

## United We Stand, Divided We Fall Philippians 2:1-3

### Introduction:

1. Good, Bible-teaching, Bible-believing churches can be destroyed. Rarely does it happen from an outside source, but they are usually destroyed from within.
2. Once the unity of a church begins to crumble, the church becomes weakened, paralyzed, and ineffective.
3. The church at Philippi was a very solid, prayerful, generous, courageous church, yet it apparently was having its unity threatened (4:2). It faced the danger of discord that often is generated by only a few people.
4. Disunity among God's people grieves the Lord, but brings delight to Satan. One of Satan's key strategies is to fracture the church because he knows that a divided church is little threat to his work and has little power or influence in advancing the gospel.
  - **Illustration:** One little match can ignite a huge, out of control fire that has the capability of burning this entire building to the ground.
5. Likewise, if there are just a few people in the church who refuse to resolve their problems Biblically, it can fracture the entire congregation.
6. Because of this, Paul pleads with believers to actively seek to promote unity in their local church. Let's read our text. **cf. Ephesians 4:3**
7. This text explains to us how we can stay united as a church as we seek to promote the cause of Christ on this earth. Here are two keys:

### **First, we must remember the bond and blessings we share in Christ. vs. 1-2**

1. The moment a person is saved, the Holy Spirit indwells him and baptizes him into Christ. What is one of the results of this? **Romans 12:5**
2. Those of us who have trusted Christ are one body in Christ. We are unified in Christ. Paul reminds these believers of this in verse 1.
  - Consolation in Christ** - This simply means encouragement. Have you ever been down and discouraged, but you received hope and encouragement through Christ? **2 Corinthians 1:5** - That encouragement is available 24 hours a day because we are in Christ. We all share a common consolation in Christ.
  - Comfort of love** - Did you know that because you are in Christ, you are an object of God's love for all eternity? We share this comfort of love. We are in the same family.
  - Fellowship of the Spirit** - We have the same Holy Spirit living inside of us. This means unending, unbroken fellowship with God forever! We share this in Christ.
  - Bowels and mercies** - This carries the idea of tenderness and compassion (**Psalm 86:15**). If it wasn't for God's compassionate mercy, we couldn't be saved. **Titus 3:5**
3. Here is the point Paul is making. Since you have received all these blessings in Christ - His Holy Spirit, mercy, compassion, unconditional love - you should be willing and eager to give them back to others. vs. 2

4. It is the ultimate act of ingratitude to receive all of these blessings from the hand of God and then be unwilling to extend the same graciousness to brothers and sisters in Christ. **Illustration:** Parable of the unforgiving servant - **Matthew 18:21-35**
5. This is one of the keys to unity among believers. We must remember what God has done for us and in us. **Ephesians 4:32**
6. If we lose sight of the great mercy, forgiveness, and grace that He has shown to us and shows us daily, our attitude towards others can get wrong real fast.
  - **Illustration:** You are thirsty and God, in His grace, provides you with not only a drink, but an entire well of fresh, cool drinking water. Another person comes along and is very thirsty. You cover it up and say, "No. It's my well, you can't have any. You don't deserve it."
  - **Application:** God has forgiven me time and time again. I've drawn from the well of His mercy over and over, but then someone else messes up and sins against me and I won't give them one drop of mercy. They don't deserve it.

### **Second, we must develop a spirit of humility. vs. 3**

1. In verse 3, the phrase "*lowliness of mind*" literally means "humility." This phrase teaches us two things about humility.
  - Humility is an attitude of the mind or heart (cf. **Colossians 3:12**). It starts **within** and works its way out. It is not something you can work up externally.
  - Humility is a freedom from arrogance (**lowliness** of mind).
2. Humility is a recognition that all that we have and all that we are comes from God. God can do nothing but resist the prideful person, but gives grace to the humble. **James 4:6-7**
3. This issue of humility and pride definitely affects our relationship to God, but does it also affect our relationship to one another? It, in fact, has a profound impact.
4. Notice the word "*vainglory*" in verse 3. This is the opposite of humility.
  - It means you have an exaggerated self-view. You are in love with yourself. You have an over-inflated self-image. You think you are always right and the only unity you seek or value is centered in yourself.
5. The person I just described - how well do you think he will get along with other people? About like if you were to go the jungle and cage a wild-cat, then open the cage and turn him loose in here!
6. When you are full of pride, your relationships will be marked by contention. **Proverbs 13:10** (apply to home and church-over)
7. What is the answer? Verse 3 says to "*let each esteem other better than themselves.*"
  - A humble person regards others as more important than themselves. You don't just pretend this, but rather it is a carefully thought out conclusion based on the truth.
  - You actually believe that others are more important.
8. How does a person develop that kind of attitude that God says we should have? Consider your own sins. You know more about your heart than anybody else. When we truly recognize our own sin, it will exclude boastful self-exaltation. **Ephesians 3:8; Galatians 6:1**

9. Humble people realize all that God has given them in Christ (point # 1); therefore they are more than willing to extend grace, forgiveness, and compassion to others. This kind of person promotes unity and harmony in the local church.

**Remember church - united we stand, divided we fall!**