

MAKE MY JOY COMPLETE, BEING ONE IN SOUL AND MIND

Philippians 2: 2 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

The text that God the Holy Spirit has brought to my attention this week comes from a context that is one of the deepest passages of the Bible. At the heart of this message is the fulcrum of the message in Philippians 2: 5. There I read, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” Whatever I am to preach today, it must be rooted in this fulcrum—that our model for unity in soul and mind must be rooted in Christ Jesus. Paul defines what this means in Colossians 3: 2 where he commands us, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” The word “set your mind,” (phroneo) is a kind of thinking that must have God’s love and soul embedded in the very core of our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength. This mind of Christ is illustrated in Philippians 2: 6-8. Notice that the heart of the mind of Christ is the *emptying* of ourselves as He emptied Himself—the unwillingness to claim our own rights, but rather to do the Father’s will. Jesus never emptied Himself of His position as being God the Son. But He did empty Himself of His prerogatives as God the Son.

A prerogative is an official or hereditary right which may be asserted without question. Webster adds that it is the right and privilege of a sovereign leader. This Friday morning, in our Revival Prayer Fellowship, Pastor Larry read the June 10th devotional by Charles Stanley called “In His Presence.” The context of the devotional was Jonah running away from God. We all have a right to run away from God’s Word, His will, His way, and His wooing. Yet, if we have the mind of Christ, we must empty ourselves of our own desires and preferences, surrendering to His will—so that we can say “Yes, Lord.” The title of the devotional was “Yes, Lord!” The devotional stated these words. “Disobedience to God (as Jonah disobeyed) does not cancel God’s commands. Our lack of obedience does not alter His plan. There is no such thing as “getting off the hook” with God. We can’t escape the presence of God... Resistance to God’s will brings suffering to others. It steals our joy, divides our minds, and causes guilt... God always accomplishes His will. Nothing we do or say alters His plan. There is only one way to answer the call of God and that is to say, “Yes, Lord.” Anything else results in disobedience.” Those words of this devotional must have been on Pastor Larry’s mind as we prayed. He prayed words in his prayer that I immediately wrote down. He prayed, “Lord, don’t let us take issue with Your Word as we read it, or Your Word as You reveal it to us by Your

Spirit.” I sensed God speaking to me instantly and saying to me, “That is at the heart of my message for you to preach on Sunday.”

Today, God is calling all of us to do something every bit as tough as God asking Jonah to go preach repentance to Nineveh. In Jonah 4: 2, after God spared Jonah from the experience of being swallowed by a large fish—after which Jonah willingly did what God asked, preaching to Nineveh as he walked throughout the city which took 3 days to walk across. Nineveh, that is, everyone from the king down to the lowest servant there, repented as a huge city. Jonah was not happy with the outcome of his preaching. He wanted God to destroy Nineveh, not spare the city. Jonah’s amazing words to the Lord were, after he became angry and displeased with God, he said, “Please, Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this, I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.” Being asked by God for husbands and wives to be likeminded, for parents and children to be likeminded, for people in the church to be likeminded is no small desire. For some of us, it becomes more of a sticky wicket than just a few momentary glitches in our love for each other. It can mean that we, like Jonah, turn our back on God’s call to unity and set sail in an opposite direction.

All Jonah did was to put his foot down when he knew God’s will was not his own will. He bucked God’s authority and he went down to Joppa and bought a ticket, paid the fare and boarded the ship to Tarshish, which was not God’s will. Jonah was fleeing from the presence of God. Today, I am calling us as a church, as married couples, as parents and children in the home, and as brothers and sisters in the family of God to be likeminded. This call will define our entire future of how much and to what extent God will be able to use us. The call to likemindedness is not a call to agree with those who are doctrinally in error. It is not a call for us to agree with those who are wanting to act in a way that is prohibited in the scriptures. No, it is only a call for us to be likeminded in marriage, in the family, and in the church, with fellow believers who are part of the same body of Christ that we belong to. At first glance, it sounds like a cake-walk. But as I will attempt to explain today, this call to unity will require a Christ-like emptying of ourselves that will be unparalleled in our lives. This call to unity will require an emptying of self that will please the Lord. This unity will make the heart of our pastors and congregation complete, the heart of our husbands and wives complete, and the heart of our dads and moms and children complete. In this text in

Philippians 2: 2, I see four ways God is calling for us to empty ourselves of our prerogatives, our privileges and rights as Jesus did so we can be likeminded. The outline in the text is easy to figure out—We must empty ourselves (1) by being of the same mind, (2) by maintaining the same love, (3) by being united in spirit, and (4) by being intent on one purpose. Let's take the time to examine this strong call to unity and likemindedness. I want to ask us all the same four questions...

