

How We Were Meant To Be Philippians 2:1-4 bible-sermons.org June 26, 2011

The Apostle Paul is painting a picture of what we, as believers that make up the body of Christ, should look like. It's how we live out the previous command to walk worthy of the gospel. (1:27) It's a picture of the perfect church. Though it doesn't exist, it is to be our aim. When we have problems as a church body, we can come back and look at the picture and see where we don't line up. Next week we'll see how Jesus exemplified this and the glorious results.

Commented [Paul1]: Philippians 1:27 (NIV)

²⁷ 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

Our short passage for today is just one sentence in Greek. It begins with the word "so", which means the author is drawing a conclusion from what was just said. SO let's begin by reading what was just said. Remember, Paul has decided he will go on living to serve the believers. He'd rather go home to Christ but there is still work to be done. (1:24-25) And then he writes, ²⁷ *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,* ²⁸ *and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.* ²⁹ *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,* ³⁰ *engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.* Philippians 1:27-30 (ESV)

Commented [Paul2]: Philippians 1:24-25 (NIV)

²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

So, since we should live in manner worthy of Christ, since he's asking them to be of one mind standing side by side for the faith of the gospel, since they have received the gift of belief and of suffering for Christ, and are engaged in this spiritual conflict that spills over into this physical world, he makes the following points.

He begins by reminding them of what they have in Christ as a body of believers. ¹ *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,* Paul is making some understatements in the form of a question to emphasize what we have and what it should mean to us. This should motivate us to do what he is about to ask of us.

Is there any encouragement in Christ? Well, is there? I'd say being made right before our holy Creator is pretty encouraging. When you get a clearer picture of who God is and who we are it is extremely encouraging! Knowing that God loves us enough to send His only Son to redeem us is pretty encouraging, wouldn't you say? (John 3:17) Knowing that the One who planned the future is living in me and directing me can be pretty encouraging. (Isaiah 39:21) The encouraging thing I keep sharing with you and

Commented [Paul3]: John 3:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Commented [Paul4]: Isaiah 30:21 (NIV)

²¹ Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

that we read in verse 6 is that if we are in Christ, the work He began in us He will complete and that means being made into the image of Jesus. (3:21) That is very encouraging to me. So, is there any encouragement in Christ?

Commented [Paul5]: Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Commented [Paul6]: Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

How many stories come to mind of when Jesus supernaturally got you through a difficult time? His Word came alive or a song said what you needed to hear. He prompted someone to call or send a card, or even when suddenly without explanation the darkness lifted and the burden was gone. That is the encouragement and strengthening believers experience throughout their life. (Hebrews 11:25)

Commented [Paul7]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)

²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Is there any comfort from love? Paul doesn't qualify who or where this love is from, but it is the word *agape*. That kind of love is from God or God's love through our fellow believers. (1John 4:7) It's the love that isn't looking for something in return, but simply loves for the value it sees in the one that is loved. The cross tells me the only limit to God's love for me is my willingness to receive it. (Revelation 22:17) The thief on one side received it while the thief on the other was unwilling and rejected it. (Luke 23:41-43) Isn't it comforting to know that the only limit is within you?

Commented [Paul8]: 1 John 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Commented [Paul9]: Revelation 22:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Commented [Paul10]: Luke 23:41-43 (ESV)

⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴² And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³ And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

That same love flows through others that have received God's love, and that is the unique quality of a follower of Jesus. It is unselfish love. One of our dear sisters took a brother and me to breakfast for Father's Day. Why? We are a family and she saw us as her spiritual fathers and spent her limited resources to show her loving appreciation. Another person spends their valuable time week after week with someone who is going through a difficult time. They don't have anything in common in the natural realm, but the love of Christ is flowing through them and they are blessed by letting it flow. Someone else gives their finances to help another in need. No one asked; it was just the love of Christ perceiving the need. That comforts the one that gave and the one that received. (1John 3:17) Is there any comfort from love?

