Unified for the Gospel Pt. 2

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Well, for this morning, let's return again to Philippians chapter 2.

! Philippians chapter 2. We are returning here to the first several verses. As we think about this theme of being unified for the gospel, that in the church, there should be great unity, and that unity gives us a picture of the gospel.
We looked last week, just at the very beginning here of chapter 2, that reminds us that we have the source of our unity in what the Lord has given to us.
Let's just look at this again to get our minds back in context here. Chapter 2, verse 1. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy.
These four things form the source of our unity, the encouragement that we have in Christ, the comfort we have from the Father's love, the fellowship we have in the Spirit, and the affection and sympathy that we have been given, that we then in turn seek to give to others.
[1:23] All of this is the source of our unity. And what I want you to notice is that the source of our unity is that which the full Godhead has given to us.

You see reference to God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Our source of our unity is not in and of ourselves.
The unity our church enjoys is not ultimately just because of things outside of us that we have in common of the world, nor is it based on things just internally from us that we build up.
It's what God has given to us and placed within us. The source of our unity is what God has done for us. It's not based on the fact that we would just all have the same taste or preferences or opinions.
It's not based simply on the fact that we choose to get along. The source of our unity is that God has given to us salvation, and as the Spirit of God works salvation through us, and then gets worked out from us, the result of that is the people of God that live in unity together for the sake of the Gospel.
[2:48] The Father sends Christ the Son, and the Son goes to the cross as a payment for our sin, and the Son ascends to heaven, and the Holy Spirit unleashed within us, and that is the source of our unity.

One of the things that our church greatly enjoys here is unity. And on one hand, that makes perfect sense, because why wouldn't sinners who deserve judgment but have been given salvation and forgiveness?
Of course, we should walk in unity. We should. But the reality of it is, it's really a pretty remarkable thing. You take as many people as come to our church regularly, and as many different thoughts and backgrounds, and all the things that could be different among us, and then you just take experience that so many churches have that can argue and divide over finances and schedules and buildings and music and personalities.
And it really is a pretty remarkable thing that our church has been able for so long to enjoy great unity, and can I just remind you the source of that unity we enjoy is what God has done for us and given to us, which reminds us that if we stay focused on the Lord and on the Gospel, what we should expect is to walk in unity.
But if we take our eyes off of that, division occurs. So unity in one sense is something God has purchased for His people and given to us, and yet in another sense, it's something we have to commit to over and over and over again so that we do not get divided or distracted by smaller,

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lesser things.
[4:51] And the source of that unity is what God has given to us. We should be thankful. Let's continue to build this week here in verses 1-4.

Verse 1 was the source of our unity. You look at verse 2 with me, and we find the sign of our unity. The sign of our unity. He says in verse 2, Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind.
This is the sign of our unity. It should be evident to us and to those around us that we are walking in unity. Verse 2, Complete my joy.
This is the imperative here in this phrase, that this is what we are supposed to do. And this is really, if you think about it, a pretty remarkable reality we find about the church and the Christian life.
As Paul writes, Complete my joy. This tells us that the joy we have as believers is absolutely strengthened by the obedience of the saints.
[6:10] This really is a remarkable thing and a reminder that the Christian life is never to be lived in isolation. The Christian life is lived within the context of Christian relationships.

So much so, that Paul says, when I see that you are walking with the Lord, when I see the obedience that you have, it makes me joyful.
The Christian life is not just about you. It's absolutely about helping other people to grow with Christ and to walk in His love, to live out our faith.
Our lives are to be so intertwined that our joy expands because of seeing somebody else walk in obedience to the Lord.
This is such a far cry from the present mindset that permeates so many people, even those who would be active in their churches, that the Christian life is just an individual sport.
[7:24] Or that you can go to church if you want and stay home if you want and serve if you want and sit out if you want. It's just really whatever you want to do and whatever you feel like doing.

It's just you. It's just your life. It doesn't really affect or involve anybody else. This is a complete opposite way of living. He says, I find joy when I observe your obedience because our lives are so inextricably linked together that I worship, I delight, he says, in watching my fellow brothers and sisters honor the Lord.
And yet, sadly, in so many churches all around our nation, it's just this complete opposite mentality of it's just all about you.
And the Bible reminds us, no, we're a family. Our unity is not simply that we believe the same thing, it's that we delight in the same thing and that we encourage each other and help each other and that we joy when we see each other walking with the Lord and obeying Him.
Now, the sign that we really are unified is expanded upon here in verse 2. It gives us several phrases to consider.
[9:05] First, by being of the same mind. The strength of our unity, the sign of our unity comes from our mind, what we think.

