

“The Four Pillars of Unity”
Philippians 2:1
(Preached at Trinity, September 25, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 2** begins with the familiar “therefore.” The word always takes us back to the previous section. It introduces the “logical result” of something previously said. We could substitute the word “consequently.” The question is, to what is Paul drawing a conclusion. We don't have to go far.
2. In **Verse 27** Paul turned his attention away from *his* current circumstances to the situation at Philippi. They too were facing severe opposition.
 - a. Paul encourages them conduct themselves worthy of the Gospel.
Philippians 1:27 NAU - "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"
 - b. Then he turns their minds to the importance of unity as we face opposition. We are uniquely united to one another. This unity strengthens us as we face our enemies together as a single united front.
“you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”
3. Now Paul is continuing this theme of unity. In **Verse 2** he writes,
Philippians 2:2 NAU - "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."
4. Paul is writing to the Philippians in the context of suffering. They were daily facing opposition to their faith. But they had other issues that were just as threatening to the wellbeing of their church. They had to face daily life with one another.
5. All of us can be difficult to get along with at times. All struggle with pride, selfishness, and self-importance. We struggle with envy and rivalry. We tend to surround ourselves with people who make us feel good about ourselves and forget about others. We struggle with the issue of giving up our rights and humbling ourselves before one another.
6. It would appear that the Church of Philippi was struggling with the all-important issue of unity. The exhortation of **Verses 1-4** loses its relevance if they were already practicing selfless unity. Paul mentions two by name who were struggling with division between them.
Philippians 4:2 NAU - "urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord."
7. In the Greek **Verses 1-4** form a single sentence. The focus is upon the display of their unity through each one being willing to put others before himself.

8. Paul introduces **Verse 2** by first setting forth the foundation for Christian unity in **Verse 1**. I call **Verse 1** the four pillars of unity. He uses a Greek phrase that sets up a conditional statement. They are sometimes called “if” “then” statements.
 Εἴ τις – “if there is any.” It presumes the answer, “then” set up in **Verse 2**.
 Paul’s use of the word “if” however, in no way expresses any doubt in the statement. Paul is assuming that these things are present. In fact, they are so definite we could substitute the word, “since.”
9. These four elements are essential for any true unity.
- I. Encouragement in Christ
 - II. Consolation of Love
 - III. The Fellowship of the Spirit
 - IV. Affection and Compassion
10. On one hand **Verse 1** points to our union with our triune God.
- Paul describes our encouragement in Christ; the rich consolation of His love
Ephesians 3:17-19 NAU - "that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge"
 - The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.
 - The pity and compassion of the Father
Lamentations 3:22-23 NAU - "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."
11. Paul uses a similar expression in 2 Corinthians.
2 Corinthians 13:14-1:1 NAU - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. "
12. In essence Paul is saying, “If you’ve experienced the glorious union with God you must demonstrate your gratitude by reflecting His love and compassion towards others.” While the characteristics of **Verse 1** find their foundation in our union with Christ they also form the foundation of our unity with each other.
- I. Encouragement in Christ
- A. Paul is directing our attention to the encouragement and love we experience in Christ.
 1. There are comforts in Christ that only a Christian can know
 2. Knowing and experiencing the love of Christ is at the heart of Christianity.
 3. It is only as we comprehend the love of Christ for us that we can then love one another. This is at the heart of our unity together.
 - B. In this first phrase Paul is speaking of the encouragement we give to one another as the result of our union with Christ.
 1. We reflect the encouragement of Christ towards one another.
 2. The word here is παράκλησις from παρακαλέω – It’s a picture of drawing someone near and putting your arm around them.
 3. In **Verse 19** Paul writes of the great encouragement he will experience as he receives report of them standing firm in the Gospel.
Philippians 2:19 NAU - "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition."