Commented [Paul11]: 1 John 3:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Is there any participation in the Spirit? When we are given a direction by the Holy Spirit we all come together in wonderful unity of purpose through the Holy Spirit. We saw it in the Tabernacle and other projects that God has given us. The word "participation" is the Greek word *koinonia* that we usually translate fellowship. We talked about it a few weeks ago when we were looking at 1:5. There we used the word "partnership". That is the unity we enter into when we are truly one in Christ. (1Corinthians 12:13) We have one vision and one goal. It's that deep sense of commitment to one another bound by something much stronger than mere blood relations. We love the same Lord. We have the same priority in life. And even when we don't agree on the details or have totally different interests, we can set differences aside for we are motivated by the same Spirit

Commented [Paul12]: Philippians 1:5 (NIV)

⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,

Commented [Paul13]: 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV) ¹³ For we

were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

working in each of us. You can't explain it in the natural. It is truly supernatural. (Ephesians 4:5-7)

Do we have affection and sympathy? Does our heart go out to one another and are we willing to overlook faults? These are the work of the Spirit in us knowing that others are overlooking our own weaknesses and shortcomings. (Ephesians 4:32) Affection is a heart for one another. Sympathy is a merciful attitude. If we are filled with the Spirit, then those qualities will certainly be in us.

So Paul asks in a rhetorical way if these qualities that are in a Spirit filled church exist among the Philippians. Since the answer is clear and should be acknowledged by all to be their daily experience, Paul makes a request based on those realities. ² *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* Paul is telling the Philippians the evidence of Christ that he has seen in their fellowship but now asks them to go further. He says that if they will do so it will complete his joy. He had joy in their partnership with him in the gospel (1:4-5) but it would make his joy complete to see them of the same mind, having the same love, in full accord of one mind.

Something had sprung up within this good fellowship that had brought a division of mind, and a difference in love. That means that people were taking sides on an issue and not having the *agape* love of Christ. It had disturbed the usual unity of this church.

Paul does a very wise thing in not entering into the trivial details of the debate and not coming down on one side or the other. We don't even know what it was about. It certainly was not some heretical issue or Paul would have clarified the gospel. He would not enter into some minor dispute, and most disputes are over a minor issue when you get down to it. It dampened Paul's joy when he saw them divided over a trivial issue. Paul used the opportunity to teach a more important lesson, unity.

He has just given them five ways to maintain unity: 1 Value the encouragement of Jesus. A believer's relationship with his brothers and sisters is a reflection of his or her relationship with God. 2 Revel in the comfort of love. Our bonds of love should be ever deeper as we sacrifice for one another. When differences come, we will look past them because of the foundation of love we have in Christ. Love never fails. (1Corinthians 13:8) 3 Recognize the same Spirit is in us. (Ephesians 1:13-14) 4 Our calling and minor convictions may be different, but as we see the unique calling in each person, we should rejoice. The Spirit empowers us to love one another. We can say as a matter of fact that the unloving do not have the Spirit. (1John 2:11) 5 Affection – genuine

Commented [Paul14]: Ephesians 4:5-7 (ESV)

⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Commented [Paul15]: Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Commented [Paul16]: Philippians 1:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,
⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Commented [Paul17]: 1 Corinthians 13:8 (NIV)

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

Commented [Paul18]: Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,
¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Commented [Paul19]: 1 John 2:11 (ESV)

¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

concern and caring for one another brings unity. 5 Sympathy - if someone is in disunity we need to feel what they are going through and help them through it. That is what Jesus does for us! (Hebrews 4:15-16) All five of these gifts should be present even when you are undergoing strife within the body. Perhaps we should say especially when you are in disagreement. We should draw from these gifts until we are in full accord and become of one mind.

Commented [Paul20]: Hebrews 4:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.

¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

This doesn't mean we walk in lock step and agree on every minor issue. It does mean we are all focused on the gospel (mentioned 5 times in chapter 1) and united in our understanding of its importance in our life. Together we strive to walk worthy of the gospel. (1:27)

Commented [Paul21]: Philippians 1:27 (NIV)

²⁷ 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

The verse that follows warns them of how to avoid this disunity and lack of love and keep it from entering into a congregation. ³ *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* Disunity and lack of love comes from pride and arrogance. It begins when someone decides they are competing with, instead of serving alongside, another. The other party may sense this and up the ante. Soon a power struggle develops and people start to choose sides. If it isn't checked it will develop into gossip and slander and eventually a church split.