Unity starts in the mind. Biblical unity is not the same opinion on all matters. Biblical unity is the same commitment.
To essential truth. That's what unity is. I think of this, not just in the church, but I think of this, how it's lived out in homes and families through the years of raising our sons.
Mars and I had the same mind. We had the same commitments. We had the same foundation. We had the same goal in mind for our children.
That doesn't necessarily mean we always had the exact same opinion. We may have times where we had to talk about it and figure out, what are the rules going to be?
[10:12] What should a curfew be? Should they get an allowance? What should be expected of them? What happens if somebody disobeys? What shows can you watch?

How late can you stay up? All of these kinds of things that there may be some differences of opinion that you've got to talk through and work through to make good, wise decisions, but those differences don't drive you apart because you're of the same mind.
You have the same commitment to essential truth. And that's how it should be in the church. Not everybody has or should have the same opinion on every decision that's made.
Not everybody should have the exact same preference in all matters. But those differences are fine as long as we are of the same mind, the same commitment to essential truths.

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He says also, having the same love. Now this is so important that the sign of our unity is that we love each other.
[11:20] John 13, 35, by this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. So notice that here in the exact same verse, the exact same explanation of what true unity is, he highlights being of the same mind and of the same love.

And this is so helpful for us the way the Scripture lays this out because it reminds us that true unity absolutely includes the mind and what you believe and what you are committed to, but it's never absent from loving each other.
At the same time, true unity isn't only your feelings or emotions about somebody else, it's what you hold firmly in your convictions. This is what true unity is.
The same mind and the same love. Biblical unity is achieved by the work of the Lord in His people as God's people believe and love.
This is commitment to truth and to each other. We dare not emphasize one over the other because both of these realities are essential for us to enjoy the unity God has for us.
[12:43] We love each other. We feel that affection deeply. And we're committed to truth. And the more we love each other, the more we want the truth.

And the more we love the truth, the more we have affection for each other. And the sign of our unity is not merely that we just get along with each other, where we just tolerate each other, neither is it that we agree on every single thing that could ever come up.
The true unity the church should enjoy is a unity that says we've got the same essential doctrine we hold dearly. And as we hold to that doctrine dearly and pursue the truth of who God is, we love each other.
We love each other. This is one of the reasons why to really enjoy all God has for you, you need to be building relationships with each other in the body of Christ.
That's why it's such a good thing and a healthy thing to on purpose come to church early for the purpose of meeting and talking and fellowshipping and encouraging each other.
[14:05] That's why it's good to stay and to linger after church is over, after you get your kids from the nursery. Go get your kids from the nursery. Then stay and linger. Right, Bandy? Let's get the kids and then let's fellowship and stay and talk.

It's good to not run off in a hurry. That's why it's good to be plugged into a Sunday school class so you can get to know a group of people in a more deep and a more personal way.
That's why it's good to invite people to your home so that relationships can foster and grow. That's why it's good to come to church on Sunday evenings and Wednesday evenings, not out of legalism because someone's going to be mad at you if you don't.
Not that kind of a thing, but because you just love to be with God's people and the more truth of God you learn, the more connected you are to the people and the more you love them, the more you want to pursue the Lord because watch how this all fits together.
If people love you in a biblical way, they will delight as you walk in obedience to the Lord and if you want to increase your joy as a believer, get to know other believers better so much so that like Paul said in verse 2, your joy is strengthened because of the way other people are living for Christ.
[15:30] In other words, biblically, the path to joy is the path through unified relationships.

Now here's the struggle. Sometimes people hurt you. Sometimes relationships fizzle and fade. Sometimes people let you down.
And what too many people do out of a means of maybe just kind of heart protection is they just start to live their Christian life by kind of stiff-arming people just a bit.
I'll let you in just a little bit, not too close. But friends, that's not the path to joy. The path to joy is to love each other with the same mind and the same love.
He goes a step further. Being in full accord, it says in verse 2. This means we have agreement and attitude. So we have beliefs, we have love, and we have attitudes with how we treat each other.
[16:44] He says going further in verse 2, and of the same mind, we have one common purpose, one singular goal, and that goal is the glory of Christ.

