

Philippians 2:1-4

The Foundation for Unity

Having instructed the Philippians to *stand firm in one spirit, with one mind*, Paul now explains the foundation for true unity.

There is a double threat to unity in the body of Christ:

- False teachers from without
- Divisions from within

Verse 1

Paul gives four incentives for unity each introduced by the word “if”. All of these “ifs” are 1st class conditionals which assume the statement to be true. We could accurately translate, “Since there is...”

- 1 – *Encouragement in Christ* – Jesus stressed unity in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17.
- 2 – *Consolation of love* – God’s love in hearts produces spiritual unity in our lives. Paul’s love for the Philippians was an example of this.
- 3 – *Fellowship of the Spirit* – The Holy Spirit’s indwelling ministry produces spiritual fruit in our lives as we walk with Him. Spiritual fruit in our lives produces unity in the body of Christ (Galatians 5:16-26)
- 4 – *Affection and compassion* – The word for affection literally means “*inward parts*”. It was here that deep emotions resided. It is sometimes translated “*heart*” carrying the idea of a “*tender heart*” in which mercy resides (Phil. 1:8; Philemon 7, 20; 1 John 3:17). The word for compassion is also translated “*mercy*” in Romans 12:1 and 2 Corinthians 1:3. As we have the “*mind of Christ*” and are led by the Spirit, affection and compassion will become part of who we are.

Verse 2

Make my joy complete – Paul now gives four ways in which true unity is achieved. Humility is at the root of all of these.

- 1 – *Being of the same mind* - Same mindedness with Christ is key to unity.
- 2 – *Maintaining the same love* – Demonstrating the love of Christ.
- 3 – *United in spirit* – Walking together in the Holy Spirit.
- 4 – *Intent on one purpose* – Literally “same minded”.

Verse 3

Selfishness – This word is translated “*disputes*” in 2 Corinthians 12:20 and Galatians 5:20 in the list of the deeds of the flesh.

Empty conceit – Desiring vain glory. The kindred adjective is translated “*boastful*” in Galatians 5:26.

Humility of mind – Having a humble opinion of one’s self.

“The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all!”

“Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it.” Warren Wiersbe

Regard one another as more important than himself – How we treat others is a test of how we view ourselves.

Selfishness keeps us from being Christ minded and the root of selfishness is pride.

“*He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble.*” Luke 1:51-52

“...*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*”

James 4:6 & 1 Peter 5:5,
Proverbs 29:23

Verse 4

Look out...for the interests of others – Verse 3 deals with how we view other people. This verse deals with how we *relate* to them.

Contrasts Between a Helper and a Servant	
Helper	Servant
Helps others when circumstances are convenient	Serves others even when circumstances are inconvenient
Helps people he or she likes	Serves even people he or she dislikes
Helps when he or she enjoys the work	Serves even when he or she dislikes the work
Helps with the view to obtaining personal satisfaction	Serves even when he or she receives no personal satisfaction
Helps with an attitude of assisting another	Serves with an attitude of enabling another