

Joy in Selfless Unity

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[0 : 0 0] in Philippi, there's another Lord besides Caesar can put you in prison, just like Paul has been put in prison. And he's calling these folks to be good citizens. The word he uses in verse 27, which our English translations all translate, be worthy, let your manner of life, or walk in a worthy man or something along those lines. It's actually the word that means citizen. Be a citizen.

Politeo. We got our word politic, policy, political from this Greek word, meaning, so Paul is intentionally using a unique word to these folks, which will hit home for them. So be good citizens. How?

Now, worthy of the gospel. So whatever politics you do, worthy of the gospel. Whatever citizenship you do, whatever rights and privileges you have as a citizen, worthy of the gospel. So he's calling these folks who are under pressure not to live their Christianity.

Do it worthy of the gospel. How relevant is that for us today? However we involve with folks in this Black Lives movement, worthy of the gospel.

However we involve ourselves in this election, worthy of the gospel. However we involve ourselves in this issue of the epidemic and caring for one another, worthy of the gospel.

[1 : 5 0] There's our call. So here we have Paul calling us to responsibility of citizens, but not as we might think, but rather as those who live worthy of the gospel and for a higher purpose, which is to protect the unity of the church, not simply to do something else. But ultimately his goal is protect your unity because your unity is a threat.

There is an outside threat and there's an inside threat to your unity. He's not calling the church to create a unity. We already have a unity. He's saying protect it, maintain it, strive together, contend together for that unity, both against outside threats and inside threats.

And I believe, man, I think that's right on point for where we're at right now in our day because we could be, our unity is threatened by all kinds of things. It's tough to have unity when our whole church physically can't gather together.

It's very hard. I'm grateful for those of you that show up. I mean, we're limited, I understand. And I'm grateful that we have the technology to, at least over the airwaves, have some connection.

But our unity is at stake, really is. And we have to consider that during this time. So here we are in Philippians. We've been discovering joy.

[3 : 2 2] Paul has been showing us how he finds joy in a number of things. He finds joy in this church. Back in verse 1, verse 5, he talks about how he prays with joy about these people because of their participation in the gospel.

This church brings him joy. He doesn't say that about too many other churches. This church at Philippi brings him joy.

Because they are gospel people. They are not just supporting him. They are also engaged in the gospel themselves. They're praying for him. They're supporting him.

They're out witnessing themselves. This is a gospel church. And that brings him joy. And then he talks about, well, I know you're concerned about my circumstances.

I'm in prison for the defense of the gospel. And you guys get that. I know you get that. I want you to know that even in this situation that seems bad, I've been contained.

[4 : 22] I've been, so the gospel seems like it's under wraps. I want you to know that even in this situation, God's caused the gospel to advance. Because I have a captive audience.

I'm chained to guards. And everyone that gets chained to me gets to hear the gospel. And he says it has spread through the whole Praetorian Guard, which is the elite guard of Caesar himself.

So he gets time with each one of these guards. Not all of them, but they're out spreading it around.

Man, you've got to know what this prisoner I just got chained to for the last eight hours. He's not like a normal prisoner. Man, he's got joy.

He's got a purpose in life. He really believes in this Jesus guy. He's got some story. I want to go hear him again. So God has worked through Paul even in this prison.

[5 : 26] And so he says, I rejoice in that. And then he says later, he says, I rejoice too, because not only is the gospel advancing inside the prison, it's advancing outside the prison because brothers in Christ here in Rome who have heard about my imprisonment are encouraged and emboldened to preach the gospel themselves.

Some of them do it out of love for good reasons, for pure reasons. But there's some other preachers who are preaching Christ from selfish motives. They're trying to hurt me.

And you know what he says? He goes, I still rejoice. Because even though they're trying to hurt me, their motives are totally messed up. But the message is still on point.

And so as long as Christ and the message is right and preached, for me personally, I rejoice. Let them badmouth me all they want. I don't care. Because I'm all about the gospel going out.

So he keeps talking about this joy. And then he talks about the last session we looked at, verses 18 through 26. Paul says, you know, I'm facing death.

[6 : 42] They may put me to death here. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what's going to turn out. I may die. I may live. I'm waiting to face the emperor himself. I'm waiting to defend myself before the emperor.

I've defended myself before others. Now I'm kind of working my way up to Supreme Court. And I don't know if his thumb's going to go up or his thumb's going to go down.

But he says, I know that I will rejoice no matter what happens. I find joy even in what I do not know the future to be for sure.

