

Unity and Humility

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

- [0 : 0 0] Once again this evening, let me give you a very warm welcome to the service tonight.
- Also welcome those who are online, and it's good to be able to come together once again to worship the Lord. I'm not going to go through the intimations, too many of them. There's one or two I just want to highlight.
- But the toddler group resumes tomorrow, that's at 10 in the morning, 10 till 12. That's for all children under school age. I think I said of school age this morning, but toddlers really should make it obvious, of course, that's under school age.
- So that's at the MA Hall here from 10 to 12. And we're pleased that they're able to start again after a time off. Monday, prayer meeting as well, the monthly prayer meeting, that's tomorrow on Zoom, and that's at 7.30pm.
- And if you look at the Blytheswood shoebox appeal, there's a number of things there to notice. I'll just leave you to read through it. But it's an important annual collection.
- [1 : 0 6] So please just read through that at your leisure. And just to let you know as well, as on the final page, the monthly collection of freewill offering envelopes, we're not going to be going ahead with that just now for the meantime, because the COVID-related restrictions on attending church services have been dispensed with.
- So we're deciding not to continue with that facility. But anybody who wishes, who still can't come to church at all, or if you know of anybody, they can actually give their envelopes to any of the office bearers or a friend to collect and deliver.
- This will be reviewed as time goes on, just as we see how things develop with the COVID situation. We're going to now begin our worship of God, and we're singing tonight firstly from Psalm 99.
- Psalm number 99, that's in the Scottish Psalter, on page 361. The Lord our God exalt on high and reverently.
- Do ye before his footstool worship him? The Holy One is he. We'll sing these verses in Psalm 99. The Eternal Lord doth reign as King. The Eternal Lord doth reign as King.
- [2 : 5 4] Let all the people quake. He sits between the cherubims.
- Let the earth be moved and shake. The Lord in Zion, great and high, above all people is.
- Thy great and dreadful, dim for it is holy.
- Let them bless. The King's strength also judgment loves.
- Thou settest equity. Just judgment thou dost execute.
- [4 : 2 3] In Jacob righteously. The Lord our God exalt on high and reverently do ye.
- Before his footstool worship him. The Holy One is he.
- Once again, let's join together in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for that reminder that we have been given in these words.

We have sung in your praise that you are the Holy One who inhabits eternity. That in your holiness you regard all things that you have made. And that you look down upon us tonight with your holiness as part of all that you do.

And marking all that you do. Because everything that you do is marked by holiness. For you are holy in your very being. You are holy in your actions. You are holy in your thoughts toward us.

[5 : 56] In your dealings with us. In your providence. Lord, our God, we know that it is our privilege to come before you tonight to worship you. And it is especially our privilege to be able to draw near to you.

And we give thanks for the means by which we are able to do this. The means that are set in the person of your Son. For he is the way and the truth and the life that we come to the Father by.

And we give thanks, O Lord, for him. And for the way that he ensures as we come trusting in him into your presence. The way that we are assured of your reception. Of your acceptance of us.

Of your blessing as we come seeking your blessing in his name. We thank you, Lord, tonight for all that makes you great. And for everything that pertains to you as the holy God.

We pray that we may come with due humility and humble hearts to worship our King. We, Lord, know that we are not so naturally.

[7 : 01] That it is not part of our attitude, our mind, our very actions to be humble. We need the grace of your Spirit. And we give thanks that you give that to your people.

So that they may approach you in humility. And that they may seek to live humble lives. Lives of humility in your presence. Lord, we ask that you would help us to improve upon this in all aspects of our life.

For we know that in our heart dwells that enemy of holiness that your word calls pride. And we pray for grace, O Lord, each and every day to deal with our pride.

To deal with it in such a way that realizes it is in our natural sinful human state what marks us. As much as anything else. We ask, Lord, for your forgiveness.

For when we exercise our pride and come to live in a way that is self-conceited or self-centered. We know that it is contrary to your position over us.

[8 : 08] Your requirements of us. We ask that you truly then make us humble day by day as time goes by. We pray for our concerns as a congregation.

Lord, we ask that you would bless us in our homes and our families. We pray that as we come before you in prayer, we may do so, Lord, realizing that we continue to pray for those who are in particular need this night also.

We give thanks that we are able to carry our own concerns and those of our neighbors, those of our friends, those of our fellow members of the congregation into your presence.

