

THE PATTERN FOR LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
An Exhortation To Humility
Philippians 2:1-4

This passage is a continuation of the exhortation that began in **Philippians 1:27-30**. The entire previous section states what **Paul** called the believers at **Philippi** to do...to **conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ**.

One of the main reasons **Paul** exhorts the church at **Philippi** to **conduct themselves in this manner** is to *maintain their spiritual unity*. This *unity* that the Word exalts is *inward...not outward*. It's *internally desired...not externally compelled*. It's *spiritual*, not just *religious*. It's *grace...not legalism*. It's the *Spirit-motivated* and *Spirit-empowered* bonding of the *hearts, minds, and souls* of God's children to each other. And *preserving unity* in the church isn't an *option*.

"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

~Ephesians 4:1-3

The church at **Philippi** was for the most part *theologically sound, devoted, moral, loving, zealous, courageous, prayerful, and generous*. Yet it faced a *danger of discord* that often is *generated* by only a *few people*. Such *troublemakers* can stir up such *contention* and *strife* that it *fractures* an entire *congregation*.

I. THE MOTIVE FOR LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: (vs. 1-2)

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion (vs. 1)...

When a passage begins with **therefore**...you should *always ask the question*...what is the **therefore, therefore**. In this case, **Paul** is referring back to what he had written about *living the Christian life in accordance* with the *gospel of Christ* back in **verse 27**.

Notice that there are **four** "ifs" in **verse 1**. There are **three** ways the **participle "if"** can be used:

- **If...and it is so**. If you do this...then it will be so.
"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."
~John 14:15
- **If...and it may or may not be so**. If you do it...this will happen. If you don't do it...then it will not happen.
"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
~I John 1:9
- **If...and it is not so**. If it was possible, but it's not...
If someone could lose their salvation...but they can't...it would be impossible for them to be saved again.
"...If God permits...In the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."

~Hebrews 6:3b-6

When the **Greek participle *ei*** (if) is used with an **indicative verb**, it always expresses *certainty*...which is the case here in **verse 1**. So, ***ei* (if) is** introducing a **first-**

class conditional clause, which expresses the idea...*“If this condition is true...and it is...then...”* Consequently, the word can be better understood when rendered, *“because or since”* in order to give a more complete idea of its *meaning* and *application*.

Remember, **Paul** had written about *living the Christian life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (vs. 27)*. He then followed that message with a call to show forth *spiritual unity*. This unity is possible because of the reality of the *four qualities* mentioned here in **verse 1**.

If there is any encouragement in Christ...

Encouragement...Gk. *paraklesis*, has the root meaning of *coming alongside someone to give assistance by offering comfort, counsel, or exhortation*. It's precisely the kind of *assistance* exemplified by the **Good Samaritan**. It's an image of being *in Christ...and Christ working through you* being His *hands*, His *feet*, and His *voice*.

Using a *closely related word*, Jesus referred to the **Holy Spirit** as the **Helper** (Gk. *parakleton...John 14:16, 26; 15:26*). Since *every believer* has *received* this work of the **Spirit**, it's the *fundamental basis* for *spiritual unity*.

If there is any consolation of love...any comfort from His love.

Consolation...Gk. *paramuthion*, literally means *speaking words of comfort with someone...with the added idea of giving support*. Its basic meaning is close to that of **encouragement**. Both words involve a *close relationship* marked by *genuine concern, helpfulness, and love*.

Love...this *consoling love* is that which the Lord grants to *unworthy sinners* in the *grace of salvation*. It's that **love** in people's *hearts* that God gives that produces *spiritual unity* in their *lives*.

“...The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”
~Romans 5:5b

If there is any fellowship of the Spirit...fellowship with the Spirit...and from the Spirit.

Fellowship...Gk. *koinonia*, describes a *partnership and mutual sharing*. This **fellowship** is *intimate* because every believer is a **temple of the Holy Spirit...the seal and guarantor** of the *believer's inheritance*. The *permanent indwelling ministry* of the **Holy Spirit**.

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

~I Corinthians 6:19

This describes a **fellowship** that comes *from* the **Spirit** just as **encouragement** comes *from* **Christ** and **comfort** comes *from* **love**. This is what preserves *spiritual unity*.

If any affection and compassion...any tenderness and empathy or kindness.

These are *qualities* that characterize Christ as He *tenderly comforts* and *encourages* the *weak* and the *oppressed*.

