

A Moving Appeal for Unity

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[0 : 00] take your Bibles and turn to the book of Philippians chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1. We're going to begin reading in verse 27 and read into chapter 2 until verse 11.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved, and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[1 : 34] Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, 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.

Nasty, hateful, divisiveness, is the order of the day.

We see it daily in the news, whatever your news source is, Democrat versus Republican, Asian and Hispanic, white and black, down to every conceivable different identity, by which the world categorizes people, and everyone is fighting against one another.

It's come to such a fever pitch, that have you not heard it said, never has our nation been so divided. Well, whoever said that forgot the Civil War.

[3 : 11] I'm reading a book from that era right now, and folks, it can get a whole lot worse, but it is bad. Nasty, hateful, divisiveness.

It's nothing new. In fact, it's just the world being the world, isn't it? And anyone who knows anything about history, knows that's the case.

There's always been this nasty, hateful, divisiveness. Whether we're studying U.S. history, world history, biblical history, it's what sin has done to the human race.

It's robbed us of love for one another, and it's replaced it with hatred, prejudice, and bloodshed. In the New Testament, it was Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, slave and free, male and female, Galatians 3.28 tells us.

And the glory of the gospel of Christ is that God in Christ is reconciling all kinds of people to Himself through the cross that we just sang about.

[4 : 21] And that is worth a hallelujah, a praise to the Lord. And in reconciling us to God, He is also reconciling us to one another.

It's a miracle. It's nothing short of super, that is above, nature. Supernatural. Read of this work of the Prince of Peace in Ephesians 2 and how He brought together the warring Jews and Gentiles.

For He Himself, Christ Himself, is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, that hostility that dwelt in Jew and Gentile alike.

He's destroyed the dividing wall of hostility and His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.

Ephesians 2.14 and 15. So how important is it to you that Grace Fellowship Church experiences this unity with one another?

[5 : 34] What are you willing to sacrifice to see it maintained and to see it realized more and more? This unity in the church of Christ is something that God our Father is rightly proud of.

He invites those in the world to step out of its nasty divisiveness of hating and being hated and to step inside a gospel church for a breath of fresh air.

Where loving unity abounds among those who are different, still black and white, rich and poor, slave and free, male and female, but all one in Christ Jesus and living together as one in Christ Jesus.

And whatever this peace and unity in the body of Christ is to you, it is a huge, huge, huge thing to God. The Father gave up His own Son to accomplish it.

The Son shed His blood to make it happen. And the Holy Spirit in uniting us to Christ and in dwelling us creates this unity among us that we are now to guard.

[6 : 49] It's greatly to God's glory that He has a united people in a hostile, divided world. We're remembering our Lord's death this week, and I trust we'll be meditating much upon it to prepare our hearts to gather Friday evening.

We've invited Grace Fellowship or Grace Baptist Church from Warsaw to be joining us again this year for that service. But you know, it was on the Savior's heart just hours before He was crucified.

when praying for His followers in John chapter 17, praying that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in me and I am in You.

May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent me and have loved them, that is, my people, even as You have loved me. So our unity with one another is of huge importance to Christ, to our mission in the world that the world might believe that the Father sent His Son.

And what we find in Philippians is that the Apostle Paul's heart is beating in unity with the Savior's heart. His letters to the churches breed this Christ-like concern that His people be one.

[8 : 12] And this letter to the Philippians is no different on that score. In fact, find me any epistle anywhere in the New Testament that doesn't have something to say about this unity.

We must regard its importance to God. Now, the Philippian church was a wonderful church. In many ways, the Apostle could hold it up as a model to other churches to imitate.

And we see him doing so in his other letters. But it was not a church without problems. Unity is such a repeated theme in this letter that it appears that their unity is already beginning to unravel.

And certain divisions and strife were indeed already present there. Well, no church is perfect. You can't expect much from fallen people anyway, right?

That's not the attitude that Paul takes to it. It's far too important of an issue to just brush aside. Rather, Paul deals with it head on in this letter.

[9 : 26] It's too important to the health and mission of the church to treat it lightly. So at the end of chapter 1, Paul began to address the topic of unity by rooting it to the gospel.

more and more I'm convinced that chapter 1, 27a is the controlling verse of this whole segment for the apostle if not for the rest of his letter.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. The gospel is God's answer to division and disunity. The gospel reconciles people to God and to one another and therefore conduct worthy of that gospel is to live in unity with one another.