We pray that you would bless us, Lord, as a congregation as we seek to continue to serve you during difficult times. Once again, we do give thanks, Lord, for your remembrance of us.

For your upholding of us. For your blessing of us. We thank you for the many that have come back to attend upon the gospel physically here in this building and elsewhere.

[9 : 10] We ask, Lord, that you would give others also not only the desire, which we know many of them have, but also the encouragement to come. Knowing, Lord, that it is very much a mark of your church that they assemble together.

And, Lord, even during these difficult times when this has been such a challenge to us, we thank you for your upholding and for your guidance of us. And we thank you for all in the congregation who give up their time so diligently to make sure that the buildings are safe, that the procedures are correct, that we carry out the various tasks that we have in a way that will be to the safety and the health and well-being of all who come.

And we ask, Lord, that you would bless those who are not able to be here, those who are prevented by illness and other conditions that prevent them from being here. And we ask that you'd bless them as they watch online, as they join the service.

We give thanks, Lord, for that facility. We give thanks that it goes not only to other members of the congregation and households, but that thereby, as it goes out online, that it is disseminated throughout the whole world.

We pray that that itself, Lord, will be to the benefit of many. We ask that tonight many will come to hear Christ's voice for the first time. If they have not heard it already, Lord, make them to hear your voice tonight, we pray.

[10 : 39] Grant that you would speak even through these media that are used to disseminate the gospel. We pray that you would speak into people's lives and to their hearts and minds and give them, Lord, tonight to know the drawing power of your Spirit, bringing them to yourself.

We ask, too, for your blessing on all their activities. As we again begin activities with toddlers, we pray for your blessing for them and for those who have charge over the meeting.

We give thanks for them and pray that you would bless their meeting tomorrow and encourage them, Lord, we pray, in dealing with the toddlers and with their need. And encourage, we pray, those families who bring their young ones onto Sunday school as well and to youth classes.

Lord, we pray for your encouragement for them. And we pray that in all our concerns as a congregation, your blessing will go before us. We recognize, Lord, that we need that blessing to go before us.

We thank you that you are the provider for us, that you go ahead of your people into the path that they follow. Lord, we, Lord, recall from your word how you instructed Elijah long ago to go to a certain place by the brook Kareth, that you had already commanded the ravens to feed him there, to bring him food.

[12 : 00] And the same for the widow that you sent him to later on, that she had been prepared by you to receive him. And, Lord, help us, we pray, to believe that you still do this for your people, that whatever you ask us to do, wherever you lead us to go, and however you prompt us to serve you, we know that you go ahead of us.

And we pray that we may at all times, Lord, like the psalmist, set the Lord before us at all times, so that we can say, seeing is at our right hand, that we shall not be moved.

And so, Lord, bless us again, we pray tonight. Again, we commend to you those of our congregation who are experiencing challenging and difficult times during these days. We pray once again, Lord, for those who mourn the passing of loved ones.

We pray for them not only in this recent week that has gone by, but also in times gone by as we would seek, O Lord, constantly to remember that bereavement and the sorrow of bereavement is not over quickly and sometimes not even for a lifetime.

And we pray especially that you would bless those in the past week who have lost loved ones. Again, we commend to you, O Lord, Chriselle and her family. We ask that you would be with her brother and sister as they mourn the passing of Joan, her sister.

[13 : 18] We ask, O Lord, that you would bless them at this time with your strengthening, with your comforting, and the wider family as well. We commend them all to you. We pray for those who are ill, O Lord, at this time.

We pray that you would bless them as they spend time in recovery. Those of them who have been and are receiving treatment or surgery, we commend them to you.

Those who, Lord, are anticipating this in days to come, Lord, remember them. We pray also. So we give thanks as we hear of a measure of improvement with those that we've been praying for and remembering for many weeks and months gone by.

We thank you for the improvement, Lord, in the health of our elder, Dolyangi. We pray that that will continue. And ask, O Lord, as he will again begin the next stage of treatment this week, that that will be beneficial to him.

Remember him and remember Anne and the wider family as well. Continue to uphold them and to encourage them. By your own truth, we pray. We pray, too, for John Alec as he spends now time at home.

