

THE POWER TO LIVE AS ONE



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Philippians 2:1-11
September 27, 2020

Of all the words we might use to describe our country today, “unified” is clearly not one of them. Despite Jesus’ prayer in John 17, “one” is not a word that describes the church either.

We’ve listened to Philippians 2 several times and noticed the need for us to be like-minded and some keys to being so: not having up selfish ambition but valuing others over ourselves, not being conceited but humble, and not looking to our own interests but rather to the interests of others (vv. 2-4). We’ve also emphasized the need to follow the example of Jesus in this (vv. 5-11). I still believe if we actually followed these words from God, we would indeed be like-minded, one in spirit and mind.

I realized recently, however, that as many times as I have spoken on this important passage, there is one very important part of it I have not emphasized. It is the part that tells us where we get the *power* to have the attitudes and behaviors of Christ. Knowing *what* to do is not going to unify us if we don’t have the *power* to do it.

The “if... then...” in vv. 1-2 indicates that the power to follow the instructions in vv. 2-4 and the example of Jesus in vv. 5-11 is found in the resources we have in Christ, which are described in v. 1. I recommend four exercises to help us assimilate those resources:

1. Remember where we came from. The Bible sometimes reminds us of our condition before Christ. It is worth prayerfully reading and considering these descriptions, unflattering and perhaps even offensive as they may be (Romans 5:6-8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 2:1-19; Titus 3:3-4).
2. Recognize the blessings we have in Christ. In our passage, Paul lists encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, and compassion, and he attributes these specifically to Christ, his love, and the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:1). We have many others as well, and again, it is worth prayerfully contemplating these (Acts 2:38-47; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 1:3-14).
3. Revitalize our hearts (cf. Proverbs 4:23). Making a list of blessings won’t change us unless they soak down into our hearts. This is very challenging because our hearts so easily become dull (Mark 6:18; Luke 21:34; Hebrews 3:7-8; 5:11). We will only truly perceive if we *humble* our hearts (Matthew 11:25-26; 13:12-15). *Prayer* is essential to revitalizing our hearts, including prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and understanding so that we will truly know God, and that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened so that we may grasp the blessings and resources we have in him (Ephesians 1:17-19). *Repentance* (change of mind/heart) and *obedience* (Hebrews 3:7-8) also contribute to spiritual heart health.
4. Resolutely invest in our relationship with the Lord. Since living in a unifying manner (Philippians 2:2-11) depends on resources found in Christ (2:1), it will help to invest heavily into our relationship with him. This could include listening to and meditating on his words, pouring out our hearts to him, worshiping him, obeying him, etc.