4. Notice the encouragement is “in Christ.” As Christians we are united with Christ which is the basis of our union with one another.
- C. How do we encourage one another?
1. We encourage one another as we serve one another. Few really have the gift of service. In Paul’s second epistle to Timothy he gave a personal testimony of one who gave himself to service.
 - a. During Paul’s second imprisonment in Rome most abandoned him. **2 Timothy 1:15 NAU** - "You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes."
 - b. But one individual gave himself in service to Paul. **2 Timothy 1:16-18 NAU** - "The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; ¹⁷ but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me-- ¹⁸ the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day-- and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus."
 - c. Paul wrote that he was refreshed by Onesiphorus. The word for refreshed is ἀναψύχω which is a compound word meaning to breath upon. Onesiphorus was a breath of grace and encouragement to Paul.
 - d. He searched out Paul and gave himself to serving Paul without regard to his personal comfort or safety. Paul wrote of him that he “was not ashamed of my chains.”
 - e. Some have conjectured that Onesiphorus was a deacon who served the Church of Ephesus. “you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.” διακονέω – a verbal form of the word διάκονος. He surely fills the description of a faithful deacon marked by the gift of service.
 - f. How we need to pray that God will raise up men in our church with such a gift of service – men who give themselves in sacrificial service to the church. What encouragements such men are to the church.
 2. We share in the suffering of one another. We are on the same journey experiencing the same things. **1 Corinthians 12:26-27 NAU** - "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."

II. Consolation of Love

- A. Love is the chief pillar of unity. It is the basis for our encouragement of one another
1. Those who are united with Christ are united with His love.
Paul prayed for the Church of Ephesus
Ephesians 3:16-19 NAU - "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."
 2. It is an experience of love shared by all who are united with Christ. We are united with one another in love.
 3. The word for "consolation" implies the speaking of encouragement. It implies encouragement through exhortation.
 4. All men love, but the lost man has a love affair with himself. His energies are fixed upon satisfying himself. He loves those things that are pleasing to his flesh
 - a. He loves darkness more than Christ
John 3:19 NAU - "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."
 - b. He loves money and pleasure more than God
2 Timothy 3:1-4 NAU - "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"
 5. Christianity enables us to look outside of ourselves; to love Jesus and to love others who love Jesus. We love one another.
 6. This gives us a desire to build up one another, to encourage one another. Paul refers to it here as "consolation of love."
 7. True unity finds its foundation in this love.
- B. Paul never exhorted others to do what he didn't do himself. Paul continually spoke words to build up and encourage
Philippians 1:3-5 NAU - "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."
Romans 1:8 NAU - "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."
Colossians 1:3-4 NAU - "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints"

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NAU - "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of *you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father"

1. Have you expressed your gratitude to your brothers and sisters here at Trinity that God has brought us together. Have you expressed your appreciation for their work?
2. Our tongues are wonderful gifts that can be used to bless or to curse. From a heart of love flows rivers of consolation and encouragement.
Luke 6:45 NAU - "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."
3. James also made the connection between the heart and the tongue
James 3:9-11 NAU - "With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰ from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹ Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*?"

III. The Fellowship of the Spirit

- A. There is a unity that comes from the Holy Spirit who indwells each of us
 1. Paul wrote of the unity of the Spirit in **Eph. 4**
Ephesians 4:3-6 NAU - "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also 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 over all and through all and in all."
 2. It is a unique fellowship that binds us together as one - κοινωνία
- B. The Holy Spirit binds us together with one heart with one purpose
 1. In **Chapter 1** Paul spoke of their fellowship in the Gospel
Philippians 1:3-5 NAU - "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."
 2. We have fellowship in our labor, our worship, our striving after holiness, our suffering. Such unity is made possible by the Holy Spirit.

IV. Affection and Compassion

- A. This refers to love put into practice
 1. God's compassions are never failing.
Lamentations 3:22-23 NAU - "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³ *They are* new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."
God's compassion is unmerited and never ending. This must be our heart towards one another.

2. "Affection" is from a word that refers to internal organs. It speaks of the emotions. True love is a willful act but it is also full of emotion. It is love from the heart.
1 John 3:17 NAU - "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart (*same word*) against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"
 3. The word for compassion refers to pity or mercy. ESV translates it sympathy.
 4. True unity occurs when our hearts are knit together. This is what led the early church to sell property in order to relieve one another.
- B. Our hearts must be stirred for one another
1. This must be our prayer
 2. This must be the great labor of our church
Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU - "we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Conclusion:

1. All of these in one way or another are a reflection of love. Unity can only occur in an atmosphere of love.
Ephesians 4:1-3 NAU - "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
2. Love controls everything
 We are rooted and grounded in love
 We are to speak the truth in love
 We are to walk in love –
Ephesians 5:1-2 NAU - "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us"
3. In **Colossians 2** Paul states that our hearts are knit together in love
Colossians 2:2 NAU - "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love"
4. And now in this passage Paul will declare in **Verse 2**
Philippians 2:2 NAU - "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."
5. This is the work of God in us. May we pray that it will abound yet more and more.
Philippians 1:9 NAU - "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,"