[14 : 26] We pray that you would uphold him in mind and in body as well. We pray, Lord, that he may know your blessing during this time of recovery for him, too. We pray, too, for little Olivia.

And thank you for the improvement also shown in her health as also with little Jessica. Lord, we ask that you bless them as we have prayed for them for some time and continue to bring them before you.

So we give thanks that you hear us, that you are a God who listens to our feeble voices, Lord. And that you are one who, despite our littleness of faith and our unfaithfulness at many times, O Lord, yet you hear our cry and you give note.

And you take note and you give us indication that you are pleased to bless in response. Lord, we pray that this will be so for them and for others, too, for whom we pray at this time.

Remember us as a nation, as a people. Remember us throughout the islands, Lord, when there is an increase in the COVID vaccine, COVID infections.

[15 : 35] We ask that you would bless the vaccines that you have provided and help people to, if they haven't taken them, to help them. Lord, we pray to see their way forward to taking the vaccine.

And once again, we commend Jackie Keddie to you. We ask that you bless her, bless her work colleagues in donation as well during this difficult time for them.

We pray, too, for the residents and ask that you be near to them, Lord, and grant that your own protective care would be cast over them. And we pray that you may bless them with recovery, if it please you, and that you would help them, Lord, at this time to look to you for your help.

Remember those who have charged over these health situations in the health board. We give thanks for the dedication of staff of different levels of responsibility.

And we pray that you would bless them, Lord, at this time and help them through times of anxiety such as these. Help them especially to look to you and to your grace. We pray that you would bless us as a nation as well.

[16 : 44] Bless those in government over us, Lord. Grant to us, though we see that there doesn't seem to have been, throughout the general public, much of an increase in looking to God and looking after their own souls, as well as those who are in government over us.

Oh, turn them to yourself, we pray. Give them even that this pandemic may reach into their hearts and minds to ask serious questions. But especially, Lord, turn them to your truth, to your words, to your laws.

And in all of these things, Lord, take the glory and the praise to yourself. And whatever you have chosen to be, our lot in life, help us to glorify your name at all times, even as you have created us for this purpose.

Receive our thanks now, cleanse us from all our sin, and all for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now we're going to read God's Word this time tonight in Philippians.

Once again, we're looking at Philippians tonight. Philippians chapter 2, as we begin looking at chapter 2. We'll read chapter 2, verses 1 through to verse 18.

[17 : 55] Philippians chapter 2 at the beginning. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

[19 : 31] For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God, without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Amen. We pray that God will bless his word, and especially as we turn to it now, to look into the first four verses or so of the chapter, that he would guide us as we go through these great truths that he's going to set before us in this passage.

Now, we've already seen that Paul is not a man to feel sorry for himself. We've spoken a number of times and mentioned his imprisonment, that he is chained to a Roman soldier, as would be the custom then for someone in prison, that he doesn't have the freedom by which he would be able to go about, as perhaps he would have wanted to, and no doubt would have wanted to.

And indeed, you can see that he's not feeling sorry for himself from what we saw in the previous chapter. For example, there in verse 28, earlier on, at the early part of the chapter, how he is rejoicing there at the advance of the gospel, and how he's actually saying that he will rejoice in verse 18, in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, God is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.

[21 : 32] In other words, he is, though he is imprisoned and obviously experiencing pain and discomfort, nevertheless, he rejoices in hearing that the gospel is being preached, that the gospel is being preached, even if it's not sincerely preached on the part of those that are preaching it.

Some are preaching it, as he says, to make further trouble for him, but nevertheless, as long as it's the actual gospel that's being preached, he's prepared to rejoice in that, despite the fact that he's going through these difficulties.

Now he's saying, complete my joy here, as you see in verse 2 of chapter 2. Complete my joy. So he's saying in the previous chapter, I rejoice in hearing this.

Now he says, I want you to complete my joy. It's remarkable the way that through the grace of God, he's enabled to still mention rejoicing and completing his joy.

And what is it that's going to complete his joy? Well, he tells us in this passage, he says, complete my joy so that you be united in the same mind.

[22 : 39] In other words, what would really complete the joy of the apostle is for him to hear that the Philippians are a united church, that they're exercising their unity in Christ in a way that he describes here, doing nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility counting others better than themselves, and not looking to their own interests, but the interests of others.

And indeed, as we'll see next time, having this mind that was shown in Jesus himself, in the mindset of Jesus as the servant, as he served in the interests of his people.

