

Unity In The Church

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[0 : 00] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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Let me read these four verses in Philippians chapter 2 and then I'll pray. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Let's pray just a quick prayer for God's blessing on our study this morning.

Father, we recognize that this is your word. And there is nothing that will come out of my mouth today absent of your word that will be of any use to us. And so we ask, Lord, that you would grab our hearts and our attention on the truth that you have presented here.

[1 : 38] And that you would give us eyes to see, that you would give us ears to hear, that you would give us a heart of understanding, a heart to respond faithfully to what you want us to know here. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. There's not a lot in the Scripture that points to the Philippian church being a bad church. In fact, they were a very healthy church. By every indication as we study, not only through the letter that Paul has written to them, but as he references them in some of his other letters.

Letters to the Corinthian church when he commends their giving. And as we study the book of Acts and we see how not only they supported him in the initial planting of the church, but when he revisited them in a later missionary journey, how they supported him in that.

This church was an incredibly healthy church. But even though it was healthy, even though it was a good church, even though it was a prosperous church, Paul clearly had a concern about the church's potential for division.

In fact, warnings about disunity and instructions in solidarity together as a church are peppered all throughout this particular letter.

[2 : 54] It indicates to us that Paul had a whiff that something may potentially be brewing in the church. It might not have come to fruition yet, except maybe in one instance that he mentions in chapter 4.

In verse number 2, he actually calls out two ladies in the church and says they need to start getting along a little bit better. Other than that, we don't know exactly what's going on, but clearly Paul is concerned about the Philippians' desire for unity and that they would work towards unity as a people and as a church.

You can study through the letter and notice all of these particular moments that he mentions in. And I won't do that to you this morning, but it all really is grounded in this particular passage.

In fact, it's not just these four verses, it's these 11 verses. Starting at verse number 1 and continuing all the way through is really one big section that highlights what should be the unity and the humility of the church.

Of course, this isn't an exclusive as far as instruction to the Philippian church in the Bible. In fact, this topic of unity in the church is covered extensively in almost every letter of the New Testament.

[4 : 07] Clearly, God desired and intended for believers to understand the dire necessity of unity. It's glorifying to God, but it is also a very fragile thing.

While our ability to serve the Lord together, to love one another, to be unified together under one common purpose, and that being the gospel and biblical truth, while that is a dire necessity for the church, it is one of the most fragile things within the church.

Now, this looks different in various churches. In some places, perhaps you've been a part of a church that the division was very explosive. I've been in a situation like that before.

As a kid, my dad pastoring a church, and there was a number of people in the church, a small group of people, but a very loud group of people. And this division that had existed in our church became an explosive division, and everybody knew what was going on.

Everybody knew where the line was drawn. Everybody knew the sides that there were, what the issues were as it was related to. It was very public as far as the church was concerned. It became an explosive division in the church.

[5 : 19] But not every form of division in a local church is so explosive. In fact, most of the time, I believe, division isn't very subtle. It doesn't exemplify itself all the time in someone getting up in a members meeting and having an all-out war with someone else in the member meeting.

It doesn't always result in that. Sometimes division, the subtlety of it, is just revealed in people quietly leaving the church. Sometimes division is a disengagement in spirit.

It's not that the physical presence of a person has left the church, but their spiritual presence certainly has. They'll come in every week and they'll find their seat, but their heart is nowhere near that service because for one reason or another, they've become disgruntled with the pastor.

They've become disgruntled with the person that sits over here. They are unappreciated in some way and they feel devalued in some way, and so they've disengaged in their spirit. They've not disengaged in their presence, but they've disengaged in their spirit.

And it's all just a subtle form of disunity. It's a subtle form of discord where when we look at the scriptures and we see the teaching of the Bible, what the church is supposed to be and what it's supposed to look like, that's not it.

