

## August 30, 2020 James Gallaher The Path to Unity

We are living in the age of self that makes us question outcomes as seen through the lens of self. There is self-discovery, self-realization, self-esteem, self-determination, and the “selfie.” This term “selfie” has been described as an instant communication of where we are, who we think we are, what we are doing, and whom we think is watching (or who we think cares).

The dream team of the 2004 US Olympics had the best talent but played poorly. The conclusion of why the poor playing was that each one was playing their own way instead of being united as a team. Unity is a problem even within the church. We tend to highlight our “rights.” The thing that destroys more relationships is the promotion of self.

**James 4:1-3** *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Promoting your own rights and desires above other people is a problem.

**Philippians 2:1-4** *Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

To get the context, go back a few verses to... **Philippians 1:27** *Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

If there is to be unity, there has to be a common focal point. Paul wants it to be clear that the common focal point of the church should be the gospel. We must focus on the same thing if we are to have success in unity. It is a hope to stand on. **Verse 4...** *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

D. L. Moody describes selfishness as the tearing down of others and vainglory (KJV) as the building up of self. Humility can be defined as the willing surrender of my rights in favor of the rights and desires of another. Paul says to regard others as more important than self. What does that mean for us? What if they don’t treat me the same way? We have to get beyond self and dig into the gospel to see what God has called us to do. **James 4** says conflicts come from our own desires. We need to see every Christian as in some way superior to ourselves. The body will suffer if we don’t function in our part.

**Philippians 2:5** *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.*

Do we see other people as a pattern to follow? Remember, false teachers will come along. Paul is one of the best patterns to follow. But Paul doesn’t want us to look to him. When Christ calls us to obedience, He provides the path to that obedience.

Paul tells us the path to unity.

- 1) **SACRIFICE. Philippians 2:6-7** *who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.* A life that is focused on meeting its own needs, will struggle in living a life that consistently meets the needs of others. Do you struggle in meeting the needs of others? Not just the easy needs. Meeting spouses needs? Serving the ungrateful child? Giving to those who constantly take from you? Jesus was acquainted with our struggles. A bond slave is one who offers service with no compensation.
- 2) **SERVANTHOOD. Philippians 2:7** *...but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.* Salvation was given to us as a gift. Jesus became the bond slave by offering a service expecting no compensation in return. Jesus is the best example for us to follow.
- 3) **SUBMISSION. Philippians 2:8** *Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient....* Jesus submitted to the call placed on His life. We tend to look for a natural path but that's not usually the path. Jesus in the Garden asked for another way and yet submitted to God's way.
- 4) **SUFFERING. Philippians 2:8** *...becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Unity will always require a cross in our own life – a death to some part of us to preserve the unity that comes from following after Jesus. Jesus promises suffering but there is also a promise of overcoming, of joy, of patience, of lacking nothing. There is lots of struggle in the Bible but keep reading and you'll find the provision that comes with it.

How much are we willing to experience these things in order to have unity? Jesus says our unity is our greatest witness. In **John 17**, Jesus prayed for us to be one. Are we willing to sacrifice, to serve, to submit, and to suffer for one another so that the world will see?

"We have the technology to fix the heart but not to change the heart," said a heart surgeon. It takes a willingness to change. We do the same as Christians by doing things to fix the brokenness but not being willing to change the heart. Do we have things in our life that need to change? Or...What in our life needs to change? If our unity is the greatest testimony to the gospel, then wouldn't we want to fight for unity? Unity with one another is so important in order to take the gospel to a lost and dying world. Unity starts with being saved...

*Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my Father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my Helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.*

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Where does conflict come from?

What is the path to unity? Can you give an example to help the church?

Why is unity important?

What in your life needs to change to develop unity?