That's what he's saying to them here. It's not his own situation. It's not his own imprisonment. It's not his own pain. Not his own discomfort.

Not his own affliction. That's not what's occupying the apostle's mind at all, remarkably, at this time. It's actually the church of God. It's God's children that are on his mind.

What a huge challenge to myself and to yourselves that is tonight, because undoubtedly there are times when we perhaps prefer our own comforts to the discomfort or to the challenge of actually being engaged in the interests of others.

[23 : 56] But that's what real discipleship is about, as the apostle is showing us here. Now, we have said earlier that they're going to be united. He wants them to be united.

At the end of the chapter, the last passage we looked at there, striving for the faith of the gospel side by side, standing firm in one spirit, one mind.

In other words, he was emphasizing either need for unity in facing their opponents. Opponents of the gospel, opponents of them as a church in Philippi, of which there would be many.

And he was saying to them there, you need to be united side by side in facing your opponents. But now he's emphasizing unity, not for their relationship to their opponents, but for their own health, for their own spiritual health, for their own spiritual good.

And that's always how it is, isn't it? We cannot actually think about facing opposition to the gospel, of going out with the gospel and dealing with the opposition we face without being united in doing so, without having that essential unity in Christ and with one another by which we serve Christ in the gospel.

[25 : 11] And it's the same when it comes to our own spiritual health as a congregation, in order to be a healthy congregation, not just in reaching out with the gospel, but reaching into our own lives, to progress spiritually, to progress in assurance of faith, to progress in holiness of life.

We do that unitedly. It's not left to each individual, although we have, as we'll see tonight, an individual responsibility in these things. But our personal holiness, our increase in personal holiness, takes place within the setting of the body of Christ, within the setting of the fellowship of God's people.

And that's why this unity, this togetherness that he's going to mention in this chapter, in this passage, is really so important. So, united against opposition. Now he's saying, be united for the sake of your own spiritual growth and health as well.

Now there's method in this passage, the first few verses here, verses 1 to 4. There's method in the way the apostle goes about things. And it's important for us to notice that, just very, very briefly, because the first verse there is actually, we're going to call that God's investment in his people.

Because what the apostle is doing is really reminding the Philippians how God has invested love, how he has invested encouragement and comfort and fellowship in the Holy Spirit in these Philippians, as he does in all his people.

[26 : 44] In other words, Paul is saying, just think for a moment what God has already done, the extent to which God has already gone to make you the people you are. And how in the Trinity that God is, the three persons of the Trinity, they are together involved in making you what you are as a people.

Therefore, he's saying, seeing that's the case, now complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love. In other words, the unity that he's going to appeal for in these verses 3 and 2 to 4 is a unity that flows from, or really you might say is encouraged by, or stimulated by, the investment that God has already made in them.

And let's look at that first of all in verse 1. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy.

There's a lot of words there, and we're not going to be able to go into the meaning of all these words in any great detail. But we're taking this, there are different ways in which commentators who comment on the epistle take them.

But we're taking them, I'm taking them tonight, that this is actually a reference to God in the three persons of the Trinity. Although God the Father isn't mentioned specifically, Christ is, and so is the Spirit.

[28 : 14] And in between that, you've got comfort from love. So taking that this is Paul's way of presenting the facts of God's love for them, God's encouragement of them, God's comfort for them, and God making them into this fellowship of believers that they are.

And so this is how he's putting it. And the if here, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from love, it doesn't mean if in a doubtful sense.

Sometimes we use the word if like that, if such and such is the case, without necessarily knowing whether it is or not. That is not how he's actually dealing with, that's not the kind of meaning that if has here.

You could translate it, if as indeed is the case, if as indeed it is the case that there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit.

If indeed as it is the case, then fulfill the complete my joy. So that's really the way that the Apostle's thinking is set out.

[29 : 26] But look at these three references. He's saying, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if indeed as is the case, there is encouragement in Christ.

Them being in Christ is actually bringing Christ's ministry into their lives. It keeps flowing into their lives. It's not something that happens in the beginning of the Christian experience and then ebbs and leaves them.

It's something that goes on. And what he's talking about here briefly is Christ's exhortation of them. The Spirit is mentioned. It's through that and through his word. But it's Christ's wonderful ministry to his people as a ministry of gentle exhortation, you might say, which actually also involves encouragement or comfort.