WILL I EMPTY MYSELF BY BEING OF THE SAME MIND? (I.)

Paul commands us, "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind." This means coming to think the same thing, being united in what we think, and being one in our thoughts. **This is MENTAL UNITY.** Tell me I am wrong when I suggest to you that all of us avoid certain ones of each other at times, and we avoid certain subjects with each other, and we would rather die than give in to so as to have the same mind. We sing, "To Be Like Jesus, To Be Like Jesus, All I Ask, To Be Like Him." Do we mean it? Having the same mind is all about surrendering our preference and our wiser ways. Calling us to be of the same mind is calling us first of all to listen to each other, to pray about what each of us is thinking, and to say with Jesus in our Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." Now remember Hebrews 12: 2 where we read, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Paul is telling the Philippi Church that such a same mindedness among them will make his joy complete. Same mindedness is the road to joy. The apostle Paul mentions joy 19 times in this 4 chapter epistle—that's one short of five times for each of the 4 chapters. Paul could not break out in full joy with the thought of factions or opposing minds among the Philippians. Beloved, do I have to tell you, any of you how such opposing mindedness undermines husbands and wives, parents and children, and members and friends in the body of Christ?

Unity in thought which continues in unity in action is no easy command. Why? We each have active fertile minds and we all have free independent spirits. It can be as grating as tuning a piano to allow God's spirit to tune our minds to the same A chord on all our violins. When was the last time when you as husband or wife thought something and the other one said, "Amazing, that is just what I was thinking!" God is calling us together in mind so that such an amazing moment becomes more and more common and less and less rare. When the same Spirit of God is moving and speaking to us, with mind answering to mind, it is something like wireless telegraph, in the answering of transmitter with receiver. Consider an orchestra. There is

one leader or conductor and many musicians. By the way, musicians are harder to come together than almost any group. Musicians each have their own training and style. They have their own strong opinions about the beat, the rhythm, the blend, and on and on. But what does an orchestra have in common, besides the same conductor or director? An orchestra shares the same music and musical score. They all play different parts. When they follow the conductor, the result is not only melody, but harmony, and when all the effects of volume, rhythm, beat and blend are met, it is a symphony.

Unity of mind is not the same as uniformity of thought. Being of the same mind in an orchestra doesn't mean every musician is playing the same notes at the same time. That is uniformity—as a dictator might command. A director isn't after uniformity. Minding the same thing doesn't mean that we must always think the same thoughts, but it does mean that our different thoughts cannot be opposing thoughts. The same mindset allows for individuality and style, but there will be no symphony if we are not playing the same music, the same song. Even one musician refusing to look at the conductor is the death of a symphony. I pray often for us as a church—the words of the song, “Lord, make us a symphony, a symphony of worship, we lift up our minds in Your name.” Will we empty ourselves by being of the same mind one with another? Secondly, I propose another personal question.

WILL I EMPTY MYSELF BY MAINTAINING THE SAME LOVE?

(II.) Paul commands us, “Make my joy complete by maintaining the same love.” **This is MORAL UNITY.** Notice the tearing down of all walls that divide us. The same love. This cherishing of the same love and prizing the same yearning for each other is a moral strength that divides us from the world around us. Jesus said in John 13: 34, 35, “A new commandment I give to you that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” This agape love of Christ, who emptied Himself and gave His life on the cross for us, is a love that purifies our love, that defines our love, that in love lays down our lives, by giving up our rights, our own way, and that prefers each other to ourselves. This love is without selfishness or empty conceit, but full of humility. (Phil. 2: 3.) Let's go back to the symphony. It takes harmony not only of thinking, but harmony of feeling. This is unity of thought and affection. There is a music of spheres. The same note will respond when in key with another instrument. The two instruments sound different, but when one note is struck, the one in key answers to it. Each instrument has its own notes, but when both are in key,

even a whole church singing together that loves each other worships whereas, a church with division sings, but fails to worship. Romans 12: 1 tells us that our reasonable service to God is to present our bodies (plural) a living and holy sacrifice (singular). Musical natures are super sensitive and high strung. Thus musicians are always tuning their instruments. Why? We all get out of tune, and fail to maintain the same love. Beloved, if we are in love, agape, selfless self-emptying love with God, it's far easier to keep in tune with each other. I call each of us today to surrender our jarring chords of—"this is my way and that's the end of the story." Let's empty ourselves by maintaining the same love. Thirdly, I propose a third personal question.