And that means standing firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, 27b. So this unity is all the more important since they were suffering persecution from the world.

How critical was it then that they be united? Indeed, that we be united, that the church be the haven of rest in a hostile world. The church be the family where you belong and are safe.

[10 : 45] The one place you can resort to where love flows freely back and forth between each heart. Well, that's how chapter one ends.

Now in chapter two, Paul really gets down to business and makes a stirring appeal for unity. It's unsurpassed anywhere else in the scriptures. And what we find is he's not just interested in a nice sermon on unity.

His aim is to spur them and therefore us to the hard work of unity. His aim is to excite. It's to motivate.

It's to move us to the action that is needed. He's wanting his words to be like a cattle prod. to get us going to making every effort to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

So he bases his appeal on three different things. First of all, verse one, their enjoyment of the benefits of the gospel. Number two, their love for Paul who brought them the gospel.

[11 : 51] And number three, the example of Christ in his incarnation and substitutionary death that is the very heart of the gospel. So Paul is still using the gospel as a great lever to move us on out in this hard work of unity.

Their enjoyment of its benefits, their love for Paul who brought the gospel, the example of Christ who is the gospel. So, the more difficult the task, the more powerful the motives needed.

Let's look at these three powerful motives to unity. I will save the last for next time. First of all, the motivation, their enjoyments of the benefits of the gospel in everyday experience.

He mentions four such benefits. Notice them in verses one and two. If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the spirit, if any tenderness and mercy, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit, and purpose.

These are if-then statements. If this, then that. And they're first-class conditional statements, which simply means that there's nothing iffy about them, really.

[13 : 17] They're all assumed to be true. If this is true and it is, then do this. It could also be translated since this is true, but it's the word if, and we understand, we use it in that sense.

If you're going to be in town, then stop by. Okay? Yes, you are going to be in town, and so I realize that, so please stop by. Now, each benefit that Paul mentions then is meant to be a prod to move us toward unity.

but you'll notice in this passage that there are four ifs and only one then. It's like he lets all four ifs pile up into a tsunami wave before he lets it loose on us with the then.

All right? So that's where we're headed. That's the structure of the passage. Four ifs, but they all are lending their weight to the same then of unity. So, number one, if you have any encouragement in Christ or from being united with Christ, that's what Paul's reference is when he speaks of being in Christ, it's being united with Christ.

If you have any encouragement from being united to Christ. Any encouragement? These are some of the most, the greatest understatements in the scripture because I have every encouragement.

[14 : 54] I have everlasting encouragement and good hope from being in Christ because being united to Christ means all his merits are mine and all my demerits are his.

I gave him my sins and he bore them all to the tree where he suffered the full penalty in my place. And then he gives to me his perfect obedience to cover me as a robe of righteousness.

Any encouragement? That's a source of daily encouragement to me. That all my sins have been forgiven. That there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

That's a bottomless ocean of encouragement in my sinful failures and weaknesses. promises. And besides, all his strength is mine, his grace, his goodness, his riches, his wisdom, his truth, his abundant life.

It's all mine in Christ. How vast the benefits divine which we in Christ possess. There are many. So if you have any encouragement from being in Christ, that's the first if.

[16 : 09] And right away he goes on. And if you have any comfort from his love, again we say any comfort? His love is as infinite, eternal, and unchangeable as he himself is.

And we tease this out in the Sunday school, didn't we? What are the comforts that we have from his love? Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus. Tis an ocean vast of blessing.

It's a heaven of heavens to me. It's my greatest comfort in life. and in death to know that Jesus loves me. One of the greatest theologians in the United States was asked one day, what's the greatest thought that has ever passed your mind?

He says that Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. I guess that says it all, doesn't it? His love, our soul's chief treasure. And when all created comforts dry up, the love of Jesus remains that flowing fountain of comfort and keeps us from despair and makes us more than conquerors in all of life's troubles and afflictions, his love is better than life.

So if you have any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from his love, and if you have, thirdly, any fellowship with the spirit, he's moving on from Christ to the Holy Spirit now, and he talks about if you have any fellowship, koinonia, any shared blessings in the spirit, any participation with the Holy Spirit, well, think of all of his ministries in my life, of teaching me and leading me and reviving me and assuring me and comforting me and helping me in sanctifying me and enlightening me and on and on we can go.

[18 : 05] Do I have any participation with the spirit? Think of all that he's doing in me, producing his fruit of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, any fellowship with the spirit.

