

# Christian Unity

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome to our services today and as we come together around the Word of God, we would seek his blessing to be upon his word. So let us join together in prayer.
- Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks unto thee that we have access unto thy presence, so that as we come together around thy word, that we may draw near to thee and seek thine own blessing to accompany thy word today.
- O Lord, we are dependent upon thee, for without thee we can do nothing. And so we seek that it may please thee to shine upon us with thine own countenance, with thy favour today, in granting to us thy spirit, to enlighten our understanding, to lead us unto thy word, to open our hearts to receive it, that thy word may be lodged in our heart, that it may bring forth evidence in our lives, so that our conversation would be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.
- We pray, O Lord, that we would be enabled to be true and faithful witnesses for thee, that our life would shine out as those who have been with Christ.
- We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless thy word, not only among ourselves today, as we come together, but throughout our nation and even into the ends of the earth, that wherever people gather to hear thy word, whether they be in their own homes or wherever, we pray, O Lord, that thy word may be blessed to them, that it may become a living word for them, that it may be the word that would bring the power of God and salvation into their experience.
- [ 2 : 3 6 ] For we give thanks, O Lord, that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the word of God. And so we pray, O Lord, that thy word may go out in the power and demonstration of thy spirit in drawing a people to thyself.
- We pray, O Lord, that thou would revive thine own people, O that they may be refreshed in their hearts, they may be stirred up in their hearts.
- And we pray, O Lord, that those who are still outside of Christ, that their ears may be opened, that they would hear thy word, that their hearts may be opened, that they would receive thy word.
- And, O Lord, that they would be unable to commit themselves to Jesus Christ. We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless the preaching of thy word.
- O, we give thanks that we can come together around thy word to meditate upon it. For, O Lord, we confess that to meditate upon thy word is our delight.
- [ 3 : 5 3 ] And so we pray that as we come together, that it may be to the glory of thine own name, for that is our desire, that whatever we do in thy name, that it would be to the glory and the praise of thy name.
- Remember our loved ones, wherever they may be today. O Lord, O Lord, thou knowest, and we pray that out of the riches of thy grace, that thou would meet with them at their point of need.
- Remember those who are ill. We pray that thine healing hand may be upon them. And if it be otherwise, we pray, O Lord, that thou would prepare them in their heart and in their soul.

O Lord, remember those who mourn of the passing of loved ones, reminding us all that this is no continuing city.

We pray, O Lord, that our hearts may be prepared through thy grace, through thy spirit, for when that hour comes in our own experience, wherein we pass from the realm of time into the realm of eternity.

[ 5 : 11 ] Bless, we pray, with the preaching of thy word. Accompany it with the power of thy spirit. Uphold thy servants who proclaim thy word today.

O may they have that confidence and boldness, knowing, O Lord, that thy word shall not return unto the empty, but that it shall accomplish that for which thou hast sent it forth.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would be with us as we come around thy word today. O Lord, that we would know thine own presence, that we would know thine own spirit among us, that it would be among us in order to bless.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would remember the lonely, those who feel lonely today. Draw near to them, we pray thee.

And all that we ask for the forgiveness of our many sins. It's in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. We shall now read from the New Testament and from Paul's letter to the Philippians.

[ 6 : 28 ] And we shall read in chapter 2. And we shall read from verse 1 to 16. That's Philippians chapter 2, verse 1 to 16.

3 Ah, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

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, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

And been found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, 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.

[ 8 : 03 ] Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure, to all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I am not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. And so on, may the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

Let us now, seeking the Lord's blessing, turn back to the beginning of chapter 2. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

[ 9 : 38 ] As we come into chapter 2 of this letter, the Apostle Paul is continuing the same theme as he began in chapter 1, verse 27, where we read, He is appealing for what we have often referred to since we began our study on this letter, to the oneness and togetherness of the body of Christ, one spirit, one mind, striving together.

What Paul is concerned about for the church at Philippi is not doctrinal error. He is not concerned about false teaching, but what he is concerned about is divisions that can so easily rise among them.

Paul was aware that there was already some tension in the church between two certain women. So he exhorts them, if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Paul, Paul, there spells out the motivation for seeking unity in the church. If there therefore be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.

[ 11 : 55 ] Now this appeal for unity and togetherness, it's not something that was invented by the Apostle Paul, or by any of the other Apostles, but it is something to which we are directed by Jesus Christ himself.

Remember in his prayer, as recorded for us in John's Gospel on chapter 17, where he says, What I believe that Jesus Christ here intends by these words is a visible unity, unity that others can see, and on the basis of which people can come to believe in Jesus.

We have already noted how divisions and splits destroy Christian witness, how it takes away that confidence and boldness that we ought to have to commend our gospel to others.

So Paul here says first, If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.