That's already happened. That's already taking place in their experience. And he's arguing from that basis towards them being united together.

That's one of the wonderful things that you know about when you come to know the Lord as your Savior. When you come to give your life over to Jesus by his grace that you do so, he comes and then he introduces you to his Father.

[30 : 40] And you begin to understand something about the meaningfulness of God as a Father to his people. But it's through Christ that that is actually done. You don't come necessarily thinking of coming to the Father directly.

Remember what Jesus said in John 14, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. So tonight when you have Jesus, the Son of God, as your Savior, you inevitably have God as your Father in heaven.

And as you have Jesus as your Savior, you have a ministry of gentle exhortation, gentle encouragement from him into your life.

And then he moves, secondly, any comfort from love. And we're taking this, as we said, to the love of the Father, the love of God the Father. Any comfort. If there is, as there is indeed, any comfort from love.

You have Father's comforting care. You remember that God in the Bible sometimes is actually compared to a mother. It doesn't bring us to actually be persuaded that there's a femininity to God, although because God is presented in His Word usually in the masculine gender for us.

[32 : 04] That's not important in that sense. What is important is that the Father, as He takes care of His people, He ministers a comforting care to them like a mother nursing a child in her lap or on her breast.

And tonight, you as a Christian are thankful for that ministry. You're thankful that your relationship to God is one of a child to a father. You're thankful that you know His fatherly love, that you know in His fatherly love that He takes care of you, that He comforts you, that He ministers that comfort to your soul, just like a loving father or mother ministers comfort to their child in distress.

And if there's any, also, fellowship in the Spirit. Now, the word's participation here, but it's actually literally the word fellowship. Any fellowship in the Spirit. He's talking here about the kind of thing that the Holy Spirit brings about.

This fellowship that He creates. Because that's what God does. When He converts individuals, He bonds them to the fellowship. He makes them part of the fellowship that is Christ's church.

The fellowship that is in the Spirit. That's what He's talking about here. This fellowship that they are. Sometimes we talk about fellowship as something we experience.

[33 : 34] There's nothing wrong with that. When we think about being together, we say, well, we've had fellowship with each other. That's perfectly okay. But the main meaning of the word is being a fellowship.

Being a bonded together people that share in certain things, especially in spiritual realities, in the gospel, in salvation. That's the fellowship the Spirit creates.

That's the fellowship the Spirit nourishes through the gospel. That's the fellowship that tonight such a people as yourselves are. It's not just something you experience.

You are the fellowship of Christ's people in this world, this visible church of God as they were in Philippi. So here is a Trinitarian work already experienced by them.

Encouragement in Christ, comfort from the Father's love, participation in the Spirit. And he finishes off by saying, any affection and sympathy. He's drawing together, and now he's talking about, this word affection, we've come across it already back in verse 8, where he says, God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

[34 : 53] And you recall maybe that we saw the meaning of that word to be something that really involves a really deep affection, literally an inner movement in a person.

The old translation of bowels there, just that inner movement that you think of in a spiritual sense with a very deep, deep personal love.

Now that's what he's saying. This is the outcome of having been taken under the encouragement of Christ and the love of the Father and made a fellowship in and by the Spirit.

Well, he's saying, you have this affection and this sympathy from God. One of the commentators put it like this, Christ's encouragement, God's comforting love and the Spirit's partnership toward a suffering and beleaguered believers in Philippi and elsewhere are not merely reinforcements sent by a distant monarch to troops at the front of the battle.

They are a concrete expression of the deep affection and mercies that tie God's heart to ours and show that He is with us in the valleys of life.

[36 : 13] He was picking up the reference to the troops, as it were, the spiritual troops facing their opponents and what he's saying now in this chapter he's saying, this commentary was saying, don't think of that as if God was just sending reinforcements from a distance.

What he's actually saying is, I'm here myself. I'm with you myself because I've come as the triune God into your experience as human beings.

I've taken you to be my people. I've formed you into this fellowship. Now you see the appeal of that. That's Paul's method. That's where Paul is beginning to approach the whole issue of them being united together for their own well-being as well.

What he's really saying is, here is God united together, these three persons that comprise the Godhead and they're all perfectly united in the blessing you've already received.