[6 : 36] The church is not to be a place where we come in and we just, whenever we are offended by something, we just quietly disregard the covenant that we've made with this fellowship and move on to another place. That's not how that's supposed to work.

Rather, it's supposed to be a place of love. It's supposed to be a place of forgiveness. It's supposed to be a place of mutual submission, as we'll talk about here in just a little while. It's very important, but it's very fragile.

And sometimes if we're not careful, we can get caught up in a form of disunity without even realizing it because we've not been explosive in some way or we've not communicated a disgruntled spirit with the pastor, with whoever that it is that we've become disgruntled with.

Of course, this is an important note for us, and it's important because it's an important note in the scriptures. Even though we're technically beginning a new chapter in the book of Philippians, we cannot disconnect these verses from the previous passage.

As we've mentioned several times before, when Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians now 2,000 years ago, just under 2,000 years ago, there was no chapters and verses. He didn't sit down and get his parchment and his scroll and write out, okay, chapter one, verse one, and he wrote that verse and go on.

[7 : 48] It wasn't how it was written. It was just a letter, like you would write a letter to someone else. These verses in chapter two are directly connected to what we just studied the last two Sundays. If you'll remember in verse number 27 of chapter one, Paul is telling them that he desires and he's concerned for them to live a life that's worthy of the gospel.

And he takes those next few verses and he says, one way that a gospel worthy life is exemplified is in your endurance and suffering. You're willing to pursue the gospel and pursue standing firm on sound doctrine, proclaiming the truth of the Bible, even when it means that you're going to face opposition.

Maybe even when it means you could lose your life, you'll stand firm on. He says, the gospel worthy life is exemplified in that way. And then he continues on as we see a chapter division. And he says, also the gospel worthy life is exemplified whenever you live in unity together as a church.

When you come to love one another and care for one another and serve one another in the same way that Jesus has loved you and cared for you and served you is exactly what he's saying in these 11 verses.

And so as we are studying this particular passage, we must connect it back. The gospel worthy life is one that is in unity with the church. And of course, there is this idea that we have church membership and the idea behind that and what it means and what it truly is supposed to represent is all intertwined in the same topic of unity together.

[9 : 20] Three things about this passage I'd like to point out as we just work verse by verse through it. If you're keeping notes, write this down as the first thing. The first thing we see in verse one is the motivations for our unity. The motivations for our unity.

This is where Paul is building the case, so to speak. Verses one and two, he's not only expressing that they should be unified, he's telling them why they should be unified.

Look with me at verse number one. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies.

What we read here as if statements in verse one are really meant to be understood rhetorically. If we take just this English language here and we lay it out and we take it on the surface, it would insinuate that it's possible not to have all of these things in Christ.

This consolation, this comfort of love, this fellowship of the spirit, this affections and compassions is really what bowels and mercy is a reference to. If we just take it like that, it insinuates that there might be an opportunity for you to experience those things in Christ, but there might not be an opportunity for you to experience those things in Christ.

[10 : 37] Well, we know better than that. Paul's already talked differently than that in chapter one. Greek scholars agree that the best way to understand this particular verse is, even though it is the word if, is to understand it rhetorically.

You can almost substitute it with the word because or since. So we could look at this particular verse and we could read it because there is consolation in Christ, because there is comfort in love, or since there is fellowship in the spirit, since there are bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy.

We could also add it in with the word if as just along with a parenthetical statement. We could read it like this. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, and there is.

If there's any comfort of love, and there is. If any fellowship of the spirit, and there is. If any bowels of mercy, and there is. So what we find verse one being is the groundwork, the case being made for this is why you should primarily be unified together as a church.

Why? He uses four statements. Four statements that all point to the same truth. That believers first belong to Christ. That's the foundation of our unity.

[11 : 53] Since we have all of these things in Christ, which are all indicative of us, of us experiencing conversion through faith in Christ, because we have all of those things, fulfill ye my joy, church, that you be like-minded and of one mind and of one love, unified together.