I can't do life without him. So if you have any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from his love, any fellowship with the spirit, if you have any tenderness and compassion, probably still speaking of the Holy Spirit, this comforter who has come, the comforter that Jesus promised to send, another comforter who actually takes up his residence in our hearts.

to comfort us. And how tenderly this dove of heaven deals with us. In our need, he brings to us the very tenderness and compassion of the heavenly father.

He brings to us the very tenderness and compassion of the Lord Jesus. Jesus. So if you have any of that, he's let all four of these benefits of the gospel pile up with pressure and weight.

It's the tsunami wave billowing up. If that, then this. what is the then?

[19 : 39] What is the then? Well, if you enjoy these everyday benefits of the gospel of Christ, then conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

And what does that look like? Verse two says, well, then make my joy complete by being like minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Let the tidal waves of God's benefits, that you enjoy, move you to united love for one another.

Oneness in the body of Christ. And then he spells it out in four characteristics. There were four motives piling up and now he describes the unity in four different characteristics.

Four things were to have in common, the same mind, the same love, the same spirit, the same purpose. So if this then, have the same mind, first of all, be like minded.

Now this is foundational to being united on any score, isn't it? To think the same thing, it means, to be of one mind. Later he'll plead with Euodia and Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord, to be of the same mind.

[20 : 56] Amos 3.3 says, can two walk together unless they be agreed? If you're going north and I'm going south, we just can't walk together. So we need to be agreed in mind if we're to enjoy unity.

Now here's the 64th million dollar question or whatever it is, how is it possible to get two minds to think together as one?

And not just two, but all of our minds. We've said before, well he's got a mind of his own. Well so do I, and so do you, and so when we all have minds of our own, how can we ever have the same mind?

Think of the diversity of our backgrounds, of our upbringing, of our religion, of our education, all the differing influences that have shaped and informed our minds over the years.

Well we each bring that difference of mindset to the church. how can Paul possibly expect the whole church to be of one mind?

[22 : 06] Well the next time we come to this text we're going to see verse 5 he says let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Oh there's a unifying mind for us, the mind of Christ.

But I want to say today the answer lies in this book that we all hold in common the word of God. what is the Bible? It is God's revelation of his mind.

This is the mind of Christ put down on paper. It gives us God's thoughts. So Romans 12 2 commands me to be transformed how?

By the renewing of my mind. The whole of my life is one pursuit of mind renewal. I came into this church, I came into this world with my own mind and I've got to see it renewed into the likeness of God's mind.

How in the world do I do that? Well that's why I've got to be found reading and meditating and hearing this word preached. changed. Our unity depends upon mind renewal.

[23 : 24] So I bring my mind and put it under God's mind. Hopefully daily. I need it that much. I know that. Don't know about you. And I come and I ask him, Lord teach me now how to think.

That's how I come to my Bible in the morning. Teach me how to think. about you, about myself, about others, about the church, about sin, about salvation, about money, about sex, about eternity, judgment, heaven, heaven.

Teach me how to think. And it weighs in on everything necessary for life and godliness. So what's happening? As I submit my mind to God's word, his mind is renewing my mind, bringing me into conformity with his, correcting my erroneous thoughts.

John, you're out in left field here. Get with it. This is truth. This is reality. And I am correcting. I'm renewing my mind. And so though we start worlds apart in our minds, the more and more that I think God's thoughts after him and the more that you think God's thoughts after him, what's happening?

You're getting God's mind. I'm getting God's mind and God's mind is something that's bringing us together so that we have the same mind. Some people say we don't like Bible doctrine being taught in our church because doctrines divide.

[25 : 06] To the contrary, it is the only hope any church has of experiencing this unity which is to have the same mind. It's only as we all individually and collectively bring ourselves under God's mind that we have any hope of having our minds be the same.

And oh, it's a sure hope getting us to think together as our minds are being renewed together until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, Ephesians 4.

13. It's coming and we're working our way to it. So having the same mind. But that's not all unity is. That's the foundation, surely.

But having the same love, you see that? Having the same love. This is the affections. Love for the same things. Love for the Father.

Love for the Son. Love for the Holy Spirit. Love for His Word. Love for His people. Love for His day. Love for His worship. Love for His glory.

[26 : 16] Love for His commandments. Love for His will. But especially is this unity about having the same love for one another. Do you have any comforts from His love?