Why does this happen? Someone thought they heard from the Lord more clearly than someone else. Someone thought they had the answer and everyone needed to get on board. Their issue may sound like a worthy cause, but the root is conceit. Humility considers others more significant. (Psalm 25:9)

Commented [Paul22]: Psalm 25:9 (ESV)

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

How unlike the world that is always trying to prove oneself superior to others in any way one can. Brockmuehl describes godly humility in his commentary, *The Epistle To The Philippians* (pg 110-111). "The biblical view of humility is precisely *not* feigned or groveling, nor a sanctimonious or pathetic lack of self-esteem, but rather a mark of moral strength and integrity. It involves an unadorned acknowledgement of one's own creaturely inadequacies, and entrusting one's fortunes to God rather than to one's own abilities or resources."

What does the humble person do when they have a difference of opinion on how something should be done? They yield to the other person considering them more significant. They trust that if God was not leading in the way that person insisted on going that it will soon become clear and corrections will be made. The conceited, however, demand to have their way or else they will leave and take with them those that are willing to listen to their petty complaints. (Proverbs 21:2)

Commented [Paul23]: Proverbs 21:2 (ESV)

² Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

I've seen it happen over and over since I was a young teen. The complaints range from too many evangelistic messages, not enough sensitivity to the Spirit, too many contemporary songs or hymns whichever the case may be, to build or not to build, not enough emphasis on this or that but always something other than the central issue of who Jesus is and what he has done for us. It goes directly against the prayer that Jesus prayed for unity among believers. (John 17:21) It ignores the five points that Paul reminded us as the source of our unity.

Commented [Paul24]: John 17:21 (ESV)

²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Paul went on to give another tip in how to not fall into this divisive trap. ⁴ *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* We all have a unique gift and calling. (1Corinthians 12:4-7) We each have our personal interests. Sometimes we get so enthusiastic about our calling that we think it should be everyone's emphasis. We can even make people feel guilty that they don't have our calling or gifts. The worst case scenario is that we try to form a group that believes we should all have the same interest and that those that don't just aren't in the Spirit. It's usually a very Scriptural thing; it's just not the only Scriptural calling.

Commented [Paul25]: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (ESV)

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;
⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

This last verse in our passage today tells us that we should expand our interests by looking at others' interests. That broadens our appreciation for all that the body is doing. That will avoid an overly strong emphasis that would split a church, not only by appreciating that person's calling so they don't feel they must go elsewhere, but by seeing that your interest is just one of many.

There is even a movement today to appreciate the different callings in the various denominations. Each has an emphasis and many of them are godly. With one it is a clear understanding of Scripture, with another the leading of the Holy Spirit, with another reaching out to widows and orphans and the least in our world in need and with another the historical traditions of the church. Each is important and has a place. We are more well-rounded believers when get familiar with Scriptural interests other than our own favorite one. The true church of Jesus will have diversity in non-essentials, unity in essentials, and in all things love. The true church will adhere to the Word of God and focus on glorifying God.

So what about your church? Do we have the encouragement of being in Christ? Do we have comfort from the love of God and one another? Do we experience participation with the Spirit, and do we have affection and compassion for one another? We can always grow in these areas, but Paul asked, "Is there any?" If there is then we can grow from there in unity to become of one mind, having the same love and being in full accord to the glory of God and the joy of your leaders. That is how we are meant to be.

That is God's desire for us. It is a picture of a spiritually mature church, because it is Christ like.

Questions

- 1 Why does the passage begin with "so"?
- 2 What encouragement do you have in Christ?
- 3 Do you have any comfort from love?
- 4 Is there any participation with the Spirit?
- 5 Is there any affection and compassion?
- 6 What brings a shepherd complete joy?
- 7 What is source of disunity?
- 8 How can we avoid it? (vs3)
- 9 What's another way to avoid it? (vs4)