Let's look at the four statements just quickly. The first one we see is any consolation in Christ. Any consolation in Christ. This is just another term for encouragement, and it carries along with it the idea of coming alongside someone to assist them in a helpless state.

Think the good Samaritan. As we study in the Gospels, the story that Jesus said. Do you remember that story? There's the man who gets beaten up, and he's cast to the side. All of his stuff is stolen.

There are religious individuals that see him, and instead of helping him, they cross to the other side of the street, and they continue on their way. Then there comes the Samaritan, the one that we would expect not to want to help this man, and he stops, and he cares for him.

He comes alongside of him, and he picks him up, and he cleans up his wounds, and he carries him over to an inn, and he puts him in the charge of somebody else, and he pays his bills in the process.

[13 : 06] It's the same word, coming alongside someone and helping someone that's in a helpless state. Every one of us before God are in a helpless state.

We're in a sinful condition before God, as we understand the Scripture teaches, that there is none righteous. There's none that truly seeks after God.

They seek the benefits of God, but they don't truly seek after God. For all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, we're told. We've disobeyed his commands.

We've rejected his sovereign rule over our lives in order to pursue our own ways, and Paul, when he writes to the Ephesians, says that all of us in that condition are dead in our sins and trespasses.

We're not dead physically. We're dead spiritually. And dead things can't give themselves life. It takes a living thing to give life. And that living thing only comes through Jesus Christ.

[14 : 09] So as unbelievers in this condition, in our sinful condition, separated from a holy God, we are like the man who's been beat up and he's laying on the side of the road. We're in desperate need of somebody coming alongside of us and helping us along because of our helpless state and our sinful condition.

And that's exactly what Jesus Christ has done. He has come alongside of us and he's come alongside wretched sinners that are dead in their sins and trespasses. And he's helped us alongside.

And how did he do that? By being our substitute for sin. If death is what God said we deserved for our sin, Jesus took that death for us.

He's come alongside and helped us along. We trust in his sovereign rule because of his resurrection, because of the truth that Jesus didn't remain dead. He rose up from the dead.

And in that, he carries us along. He comes alongside of us and helps us. What a wonderful motivation to be in unity with other people that have also experienced that encouragement.

[15 : 15] Any consolation in Christ. The second phrase here is comfort of love. Comfort of love. This is nearly identical in its meaning to the first. In fact, all four of these statements are not really distinct in and of themselves.

They're intertwined and they overlap. This one basically means the same thing. If there's any consolation or encouragement in Christ, if there's any comfort of love, certainly we have experienced incredible love from God through Jesus Christ.

And we ought to be motivated to love others as a result of that. The third statement is fellowship of the spirit. Do you see it there? If any fellowship of the spirit. Now we've talked about this word already in our study.

It's the same word that Paul uses in chapter one in verse five when he says that he's thankful for the Philippians for their fellowship in the gospel. It means partnership. This is one of the amazing things that we experience as believers.

That whenever we trust Christ, he doesn't leave us on our own. That was the promise he made to the disciples. Remember, he was getting ready to ascend into heaven and he says, don't worry, I'm gonna send another one.

[16 : 19] The paraclete in Greek. It's the comforter is how it's translated maybe in the Bible that you have in your hand. And that's the Holy Spirit. And he says, all those who believe in me will be baptized in that Holy Spirit.

He will, I will indwell you through my spirit. And what does he do? For the disciples and the apostles, when they walked with Jesus, Jesus guided their behavior.

He enlightened their understanding and he opened their eyes. Well, Jesus isn't physically present with us today. So what he's done is he's given us his spirit as believers. And what does he do? The same thing Jesus did for the disciples.

He guides our behavior. He opens our minds to understanding the scripture. He gives us discernment and wisdom as we live out our lives. This is a partnership that we have with the spirit.

And part of that partnership is he works through us a unity with other people that are also partnered with his spirit. Why? Because we're focused on the same thing.