You find yourself gathered in your life with other people who have the same singular goal, which is that Christ would be glorified.
It is a beautiful thing. If you ever find yourself in ministry with people with different goals, people who want to make much of themselves or want to even make much of their own church above the

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name of Christ, things fall apart instantly.
But when you serve and minister with people who have one goal, and that goal is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the sweetest thing on earth.
So, what's the sign of our unity? It's that we have the same mind, and that we have the same love, and that we walk in accord with each other because our one singular ambition is the glory of Christ.
[18:05] This is the sign of our unity. And the more you're connected to each other, the more you'll feel that.

And the more relationships you have in your life with each other, the more delight you'll have in those things. Well, the source of our unity is what the Lord has given to us.
The sign of our unity are the things that we just talked about. But there is a struggle here. There is a hard part about walking in this. So, let's look thirdly at the struggle of our unity.
Because as beautiful and right as verses 1 and 2 may be, and as lovely as they are when you experience them, the truth is, these things don't always come easily.
There's struggles along the way. It would be great if verse 1 and 2 was all we knew and all we experienced, but in a moment of honesty here, we look at the Scripture to acknowledge what the Scripture reminds us of, and that is, there are some challenges that we face.
[19:18] Verse 3 addresses it. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

And this begins to peel back the layers and expose to us why sometimes, even among those who love the Lord, why sometimes unity can be a struggle.
It's because sometimes we walk in selfishness and sometimes we put ourselves above others instead of the other way around.
Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. If selfishness drives the church, unity will always be a struggle.
if selfishness drives the marriage, unity will always be a struggle. If selfishness drives the friendship, unity will always be a struggle.
[20:33] And so we want to avoid selfish ambition and we want to avoid conceit so that we can walk in the unity that we are supposed to, but let's just be honest with ourselves this morning, this is not always easy.

It's not. We all like to get our way. We all want other people to see things the way that we see it. We would prefer that everyone in our household had the same opinion that we had because after all, you hold that opinion because you're right. And wouldn't it be easier if other people in your family were as right as you were?
Or even if they're not going to be right, at least would acknowledge that you're right and they're wrong. Well, it's hard sometimes. You take two people who love Jesus and they want to get married, they're excited to get married, and you put two sinners in a 1,200 square foot house, you're going to have some conflict.
That's life. unity grows when they remain of the same mind with the same love being in full accord. But if instead they choose to do things from selfish ambition or conceit, it gets really hard.
[21:55] The struggle for unity comes because we are imperfect. And even though we would affirm that we want the glory of Christ to be first and foremost, if we're honest, because of our flesh, sometimes what we really want is for ourselves to be first and foremost.

Now, we may not say it that way or admit it so blatantly, but we really don't like it sometimes when we're challenged. We really don't like it when someone disagrees with us, and we sure don't like it if we're forced to give in to someone else's preference over our own.
And so sometimes there's a struggle for unity. But the Bible gives us the exact answer. Verse 3, In humility count others more significant than yourselves.
The key to unity is humility. humility. We've got to pray for humility.
We've got to fight for humility. We have to truly value each other. It was such a blessing for me a couple of days ago.
[23:11] I had the chance to speak to a network of pastors across the nation. And they were interviewing me about with a theme of longevity and ministry, which is just a polite way of saying you're old now.

But that's what I was on there for. And they were talking about serving somewhere for 25 years and just lessons I learned from that. And one of the things that I got to share with them was such a joy in

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my own heart to kind of rehearse these own thoughts in my mind and just to enjoy the reality of this. In humility, count others more significant than yourselves. So one of the things God has done in my life and used in my life so greatly are the people that I get to work with every single week.
Because we absolutely, verse 2, we absolutely are the same mind and the same love. We're in full accord 100%. But it doesn't mean that we agree on every single issue or decision.
And what the Lord has done that is such a rich blessing in my life and I wish every pastor in the world could experience this, is that when I'm surrounded by our team and we're talking and debating and discussing and trying to make good decisions together, I'm looking at people that I love them and I trust them.
[24:34] It does not mean they always agree with every decision I make. It does not mean I agree with every opinion they have. It does mean I trust their heart. I trust their motive.