Now let His love be in you toward one another. Have the same love, the same Christ-like love that you enjoy. that 1st Corinthians 13 love.

Having the same mind, having the same love, having the same spirit. One in spirit. So what we're being told is that this unity is not something we can define externally.

It's not just that dealing with outward uniformity of behavior. behavior. No, no, it's something inward. You can have a hundred people all in the same church and dressing the same way and following the same rules, but who are far from being one in spirit.

You see, that's not what the unity looks like. It's not just external uniformity. No, the idea is to be in one spirit. We use that phrase, kindred spirits.

[27 : 28] That's what we're to have, not just with one or two, but with all God's people. We're to be one in spirit, kindred spirits. The word is soul, psuche.

We're to have souls in tune with one another, hearts that beat together. Same mind, same love, same spirit, same soul love, and same purpose.

One in purpose, to be of the same mind on why we're here and what we're about. It's the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom, his gospel.

And the more his purpose replaces our own many self glorifying purposes, the more united we will be as we each seek first his kingdom instead of our own, his will instead of our own, his honor instead of our own.

So that's the first motivation to unity. If you're enjoying the benefits of the gospel, encouragement with Christ, comfort of his love, fellowship with the spirit, his tenderness and compassion, well then let that spur you on to conduct worthy of that gospel, which is defined as greater unity of mind, love, spirit, and purpose with each other.

[28 : 49] Now the next motivation then to unity, not only the benefits of the gospel, but their love for Paul who brought them the gospel.

Now this is an interesting one to look at. Notice verse 2, if, if, if, if, then make my joy complete by having the same mind, love, spirit, purpose.

Make my joy complete. Not the same as saying make my day, but he's wanting them to fill up his joy.

Now Paul already is rejoicing in this church. They already brought him joy. He tells us that in verse 3. He can't pray for them without rejoicing before God for them. So it's not that they were no joy to them.

That's not what he's saying. He's saying there's still room in my joy cup for you to fill up. And that's what I want you to do. If, if, if, if, then fill up my joy cup by being united together as a body.

[29 : 56] Now think of the, the power of that appeal to this Philippian church. It was Paul who suffered such bloodshed in bringing the gospel to Philippi.

Remember how they, they, they flogged them and threw him and Silas into the stocks in prison. That was to bring the gospel to this church, the, the, the Philippians.

And, and so this is the Paul who's, who's writing to them and, and who, who brought them the gospel that changed their destinies forever. And now they've heard that he's in prison and, and they care about him.

So they send one of their own, Epaphroditus to go to him and take him some things and see how he's doing, bring word back. And he brings this letter back to them. So here they are, just like us today.

They're all gathered together for the first time and they start hearing the letter from Paul in prison. Their beloved father in the faith is asking them to make his joy complete.

[31 : 01] Oh, what would they not do to increase Paul's joy there in prison? Well, he says, then have the same mind, the same heart, the same spirit, the same purpose.

Here's a way to make your minister's joy complete. Live together in unity. You parents know this.

You know the joy. If you got young kids, to see them all laying there on the floor playing with each other, getting along well, and you just look over at your wife and wink and just soak it in.

Enjoy it. it won't last long, but you know the joy, don't you? And how much more as they grow up? Yes, they get minds of their own, they get all of their own ideas, and yet to see them even as families now of their own, and you see them getting on with each other, helping each other, praying for each other, doing for each other, and you wink again and you lift your hands in praise to God.

It fills your heart with joy, and the opposite fills it with grief, and you're grieved because she's not getting on with her, and he's not getting on with him, and you're grieved, and Paul is saying, make my joy complete, have the same unity of heart, mind, love, spirit, purpose.

[32 : 47] Now, to be sure, increasing Paul's joy is not the highest motivation, but it is a motivation, and Paul's not ashamed to use it if only it will spur them on to greater love and unity.

That's what I get from this. Of course, it's not the ultimate thing. Of course, what we ought to be doing is seeking to bring joy to the Holy Spirit who reigns over his church, the head of the church, Jesus Christ, the father who births everyone into this family.

Yes, that ought to be the predominant thing, but it is an argument that Paul is willing to make. Make your minister's joy complete.

And then Paul gets very practical in his commands concerning unity, and he tells them both what not to do and what to do.

Verse 3, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Now, when we look at these two things of selfish ambition and vain conceit, we're immediately put on notice that Paul's not just treating symptoms, just outward behavior.

[33 : 58] Now, he mentions that, do nothing, that's outward behavior. But Paul's wanting to get down to the root of the unity problems, and exposes the attitudes lying beneath them.

So here are two unity killers. I suppose if we could perform an autopsy on any church that has been destroyed by disunity, you would almost always find one, if not both, of these deadly diseases of selfish ambition and vain conceit.

Both are forms of pride and both are unworthy conduct for those who profess the gospel. Let's look at them individually.

First, do nothing out of selfish ambition. Now, the Bible tells us it's good to be ambitious about a good cause, but here the cause is self.

Here the cause is me, me, me, me. And it's zeal, ambition, to put ourself forward, ahead of others, above others.

[35 : 04] It's self-promotion. It's what Paul, or John, said of that troublemaker diatrophies, that he loves to be first.

he loves to be the top gun. And so he misuses everyone beneath him. It was what the Pharisees were doing, who loved the most important seats, because they loved to be seen as above others, and receive the praises of men.

And where selfish ambition is found, it leads to rivalry and competition against one another, envying someone else's gifts and position, popularity, tearing them down to put ourselves up.

You know, that's why the Pharisees attacked Jesus and drug him before Pilate to have him crucified. Even Pilate knew it was out of envy that they had handed him over.

Envy. James says where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But what you won't find is God glorifying unity.

[36 : 16] So do nothing out of selfish ambition. Another unity killer is vain conceit, vain glory, empty arrogance. And this too is all about the big I, the ego.

Pride is essentially a disease of the mind. It's high mindedness, high mindedness. Thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think, Romans 12, three.

Thinking you're something when you are nothing, Galatians 6, three. It's an over inflated view of your own importance and abilities. And the reason the Pharisees seek the most important seats is because they think they deserve the most important seats.

They're high minded. That's how they view themselves. So of course they seek out the most important seats. They are the most important people in the room in their minds.

So pride seeks the high seats. Pride thinks you're always right, never wrong. Pride thinks some tasks of service are beneath you. I'm not his slave. I'm no servant of his.

[37 : 26] Pride makes us easily offended. If I've got myself up here on a pedestal and you're not treating me as a man up here, well then I can be offended at you.

You're not treating me as I deserve. What is that? That's this vain conceit. That's that vain thought that I actually deserve to be treated so well.

So criticism can be a good barometer on my pride. It's my pride that makes me prickly and highly defensive and offended that anyone would dare say something against me.

So it's not hard to see that that kind of behavior does nothing for unity. Where pride thrives, unity dies. So Paul says, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Do nothing out of pride. Dry up the tap root of this pride and a hundred divisive behaviors will die with it. So that's what you're not to do.

[38 : 28] Now he tells us what we are to do. What is it that promotes unity rather than kills it? Well do nothing out of selfish ambition and vain conceit but rather in humility consider others better than yourselves.

You see it's just a flip on its head isn't it? And if we've not figured out anything in the Christian life it's this that usually our first thought is the wrong thought and Christ's ways are just the flip side of what comes by nature.

And that's what we're finding here. Christ's way is exactly opposite. Instead of pride acting out in humility you know that's the number one prerequisite for unity.

If we don't get to first base with unity we will not get to unity. Remember we studied the four graces? Remember what humility was?

It was the great what? Emptier. And pray tell what might it be emptiness of? Pride and selfishness self-centeredness we're being emptied of that.

[39 : 42] And that's why Paul sticks it right up front here in humility. In Ephesians 4 he's going to tell the Ephesians make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

How in the world can we keep this unity that the spirit creates among us? He tells them be completely humble and gentle be patient bearing with one another in love completely humble that's where we start the house of unity cannot be built without the foundation of humility and the word that he uses here for humility is a rare word it's I don't think it's used anywhere else in the New Testament this word in the original but it means lowliness of mind and isn't that something in contrast with pride which is high mindedness he's calling us to low mindedness a lowliness!

of mind it has to do with the way I think about myself that's what humility is a lowliness and it's only humble minds that will consider others better than yourselves so it works like a teeter totter my view of myself and my view of other works like a teeter totter kids you'll have to ask mom and dad about those dangerous playground devices but they don't have them anymore but it worked like this it was just a fulcrum point with a board on it and you each got on either side and you could push up and down and when one was up the other was down and the dangerous thing is the guy might jump off and suddenly you'd be down and it might hurt you but that's the way my view of self and others goes when I'm thinking of myself high how am I looking at you

I'm looking down at you you're beneath me you don't measure up I could list ten things that prove it because I've got twenty things that prove how high I am and how good I am you see my view of myself affects my view of you it was the Pharisees high view of their own righteousness that caused them to look down their nose and despise the tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners and Jesus nailed them for it didn't he when I'm low in my thoughts others are esteemed higher than me what makes it hard to consider others better than yourself one thing is pride that's the only thing that keeps me from considering any of you brothers and sisters as higher than myself humility humility it's the vaccine against unity killing pride so the answer is not to try to be humble just to merely act humble you know pretended humility is some of the ugliest thing on the earth rather the answer is just to remember who you are before

God and humility is the response Augustine said your entire humility is to know yourself so would you be humble then bring yourself not in comparison with everybody else around you but you go before the holy holy holy one you say search me oh God know my heart test me and know my thoughts and if you can come away from that experience and put yourself up and look down I'm scared of you I'm scared of how blind you are to yourself how blind you are to the thrice holy God because the whole of humility is to know yourself before God and if knowing yourself before God leaves you humble and lowly it will also leave you humble and lowly toward your brothers and sisters and you will be able to consider them better than yourselves what am

[44 : 30] I before God he is holy and I am sinful yet I still have every day cause to come and confess evil thoughts that pass through this mind proud thoughts lustful thoughts covetous thoughts greedy thoughts earthly bound thoughts forgetful of heaven thoughts selfish thoughts and angry thoughts and revengeful thoughts and I come and I I have to confess that before this light that penetrates my heart as well as all the outward actions of sin that I've committed and one of the most humbling things to the Christian is to think that we still offend such a loving heavenly father who gave his own son for us one of the most humbling things to a Christian is that we still sin against the one who died for us still sin against the Holy Spirit who condescended to take up residence in this dark heart and to move me to love my Savior to love his people and I still sin against the

Holy Spirit I still grieve him it humbles me and truly repenting men cannot be proud men it's only when we become forgetful and blind of our own true selves that we can be proud in the presence of God or in our fellow brothers and sisters it's knowing the truth about ourselves that creates genuine humility so if I've got the truth here from God then I will be able to consider you better than myself myself here's why when I look at you what do I see well I see you've got your Sunday best on and your behavior on and I see you very little but let's say that your outward sins are like your sins are like an iceberg and only 10% of your sin is outward where others can see and 90% is beneath the surface okay I think that's probably fair to say at least it's true in my heart so I don't even see the whole 10% of your outward sins

I I catch very little of that so you're looking pretty good in my sight I can't read your heart I'm not competent to do so and I'm forbidden to judge your heart and your motives in fact I'm commanded to put the very best possible construction on what I do see that looks a bit sinful to put the very best construction well okay but this and this and this and this and to think the best and so you come off pretty good in my sight now when I come to look at myself before God what do I see well I not only have the 10% of my sinful actions to deal with you see I see not all of it but I see a good portion of that iceberg that lies beneath the water and I see all that scum that I just told you I have to confess before God sins of omission things I know I should have done and I didn't do not just things I did do things I left undone not just things that I did but things that I thought and wanted to do but wouldn't because of negative consequences so you never seem half as bad as me I see more dirt here than I've ever seen in you there so in humility

I can well consider you to be above myself it's only my pride that hinders me besides I don't know but that there are many hidden graces in your heart that I can't see patience love compassion pity holy deeds holy actions I just I haven't seen them but I'm sure that you have them so in humility I can consider you better than myself are some of you struggling with sins in areas that I'm not that's still no reason for me to feel high and look down my nose at you how would I be doing if I was in your circumstance!

And I had your background! And I had your present situation! how would I be faring? And how far ahead of me would you be if you'd have had the same advantages that I was given growing up?

[49 : 25] Advantages that I've squandered and not improved on as I ought! And besides who makes you different from anyone else? And what do you have John that you did not receive?

And if you did not receive it why do you boast as if you did not? So in consideration of you and in consideration of myself in humility I should be able to very easily consider you better than myself.

We heard it in Sunday school that this love that we have for the saints is even with those that we differ theologically with. If they're true believers in Jesus on the fundamentals of the gospel they stand with us we love them.

George Whitefield was a Calvinist you know. And his contemporary John Wesley was an Arminian. Now Whitefield believed that God chose who is to be saved when all of us deserve to go to hell.

John Wesley didn't believe that teaching of the word of God. Now we believe Whitefield was right. But his better understanding of God's word did not puff him up. Now it was an age of bitter controversy over such matters.

[50 : 38] And in the spirit of the age someone came to George Whitefield and asked a question about Wesley the Arminian. So do you think you'll see Wesley in heaven? And Whitefield shocked him.

He says no I don't think I will. He'll be so close to Jesus that I won't be able to see him for the glory shining out from Christ's face upon him.

God's And that's what Paul's saying. In humility consider others better than yourselves. He knew something of the heart and love of John Wesley for the Savior.

And he said oh he's got many honors coming from the Savior. and I hold him in honor.

And only humility can do this sincerely. So instead of pride humility, instead of selfish ambition, unselfish concern for others. And that's where he ends. Oh my, my time's ended.

[51 : 44] But just verse 4 quickly. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. Looking out for my interest comes to me naturally.

We're very adept at paying attention to our own interests. We say to ourselves, self, you've had a hard day at work. Have a seat. Can I get you anything? Maybe something to eat? Oh, you don't like that?

Maybe something else? Okay, here. Something to drink with that? How do you feel? Comfortable enough? Can I get you a pillow? You're cold? Let me get you a sweater. You're hot? Let me turn the air conditioning on.

Do you like a warm shower? You tired? Like to lay down? Here's a bed for you. And we're doing this all the time. We do it without thinking. We do it without trying. It comes natural to us. Now, our God is saying what you do for yourself, do for others.

Don't look only on your own interests, but also for the interests of others. And this is not natural. This takes grace. This takes the power of God, the supernatural divine power of God operating in your life through the Holy Spirit.

[52 : 53] So be on the lookout for their interests. Don't be preoccupied with your own. Be preoccupied with theirs that you might be forgetful of yourself. Happy the church where each finds joy in serving others.

Where the competition with each other is to out-serve one another. To give more honor than we're receiving. Think of the humble Christians you know who go out of their way to serve you and others.

Don't you just hate them? Of course not. You love them. And don't they contribute greatly to the unity of this body? Well may their tribe increase among us.

May we all do what the Lord God is charging us here to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Now Paul saves the biggest cattle prod for last.

He's talked about our enjoyment of gospel benefits and the joy that it brings to the gospel ministry but he's going to bring to bear the Lord Jesus example.

[54 : 03] And before he's done he's going to have us come and see our savior impaled on the cross. And he's going to say stand and look there John and learn something about humility there at the cross.

Now that's where we're going. these attitudes that destroy unity are deeply rooted in our hearts. We're born with them. We feed them. They grow. Inboard pride is resistant to our own attempts at changing them.

We need a power beyond our own to deal with them. And that too is for our humbling because if we could fix our unity problems we would be proud about it. So we come empty to the Lord Jesus confessing our selfish ambition and vain conceit.

We humble ourselves before him asking him to forgive us and asking him to fill us with his spirit and the graces especially of humility that creates this unity.

He died to save us from our pride and selfishness. That ought to invite us to come to him to confess it. It's the very reason he came and suffered so on the cross.

[55 : 14] You know he delights to save us from our sins. never turn me away when I come confessing my sins. He delights in mercy. He delights in the unity of his people.

And don't we as well? Isn't it a breath of fresh air to step out of the world for a day and to come together? Well let's rejoice in it together. Stand with me and let's sing because this unity is not only right it's something that's good and pleasant and we sing of it in this song.

Oh how good it is in the family of God. Oh how good it is when the family of God was together in spirit in faith and unity where the bonds of peace of acceptance and love are the fruits of his presence here among us.

so with one voice we'll sing to the Lord and with one heart we'll live by his word till the whole birth sees the Redeemer has come for he dwells in the presence of his people to be Lord oh how good it is on this journey we share to rejoice with the heavenly and weak with those who mourn for the weak might stray the afflicted by grace when we offer the blessing of the holy so with one voice we'll sing to the

Lord and with one heart we'll give of his word till the whole earth sees the redeemer has come for he dwells in the presence of his people oh how good it is to embrace his command to bring one another forgive as he forgives when we live as one we all share in the love of the son with the father and the spirit so with one voice we'll sing to the

[58 : 47] Lord and with one heart will live on his word till the whole earth sees the redeemer has come for he dwells in the presence of his people amen let's go in the truth of it him Amen.
Amen.