They're all perfectly united in what has come to be your experience already from Christ, from the Father, from the Spirit. Now therefore, seeing that is true, seeing that is one of the great facts in your experience.

[37 : 25] Well then he says, complete my joy having the same love, being in full accord. In other words, the unity within the Trinity in blessing them is the launch pad, if you like, in his argument for them to be united together.

It's almost saying to them, when this is the case, how can you be anything other than united in these ways? So there's God's investment in his people.

Isn't that so precious to us tonight? Isn't that so precious to us as a fellowship of God's people? That God himself should have invested so much in our lives.

That Christ should have invested encouragement, that he gives us encouragement. That God the Father should have invested comfort from his love in our lives. And that God the Holy Spirit should have invested in his power in creating us a fellowship, a believing fellowship of people, a fellowship of believing people.

That we should actually then from that say, how can we be anything else than united for the glory of God in facing opponents or looking in on ourselves?

[38 : 42] It's the same emphasis. God has already done such great things. Now then it's our response to be united, as he calls here. And there are two things he mentions in this unity.

First of all, he mentions unity itself, but then he mentions humility as well. So we take verse 2, first of all, as unity, and then verses 3 and 4 under the heading of humility.

Complete my joy, being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind. Now again, there's a lot of words, a lot of phrases there.

Let me just see if we can briefly go through them and just keep them in the way that Paul deals with them here. He's talking really about a unity of conviction and of affection, a unity of conviction in the truth and about God, and a unity of affection for one another.

That's really what a fellowship is as well, isn't it? A unity in conviction about the truth and a unity of affection for one another. Because it begins there in a unity together, a like-minded in the truth of God.

[39 : 56] Be of the same mind. Be of the same mind. That's where agreement really begins. It's an agreement in the faith.

It's an agreement in the truth. The central doctrines of the Bible, the central doctrines of our salvation, we must never think of the central doctrines of salvation as doctrines that are in any way designed to disintegrate our unity.

It's actually the opposite. These central doctrines provide us with true unity in Christ. Christ himself, the person of Christ, the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, Christ's resurrection from the dead, his death on the cross, as an atoning sacrifice.

All of these foundational doctrines from the Bible as you have it are actually uniting doctrines. It's when you actually go out with the Bible's own definition of them that you begin them to have disunity.

But when you take the doctrines as they are, as they are set out by God, the basic doctrines themselves, there'll be other doctrines around them that we may not actually agree with, like the form of church government or baptism, whatever they might be, but the essential doctrines themselves, Christ himself, all of them as I've mentioned, they are unifying doctrines.

[41 : 29] They are there so that we, in sharing them, are bonded together with them and under them. This is what he's reminding them of, having experienced God and his blessing.

Now he's saying, be of the same mind, complete my joy, that you be of the same mind, that you have, that you are one-minded about this. And Paul, actually here, is using the word mind a few times.

And he uses the word mind a lot in his epistles. For Paul, the mind is important. And the mind is not equal to the intellect.

He mustn't think of the mind as just those who are brainy, those who have a high intellect. The mind is actually that central component in our spiritual well-being, in our soul, where you find the, you find, you might say, the mindset or the attitude that actually directs a person's life.

The mind is so important as we relate to each other, especially as we relate to God. And that's why he goes on in verse 5, have this mind that was also in Christ Jesus.

[42 : 46] Have this mindset in you. Let this be your great example as you think about what it is to be united and about what you think it is to be humble. Go to Jesus.

Look at Jesus. That's why he's going to give us this great example. We'll come to that, God willing, shortly. So that's what he's saying. Be like-minded. Having also the same love.

Being of the same mind, having the same love. What does he mean by that? He means sharing in the type of love that God himself has shown them.

Sharing in the love that God himself has brought about in their lives for himself. One of the things that's important here is that love is actually as God has defined it.

I don't need to tell you how love is defined nowadays in human terms, love being what people make it. And that meaningless phrase is often bandied about love is love.

[43 : 53] Well, that doesn't really mean anything. Or if it means anything, it means only what I make it. Love is love. In other words, love is what I choose it to be. And if I choose it to be expressed one way or the other, then that's it.

That's love for me and that's what's important to me. That's the world in which we live. God is saying, love is as I define it. Whether it's love between a man and a woman, love between Christians together, love between individuals that are not married at all, love is as God has defined it and as it's exemplified in Jesus.