I trust their thinking. I trust why they're doing what they're doing. And so I sit around with these leaders and I say these are people I watch them every day.
I watch how they live. I watch how they talk. I watch how they conduct themselves. I watch how they treat their families. We know each other really, really well. And if we have a difference of opinion it may not mean that I automatically think that I'm wrong.
But it does mean I'm looking at people that I love and I trust and I value and it sure is much easier in that moment for me to sit back and say if we have a difference of opinion I don't want to run over these people because these are people I trust.
These are people that I look to and look up to. Now I'm an imperfect sinner with unredeemed flesh and there are times when like everybody else I think my opinion is best.
[25:48] But when you're surrounded by people that you trust it makes all the difference in the world with how you disagree.

and you can take that same principle in the church you can take that principle in your home. Husbands and wives you may disagree on some things but remember this is someone you trust. This is someone you love. This is someone I hope you know has your best interest in mind. It doesn't mean you're going to agree with every decision that comes up.
But before you're quick to write them off or before you're quick to try to run over them or before you're quick to try to twist their arms so you get your way just remind yourself that this is someone you value.
This is someone who you believe in. This is someone who you've seen I pray walk in wisdom with the Lord. It doesn't make every disagreement easy.
[26:53] but it sure should impact the way you handle disagreement. In humility count others more significant than yourselves.

This is choosing to think of other people before we think of ourselves. Now can we be honest and say there's a reason why I'm calling this the struggle? This is not always easy.
This is not always easily done. But just think of how Paul described himself. So Paul, the one the Holy Spirit is using to pen this letter in Ephesians 3 Paul said I'm the very least of the saints.
In 1 Timothy 1 Paul said I'm the foremost of sinners. sinners. Why would Paul describe himself as the foremost of sinners?
Same reason you would yourself and same reason I would myself because we know our own hearts better than anybody else's. We know our own shortcomings better than anybody else does.
[28:11] We know our own propensity to pride and selfishness. We know how wrong we can be in attitude and motive and in words so many times.

And what we want to do in each and every moment is remind ourselves that we are sinners in need of God's grace and apart from His grace we are nothing.
And we need to look at each other with the lens of humility seeking to put the preferences of others above our own. Here's the danger. If you think too highly of yourself you will with certainty think too lowly of others.
And if you think too lowly of others you will not serve them because it will seem beneath you to serve those more lowly than you.
The key in the home is service. The key in the church is service. And the way to foster service in the home and foster in the church is to strive by God's grace to make sure we have a right understanding of ourselves.

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[29:42] And so we don't want to think too highly of ourselves lest we think too lowly of others lest we fail to serve them and in so doing cease to live in unity.

Remember that in your home in your ministry in your church that the people that you're working with and making decisions with I trust I pray are people who you know love the Lord and are in the word and spending time in prayer and have the same foundation you do and have the same motive the glory of Christ that you do and so sometimes there's decisions have to be made that you may have to work through and disagree on but you can do that in unity as you remind yourself we are of one mind and of the same love and the same motive so I mean in my marriage I think I think Marcy is the smartest person I know I really do with all my heart I think she's the smartest person I know which astounds me how she could be so wrong so often when she disagrees with me how could someone so smart disagree with me so in real life in real life if we were to have a disagreement I think to myself I really trust this lady like I really believe in her I really value her opinion but it doesn't mean every time we disagree I automatically assume that I'm wrong but it sure helps when you remind yourself that you have the same foundation motivation and the same motivation doesn't mean there's always a mean agreement but it sure dials down the tension and drama really fast same thing is true in our staff I love these men and women I serve with I value them like I could never describe it doesn't mean that there's disagreement I automatically think that I'm wrong nor do they think they're automatically wrong but if you remind yourself we have the same mind and the same love and we're walking in accord with each other you remind yourself that you love and trust each other it sure makes it easier to do the end of verse 3 in humility count others more significant than yourselves it's not easy it's a struggle but by
God's grace we seek to live out our unity let me show you a fourth truth it comes from verse 4 and that is the simplicity of our unity the simplicity really comes down simply to this in verse 4 let each of you look not only to his own interest but also to the interest of others unity really comes down to a pretty simple thing and that's loving and serving each other look to meet the needs of each other look to help each other keep things simple in your life keep things simple in your ministry keep things simple in your relationships don't have an inflated view of yourself don't look down on others but instead seek to fulfill the needs of others I'll take just a minute and just show you a bad example of this in scripture and then a faithful example of this alright so turn with me if you would real quick to
Mark 10 I just want to show you one example where they missed it in living this out and then one example where it is demonstrated Mark 10 this is Jesus is sharing with his disciples again about his soon coming death we are just right before the events of Jesus going into Jerusalem leading up to the events of the cross in Mark 10 verse 32 it says they were on the road going up to Jerusalem and Jesus was walking ahead of them and they were amazed and those who followed were afraid and taking the twelve again he began to tell them what was to happen to him saying see we are going up to Jerusalem and the son of man will be delivered over the chief priest and the scribes and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the
[34:40] Gentiles and they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him and after three days he will rise Jesus is saying here's what's about to happen don't be shaken when you see this don't be surprised when you experience this and don't think when I have given up my life don't think that's the end because after three days I will of the truth and the prophecy of the soon coming resurrection and the reminder that Christ will pay the price for their sins verse 35 and James and John the sons of Zebedee came up to him and said to him teacher we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you just think are you kidding me he said to them what do you want me to do for you and they said to him grant to us one at your right hand and one at your left hand in your glory

