

Light Brings Salt

Volume 4, Issue 39

October 15, 2006



Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



Standing Firm in One Spirit

Pastor John Griffith

Have you ever wondered what is Satan's most effective strategy since the early days of the Church? Where has he concentrated his greatest efforts in order to thwart the work of Jesus Christ the most?

I Believe that the first paragraph of Philippians chapter 2 will give us some answers to these questions. Paul continues the exhortation to unity in the local assembly and gives some guidelines to achieving it as he teaches us some truths about true humility.

In the previous paragraph, 1:27-30, Paul had exhorted them to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, that is, our conduct is to weigh as much as the doctrine we believe, there is to be a balance between the truth we know and our conduct as believers. He then describes some of what he expects to hear that they are doing in response to that exhortation.

#1 - standing firm in one spirit, with one mind
(therefore having a good defense)

#2 - striving together for the faith (a good offense)

#3 - undeterred by their opposition in life.

What Paul is exhorting them is to be "one in Christ experientially and to maintain this unity even amid persecution" that they were experiencing. Some of those Philippian believers -- if they were thinking at all as they arrived at this point in the letter may have been tempted to ask why, what's so important about unity, others may have asked themselves how this could be done. Paul anticipated these questions and in these next verses will give us the answers.

#1 - The basis for Christian unity - Our Personal benefits in Christ 2:1

#2 - The attitudes of Christian unity 2:2-4

#3 - An example to follow - Jesus Christ 2:5-11

The basis of Christian unity and the benefits of unity for us as believers is found in Christ 2:1

2:1 If therefore 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, NASB

GRAMATICALLY 2:1-4 is one long sentence in the Greek, with the main clause being found in 2:2 with the imperative "make my joy complete." Idea being, bring to completion that which I have seen begun in you that brings me such joy. In other words Paul is exhorting them to continue growing and maturing so that they would realize the impact of their position in Christ and reflect the character of Christ in their life so that Christ would be seen in them and glorified by their lives.

Need to recognize that Paul has a very real concern for these believers and the circumstances that they were facing which were putting a strain on the unity of that local body of believers.

Issues not detailed apart from the two ladies who were having some kind of a dispute which was disrupting the harmony of the congregation is noted in 4:2 Euodia and Syntyche.

Paul is not making so much a theological argument in 2:1 as he is a very strong impassioned plea to stimulate their thinking related not only to their present situation but to their past and to consider all that God has accomplished on behalf of them and through them. Its a challenge to pause and reflect. He says in effect, "Look Philippians remember your spiritual heritage, look at the reality of what you have in Christ." Does that not sound like something we may need to do once in a while ourselves?

The incentive for unity then is given in 2:1 or Why we should stand firm in one spirit, why we should contend as one for the faith.

1. "*If there is any encouragement in Christ*" [all 'if's' are 1^{cc} therefore establishing the truth of the statement.]

The word for encouragement is παράκλησις which refers to comfort, encouragement, exhortation; all have application here but the primary thrust of the context is exhortation, making a strong appeal to them.

Basis of Paul's appeal is our union with Christ which carries inherent with it encouragement and exhortation. Being in Christ they no longer were without hope in the world, in this life; **being in Christ** they had a future, being in Christ they had an inheritance, all based on that positional relationship. All this is true for you also. Knowing this, it then places an obligation upon us experientially to respond to and apply His thinking. It takes spiritual growth for this exhortation or encouragement that flows out of being in union with Christ becoming understood and realized in our lives.

2. "*if there is any consolation in love*," Is there any comfort from Christ's love? You bet there is!

The word for consolation παραμύθιον refers to encouragement in the sense of consolation. It is used of coming along side someone with persuasive arguments to stimulate them and to draw one aside from the pressure they're facing. Not only are they **"in Christ - united with Him"** they as we are, are also members of the family of God, sons and heirs. Because we are a part of this unique relationship we become the beneficiaries of Christ's continual love and provision.

Paul's exhortation here is that even though you had experienced suffering and persecution (vs:28-30) you have also experienced the comfort that comes from being the objects of Christ's unconditional love. As believers we are the beneficiaries of His love and knowing that should motivate us in our lives daily.

This is noted by Paul in 2 Cor. 5:14. Christ's love for us should motivate us, urge us on as with an irresistible force (συνεχω). The **fact** that He loves us ought to motivate us to love others. Epaphroditus may have explained to Paul the ways in which Christ had preserved them and helped them during this time of persecution and suffering.

In all this what Paul is attempting to do is to get their focus back on the one who is to be the central focus of

their life as believers. They have become more occupied with the pressures of the moment than with the one who will make the provision to deal with the situation.

3. "*...If there is fellowship of the Spirit...*" (and there is!)

The word for fellowship is κοινωνία which means fellowship, partners, joint participation here with the Holy Spirit. Need to remember that He indwells all believers 1 Cor 6:19.

It is the Holy Spirit who placed, us into this union with Christ, 1 Cor 12:13 "*For we were all baptized with [by] one Spirit into one body*" Christianity is relational. Here Paul is stressing the relationship we have with the Holy Spirit. While John in 1 Jn 1:3 stresses the relationship with the Father and Son.

Paul's statement here indicates that the believer is walking by the Spirit and therefore is being led and taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

4. "*...if any affection and compassion...*" (and there is!)

Affection σπλάγχχνον is a strong word for affection and tenderness and speaks of the capacity to show affection. It is used of men and of God.

The word for compassion οίκτιρμός speaks of seeing a need and being willing to meet that need. The idea is that if we have experienced any affection and compassion in Christ then it should be reflected in our relationships with others and for the Philippians to make Paul's joy complete as he learns of these things being lived out in their lives.

Need to remember what James says in 5:11 "*The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.*" Since you are a believer in Christ, then you have experienced God's mercy. We deserved judgment, but God in love sent His Son, Jesus Christ, who died for you and me so that we by faith in Him might experience this affection and compassion in our lives.

The thrust that Paul's exhortation here at this point is to get them to realize all that they have received and experienced as a result of their position in Christ and their relationship with the Holy Spirit then as they do understand that it should stimulate and motivate them toward a specific pattern of conduct towards others, that is a unity within the local body.