[17 : 18] Living out, worshiping the God that has saved us and pursuing his mission. And the spirit does this work in us. And so it's a partnership. It's a motivation for unity. The final statement is a weird one.

Bowels and mercies. It means affection, compassion. In this day and age, when this was written, this was a reference to how we would refer to the heart.

We would say somebody has grabbed a hold of my heart. They have, I moved in my heart towards someone. Bowels or the primary organs of the body is something that in this particular culture was a reference to the same thing.

It sounds weird to us now. Wouldn't have been weird to them. It means the same thing. That God loves us. And that love is continually poured out on us and lived through us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And Paul says, all of these things are the basis for your unity. Because you have experienced this in Christ, you ought to be willingly unified with other people that have experienced this in Christ.

[18 : 22] It just makes sense, right? Why should we be unified together? Because we all belong to him. I remember when Jonathan and I were growing up, Jonathan, for those of you who don't know, is my older brother.

He's five years older than me, and he's the pastor of our sending church. He was my boss for 10 years, and I finally got away. And we came here, and like most siblings, when we were growing up, we didn't get along very well.

Imagine many of you have experienced that same thing, right? Fortunately, in adulthood, we tolerate each other. But as we were growing up, we didn't get along very well. Now, Jonathan and I weren't fighters.

We weren't physical in that way. We're both very small, and we're both very weak. And so we fought with our words. We were very verbally abusive. Very passive-aggressive in the way that we would speak to each other.

Very sarcastic. And just the things that just irritate you to death, you know? That's how we were to one another. And it drove my parents crazy, like it would drive any parent crazy. And they corrected us all the time.

[19 : 23] And of course, any time that they knew we were involved with something that wasn't right or wasn't helpful, they would correct our behavior. But I remember one particular season when we were still living in Mount Holly.

I remember a particular season where Jonathan and I just were not getting along at all. And it was just, it was showing itself in a lot of different ways. And my parents called us into the living room.

I remember it just like it was yesterday. They called us in the living room, they sent us down. And this was different than the other corrections they had given us. They started to cry about us, to us in that moment.

And through their tears, they were explaining how much they loved us and how much they desired for us to love one another. And it wasn't just about the peace of the house.

It wasn't just about simmering down the tension of the house for them. Of course, that was a benefit of it, but they weren't so much concerned about the benefits of it. They wanted us to love one another because we were both blankenships.

[20 : 24] We all recognize that, right? Jonathan and I are very different. And those of you that know both of us understand that our personalities can be very different. We're very alike in some ways too, but we're very different.

But we're still blankenships. There is a bond that we have as brothers that's just because we're brothers. It may not exist in any other dynamic of our life.

Our interests may be completely different from one another, but the one thing that we have, the one motivation that we have to love each other and to pursue unity together in our family is the fact that we belong to the same family.

And that's exactly what Paul's saying. We may be very different and that's what the church is supposed to be. You may really like the Boston Red Sox and I really hate that because I really love the New York Yankees, but we can serve together.

We can love one another, not because we have the same interest, not because we have the same opinions on everything, not because we vote for the same candidate, not because of all of those things. We come together in unity together because we belong to the same family.

[21 : 29] The same Jesus that died for me died for you. The same Jesus that has come alongside of me and helped me in salvation has come alongside you and helped you in salvation.

And he has brought us together in this one family. And Paul says right here at the beginning, if there is all of these things in Christ, and there is, then we ought to love one another and be unified together in it.

Acknowledging the depths of God's love for us in Christ Jesus ought to motivate us to live in unity with others who've experienced that same grace. I want you just to write down in the margin, I won't move to it now, but I just want you to write down in the margin, Ephesians chapter four and the first six verses of it.

Ephesians chapter four, verses one through six. And I want you to go study that later today and read about Paul's instruction there on unity. He echoes this in a more even helpful way there as far as the description of this dynamic.