Now, here although each clause begins with a word, if it is not the if of uncertainties or probabilities, but it is the if of reality and certainty.

[ 13 : 53 ] It is four clauses of certainty, of which believers can be sure are true. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if there be any encouragement in Christ.

That is, as those who are united with Christ. A.C.R. speaks of the consolation or the encouragement that believers receive from being united together in Christ.

At the end of the previous chapter, Paul writes, For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

And the consolation of those who suffer is the knowledge that suffering is a gift of grace, and that their suffering is on behalf of Christ.

There is also the consolation that believers receive from being united with other believers in the same struggle.

[ 15 : 11 ] Having the same conflict, which he saw in me, and now here to be in me. It's a great consolation for believers that there are other believers that is also involved in the same struggle as they are, because they are united in Christ.

Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians, Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. So Paul is writing here to the church at Philippi, and he comforts them with the comfort that he himself has received from God.

He shares with them his own experience of comfort as he sat chained to a soldier. He assures them that as they share in the same struggle with him, they will also share in the same consolation in Christ with him.

This reality of this consolation in Christ is a strong motivation for unity among believers. Then he says, if any comfort of love.

[ 17 : 09 ] Now there are those who will confine this to Christ's love for them. And although it includes that, I think it is very wider than that.

That it is comprehensive. That it speaks not only of Christ's love for them, but also of Paul's love for the church, and the love of believers for one another.

What great comfort that is in all our struggles and sufferings to know Christ's love for us, and also to know our love for one another.

Paul has already reminded them that the source of his own love to them is Christ. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

And he prays that your love, he says to them, may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. That ye may approve things that are excellent.

[ 18 : 17 ] That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. So that along with the consolation or the encouragement of being united with Christ, there is also the comfort arising from love.

As he says in verse 2, he says, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love. As we have already noted, he told them that the source of his love was Christ, and our love is to be patterned on his love, on the love of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Remember, remember Paul's theme is still unity.

This oneness and togetherness that must be in the body of Christ. And this consolation in Christ, the fact of us being united to Christ, should be a motivation for unity.

[ 19 : 35 ] And the fact of Christ's love should be a motivation for us to be united in our love for one another, which should be a great comfort and encouragement for us in all our struggles.

I know that some Christians are hard to get along with. I am sure that some find it hard to get along with me. But we have a duty to see more than another Christian's faults.

Jesus reminds us, And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou say clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

The psalmist wrote, Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. We are exhorted by James, Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.

[ 20 : 54 ] The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. I think that we ought very much to take heed to Paul's exhortation to the church at Galatia, where he says, Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, thou also be tempted.

Lest thou also be tempted. Our love for one another should be patterned on Christ's love, and what great comfort that is to struggling believers.

And it is to be a visible love for one another. It is not to be a hidden love, but a visible love for one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye are love one to another. For me, consider Christ's love, how it reaches out so far as he seeks to draw the sinner to himself.

And as we come to love one another, we also love those who are outside of Christ. We want to draw them to the gospel.

[ 22 : 22 ] We want to draw them to Jesus Christ. And our love should reach out to them just as far as Christ's love reached out to them.

We know that so often he was criticised by the self-righteous Pharisees who condemned him because he ate and drank with publicans and sinners.

But our love should reach out just as far. It should reach the beggar that's in the gutter as well as the one who is upon the throne.

Our love should go just as far out as the love of Christ. And if it does that, we know that we shall be criticised just as Christ was by self-righteous people.

Oh, have you experienced this love? Does this love flow through you? Is your love to the church and others patterned on Christ's love?

[ 23 : 39 ] Do you know the consolation of being united with Christ and the comfort of love today as being united with each other in love?

And then he says, if any fellowship of the Spirit. Now, Paul already spoke to them of fellowship. He says, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

But Paul now deepens their understanding of fellowship by referring to the fellowship of the Spirit. Paul was aware that their fellowship in the gospel could be threatened by disunity.

And in order to strengthen their unity, he reminds them of another fellowship that they all had in common, the fellowship of the Spirit.

All believers have the common possession of the Holy Spirit. Everyone has this experience in common of sharing the gift of the Spirit.

[ 24 : 49 ] This, again, along with the consolation of being in Christ and the love of Christ manifested in our love for one another and the fellowship that we have in common of possessing the Holy Spirit is a great motivation for unity, for this oneness and togetherness that ought to be in our lives, that ought to shape our lives.

Great motivation for unity among believers. to know that they are united in Christ, that they are members of the one body, the body of Christ, to know the love of Christ and that our love for one another be patterned on that love and to be in the possession of the Holy Spirit.

Surely, all that ought to be a motivation not only for the church at Philippi, but for the church everywhere to be united together.

A great motivation for this oneness and togetherness that should shape our lives. Then he says, Now in biblical terms, when there is a reference made to the intestines, it was a metaphorical way of speaking about strong desires.

