's saying here, the benefits, all these amazing things we have from being a Christian.

The final one he talks about there is tenderness and compassion. And the word there means bowels and intestines. The old King James says, bowels of mercy. I remember memorizing that verse. I had no idea what that meant, but that was part of the Wana verse I had to memorize as a kid, the bowels of mercy.

[15:30] Because that was sort of the center of some of their personalities, especially for deep emotional feelings, whether it be love, or whether it was from the bowels, came from the, not from the heart. We think of the heart, but they were talking here about the bowels.

But that aspect of tenderness and compassion. I just, the only thing I want to say about that is Jesus. Let's turn to a passage here, because I've just been talking here. Mark chapter 6.

Look at Mark 6, if you would, from over here. And I like the context of this passage where Jesus has sent out the 12 disciples in chapter 6.

And so lots is going on here. The disciples went out to do ministry on their own, and they weren't supposed to take anything with them, just trust the Lord the whole way. And so that's kind of what they did. John the Baptist is beheaded, last part of chapter 6, which really shook the Lord.

I mean, he was God, but he was also a man. I think he knew that that was eventually going to happen, but it was very, he loved John the Baptist, that was his cousin, and he was the precursor to his ministry.

[16:40] So it was emotionally difficult for Jesus to hear this news. And then he feeds the 5,000. There's all these people that are around him. These people are coming around him. And let's just go on, we're going to read verse, chapter 6, verse 32 and 33 through 34.

So we'll start in verse 30. The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done. And then verse 31, then because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat.

Okay, so picture what this is like. My life has felt like that a little bit lately, but Jesus and his disciples, everybody was coming. Jesus was healing people. Thousands of people were coming through.

They heard, oh, there's a man over here and he's healing. And so the people from all over Galilee were coming to Jesus to be healed. And that verse kind of says it and we kind of read right over that, but they're coming and going and they haven't even had a chance to sit down and eat yet. And he says to his disciples, come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

[17:53] But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from the towns, got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed, he saw a large crowd. He had compassion on them because they were like a sheep without a shepherd.

So he began teaching them many things. I think Matthew has a similar passage. He calls them helpless and harassed. They were helpless and harassed. He had compassion on them. So we get the picture. Their tire's been a long time.

They come to be, they're going across the river. They get in the boat, try to get away from the crowd. What the crowd sees them? They start walking around the lake to the other side. And he lands and they're there. They're there again. The same people are on the other side.

But Jesus didn't get upset. He didn't get angry. What does it say? He had compassion. Compassion is to feel with. Compassion means, the calm means to be with. Compassion, with compassion is really what that word means.

So Jesus had such compassion for the people. And we have compassion for one another also. That comes from being united with Christ. Because we're united with him, we are people of compassion.

[18:57] Like minus, let's talk about this word. That's the if-then. We've already talked about that. He says, be like-minded. So that's the word for nail. That's really the whole point of my sermon today.

I want you to think about your mind. What are you thinking about? What is it that you focus on? What is it that becomes a part of your life? He says, to be like-minded.

And that's a directional word. And I want to talk about it this way. The direction of one's thinking proves crucial to understanding the word's force. Forms, the verses like, do not think more highly of yourself, which we're going to read in a moment, or do not think high things.

Do not be arrogant is basically what that means. It talks about your thinking, the direction of your thinking. And you can take that both ways. Don't think more highly of yourself. Don't think too lowly of yourself. But the thinking is important.

Thinking is never neutral. Humans are always oriented towards something with striving and endeavor to embed into our nature. So Paul and Romans 8. Let's go back to Romans 8. We're going to look there.

[20:05] Romans chapter 8. Keep knocking this off, sorry. Romans 8. And we see the directional quality of the word here.

We already quoted verse 1 about there's no condemnation for those in Christ. Look at verse 5. We'll start there. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their froneo, their minds set on what that nature desires.

But those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their froneo, their mindset on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit.

If the Spirit of God lives in you. So, we have that word there, mindset. And I like that because it's like your mind is sitting on something. You place your mind on something. And that thing that you place your mind on, if it's the things of God, then you're setting your mind on things of God, then it's by the Spirit and you have peace.

[21:22] If you set your mind on the things of the world, it will lead to destruction and difficulties. If you're a believer, you're a believer, okay? They're not going to be condemned. But how do we think on a daily basis? What do we think about?

Do we think of the thoughts of God? Do we allow God's word to so permeate our lives? I love J. Sidlow Baxter in his book, *Explore the Book*. It's a big fat book where he talks about each book of the Bible and gives a short synopsis of what each book says.

He says in the beginning that we should read the word of God and study it so much that our blood becomes bibline. That's not a word, by the way. Don't look it up. Bibline.

In other words, your blood is running, the Bible is flowing through your veins. It's part of your life. It's part of your world. But what do you set your mind on? And those are the things that control the way that you live, whether it's the things of God or the things of the world.

So, the conclusion of this particular passage is the then, which is what? Then what? Make my joy complete by being like-minded. The next thing he says, having the same love and being one in spirit and purpose.