So we see the motivations for unity. This is why we should care. The second thing that we see in verse two is the focus of our unity. The focus of our unity.

[22 : 36] This could be the marks of unity perhaps. If the motivations are the mandate from God, the focus then is the mark. This is what shows that we are unified together.

But before we jump into that, let's look at just this first phrase. Paul says, if there is all these things in Christ, fulfill ye my joy. Complete my joy.

In verse one, his appeal to the Philippians is that they be unified in order to please their Lord. At the beginning of verse two, he appeals to their unity in order that it might enhance his own personal joy.

Now think about that. Paul's already filled with joy. He's talked about that already in the book. He's already filled with joy at the fact that they belong to Christ. Now he's saying that that joy can now be enhanced by seeing them live out that faith in gospel unity together.

To fulfill or complete, this word means to fill up to the rim. And in some connotations, it means to even cram in order to fill up to the fullest.

[23 : 45] While some might've thought that Paul's joy would have come through being released from prison, he insisted that his joy would actually come when he saw the unity of these churches come together in love for one another, in pursuit of the gospel.

And in this regard, we understand that Christian joy is developed through various layers of experience. Paul's not saying that there is something lacking in Christ that his joy is lacking here.

That's not what he means by that. But we just understand that joy comes through various layers of our Christian experience. All of that is founded on the person of Jesus Christ. Nobody can take away our joy and the presence of joy because Jesus has put it there.

That can't be removed. It will always be there for those that love him and believe him and trust him. It will always be there. But of course, as we experience different blessings from the Lord, as we witness different things in our Christian life, as we follow in obedience, that joy is layered and it is multiplied and it's enhanced in different ways.

Paul says, the way that adds a layer of joy to my life is when I see you and I hear about you that you love one another and that you're engaged in gospel purpose despite your differences. This is the heart of any pastor.

[25 : 03] Hebrews chapter 13 tells us that we are to obey them that have the rule over us and submit ourselves for they watch for our souls and that they give an account to God for that. And then he says, we are to obey them because that they may give this account with joy and not with grief for that would be unprofitable for us.

Of course, this isn't exclusive to those in pastoral ministry. We should all rejoice at the fact that believers get along and that they love one another and that they're focused on the right thing, which brings us to these marks, which is really just a focus in unity.

Look again with me at verse two. To fulfill you my joy, Paul says, that you do this, you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind.

These marks are bookended by like-minded and of one mind. Now I have to leave it to you to dig into the depths of each mark and what he means by all of those things and it would be a helpful study to you, but we can narrow it down to understand that what he's referencing is a unique togetherness, a unique togetherness.

He's not saying that we all have to think the same way and have the same opinions and have the same interest in all things. What he's saying is that we are to unify together with one mind on sound doctrine and in one spirit on the things to which we will inevitably differ.

[26 : 35] The strength of our unity as a church is in our commitment to doctrinal purity. The spirit of our unity as a church is love and grace on issues that are not related to Bible doctrine.

The foundation of our unity together is hopefully that we all take this and we say this is the word of God. It is our guide for life. It tells us what we need to know about him and we will live our lives according to it.

That's the strength of our unity. But the spirit of that unity is, I don't care what you wear when you come to church on Sunday. I'm just glad you're here to worship the Lord. You with me? There's a strength of it.

That's doctrinal purity. There's a spirit of it that loves one another even though we're different and we're going to do things different and we're going to think differently and we're going to have different opinions and we're going to come from different cultures that do different things.

The foundation for unity is purpose. The church's call to unity is a call to unite under a common purpose, which is the gospel. Our unity as a church is directly related to the extent of our gospel focus.

[27 : 48] And I say that again, I want you to hear me. The unity of our church is directly related to the extent of our gospel focus.

When I was a kid, I used to like playing with magnets. I don't remember ever owning one, like the ones that you see on cartoons that was like a horseshoe and it was red and silver. I don't remember ever having one of those, but I had a friend that had like this monster one.

It was like this big. He would bring it to school at show and tell days, that kind of thing. And of course you just have all kinds of fun with that because it'll stick to all kinds of stuff and you just enjoy sticking it to stuff. But imagine that we had a magnet here today and a bunch of iron shavings and we just stuck that magnet right in the middle of the iron shavings.

What happens? They all glue to the magnet, right? Iron shavings are all different sizes, different shapes, different purposes, but they're held together by that magnet.

Now they'll stay held together by that magnet until one of us comes by as an outside force and starts to pull it away. And we start to pull it away, it loses its glue.

[28 : 51] It loses its stickiness to that force that at this point, up to that point, had held it together. Now in the church, the gospel is the magnet. The gospel is the magnet.

We're the iron shavings. We come in lots of different shapes and sizes and opinions and interests and all kinds of things. The one thing that holds us together is the gospel.

The way Paul said it to the Colossian church is that Christ is all, he's above all, he reigns over all, and he's in all. He is the thing that holds us together.

Not our common bond on religion or on church, but Christ holds us together. The gospel holds us together. And so long as a church, we'll stay focused on that gospel and we'll pursue that gospel as the primary initiative of our individual lives, our families, and our church.

We'll stay glued together in this unity. But at the moment that we allow some outside force to come in and begin to distract us, it will start to pull us away because we're turning our focus away from the gospel and we're turning it to something else.

[29 : 53] The something else could very well be sin in your life. You can't focus on the gospel and focus on your sinful pleasure at the same time. It doesn't work. Jesus said you can't serve God and mammon.

You can't serve God and money. You can't serve two masters. It doesn't work. You can't serve the gospel and serve your sin at the same time. And once you're glued into the gospel, if you start serving sin instead, you're gonna start getting pulled away in that unity.

It's gonna show itself in your relationship to the church, either in an explosive way or in a very subtle way. It may not be a sinful thing. It may just be a thing that's not gospel focused.

It could be selfish ambition as Paul deals with here. It could be prideful arrogance. It could be a program that you just really wanna drive forward, but it's causing us as a church to lose focus on this one thing, this gospel initiative that we have.

And it may be a noble thing, but it's pulling you away. The unity of our church will only be as strong as the extent of our gospel focus. And as a church at Lakeside Bible Church, it is our purpose and it is our responsibility to stay unified on the gospel and focused on the gospel despite our differences so that we can stay unified together in the way that Paul's saying here.

[31 : 08] That's the marks, the marks of unity. If we're to continue as a church to glorify God and be effective in our mission, we gotta remain focused on this purpose.

Thirdly and finally, we see the instrument that produces our unity. The instrument that produces our unity. If verse one is the motivations and verse two is the marks, verses three and four are the means.

Verse one and two build the case for us. Verses three and four tell us how we're gonna actually do it. How are we actually gonna be unified together in this way?

And in one word, it's humility. Humble spirit. We're bombarded in our culture with worldly philosophies that sound good, but they're not always good.

Things like be true to yourself, follow your heart. You gotta do you. You gotta think about you first.

[32 : 21] That sounds real good. But that type of belief system and philosophy is antithetical to what the Bible actually teaches the churches. We're not doing you.

We're not doing me. We're focused on the gospel. And we're gonna do that with humility, humility. The instrument by which unity is developed is humility.

And Paul's instruction is that believers put others' needs and interests first. Did you see that? Look at verse three. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.

Here's what those two words mean. One is a reference to selfish ambition. That's strife. You could literally say selfish ambition. Vainglory is conceitedness, conceit.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind or in humility. Let each person esteem another person better than themselves.

[33 : 22] Let each of us consider everybody else as more, more significant than ourselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

That's pretty radical thought. Not only are we to submit ourselves to Christ, we're to submit ourselves to one another.

Mutual submission in the church dynamic is what this is. Can't say we'll talk about this next Sunday night in our membership class, but this is what church membership is. It's a mutual submission.

Where the individual comes to the church body and submits themselves to the help and the governing role of the church body, and then the church body submits itself to that individual and says, we're gonna love, we're gonna care for you, we're gonna help you.

And then together in unity, they work. The unity of the church can only exist when this is accomplished. When nobody's concerned about doing their own thing, nobody's concerned about emphasizing their program, and nobody's concerned about being highlighted on the platform or whatever it is.

[34 : 24] It works when we mutually submit to one another in humility. There's no room for selfish ambition. There's no room for conceit. There's no room for high-mindedness.

And this starts at the top. This applies to me as your pastor. This church is not about what I want.

It's not about what I want. Of course, God has ordained leadership, and he's ordained structures, and we need to follow the biblical command of that. But at the point that this church becomes about me, it's gonna fail.

We stay focused on the gospel and mutually submit to one another, and it will succeed because that's how God's gonna work. Churches are weakened and splintered, and the people care more about getting their own way than they do about serving others.

They're rendered useless in the purposes of God when the people consider their own preferences to be more significant or important than anyone else's. When Christians are ruled by conceit, selfish ambition, and a desire to always have things done their way, they lose focus on the gospel, and maybe inadvertently sow discord among God's people.

[35 : 48] MacArthur wrote this, and I think it just explains it well. He said, Paul's concern here is not about doctrines, ideas, or practices that are clearly unbiblical. It's about interpretation, standards, interest, preferences, and the like that are largely matters of personal choice.

Such issues should never be allowed to foment controversy within the body of Christ, to insist on one's own way in such things is sinful because it senselessly divides believers.

It reflects a prideful desire to promote one's personal views, style, or agenda. Believers must never, of course, compromise doctrines or principles that are clearly biblical, but to humbly defer to one another on secondary issues is a mark of spiritual strength, not weakness.

It's a mark of maturity and love that God highly honors because it promotes and preserves harmony in his church. Someone wants to find humility as not thinking poorly of yourself, but just not thinking of yourself at all.

Humility is not thinking that you're a bad person. It's just not thinking about you. It's putting everybody else first. Unity is incredibly important to the life of the church, and it's very fragile as the church is made up of sinful people, redeemed people, but still sinful people.

[37 : 17] What I want to encourage you to do is fight for unity. It's going to be easy to be disgruntled with somebody. If you're disgruntled, make it right.

Love each other enough. To make it right. Consider your own feelings sometimes. Is what I'm upset about, is that really just an indication of my own pride, or is there a legitimate offense here?

Fight for unity. In our Christian context, especially in the South, where there's churches everywhere, it's really easy to avoid the responsibility of church unity because it's easy enough just to leave one church and go to another.

I want to encourage you to fight for that unity here. Fight for it here. After all, that's what the church is. And when you move to that other place, there's going to come a time where you're unhappy there too.

Or somebody's going to bother you there. Or something's not going to work out the way that you want it there either. It's hard for us to do. But Paul mentions here in chapter two that we have actually the supreme example of how to demonstrate this humility.

[38 : 30] If as Christians were to be like Christ, then we can be humble and unified together in the way that Christ was in chapter two. And I'll just close it by reading these verses.

Paul says in verse five, let this mind, this mind of humility, this mind of unity, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God or did not count equality with God something to be grasped.

He didn't have to have it. He was willing to set it aside. But made himself of no reputation, he took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, because of that, God has highly exalted him, given him a name which is above every name, that is Lord, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

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[39 : 56] Don't forget to visit us online at lakesidebible.church or find us on Facebook and Instagram by searching for Lakeside Bible NC. If you live in the Charlotte or Lake Norman area, we'd love for you to attend one of our worship services.

We meet every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. in the gym at Cornelius Elementary School. We'd love to meet you. Amen.