WILL I EMPTY MYSELF BY BEING UNITED IN SPIRIT? (III.) Paul commands us in verse 2, "Make my joy complete by being united in spirit." Notice, Paul does not say united in your spirits, but united in spirit. **This is MUTUAL UNITY.** The word one accord suggests two hearts beating together in perfect key. It is a symphony of the spirit. Divorces are all about the loss of mutual unity. Husbands and wives get out of tune. This is the unity of souls and spirits as well as the unity of minds and feelings. Here is the tenderness and persuasiveness of listening hearts. Beloved, I warn us all. The moment we close our ears, our hearts, or our minds to listen to each other—watch out. We are on the edge of the cliff. When we put our heads down, cover our ears, close our eyes, shake our heads and in effect say, "There you go again," we are in some degree at war. We are not emptying ourselves. We are not even on the outskirts of mutual unity. We are miles away. We may be well able to defend our points and prove we are right.

Nevertheless, if God has called us to play the same song, to be in the same orchestra, to live in the same family, to love in the same marriage, and to work in the same job, mutual unity is not an option. It is as necessary as drinking water is in a hot desert. This phrase, "united in spirit," is the translation of a Greek word, **sumpsuchos**. Sum means with and psuchos is our word from which we get psychology. Psuchos means soul. The literal translation would be "with-soul—which means we are both as husband and wife like-souls in agreement with the mind and spirit of the Holy Spirit. Counseling in marriage is 99 out of a 100 times is the presentation of a deep unwillingness to allow another heart to beat in the same key as yours. We have heard and sensed and felt the discord in the past and we have pointed our fingers at each other once too often. God tells us in Isaiah 58: 9 that "we must remove the yoke from our midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness." I ask you beloved, will you empty yourself by being

united in spirit and soul? Will you listen again to that mother, that dad, that wife, that husband, that boss, that employee, that pastor, that person, where there is a loss of mental unity, moral unity, and mutual unity? Lastly,

WILL I EMPTY MYSELF BY BEING INTENT ON ONE PURPOSE?

(IV.) Paul commands us, “Make my joy complete by being intent on one purpose.” The Greek phrase is **en phroneo**. It means one way of thinking. This kind of thinking must have God’s love and soul embedded in the very core and DNA of our heart and soul and mind and strength. **This is Mentored Unity**. Beloved, ultimately, only the Lord Jesus can mentor this into our lives. Not being intent on one purpose in the church or in the home or at work with a fellow believer is all about one or more of us failing to obey Jesus. Yet, let me remind you that mentored leadership is set up by God in the church, in the home, in the work-place, and we err when we ignore God’s set up leaders. Paul wrote, in I Corinthians 11: 1, “Follow me, as I also follow Christ.” “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” Loving leadership when followed spurs us on to being intent on one purpose. Dr. John A. Broadus, a Southern Baptist dean of homiletics or preaching would speak to his student ministers in seminary, saying, “I plead with you to do your very best for Jesus’ sake.” And then, with tears in his eyes, and soon in the eyes of his students, he would beg, “Do just a bit better for your old teacher’s sake.” Anyone who is so hard as to be deaf to the love of a mother or father, a husband or wife, or even to a child, is apt to have grown deaf to the love of God. Vance Havner--“Christians are frail, but when they stick together, like snow, they can stop traffic.” High prstly pryr-Jn.17:20-21

One powerful mentor of unity in history is General William Booth. General Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. He led in spreading the Gospel over much of the world, as he organized street meetings and evangelistic services. With the passing of years, General Booth became an invalid. His eyesight failed him. One year he was in such bad health that he was unable to attend the Salvation Army Convention in London, England. Gloom and sad pessimism swept across the floor of the convention. Then the moderator was handed a telegram from General Booth. “Dear Delegates of the Salvation Army Convention: There was a poem entitled “Others,” by Charles Meigs. “Lord, let me live from day to day In such a self-forgetful way That even when I kneel to pray, My prayer shall be for others. Others, Lord, yes, others; Let this my motto be. Help me to live for others, That I may live like Thee.” Signed, Gen. Booth. Oh, Jesus give us mentored unity, mental, moral, and mutual unity until the world is drawn to You. Amen.