[22:38] So, the Apostle Paul is telling us to have the same love, be one in spirit, be selfless, get along with one another, one in spirit and purpose. We won't say much about this, but I just want to say, then he talks, the last part is talking about how we think about ourselves and we should think of others, put others' interests in front of our own.

And so Paul is using all these things, all the good things you have in Christ because of that, treat each other kindly. Think about what's best for other people, not just yourself. Be willing to sit back and let somebody else have a voice.

We want to, so often times, be in control or we want to have things go our way. As a matter of fact, that's one of the reasons I was so angry when my wife died. I didn't deserve that. Why did that happen?

I was not in control. Something horrible happened that I could not control. And in that particular instance, I just remember being angry because it didn't seem fair.

Lord, I've served you all these years and why do you allow this to happen? And that's because I was thinking wrongly, of course, but that's kind of what we go through with what we do.

[23:48] But I want us to have some concluding thoughts. This is the conclusion. So we're almost done. To be selfless is what he says is what we're supposed to do.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. But in humility, consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. And, you know, I'm preaching to you on this subject, but I see so much love and compassion and caring and goodness in God's people. And I know that you will have those heart.

Please don't feel like I'm picking on you today or thinking of your church specifically. But the reality is that we need to consider the things that we do. And so for concluding thoughts, some challenges for the week, I want you to think about these things.

Remember your union with Christ is the first one. Start each morning thanking God that you are a child of God. Thank God in the morning when you get up before you put your feet on the ground. Father, thank you for life.

[24:43] Thank you for your love. Thank you for all that you've done for me. Thank you that you've given me the assurance of my salvation. Thank you for the encouragement from the church. Thank you for all these things. Think about and focus on the reality of the beauty of what you have in Christ every day and the encouragement and comfort in the fellowship of the Spirit.

Let these blessings fuel your desire, a desire for unity with others as well. So one thought about that. When conflict or division arises, kind of stop and ask yourself, how does my union with Christ call me to respond differently?

And sometimes, you know what that means? What do you think what do you mean? Does not talk. Somebody just needs to be quiet. Listen, listen and try to really understand what the other person is saying because don't blurt out your thoughts right away.

So that's one of the first things. Remember, remembering your union with Christ. Second one is pursue like-mindedness through humble agreement. Make every effort to be one in spirit and mind with your brothers and sisters.

Prioritize unity in the gospel over personal preferences, even doctrinal differences that don't really make that much of a difference. Don't let those be the thing that causes division.

[26:02] They so often they do. It's really sad. Every church has it, by the way. We're not unique in any way. Also, intentionally listen first and seek common ground before you share your own opinion.

I already said that, but really try to listen. And I'm a talker. As a pastor, you kind of are a talker. Sometimes, I remember, you realize that you're talking too much and you just need to be quiet and listen for a while.

That's a challenge for me. But it's an important thing. Be quiet and listen. Take a deep breath.

That's actually one of the disciplines of the Christian life is silence. The monks practiced it to extreme craziness.

they haven't spoken for 30 years. Well, good for them. But take that time to really say, let me just, today, today I'm not going to talk as much.

I'd have a story about that, but there's not enough time to tell it. But anyway, also, ask God by His Spirit to highlight your selfishness and say, Father, please reveal to me how I am, I can be arrogant or I can think about myself and say, please, Father, by the power of your Spirit, do not let me get away with doing something that's arrogant and prideful because we can easily become prideful.

[27:20] There it goes. We easily become prideful, so ask God by His Spirit to help you in that regard. So, next, actively notice the needs of other people.

so we look for the needs and try to see the struggles that other people have and understand what their needs are instead of just thinking of ourselves and make Paul's and Jesus' joy complete. What Paul is really saying is, make my joy complete by being like-minded. He said, please, one of the greatest things for leaders in Christian ministry is to see the people in your ministry living together in unity and love.

It's a blessing. My brother, Daryl Wilkes, is here. Good to see Daryl and Kristen this morning.

Director of Canvas Males Bible Camp for 47 years now. How many years, Daryl, you been there? 28 years. 28 years, Daryl. Married this precious couple. How many years now? 26 years ago. 26 years ago. And how much we've loved each other and enjoyed being together.

[28:25] But Daryl works with kids. You all know that. All these kids come up to the camp every year. New crop of kids that he is discipling, loving. And I know it's for you guys so when you see your ministry and all the kids getting along, kids coming to camp and the joy of that ministry, there's nothing better than that.

To see that joy. We can do the same thing in the ministries that we're involved in. Make the joy complete by being like-minded, agreeing with one another, coming together for the things that are really important and showing love for each other.

Thank you this morning, you guys. It's been a real blessing to be here. We'll be back next week.

Next week, we're going to look at the other word, use of *freneo* here in the scripture where it says, have the attitude, the *freneo* of Christ, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

And we'll go into that passage because that really, truly is the heart of it. Jesus, the one who created and made the world, humbled himself and that's our example in every other way and so which house we should live.

So let's stand and we'll have our last song and then close the group.