I have expectations, but my expectations are not absolutely certain. I could live or I could die. So why does he find rejoicing even in what I don't know is going to turn out later?

Because here's my conviction. To live is Christ. To die? Man, that's game. If I die, I'm good.

[7 : 41] I am good. If I live, though, I'm living for Christ. Either way, I'm good. I will rejoice. And he talks about, well, what would I rather have?

Well, to be with Christ, that's pretty much far better. He uses really good Greek, terrible English. But to live?

Well, that means I'm laboring for you, and that's still a really good thing. As he kind of weighs it out, I'm becoming convinced that I'm going to stay. I think I'm going to survive this because there's more for me to do.

I don't think I've finished my race yet. When he writes 2 Timothy, this is years later, and he's like, I'm done. I know I'm done. I've finished. I've got my guys ready to go.

I've trained my replacements. But here he's like, no, I think the Lord's going to keep me here. I'm not absolutely certain, but I'm pretty convinced in my own mind that I'm going to stay for your progress.

[8 : 44] So he keeps finding joy. Joy, joy, joy. So here we come to a point in verse 27 where it changes tone a little bit.

He's been talking about himself. He's been talking about his circumstances. He's been talking about what does he expect next. Now in verse 27. Now he turns his attention to them and what he wants for them.

Now he begins to talk to them about what do I want to see from you? And what we've seen so far about this church is, man, this is a really good church.

He talks about how it not only has, he has joy when he prays for them, but earlier in chapter one, he talked about his affection for them. He really likes them, right?

This isn't one of those churches that he's always worried about and, oh man, those folks can't get along. He really enjoys this church. So you almost get the sense of, oh, was this the perfect church?

[9 : 48] It's a really good church. They're a gospel church. They care about advancing the gospel. So are they a perfect church? Well, beginning here, we get a little sense of, no.

There's still a little bit more. There's actually some very dangerous threats inside this congregation. There's some disunity in this church.

And by the end of the letter in chapter four, he's going to mention two particular women. He's going to name them. Two women who are not getting along. And he's not bad-mouthing them.

They're good women. He says, they're my partners in the gospel. They're good people. But they got a tension with each other. What I'm learning is, and what I'm encouraged about is, here is a good church that has a lot of good things.

It also has some flaws. Just like us. I think we're a pretty good church. I think we have a lot of good things happening.

[10 : 54] But that doesn't mean we're perfect. And no church is perfect. By the way, if you find a perfect church, leave it because you're going to mess it up. Right? That's a joke. All right. Sorry. Here's a church with a lot of great strengths.

Brings joy to Paul. And yet, here's some underlying things of possible disunity. I think they're only in the threat of disunity. I think he's trying to catch it early.

They're not like Corinth where they've already got their groups all segregated. This is a church where... Pay attention now. There's some external things that can disrupt your... And there's some internal things.

It's attitudes only right now. But let's work on those attitudes because our unity is at stake. And I think this is a really relevant message for us today.

So he's rejoiced in things that have been happening, how his life has been going. Now he asks them to do unity. So in 127, he talks about, Be good citizens, worthy of the gospel of Christ.

[12 : 01] Why? So that when I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side.

Unity. So he's fixed on unity in chapter 1, verse 27. And then look at 2, 2. Chapter 2, 2, he's going to talk about unity again. Complete my joy by being of what?

The same mind. Having the same love. Being in full accord. Literally one soul and of one mind. So again, unity. So he's going to talk about unity in two different perspectives.

He's going to appeal to them to fight for unity against two different, very different kinds of threats. So at the end of chapter 1, the threat is outside the church.

There's opponents. That you must strive together, side by side, and fight for the faith of the gospel because you have opponents.

[13 : 01] He's not saying attack those opponents. He's saying defend the gospel. Defend your unity. Okay? And then in chapter 2, now there's another threat. The threat's inside the church.

Now it's about what our attitudes are toward one another. Now it's about our humility and the kind of mindset we must have to protect the unity that Christ bought for us.

Okay? So two perspectives here. So appeal number one here at the end of chapter 1, 27 to 30, I would say it this way. I think he's calling us to strive together for unity as citizens of the gospel.

Strive together for unity as citizens of the gospel. Notice in verse 27, the first word in verse 27, only.

He's going to point out a priority. Only. Only. In other words, there's one thing I want you to do. If you don't do anything else, this is what I want you to do. One thing.

[14 : 13] Only. Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Only one thing really matters.

Live worthy of the gospel. And he's more specific than that. Like I mentioned, he uses the word *politeo*, which means to be a citizen. So it's not just walk worthy, but be a citizen.