Love for God, love for one another. And here is the apostle saying, well, you're sharing in this fellowship, you are this fellowship, be of the same mind and have the same love.

Share out this Christian love and your experience of God's love together. Being in full accord and of one mind.

Again, it comes back to the one mind there. You know, there's a word, we use a word in English, hyphenated word, soulmates. It's a beautiful word. When you think about somebody being your soulmate, it doesn't necessarily mean somebody you're married to or somebody you're engaged to.

[45 : 14] It can be a fellow Christian that you are a soulmate to as a soulmate to you. Your souls are bonded together. So you can call them, so and so is actually my soulmate.

We share a lot of things together. I can tell them things, tell him things or her things that I cannot share with many others, maybe not with anybody else, but that's because they are my soulmate.

She's my soulmate and because she or he is my soulmate, our souls because they're bonded together, we share in so much to our mutual benefit.

Well, Paul is actually using that sort of word here, being of one accord, full accord and of one mind. Being of full accord means being soulmated together.

And what a beautiful expression that is for the love that Christians share. Even if it doesn't go to the point where you're able to tell people about all your experiences, all your personal details, we're still soulmates together.

[46 : 20] We share the love of God, we share the grace of Christ, we share the comfort of Jesus, we share the encouragement that comes from Him, we share all the things that Christ brings to His people.

And in that sense we are soulmates together. Now he's saying, because you know God, the Trinity is united in the blessing of you, be soulmates together, be of full accord and of one mind in the way you live your life.

But then he moves in verses 3 and 4 to humility. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Sorry, do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but the interests of others.

And he begins in verse 3 with a negative emphasis, do nothing, don't do anything, you could say, from rivalry or conceit. And he goes to the positive side of it, but in humility count others more significant than yourself.

[47 : 30] Beginning of verse 3 there, you could say really is the big problem with all of us personally as we are as fallen human beings. It's a self-centered approach to life.

Don't do anything, he says, from rivalry or conceit because this is the big enemy that exists in your soul and mine. It's called pride. pride, the conceitedness that is part of our fallen human nature.

And now he's saying to these Philippians, if there's any evidence of that still amongst you, get rid of it. Don't do anything from that perspective, from that basis. Don't do anything from rivalry or conceit or pride because that is really the self-centered approach to life.

It's the kind of approach that puts yourself above everyone else and even above God's prerogatives. Indeed, in the mystery of our fall in Adam and Eve, that's essentially what's at the heart of it.

Giving in to the suggestion of Satan that God had somehow kept something vital back from them and that they couldn't really put their whole trust in what God had said.

[48 : 48] Has God indeed said this? And so they took what had been forbidden by God with a devastating result of sin entering to the experience not only between themselves as a couple but also between them and God.

And that sin is then passed on to their progeny apart from Jesus. But there is this dreadful thing called pride and it's there, it's there in your life, it's there in my life, it's there waiting to show itself, waiting to gain the ascendancy, waiting to exercise its power and its influence.

We have to deal with it for the, not only for the good of our own souls but for the well-being of Christ's people, the body of Christ, the church of Christ, the congregation we belong to, whatever.

That's what he's saying, pride really at the center of our lives. And it's that pride that leads to things like rivalry. Do nothing, that's why he's combining it, you do nothing from rivalry or conceit.

What causes rivalry in congregations? What causes rival is between different cliques as you had in Corinth in congregations that are mentioned in the New Testament. Where does that come from?

[50 : 09] Where does that rivalry come from? Where does that competition, competitiveness, and competition come from? It comes from pride. It comes from me and from you not being prepared to stand on our pride and say, I must sacrifice that for the Lord's sake.

Don't do anything, he says, from rivalry or conceit. But, instead, here's the positive side, in humility, count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but to the interests of others. What is humility? How do you define humility? Well, it's defined in these two verses very briefly.

Because humility is, especially as it goes on here, counting others more significant than yourselves, and let each of you look not only to his own interests, but the interests of others.

That's humility. If I'm going to be a humble person as I need to be before God, I'm going to actually be, I'm going to have to be in line with what's said there, counting others more significant than myself, and I'm going to actually put the interests of others before my own interests all the time.