Jesus says I'm about to lay my life for you I'm about to suffer for you I'm about to be killed for you don't be afraid I will rise again as I pay the price for your sin and the disciples say that sounds great hey one more thing could you think more highly of us and we read this in black and white letter on page and we think to ourselves how could they be so slow how could they miss it so badly and yet in our life how many times do we come to church and sing of grace and sing of salvation and read and study of God's kindness and his goodness only to go home and before lunch is even over demand our own way sometimes it's so much easier to see these shortcomings in somebody else's life than it is in our own let me show you a second example where we see service lived right go to John 13 John 13 we are also right before the events of the crucifixion John 13 verse 1 now before the feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the

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father having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end during supper when the devil had already put it into the heart of Jesus Iscariot Simon to betray him knowing the father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God rose from supper he laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel tied it around his waist and then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him right before the cross the disciples arguing about who's the greatest Jesus serving those he loved to the end and what I want you to understand is that as much as I wish that we would all walk in unity all the time in our church in our ministries in our marriages in our families in our relationships wouldn't it be great if everybody always did Philippians 2 1 to 5 but I want to conclude by dealing with a very honest issue what do you do if the people around you aren't living that way what do you do if you find yourself in a ministry and as best you can you're living out Philippians 2 but those you're serving with aren't what do you do if you find yourself in your home and you are a believer and your spouse is not and you're trying to live out
Philippians 2 and they're not or if you're a teenager then you're trying to serve those in your household but your parents aren't or you're married and one of you both of you are believers and one of you really are trying to live out Philippians 2 but one of you is being selfish what do you do in the imperfections of real relationships do what Jesus did serve the people around you and recognize that as Jesus is washing their feet two of them are going to be arguing about who's the right and the left in the kingdom one of them Judas isn't even a believer he's about to betray him and yet until the very end Jesus is serving others so friends here's what I want to encourage you with keep faithfully serving each other even when your spouse is imperfect or your kids are imperfect or your parents are imperfect or your teammates are imperfect or your church is imperfect keep serving each other now it's on the heels of
[40:49] Philippians 1 2 through 4 that we've just looked at these two Sundays that leads in to the most lofty beautiful Christological teaching we have in the New Testament verse 5 have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus at all points of your life look to Jesus when you feel like no one else is serving with the right spirit look to Jesus when you feel overlooked and unappreciated look to Jesus when you feel like you're doing everything you're supposed to do and you're just not seeing the fruit you long for look to Jesus when you feel joyful and content look to

Jesus when you feel grateful and overwhelmed by God's kindness look to Jesus and when you feel discouraged and lonely look to Jesus the next couple of weeks we're going to be in some different text as we end the year when we come back to this text in a few weeks we're going to pick up in verse 5 and look at the most lofty beautiful expression of the person of Christ we could possibly study and until we get to that in a couple of weeks let this be what rest upon our heart that in all things let's look to Christ and let's serve each other and as we do that we remain unified for the sake of the gospel our father and our god we thank you today for your word we do long to live in unity as a church we long to live in unity as families we acknowledge this day that it is sometimes hard to do sometimes it's hard because of our sin and sometimes it's hard to do because of the sin of others around us and yet may we look to your son our savior the lord jesus christ may we seek to live in unity with humility and do so for the sake of the gospel may the world know that we are yours because of our love love we have for you and love we have for each other it's in christ's name we pray amen you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you je

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