Think of your citizenship, both here in this Roman colony or for us here in this United States. We have a great citizenry. We have a great country.

We have great privileges. We have great protections. We also have obligations as citizens. citizens. So like the Philippines, this relates to us.

We're in a time of country where our minds are set on things in our country. So be citizens worthy of the gospel of Jesus.

[15 : 15] So however you do your citizenry, all your privileges and your rights and your protections, do it in a way that's worthy of the gospel. Do your politics worthy of the gospel.

Can Christians do politics? Sure. Do it worthy of the gospel. That's our governing thing.

Can Christians be in government? Yeah. We need that. But here's the thing. Do it worthy of the gospel. Don't compromise.

Well, you can't get anything done. It's not the injustifies the means kind of thing. It's about what kind of people that you are. They're hard to find. Yeah, they are.

It's comforting when we find them, though. I think I can trust that person. So why?

[16 : 16] Why do that? Why is that the one thing? Be citizens worthy of the gospel. Why is that so important? Look at the middle of verse 27. So that. For this purpose.

To this aim. So that whether I come and see you or am absent. I may hear that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith.

Why live worthy? So that you have unity. So that you are protecting the unity. You are striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, which is your unity.

You have one purpose. You have one purpose. One priority. One priority. Worthy of the gospel. One purpose. Unity in that gospel. And he talks about two phrases here in verse 27.

One, striving by the spirit. I think I have. May I hear that you are standing firm in one spirit. I would translate it standing firm by one spirit.

[17 : 20] When Paul uses the phrase one spirit, he's not talking about the human spirit. He's talking about the Holy Spirit. So in other words, that's our power for standing firm.

It's not just about us as humans getting together and finding unity, finding a cause to rally around. And that's going to hold us together. That will hold you together for a while. But power that's going to hold our unity together is the Holy Spirit.

So standing by the spirits. In other words, walking with the spirit together. We're walking with the spirit. We're leaning on the spirit. We're depending on the Holy Spirit to give us the power to overcome our natural tendencies and do what pleases him.

And then he says striving together. Contending together. With one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. Striving together.

Contending together. It's the word *athleto*. We hear our word *athletic* in it. So it has that sense of striving, contending. People working together as a team is really kind of what Paul's pulling in that picture.

[18 : 26] He liked the athletic analogy a lot. Paul did. Striving, wrestling kind of thing. So he's talking about really not just that we work together, but that we strive together.

We *athleto*. We put our efforts into it. We contend. And I have the translation with one mind striving.

It's with one soul, actually. One soul. And that kind of gets into more of an affection bond that we have together in Christ.

Striving side to side. For what? What are we striving for? What are we contending for? What is it that we are willing to stand for? He says, what? The end of verse 27?

The faith of the gospel. Not a faith or any kind of faith of any kind of gospel, but the particular specific faith of the particular specific gospel.

[19 : 37] So what do we fight for? In the next verse, he's going to mention these opponents, okay? He's going to mention people who are against you. What are they against? Well, they're not against.

It's not about because they're against you. They don't like you for some reason. What they're against is the gospel. So what is the faith of the gospel? What is our faith of the gospel?

Well, what's the gospel, first of all? We've talked about for a few years four things that define the gospel. Right? You don't have the gospel if you don't have all four of these things.

Everywhere you go in the New Testament where it talks about the gospel, these four elements are at play. So the gospel involves one? God. God. God.

God. Who is God? Well, not a whole theology course here. Simply, who is God? He is holy, righteous, good.

[20 : 38] He must deal with sin. He cannot let it go. Right? He is just and righteous.

If he just lets it go, then he's not God. I don't like that kind of God. You don't get to define who God is. God defines who God is. And you know deep down who he is.

No matter what you say, you know deep down who he is. So he's God. But he's also what? Old Testament or New Testament. He's also loving, forgiving. Right? Abounding love, merciful.

Okay, so how does God? Wait a minute. If he's just, how can he be forgiving? If he can't let it go, how does he let it go? How do we resolve that tension in God?

Okay, well, that's the first part of the gospel. Second part is man. Who is man? Well, he's defined by God. He is in the image of God. He is made good.

[21 : 40] But he has fallen. Right? He has sinned. He has gone his own way. So he has good things and he has bad things. But when he stands against God and his justice and his righteousness, who is man?

He has fallen short. He is rebellious. He has rejected the creator. He has not given thanks to the creator. Romans 1, he's done all these things. But he has an issue with God.

So how do we resolve that tension about a holy God and a God who forgives? That comes to part three of the gospel. God, man, Christ. Christ is the resolve of the tension.

How does God keep his justice and his forgiveness? Jesus Christ. Jesus comes, lives a holy, perfect life, keeps the law, and then dies in the place of sinners.

So pays the price. Pays the debt. And then exchanges with us our sin and his righteousness.

[22 : 48] So we become righteous. Not because we've done anything righteous, but simply because we've received by faith what Christ has done. And part of that is forgiving us. The other part of that is making us saints.

Christ declaring us to be saints. And then the fourth part of the gospel. How do you respond to all that? God, man, Christ responds.

Well, I've got to do this and this and this and this and this, right? I've got to change my life. I've got to start living better. I've got to be holy. I've got to go to church, right? You've got to go to church, right? So what do I do?

So, no. What's the response? The real gospel says your response is faith. Repent and believe, which are really two sides of the same thing.

I turn back to God. I trust in him. I receive the gift from him. Now, that's going to result in, if I'm truly, say, a changed life.

[23 : 49] And so that's what Paul's calling Christians to do this walk worthy of the gospel. Well, you've been changed, so now live like it. You've been transformed, so start to show that.

Don't do it in your strength. Do it by the Spirit, right? Continue to trust God in this. Walk by him. Abide in the vine. That whole picture, right? Okay.

That's what we fight for. We fight for those things. Who's God? Who's man? Who's Christ? How do I respond to God? That's what we fight for. Because that's what matters most.

What about baptism? Should we fight for that? No, we have church discussions about that. Okay? And we try to do that very, very well.

With respect. What about, you know, the future thing? Should we fight about what, you know, what's going to happen in the future? Is there a rapture? Is there a, you know, whatever, whatever? Again, important things, but not what matters most.

[25 : 03] Not what matters most. That's not what gets you into heaven, your view of the rapture. Or your view of baptism. Okay? It gets you into heaven. And what makes us a body is our faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Our walk with Him. And what He teaches us about who the Father is. And who we are. And who He is. That's what matters. That's what matters most.

So, He says we fight for this. And what happens? Verse 28, He mentions, Not being frightened of anything by your opponents. That's interesting, isn't it? Not being frightened. There are things today that can frighten us.

So, epidemic. What if it gets out of control? That's frightening. The riots that are happening in different cities in our country. That's frightening. And depending on what political side you're on, if so-and-so gets elected, that's frightening.

Right? Because we have different views about these kind of things. Good Christians can have different views about these kind of things. Now, He talks about not being frightened.

[26 : 18] He's not talking about things outside. He's talking about certain opponents who are set against the gospel. Who are set against, in one way or either they're totally against the gospel, or they're changing the gospel.

They're changing that definition of God. They're changing that definition of man. They're changing the definition of who Jesus is. They're changing the definition of faith. See, if they change any of that, they're opponents.

Well, I got one out of four right. Isn't that okay? No, they all go together. Those four things are crystal clear in the New Testament.

Actually, in the Old Testament as well. So now we don't get to change those. Because I don't like that view of God. Sorry.

He is who He is. So He says, don't be intimidated. Don't be startled. Don't be spooked by your opponents. Don't be intimidated by them.

[27 : 27] Don't be frightened by them. Because your fearlessness against them is a sign to them of their destruction. It's a sign to them that they have no threat to you.

They have no power over you. They might be against the gospel, and you stand firm about what the gospel is. But don't be frightened because they have a different view or because they challenge it.

Don't be frightened. That doesn't affect you. Don't be afraid. You just keep correcting what the truth is. It's not your job to change them. That's the Holy Spirit's job.

You just tell them the truth. Stay with the truth. Keep it simple. It's up to the Lord. That's a miracle to change a heart about that.

And it's not only a sign to them because they're going to see, well, you're not intimidated. And they're going to know deep down, okay, well, they're not afraid of this. They're still certain.

[28 : 25] They're still confident. I'm not getting to them. It's a sign to them of their destruction. And that's something God does by His Spirit deep down. That's the conviction of the Spirit.

But it's a sign to you. So here's the encouraging part. It's also a sign to you. When you are in conflict for the gospel, when you are striving for the gospel and you have opponents, when you're not intimidated by that, it's a sign to you that you are truly saved.

It's a mark of your salvation. Do you want to know if you're really saved? How do you know? Well, I prayed a prayer. That's not a sign of your salvation.

That's a mark that you responded. But something you did doesn't prove that you are saved. You're saved by God. So what's the proof that God did something? Well, I prayed.

Well, did He answer? That's your proof. Did He change you? That's your proof. And has it changed how you live?

[29 : 27] That's your proof. Has it made you actually love those that you didn't love before? Has it made you more forgiving? Has it made you more...

Has it changed you? Has it changed your values? Has it changed your desires? Has it changed your heart? Those are the marks of salvation. Not what I did, but...

Ooh, I might be doing now, but it's not because I buckle down and... It's because God's changing my heart. He's softening and He's... You know, He's directing and I'm actually listening.

I'm not falling as often. Right? It doesn't mean I'm perfect, but I'm changing. So here's one of the marks of salvation. You don't get intimidated by people who challenge the gospel.

Because I know what the gospel is. And I know there's going to be opponents to that. I just keep saying what the gospel is. Here it is. It's not complicated.

[30 : 27] But it is uncompromising. So here are these folks that are in conflict because they, these Philippians, are now saying out loud, there's another Lord besides Caesar.

There's another king besides Caesar. And that puts them at threat. And so it would be natural to not say that out loud in Philippi.

Because I can lose my privilege as a citizen. I could lose my freedom as a citizen. That's a threat. I could end up in prison like Paul.

So what does Paul say? Yeah, yeah, keep it quiet. Contend. Contend. That doesn't mean you go out and be aggressive and cause trouble.

It just means when the gospel comes up, you defend it. No, this is what's true. Caesar's king. Yeah, he's king here, but he's not king over everything.

[31 : 32] Caesar's lord. Yeah, he has a lordship for as long as he's alive, but he's not lord of lords. There's another lord who rose from the dead, who rules, who controls whether Caesar, whether, how long Nero will sit on that throne.

And by the way, his time is running out. So, so this is Paul's call to these Philippians to be citizens in a worthy manner.

Sounds like what Paul says to the Philippians in chapter, or excuse me, to the Ephesians in chapter four. He says the same kind of things. He says, therefore, I therefore as a prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling of which you've been called.

How do we do that? Well, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. It's real relational. And then get this, walk in a manner by eager, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

So again, he brings in unity. How we live, the bottom line of how we live in a worthy manner has something to do with our unity. unity, not creating that unity, but maintaining it, protecting it.

[32 : 50] The unity is not something we stir up or create. It's something we are gifted. As soon as I become a Christian, I have unity with you who also are Christians.

We have the same Lord. We have the same faith. We have the same gospel. We have the same hope. In fact, that's what he goes on in Ephesians 4 to define. What kind of unity do we have? Well, there is one body, one spirit, just as we are called to one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Not talking about external, but internal. One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. There's our unity. Father, Son, Spirit, one body, one faith.

So again, Paul urges in Ephesians and Philippians walk in a worthy manner that involves humility and love toward one another, but it again involves this protection of unity that we have in the gospel.

So his first appeal to these Philippians and to us is to strive together for unity as citizens of the gospel.

[34 : 08] Do you think that way? Do you strive for unity? Are you striving for unity of this church? I don't know if you even think that way. Against how the others outside the church are changing what the gospel is?

Is that important to you? Or do you say, oh, we're all on the same page? No, we're not all on the same page. Oh, we just have to get along. Lovely, but there are things that matter.

There is truth that's truth and there is partial truth that's leading people astray. So, then leads them to a second appeal.

Still thinking about unity, but now from a different perspective. Chapter 2, verses 1 through 5. We're just going to kind of hit the highlights here. We don't have time to go through all of this. So, if there's any encouragement in Christ, if there's any comfort from love, if there's any participation in the Spirit, if there's 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.

So, here's the second appeal. Still for unity, but now it's a different perspective. Cultivate, here's how I would put it, cultivate a selfless attitude for the sake of unity.

[35 : 32] He's calling them to unity. And he's doing it with kind of a personal motivation as well. He says, make my joy complete. Make my joy.

So, he's, remember now, Paul's already said, here's a whole bunch of things that give me joy. I already got joy from you. I got joy from Christ. I got joy from the preaching of the gospel. I got lots of joy. But he says, I got a cup and it's not full.

And, I know you guys care about me. I know you guys love me. And I know you guys are praying for me. You know what would fill up my cup? I already get joy from you, but you know what?

You would fill my cup if you would focus on this selfless attitude for the sake of unity. That would put me over the hump.

That's kind of the picture. It's like, fill, complete, fulfill my joy. My joy is not full. You could fill my joy by being of one mind.

[36 : 36] And I think he knows that can work for them because he knows they really do care for him. That they're really praying for him. They really support him. And they've already brought him joy.

It's like, oh, we want to bring him more joy. I love Paul. I want him to feel even more joy in his circumstances. So let's do this for Paul and for Christ.

So notice he gives several motivations of verse one. We don't have time to really unpack them much, but they're really quite simple. He begins with these motivations in verse one. Why should we work for this unity?

Unity's hard. You know that? Unity's hard because we're not always on the same page. We don't always have the same feelings. We don't always have the same perspective.

Unity's hard. When there's a big issue and we're all, you know, united by a cause, okay, that's easy, but maintaining the unity, that takes some work.

[37 : 38] So why do it? What are the incentives? He gives four in verse one. If there's any encouragement in Christ. The word if there is not something that's uncertain. He's not saying if, you know, if you could find any, yeah, it might not be, but there might be, so if you could find some.

Actually, the way he phrases it in the Greek is there is. The if is really logical. It's since there is would be a better way to translate it.

Since there is, I know there is encouragement in Christ. Anybody know if there's any encouragement in Christ? Anybody get any good out of Christ? Yeah, that's easy. What about comfort from love?

Have you experienced any love in the church? Particularly, have you experienced love from God? Yeah. Does it bring you comfort? Yeah. Okay, move on. How about participation in the Spirit?

Have you sensed the Holy Spirit working in your life? Yeah? Okay, let's move on. Any affection and sympathy? So, is there any of these things going on? It doesn't mean, it doesn't mean are they perfect, are they all the time, but have you had them?

[38 : 43] Yeah. Okay. then make my joy complete. Those are your motivations. What do we do? Make my joy complete by being of one mind.

Literally, he says, by thinking the same. And he uses this word for think four times here in the next four verses. He uses it twice in verse two.

Being of the same mind, so think the same, literally. And then at the end of verse two, being of full accord and of one mind. Again, think the one.

It's odd phrasing, but that's how he's, he's talking about it's a thinking thing. And then again in verse three, nothing from rivalry or empty conceit, but in humility, literally, in humility of mind, in humility of thinking, in lowly thinking.

So think low. And then again in verse five, have this mind. think this way as Jesus did. So he's gonna repeat this think word.

[39 : 51] And it's not a word that means think like, think deeply, you know, or define things. It's more about a direction of thought. It's a, sometimes it's translated mindset.

You have a mindset. I like actually what I think it captures is attitude. Have this attitude. It's how we look at things. And how I look at things determines my attitude toward things.

Right? So, so have this kind of mind. Have this, think about things this way. Think about things one, in one way. Think the one.

one. And then he emphasizes this unity thing. Think the one. Same love. One mind.

The phrase, being in full accord, literally, that's the phrase one soul. So one mind, one love, one soul. soul. So we not only think the same, but we care the same.

[40 : 57] Soul is about my affections and caring and my identity. And how do we do that? I mean, you know, they're nice words.

We should be united. Yeah, we should think the same. Yeah, we should have one mind and one soul and one spirit. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, how do you do that? Well, he defines it in verses three and four.

Here's how you do it. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit. Do nothing from rivalry, which means selfish ambition. In other words, do nothing for your own promotion or conceit.

What's conceit? Well, I think we might call it today entitlement. I think I deserve that. I think I'm owed that. Really?

What did you do? I don't know. I just, I think I deserve it. Do nothing from that kind of attitude about putting myself ahead of others. And then, here's the radical part, verse three.

[42 : 01] The next part of verse three. But in humility, in low thinking, count others more significant than yourselves. Well, yeah, I do it all the time. Yeah, that's natural.

Right? I like the New American Standards translation, consider others more important than yourself. That one hits me a little more. It's like, what?

Who does that? Who considers other people more important than themselves? That's totally unnatural. Right? which is why it's rare.

But see, Christians aren't people who live by the natural. We live by the spirit. We live by being transformed. We live by the, by faith in God working through us.

So we do what's actually unnatural. We do things that regular folks don't do. Not because we're anything special, but because we're trusting in God and God is working through us.

[43 : 00] That's why. Because we have the Holy Spirit. That's why. We can absolutely do what's natural. We still can do that. In fact, we tend to do that unless we're thinking.

We tend to do what's natural. I tend to think that I'm more important than you if I don't think. Does that make sense? When I get up in the morning, I think I'm the most important person.

I need the bathroom before anybody else. We have one bathroom. So sometimes it's a race. That's just natural.

See, now he's talking about to think differently means, okay, that's not natural. And I need the Holy Spirit for that. I need faith for that.

Regarding others is more important. Treating others more important. And see, if we do not do those things, and then he adds in verse four, not just looking out for your own interests, but looking out for the interests of others.

[44 : 06] In other words, I'm other people conscious. It's not that I don't think about my own things, but it's that I don't just think about my own things. I also think about the interests of others or the needs of others.

See, and if we don't do those things, if we are just kind of, I'm most important and I take care of myself and that's it, that's a danger to our unity. If we're a church full of people that just take care of ourselves, then we're in threat of losing unity and thereby losing our power.

How do we do it? How does it look? Verse five, now he gives us an example and what an example it is.

Again, we don't have time to look at this whole section. Verses six through eight, there's whole books written on verses six through eight about what Christ has done from eternity to eternity, how Christ stepped down, what these heavy words mean, emptying himself and humbling himself.

So, I'm going to concede and take another week on those verses next week. Okay? Because they're really important.

[45 : 27] We could take a month on those words, but we're going to at least take one week so we can unpack it. But Paul puts those words in there as an example of what it means to do what he's just called us to do, to actually think of others more important.

To actually consider the interests of others and not just ourselves. Here's your example, Jesus himself. So, he says in verse five, think this, have this same mindset, have this same attitude in yourselves which is in Christ Jesus.

Well, what was his attitude? Who, though he was in the form of God, in other words, he was in the exact nature as God, he was God, you could literally say, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped.

Better translation, did not count his equality with God as a thing to be held on to. It wasn't something he was still pursuing. He already had equality with the Father. It wasn't something that he considered he had to just, he could never let go of.

He actually considered letting go. Let it go. We can't get that, we can't grasp that because we're not there. But that's still mind-blowing.

[46 : 41] The very nature of God, equality with God, letting it go. Can't even imagine. So this is what he did.

He let go. He did not regard equality with God as a thing to be held on to, but made himself nothing. Literally, he emptied himself. How does he empty himself?

Does he stop being God? No, that's impossible. So what does he do? Somehow he empties himself. How?

Well, he explains it. He empties himself by taking the form of a servant, literally a slave. He becomes a slave. The sovereign becomes a slave.

And by being born, by submitting himself to being born in the likeness of men, taking on human form. And being found in human form, having that external flesh, he humbled himself.

[47 : 52] He lowered himself by taking flesh and by being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. So Jesus is our model.

He empties himself by taking a body and by taking the role of a servant. Remember, Jesus taught his disciples, how do you lead?

Well, most people lead by lording it over people. Not so with you, he said. No, you're to be like me. You must be the servant of all. You must give everything up for them.

You must be other people conscious. You must not be about you. You must be about them. God, that's leadership. And that's servanthood. And that's who Jesus was.

He's the greatest example of that. And why did he do it all? To die in our place. Why did he, why was he obedient to death?

[48 : 51] To die in our place. To sacrifice all of his, all of his glory, sacrifice all of his position, sacrifice all of his power. He submitted himself every day as he walked on this earth to walk by faith alone in his father.

He did not even speak words of his own initiative, he said. I don't even say words of my own initiative. Everything I say, I hear from the father first and then I say to you. I mean, he lived by faith.

Every miracle he did, he did by faith. It wasn't just, when he knew what people were thinking. Where did he get that?

Because he was all of a sudden omniscient for just a second? No. Because he's in tune with the father and he knew what they were thinking. We have to understand Jesus limited himself in the flesh completely to be like us, to be tempted in every way like us.

He didn't ever step out of that and cheat. He didn't overcome sin because, you know, he's sinless. He overcame sin because he chose to trust the father and do what was right.

[50 : 08] Every time. Now, he didn't have the baggage we had. He was born of a virgin, right? So he didn't inherit the sin nature.

So he was like Adam. That's why we can't not sin because we have sin already in us.

He did not but he maintained that. Okay. Why is it so important that we treat, how we treat each other? Why is it so important?

Can't we just do our own thing? And this is a time when it's really tempting for Christians to just do their own thing. Well, I can't go to church so I'm just going to do my own thing. I'll tune in once in a while, whenever.

I'm really concerned about that in our little flock. How many people are tuning in? Because it's a pretty easy option to, oh, we'll tune in later. Later doesn't happen.

[51 : 11] I know that's not intentional but it's, I'm just concerned. It's an easy time right now to kind of drift and to not be connected. We've tried to develop some ways for people to continue to be connected.