Affection...Gk. *splanchna*, literally refers to the *intestines or guts...one's innards...that gut wrenching feeling...but was commonly used as a metaphor* for one's *emotions*. It describes a *deep, personal longing...especially towards those who are dearly loved*.

Compassion...Gk. *oiktirmos*, refers to the *mercies of God...the kindness of God*.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort”

~II Corinthians 1:3

Paul also spoke of **affection** and **compassion** when writing to **Philemon**.

“For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother...Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.”

~Philemon 7, 20

One of the **Spirit’s ministries** is to produce within each believer a **concern** and **love** for other members of God’s family. This may be **received** or **rejected** by a believer, but the **Spirit’s work** is a **reality** and is a **basis** for **spiritual unity**.

Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose (vs. 2)...

On the basis of what was presented in **verse 1**, Paul now exhorts the believers at **Philippi** to **show in practical ways** the **unity** which was theirs in Christ. Their expression of that **spiritual unity** would **make his joy complete**.

Corresponding to the **four realities** in **verse 1** are **four specific ways** in which their **spiritual unity** would be realized. They would...

Being of the same mind. Means *to think the same thing...to be like minded...to think right*. This isn’t talking about *doctrine* or *moral standards*. In this context, it means *to actively strive to achieve a common understanding* or *genuine agreement*. Through **God’s Word** and the **indwelling Holy Spirit**, believers can know the **mind of Christ**. This **solidifies** genuine **spiritual unity**.

“For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

~I Corinthians 2:16

Maintaining the same love. Means *to love others equally*. On a *purely emotional level*, this is **impossible**...because **not everyone** is **equally loveable**. **Agape** love, however, is love based on the **will...an intentional, volitional choice**...not on **preference, attraction, or emotion**. Here, **Paul** is focusing on a **mutual love** that believers are to have **for each other**.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

~I John 4:7-8

United in spirit. It literally means **one soul**...and is only used here in the New Testament. It refers to **living in selfless harmony with fellow believers**. By definition, it excludes **personal ambition, selfishness, or holding a grudge**.

Intent on one purpose. Literally it means **thinking one thing**...which is **virtually synonymous** with **being of the same mind**.

In **Colossians**, **Paul** beautifully summarizes all of these marks of **spiritual unity**.

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

~Colossians 3:12-16

II. THE MEANS FOR LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: (vs. 3-4)

Here Paul gives *further encouragement* of how *spiritual unity* is *achieved* based on the *declaration* of the *fourfold reality* expressed in [verse 1](#).

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves (vs. 3)...

The terms Paul used reveals an *underlying problem* in the church at **Philippi**...a problem that could *divide* their *spiritual unity*. The problem evidently was prompted by *self-centeredness* among certain believers in the church.

Do nothing from selfishness...The same word appears back in **Philippians 1:17** to describe the attitude of those who *opposed Paul*...it was rendered as **selfish ambition**.

Selfishness is the *root of every other sin*. Without question such behavior is of the *flesh* and not the *spirit*.

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

~Galatians 5:18-23

Empty conceit...means *empty glory*...which was probably the *root cause* of their **selfishness**. It refers to a *highly exaggerated self-view*...and one that seeks *personal glory*.

“For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

~Galatians 6:3

The *two negatives* are followed by a *positive exhortation* ...**but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.**

Humility before both God and man is a *virtue* every child of God needs to *strive for*. It's the *bedrock* of *Christian character*. The opposite is a *spirit of pride*...and in human relationships, it indicates a *lack of humility* before God.

When we come to the Lord with *humble hearts*, we *set aside all our preconceived notions and interests* and *hold out our hands meekly for whatever He may wish to give us*.

The *humble person* is the one who *knows he deserves nothing...has nothing to offer...but seeks everything* from the Lord to help him in his way.

Paul exhorted the Philippians to consider others before themselves.

“...All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.”

~I Peter 5:5b-6

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (vs. 4)...

This is how **humility** can and should be *expressed*. Instead of *concentrating on self...every believer* should be concerned **for the interests of others**...especially within the *household of faith*...the *church*. Preoccupation with one's self is *sin*.

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.”

~Romans 12:10

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **As a child of God, we should always strive to live our lives in a manner that is WORTHY of the gospel of Christ.**
- **One of the greatest testimonies that the church can display to the world is SPIRITUAL UNITY...being of one mind, one heart, and one spirit.**
- **HUMILITY is the foundation for all Christ-like character.**