[51 : 28] That's the challenge of it. That's the challenge of following Christ as your example. Let this mind be in you that was also in Jesus Christ. But that is humility.

And you know, in Roman times and in the Roman and Greek world of Paul's day, this was utterly opposed to how they saw the meaningful and the commendable life.

It was utterly against the idea of humility as expressed by God and by the apostle here. And so it is in our own day as well.

Because in Paul's day, his definition of humility, counting others more significant than themselves, looking at the interests of others ahead of their own interests, that would have been completely seen as a complete waste of a human life.

It would have just been the opposite way around. And so it is in our own generation as well, friends. It is the gospel definition of humility that's so sadly lacking in our society.

[52 : 38] How often do you come across, strictly speaking, how often do you come across people committed on a daily basis to count others more significant than themselves?

How often do you come across on a daily basis people saying, this is the way I want to live my life, I want to put the interests of so and so, and especially people that are less well off than myself, above those of myself, of my own interests.

It's not very common, is it? It might be to some small degree, but really not to the degree in which the apostle here defines it for us.

And that's one of the reasons our society, and I'm speaking generally of course, it doesn't mean that everybody is like that, not at all, but in general terms, our society is in a mess.

Why is it in a mess? Why is it in a mess spiritually? Why is it in a mess morally? Why is it in a mess in relationships? Why is it in a mess financially? Why is it in a mess?

[53 : 42] Because we lack humility. Because we've departed from, if we ever were there, at the level of biblical humility, where we're genuinely concerned to put others ahead of ourselves, the way Jesus here in the next part of the chapter has spoken of us having done.

And because we don't actually count others more significant than ourselves. I think that the more I go on as a Christian, humility is one of the most difficult things to achieve, to attain to.

It's one of those things for which you need daily grace in abundance. Because it's not the nature of my heart to actually think of others better than myself. It's not the nature of my heart as it is in itself to put others genuinely and consistently ahead of my own interests.

But I'm obliged to do that as a Christian if I'm going to be true to my Lord. That is what he's saying to us. He's really saying to these Philippians, you know, God has placed you as a fellowship created by the Spirit to be entirely different to the world around you in the values you have, in how you look at yourselves, in how you look at others, in how you live your life, in the things that you see that are important and not important.

And so it is for us to hear. Now that's the time gone by, but I want to just finish with one other word which occurs there and is very important.

[55 : 17] Paul is actually putting himself here between, you'll notice, between what he says about his own sufferings in chapter 1 and what he is going on to say about the sufferings of Jesus here in chapter 2.

And that's itself significant because as prison for Paul is all about Jesus, so it ties him in with the sufferings of Jesus himself that he entered into that, to the glory of God the Father.

But you notice this word each. Do nothing from rivalry and conceit. And then in verse 4 he suddenly introduces the word, let each of you look not only to his own interests but also the interests of others.

And there's that emphasis there that's so critical that the quality of the fellowship, the quality of the fellowship's love, the quality of the fellowship's concern for one another, the quality of humility at the end of the day comes down to the point of my individual life.

My individual life fulfilling my role in God's church and my relationship to God. Let each of you do this.

[56 : 40] and friends that's how we have to look at it as well. Because it bears on our individual responsibility.

Because our fellowship as a congregation as it was at Philippi has a direct bearing with how our personal life is in relation to God.

It comes down to that individual point where you actually have my responsibility and yours to live as God wants us to live and how that is spread then through the fellowship of God's people.

May bless his word to us. We're going to conclude in Psalm 131 Psalm 131 and that's on page 173 My heart's not proud O Lord nor haughty is my eye I do not occupy myself with things too great or high my spirit I have calmed my heart is pacified my soul is like a little child close to its mother's side just like a little child my soul is calmed in me O Israel hope in God the Lord now and eternally the words there refer to a weaned child more so than a little child so that you think of a child that's been weaned no longer has a hankering back for milk is now being fed on solid foods and what he's saying is I have been progressed in my life he's saying so that my heart is now pacified like a weaned child my heart is not proud

O Lord nor haughty is my eye my heart is not proud O Lord nor haughty is my eye I do not occupy myself with things too great or high my spirit I have come my heart is pacified my my soul is like a little child close to its mother's side just like little little child my soul is calm in me oh with real hope in

[60 : 09] God the Lord now now and eternally now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore Amen God Hmm 2 yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah