

10. The Book of Philippians 1:27-2:2

Joy in Unity-Part 3

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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We have begun a study in Paul's letter to the Philippians—looking at its theme of 'joy' topically.

So far we've looked at:

- I. **Joy in Fellowship—1:3-6**
- II. **Joy in Proclaiming the Gospel—1:12-18**
- III. **Joy of Faith—1:25**
- IV. **Joy in Unity—1:27-2:2**

Seven times in these verses Paul using various phrases expresses his hope that the Philippian Christians will walk in unity with one another:

1. *'One spirit'*—1:27
2. *'One mind'*—1:27; 2:2
3. *'Fellowship of the Spirit'*—2:1
4. *'Like-minded'*—2:2
5. *'Same love'*—2:2
6. *'One accord'*—2:2

All of these phrases are Paul's way of talking about unity among the Christians in Philippi. Why was the subject of unity so important to Paul? Because he knew that it was not only essential for *joy*—it is essential for dealing with trials, adversity, and for victory in our battle against the devil.

The bottom line is that we are stronger together than we are alone—

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (NLT)

⁹ Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. ¹⁰ If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. ¹¹ Likewise, two people lying close together

can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? ¹² A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

One of the greatest passages on Christian unity in the New Testament comes out of Ephesians 4.

In Ephesians 4 verses 3 and 13 Paul talks about the *basis* for our unity with one another as believers in Christ—in verse 3 he talks about "*the unity of the Spirit*" and then in verse 13 he mentions "*the unity of the faith*."

We are currently looking at the first one:

A. Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul speaks of the importance of *maintaining* our unity as Christians—but then in verses 4-6, he goes on to give us the 7 spiritual realities that make up our unity and bind us together as one in Christ:

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NKJV)

⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

So here in verses 4-6 Paul names 7 spiritual realities that unite all true Christians together:

1. **One Body—v.4a**
2. **One Spirit—v.4b**
3. **One Hope of your Calling—v.4c**
4. **One Lord—v.5a**

Christians are bound together by our **mutual love for and obedience to one Lord**—the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't worship many lords and many gods like the pagan polytheists—

1 Corinthians 8:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. ⁶ But for us, There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live.

Author Warren Wiersbe had this to say—

"This is our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, lives for us, and one day will come for us. It is difficult to believe that two believers can claim to obey the same Lord, and yet not be able to walk together in unity. Someone asked Gandhi, the spiritual leader of India, "What is the greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?" He replied, "Christians." Acknowledging the lordship of Christ is a giant step toward spiritual unity among His people."

And yet, as one author put—

“It’s difficult to believe how people who claim to believe in and obey the same Lord can’t seem to walk in unity with each other. Churches have been shattered by divisions over issues as small as the color of the carpet in the fellowship hall — and as large as the direction and philosophy of a church’s overall ministry.”

That gets into something we need to address, something we mentioned last week that is a valid criticism by unbelievers and skeptics of Christianity—which is:

- If the same Holy Spirit fills all Christians, binding us together with each other in unity as one Body, devoted to one Lord—**then why is there so much division in the Church?**

(Some towns have a “First Baptist” or “First Presbyterian”—and then a “Second”, a “Third”, a “Fourth” etc.).

The cults like the Jehovah’s Witnesses point to this as proof that the “unity” in their group is proof that they are the one true church—Why? Because they claim that their unity is the result of the Father answering the Son’s prayer in John 17:20-21—proving that *they* are in fact the one and only true church.

First of all, don’t confuse forced uniformity with spiritual unity.

Every cult in the world has forced uniformity masquerading as spiritual unity (the cult demands absolute unwavering monolithic uniformity to the doctrines and rules of the group down to the smallest detail)—but it isn’t true spiritual unity coming from the Holy Spirit.

(Heaven’s Gate cult’s last meal and outfits in 1997)

We need to understand that diversity of thought and beliefs don’t automatically equal division.

Unity and diversity are not mutually exclusive of one another. We evangelicals can differ on non-essential doctrines and still be in unity with each other when it comes to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

In other words, Christians can disagree over things like the timing of the Rapture; are the gifts of the Holy Spirit still around; is the Millennial Kingdom literal or allegorical—we can believe different things about doctrinal non-essentials and still be in unity with each other in Christ.

Also, when it comes to *why* there is disunity and division in churches, remember as Jesus warned—Satan has sowed ‘tares’ among the ‘wheat’ (false Christians among the true). This is especially true in these last days—and that has led to all kinds of fighting and division in the local church—it’s a ‘mixed-multitude’ situation. (Explain)

Furthermore, another reason there is division in churches is because—they are loaded with carnal Christians whose pride, selfishness and childishness are a big factor in all of the division and infighting that characterizes many churches—as it was in the church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 3:1–3 (NLT)

¹ Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn’t talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. ² I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren’t ready for anything stronger. And you still aren’t ready, ³ for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn’t that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren’t you living like people of the world?

But even among those who are genuine Christians, who have walked with Jesus for many years and *are* mature in their faith—there can *still* be disunity and division among them.

In Philippians 4, Paul addressed two ladies in the church there in Philippi who could not get along with each other.

Paul says, in verse 2, *“I plead with Euodia, and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.”* Were these women just a couple of immature troublemakers? No, Paul makes it clear in verse 3 that they were committed, serious-minded Christian workers who had labored with Paul for the glory of Jesus and the work of God’s Kingdom—and yet they were having trouble getting along.

➤ So, the question remains and often the criticism by unbelievers is valid—*if we all serve one Lord as Christians why is there so much division among those who are called by His name?*

I mean, if we are joined together by the same Holy Spirit and are a part of Jesus’ Body on the earth—why is unity with one another so hard and division so common in the local church today?

Why do churches split—and for that matter why do marriages fail when the Bible teaches that God joined both man and woman together in marriage making them one with each other—just like He made us one in Christ in the local church? It’s because we’re all different—but somewhere at some point we got it into our heads that unity is only going to become a reality if we’re all exactly alike and agree on pretty much everything.

True unity doesn’t happen when we force each other to become ‘cookie cutters’ of one another—remember that unity isn’t uniformity.

True unity comes by loving each other for who we are without trying to make each other carbon copies or ‘clones’ of ourselves.

First of all, our diversity is actually our strength—it allows the Body of Christ to do its work.

(Paul used the human body to illustrate this—I encourage all to read 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12).

But also, the diversity in the Church helps us to grow in our love for one another—after all it’s easy to love those who are exactly like us but takes God’s love to love others who are different from us.

Remember, God made men into *His* image and likeness and when we try to remake others in the church into our image and likeness—there is bound to be conflict and disunity.

This is true whether we’re talking about a family, a church—and especially a marriage.

Couples fight and often split up because one or both spouses are trying to force the other into their mold instead of simply accepting them for who they are—for who God has made them to be. I believe this is one reason why there is so much conflict in marriages—it’s due to resentment from one spouse trying to force the other to become someone God hasn’t made them to be—there’s no joy in forced uniformity.

Look, as spouses I think we should all work on ourselves to be better versions of ourselves—Phil 2.0!

I just find that men become better men when they have a wife that loves, supports, encourages and cheers them on rather than when a wife is barking at them, nagging them and trying to force them to be the husband they

want them to be instead of the man God has made them to be—and the same thing goes for husbands trying to force their wives into their vision of the perfect wife...

Disunity and fighting result when, because of our pride, we believe that everyone needs to think like us, talk like us, look like us and believe everything exactly like us (when it comes to non-essential doctrinal matters)—or else we can't be in unity with them.

We are not the Lord, people don't need to obey us or make us happy—there is only one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the only one we need to obey and please. When we humble ourselves, obey Jesus and put others before ourselves—we often (not always, but often) have peace with people—and the result will be unity—and joy!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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