We already had this word used by Paul in referring to his love towards the church at Philippi, where he says, For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

[ 26 : 38 ] There he expresses his great intense longing for them with the affection of Jesus Christ. In other words, his affection for them was really the expression of Christ's love flowing in and through him.

If any bowels and mercies. To this word bowels, Paul adds the word mercies.

Now we know that ultimately God is a source of all mercies. The word mercies in reference to God is used by Paul throughout his letters, but we can just draw a reference to two.

Romans 12, verse 1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. Also in 2 Corinthians, and chapter 1, verse 3, he says, Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.

But we also remember how James tells us that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercies.

[ 28 : 00 ] Now in Paul's usage of this phrase here in reference to God, we have to ask, must we confine it just in reference to God?

Or is Paul's usage of the word mercies in reference to the church at Philippi, who were the agents of mercy? Later on, he is going to say to them in reference to their sending of gifts to him, but I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me have flourished again.

Is Paul saying to them that the matter of past intimacy should deal any threat of disunity among them? that the way that they showed their care and their love and their mercy to him in the past should deal any threat of disunity coming among them.

Well, I suppose there is merit in both, that Paul could be appealing to their expression of God's mercy that which they have experienced towards, towards sin.

That Paul could be appealing to their experience of God's mercy towards them. In writing to the Ephesians, he says, But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ.

[ 29 : 35 ] By grace ye are saved. In other words, he is saying to them, and to us also, in light of God's mercy tells you, how can you fail to show mercy to other believers?

God's mercy should be an incentive. It should motivate us to be united with one another, to unity rather than disunity. Fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

So we have to ask ourselves, well, how does this matter of Christian unity stand with me? Other divisions and splits that should not exist among us?

Are there any hard feelings against Christians, even if they have offended you in the past? Paul here teaches that the incentive for unity arise in the fact of a reality of us being in Christ.

Christ. We are together in Christ. We are in the one body of Christ. We have already made reference to this in our study that as each member of the physical body is useful and needed, that is also true of the body of Christ.

[ 31 : 06 ] Each member that makes up this body is useful and needed. and every member of the physical body must work in harmony for the body to function properly and that is true of the body of Christ.

Each member of the body must work in harmony. They must be united in their cause and in their aims. But we are together in Christ.

We are united to Christ. Therefore, we should have that oneness and togetherness with each other. The comfort of the love of God to us.

Oh, who loved us and gave himself for me. Who loved me and gave himself for me. And of the flowing from God's love of love to each other.

We know that we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

[ 32 : 27 ] Let us not love in word neither in tongue but in deed and in truth. What a great incentive for us to be united with one another.

What a great incentive for the oneness and togetherness that ought to be among Christian believers. the fellowship of the Spirit or our participation in the Spirit.

And the only other place in which Paul uses this expression of the fellowship of the Spirit is in that benediction with which he closes 2 Corinthians. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit or the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen. And finally here in verse 1 he is appealing to God's mercy towards us and our mercy towards one another.

How we should have the intense inner yearning towards one another as God has towards us. Oh what great incentives we have here for unity among believers.

[ 33 : 44 ] Then he says fulfill ye my joy that ye be like minded having the same love being of one accord of one mind.

Fulfill ye my joy. This may seem on the face of it to be something which is very self-centered as if Paul was only concerned for his own joy but actually the opposite of what is true.

What grace has done in the life of Paul should be true of me and you and that is that grace has turned Paul's joy in seeing his Christian friends growing more in faith and love growing more like Christ or growing more Christ like.

We shall see this of course as we go on. To be like minded that's a favourite word of Paul throughout this letter we find in various ways he's making reference really to this very one point of being like minded.

We come across it here in verse 5 let this mind be in you and then in chapter 3 he says let us therefore as many as be perfectly thus minded and if anything be otherwise minded God shall reveal that unto us.

[ 35 : 22 ] In the same chapter 3 he says for many walk of whom I have told you often and I now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction whose God is their belly and whose glory is their shame who mind earthly things and in chapter 4 as we have noted where he is making reference to the two women who was causing some tension in the church at Philippi that could easily erupt to division and splits he says to them that they be of the same mind in the Lord that they be of the same mind in the Lord he exhorts them to lay aside whatever was causing that tension among them or between them to lay it aside and to have the same mind in the

Lord we shall look at that when we come to that portion of the letter when Paul uses this word he is speaking of the dominant attitude the settled disposition the character or the personality of the entire person that the whole person be like minded that the whole person be in the same mind in the Lord Paul is here is not saying that there would not be different feelings and personal diversity but what he is asking is that they seek the same goal with one mind or with a like mind and one can ask well how can we be like minded well he says this is a way of being like minded having the same love Paul prayed for them and this

I pray that your love may abound yet more and more he was praying that the Lord would work among them so that their love would increase but here he is here we have an imperative here we have a command he is asking them to work at this love fulfill ye my joy that ye be like minded having the same love been of one accord of one mind he is as if he said to them you must work at this this does not come to you as it were automatically automatically you must work at it you must work at it Paul wrote to the Colossians and he said for I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh that their hearts might be comforted be knit together in love be knit together in love

I like these words be knit together in love that is oneness that's togetherness be knit together in love something that cannot be easily taken apart be knit together in love be of one accord of one mind in other words he's asking them to work at it so that they will be in harmony with each other this echoes Paul's earlier exhortation stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel to work together as one person in the Old Testament we are told that when the men of Israel came together against the city of

Gibeah so all the men of Israel were gathered against the city knit together as one man as one man and you know we can see how essential that was if they were going into battle if they were going into this struggle this fight how important it was that they would stand together or be knit together as one man and my friends that is very important for us it's important for me and you it's important for the church of Jesus Christ that they be one knit together as one man as we go out into the world as we witness to the world as we bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world as

[ 42 : 01 ] Lord of all and then he says let nothing be done through strife or vain glory but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves Paul has already mentioned that there were some in Rome that preached Christ out of envy and strife some translation has self ambition or vain conceit in other words they have this deep seated desire for personal preeminence to gather attention to themselves they have this deep seated desire to gather attention to themselves those at Rome their preaching of Christ was self seeking they wanted to increase their own reputation while at the same time put down Paul while he was imprisoned

Paul here warns the church at Philippi that they in serving Christ were not to be driven by self centred motives and there is a challenge here for every one of us we may ask ourselves why do I do the things that I do in service to God in my home or in my workplace or in my community or in my church life is it in order to be noticed so that I can get the applause that I feel I so deserve do do do I feel resentment when my work is ignored and my ideas are not followed you know that many of our divisions and splits and disharmony in churches are caused by people being self centred going going totally against the grain the very opposite of what is natural to us but this is the word and the exhortation of the apostle look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others lowliness of mind or humility is not easy to define in our next study

God willing we shall discuss the example given to us in this chapter by Paul but you know that sometimes we see people going round with an unrealistic dure face and always speaking in extremely negative terms they have negative thoughts about themselves they have negative thoughts about everything and perhaps they are obsessed with such thoughts and you know very often you'll find that they mistake this for lowliness of mind or humility but the truth is that they can be self centred and can easily this can easily be seen as vain glory you know it's not true humility at all what true humility here for Paul is a readiness to forget self and to exalt others that we care for others and honour others as we instinctively do for ourselves

Paul always emphasizes that believers should love one another God that they should bear one another's burdens that they should build up one another that they should bear with one another that they should forgive one another Paul always emphasizes to be kind and compassionate toward one another.



Writing to the Roman church he says, Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love in honour preferring one another. And he goes on again to the letter to the Romans and he says, We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves.

[ 47 : 54 ] Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. Oh, there's a lot in that, isn't there? How can we do that, you say?

Well, we go back to the beginning and the strongest incentives that we can have. If there be there for any consolation in Christ. If any comfort of love.

If any fellowship of the Spirit. If any bowels and mercies. How can we do that? Our strongest incentives are our union with Christ.

The love of Christ and our love to one another. Our fellowship in the Spirit and our receiving God's mercy. And expressing that mercy to others.

Should be our greatest incentive. To humility. And to oneness. And togetherness. To harmony.

[ 48 : 55 ] May the Lord bless our thoughts. Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed Lord. You know how often we seek the grace of humility.

And you know, O Lord, how often we have to struggle. With the expression of humility. But we pray, O Lord, that thy Spirit would teach us through humility.

That we indeed would be ready to forget self. And to exalt others. To care for others.

And to honour others as we do that for ourselves. That we be ready to love one another. And to bear one another's burdens.

To build up one another. And to forgive one another. To be kind and compassionate towards each other. And we pray, O Lord, that our life would be a life that others would see Christ in us.

[ 50 : 15 ] That our life would be Christ-like. O Lord, we pray that thou would bless thy word to us. And the expectations that are contained in thy word.

That we would take them to our heart today. That we would lay them deep into our heart. And ponder over them. As thy word proclaims to us of Mary.

That she lodged these words in her heart. And that she often thought upon them. And we pray that the same would be true of us today. As we take those exhortations.

And as we take those incentives that Paul has brought before us today. In his letter to the church at Philippi. And that we will take them into our hearts.

And that we will ponder over them. And seek to apply them in our life. That we all will be like-minded.

[ 51 : 17 ] Having one goal. And that is Jesus Christ. We ask that thou would continue with us during the day. And forgive us for all our sins.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.