We have the live stream but we also have our, what do we call it? Our car, our car tree, our care tree. We have a care tree where people are calling and connecting and we're trying to stay in touch with people.

And we've got to fight for that. So why is it so important how we treat each other? Here's what Jesus said. Here's the new commandment that I give to you that you love one another. That's not new.

We've heard about loving. No, this is different. Love one another as I loved you. So are you to love one another. In other words, sacrificially lay down your life. And then he says, by this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

If you love each other like I've loved you, people are going to notice. How you treat one another is a witness to the world. It testifies of your oneness through Christ.

[52 : 23] And if we're not fighting for our unity, we lose that whole witness. We lose that testimony. The fact that we are people that have differences and have disagreements and sometimes don't really like each other but still find a way to unite, that communicates something more important and powerful.

Any group of people in this world can unite for a while around a single cause. But if you look at them, most of them look the same from the same background.

The churches that get real big, look at them. They're all the same color. They're all the same background. Paul talks about the kind of church that has different races, different backgrounds, different places in society.

That's and they unite. That's a testimony to Christ, bringing people from different backgrounds. How do you do that today?

Pray for it and walk in a manner worthy of the gospel. However you dialogue with those folks, if you're online or whatever, or you're in work, you're dialoguing with folks about these issues going on today, do it in a manner worthy of the gospel.

[54 : 00] Dialogue. Absolutely. Do it in a way worthy of the gospel. Maybe it's just me, but it feels like I've been up here a long time.

Am I going long? Oh, she wouldn't tell me. She'll tell me later. No. Okay. Okay. A consistent message of the whole New Testament is a call to Christians to live this kind of selfless mindset.

in Romans 12, talks about let your love be genuine. Abhor what is evil, but hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

There's something interesting. Here, held a competition in your church. See who can honor each other more than anybody else. Do that. That's interesting. Do not be slothful and zeal, but be fervent in spirit.

Serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you.

[55 : 13] Bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. There it is again. Do not be haughty.

There it is again. Associate with the lowly. Think of others more important than yourself. Never be wise in your own sight. Don't think you got it all figured out. Repay no one evil for evil.

Today. Repay no one evil for evil. But give thought to what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible.

It's not always possible, but if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with everyone. As far as it depends on you, be at peace.

You can't make that happen, but you do all you can. So this is the consistent message to the Christian. For the sake of unity, living in harmony with one another, cultivate a selfless attitude that Christ had.

[56 : 15] Why is unity so important? Because it reflects Christ. He has created us to be a body. He's created us to be a temple. He's created us to be a building that every part is connected.

We're like that wall. We're all different shaped stones and some are crooked and some are round. But He's connected us all together and together we make the temple of the Spirit. We're a body that's not one finger disconnects and goes over there and another leg disconnects and goes over there.

No, we're connected. Even if we reach outside we're still connected because our power comes from our unity in Christ. We treat one another as Christ treated us.

So we empty ourselves become servants. We humble ourselves and sacrifice for others. Jesus regarded us so important that He came to meet our greatest need.

and He sacrificed His glory, His power, His honor, His reputation, sacrificed everything that He might meet the greatest need that we had.

[57 : 33] This is what it means to be a Christian citizen, to live in this world according to a higher standard. Our purpose is bigger than me.

I live as a Christian citizen. My purpose is greater than me. My purpose is to protect the unity of the body of Christ. The body of Christ is more important than me.

Do we believe that? That church is optional. I don't talk about church, I'm talking about the body. These relationships.

Now I know in some instances I'm preaching to the choir here. Some of you who are here, you're here because you're committed to this body, you love this body, you... I get it.

But there might be some here or not here that need to hear this. I've needed to hear this before. I'm not coming from a high lofty thing. I've been there.

[58 : 40] I got the t-shirt. There have been times I haven't wanted to be in the church. I get it. I've been hurt. How can I put my trust in those people again? Well, because those people belong to a Lord who's greater than they are.

And He can work through flawed people. I've seen it. I've seen it in this church. So our higher standard is to protect the unity that Jesus bought for us with His life so that we might reflect Him to the world.

Let's pray. I'm out of notes so let's pray. I feel like I need to wrap it up. Father, I pray that You take the Word that You gave and apply it to our hearts.

I'm distracted today, Lord, and that may be the enemy, that may be me. But I pray, O Father, that Your Word would go forth. I pray that You would open ears to hear what needs to be heard about unity, about joy, about the threats both outside and inside the church.

So Father, put this Word into Your servants' hearts. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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[60 : 01]