

Philippians 1:27-2:11 – Gospel Centred Attitude

Reading the text of Philippians 1:27-2:11

1. In the text of this passage, circle / highlight all the words associated with unity (e.g. 'one', 'same' etc). How many are there?
2. What are we united in / by?
3. Another issue for the Philippians was suffering for their faith.
 - a. What words in 1:27-30 point to the fact that they were suffering?
 - b. What motivations does Paul give to stand firm in the face of opposition?
4. In 2:6-11, double underline words that point to Christ's *high* position, and underline words pointing to the *low* position he took.
 - a. What is Jesus' motivation?
 - b. What does God the Father do for Christ? Why?

Text of Philippians 1:27-2:11

²⁷Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit,²⁸ striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved – and that by God. ²⁹For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Considering the implications

5. How easy or difficult is to achieve unity (in your experience)? Why?

6. Who does Paul want us to be united with? (hint: look back at q. 2)

7. Paul wants real peace in the church. There are false paths to 'peace':
 - a. *Competitive* (win-lose) approach: the strongest party imposes its will on the others.
 - b. *Co-operative* (win-win) approach: the parties work together so everyone gets what they want.Paul's approach is neither of these. On what basis does he seek peace?

8. What does Paul mean by verse 3 by 'in humility value others above yourselves'? Does he want you to believe that you are worse than everyone else?

9. Summing up, what attitudes are necessary for unity? What does this tell us about some causes of disunity?

10. If you find yourself in tension with other Christians, what could you do to try to create the sort of unity God wants you to have?

Notes for leaders

Text exploration

The text is included to encourage you to visually learn from the text. Some people will like it more than others, but I encourage you to try it!

There is a one-page version after this page if you prefer that.

The text is next to the text exploration questions to make it easier to see both together. The implication questions are over the next page.

Some thoughts on unity from the Matthias Media study notes

“It is clear that the unity Paul desperately wants to see in the Philippian church is not simply a unity of *avoidance*, where they ignore any differences they have with each other and pretend that everything is fine. It’s a unity built on a common mindset, a common love and a common purpose (2:2). At a merely human level, people experience various depths of unity when they are drawn together by common interests and pursuits—sporting teams striving to win, armies battling a common enemy, computer gamers enjoying a common hobby, or food lovers drooling together over the latest taste sensations. But there is something much stronger and more significant that draws Christians together—we know a common Saviour, we serve a common Lord and we strive for a common purpose. But it needs to be said that we often aren’t very good at being united.

“Paul urges us to be united by being of one mind. This means that we need to be in agreement in our convictions, at least in the things that matter...Clearly there are some less-than-important issues where we can agree to differ without being in fundamental dispute—in which case, God would have us *not allow* those issues to cause tension among us. But there are other issues where agreement is necessary for unity, and in these cases we oughtn’t merely agree to disagree.

“And Paul is not interested in mere intellectual agreement. Having the same theology should also lead to having the same purpose: striving together for the faith of the gospel...

“Although having the same mind and purpose are *essential* for unity, they are not *sufficient* for unity. [We also need an attitude of humility – putting others first.]

“We often have a limited view of what becoming like Jesus involves, as if it is simply a matter of being nice—caring, sensitive, non-judgemental, patient and humble. But when the Bible writers urge us to be like Jesus, they usually have in mind the *purpose* as well as the *behaviour* of Jesus. Jesus was indeed humble (and so we should be, too); but Jesus was driven by the purpose of saving many—that was *why* he willingly humbled himself. Becoming like Jesus will involve having the same purpose and passion (i.e. the salvation of others), which will lead us to humbly lay down our lives for the benefit of others.”

Philippians 1:27-2:11 – Gospel Centred Dreams

Reading the text of Philippians 1:27-2:11

1. In the text of this passage, circle / highlight all the words associated with unity (e.g. 'one', 'same' etc). How many are there?

2. What are we united in / by?

3. Another issue for the Philippians was suffering for their faith.
 - c. What words in 1:27-30 point to the fact that they were suffering?

 - d. What motivations does Paul give to stand firm in the face of opposition?

4. In 2:6-11, double underline words that point to Christ's *high* position, and underline words pointing to the *low* position he took.
 - a. What is Jesus' motivation?

 - b. What does God the Father do for Christ? Why?

Considering the implications

5. How easy or difficult is to achieve unity (in your experience)? Why?

6. Who does Paul want us to be united with? (hint: look back at q. 2)

7. Paul wants real peace in the church. There are false paths to 'peace':
 - a. *Competitive* (win-lose) approach: the strongest party imposes its will on the others.
 - b. *Co-operative* (win-win) approach: the parties work together so everyone gets what they want.Paul's approach is neither of these. On what basis does he seek peace?

8. What does Paul mean by verse 3 by 'in humility value others above yourselves'? Does he want you to believe that you are worse than everyone else?

9. Summing up, what attitudes are necessary for unity? What does this tell us about some causes of disunity?

10. If you find yourself in tension with other Christians, what could you do to try to create the sort of unity God wants you to have?