

Becoming One Heart and One Soul

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

One of the most important questions churches are asking today is, "What is the difference between a strong, living church and a weak, dying church?" Articles are written, books are sold, conferences held and speeches given, all trying to answer this question. Everyone has their model and plan for the way a church should be run. Christians and churches have been willing to pay to hear the answers men have to offer. We, however, have been able to learn the answer without spending a dime. We know that God wrote the manual for the strong, living church and if we simply follow it, we will be one. We have looked at the church in Jerusalem following the day of Pentecost and discovered a model of strength and life. We are striving to go where we have never gone before and become the kind of church they were. We have examined their devotion to worship and committed ourselves to growing in our devotion to worship. The Jerusalem church was also alive and strong because they were united, being one in heart and soul. Rarely do we think of the strength and life of a church in terms of its unity, but we must. We often think about size. But even the largest church, without unity, is a dying church, ready to bust apart at the seams at any moment. There are numerous passages in the scripture describing the unity we are to have. One, which greatly expresses the key issues, is **Philippians 1:27-2:11**. Examine this passage and learn how we can be of one heart and soul together in this body.

Discussion:

- I. Becoming one heart and soul is necessary because of persecution (**Philippians 1:29-30**).
 - A. When the Jerusalem Christians accepted the message of Peter on the day of Pentecost and in the weeks to follow, they may not have realized the trouble they were asking for. After all, they were simply following the Law and the Prophets to their logical conclusion. The Messiah was to come. He came and they would obey. But the Jews who would not accept Jesus and the Romans were not pleased with this "new" doctrine. Persecution of the church began in **Acts 8:1**, and from that time on the church has gone through persecution on a regular basis.
 - B. According to Paul, all who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted (**II Timothy 3:12**) and we will be no exceptions. Because the world will hate, mock and persecute us, we need somewhere to turn for comfort, encouragement and love. Right here is that somewhere. The people around you are the ones to whom you can turn. And you are the one to whom they can turn. Or, at least, it ought to be that way. We must be like the Jerusalem church, loving one another with compassion just as Jesus commanded in **John 13:34-35**.
- II. For the church to be one heart and one soul, we must personally conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ (**Philippians 1:27**).
 - A. Far too often, we spend our time looking at other people. We consider their responsibilities. We dwell on their faults. We think about what they have done wrong and how they hinder our unity. If we are to be one heart and soul, we must follow Paul's advice in **Philippians 1:27**. Despite how anyone else is treating us, are we walking in a manner worthy of our calling and worthy of the gospel of Christ?
 - B. **Ephesians 4:1-3** demonstrates what our walk should be. We must be clothed in humility and gentleness. We must be patient and forbear others' weaknesses. We must have love and be diligent to preserve unity and peace. Obviously, this is not peace at all costs. If a brother is factious, contentious or false, we will have to discipline and cast out the old leaven. That will be the exception. Do you display these qualities with others? Why don't you ask them?
- III. Being of one mind and spirit means standing firm and striving with one mind (**Philippians 1:27-28**).
 - A. As a church, we are in a fight, but not with one another. We are engaged in battle against the devil himself (**Ephesians 6:12-13**). We must therefore wear the armor of God. Our unity is demonstrated through teamwork in this battle.
 - B. Satan will attack with direct persecution. He will attack indirectly with prosperity and apathy. He will cause distraction and discouragement. He will attack with false doctrine. He will attack from within and without. But we must work together, teaching the lost, encouraging each other, convicting the sinner.

- C. Regrettably, not many churches are willing to stand firm and strive together. In our modern day, most churches don't want to stand firm for anything. And they definitely don't want to be considered as striving. The mere mention of the possibility of opponents strikes fear in the hearts of mainstream religionists because they have become convinced that Christianity will have no real opponents but all will be friends.
- D. Sadly enough, some of this has even confronted Christ's church. Members ask preachers not to preach so hard on sin. Don't preach so loud on baptism, denominationalism, Pentecostalism, instrumental music, modesty or marriage. When solid gospel preaching is done, believers apologize to their non-Christian friends, destroying the effectiveness of the message. This is not standing firm and this is not having the one heart and soul of the early Christians.
- E. Even sadder is that in too many churches the striving is not together against the works of Satan; it is against one another. Cliques form that don't get along or work together, often following their favorite teachers (cf. **I Corinthians 1:10-17**). Some, like Diotrephes, rise up and strive to have preeminence in the body (**3 John 9**). Others, upset with some aspect of the work, seemingly conduct their own campaigns explaining to anyone who will listen why what is going on is not right (cf. **II Timothy 4:2-4**). Of course, in many places there is the gossip and backbiting which Paul condemned in **Galatians 5:15**. We must not strive against one another. We must strive together, as a team, to fight false doctrine, to refute false teachers, to convict sinners and overcome the devil. Don't quit the battle and don't start "friendly fire."

IV. Be of the same mind, love, spirit and purpose (**Philippians 2:2**).

- A. **Philippians 2:2** cuts straight to the heart of this matter and hits most directly on the same issue presented in **Acts 4:32**. It makes four simple statements that address the issue of having one heart and one soul. The statements are not absolutely distinct from one another and yet they highlight different issues of unity, especially as translated in the NASB.
 1. *We must be of the same mind.* Paul uses a play on these words in the Greek language in **Philippians 3:16**. Instead of saying be of the same mind, he commands us to "mind the same things" (KJV). Being of the same mind reflects having the same standard. We are to have the same judgment, speaking the same things. This will happen when we walk by the same rule and are governed by the same standard.
 2. *We must maintain the same love.* In **Acts 4:32**, having the same love was demonstrated as the Christians sacrificed even their own possessions to provide for brethren in time of need. And it was done without partiality. We must all have the same standard of love: God's love for us (**I John 4:11**). And we must love all with the same standard (**James 2:1ff**).
 3. *We must be united in spirit.* The KJV says here, "being of one accord." This phrase is used numerous times and refers to unity of action. Consider the following passages: **Acts 1:14**; **Acts 4:24**; **Acts 7:57**; **Acts 8:6**; and **Acts 19:29**. The concept is, because we have the same mind and same love, we will have the same actions. It calls to mind the teaching of **I Corinthians 12:12**. We are many members, but one body. We are of the same spirit, acting in one accord as a group. Leading us to be intent upon the same purpose.
 4. *We must be intent on one purpose.* As one body, we have a mission to accomplish. We are of the same mind, same love and same spirit. We are governed by the same standard. Therefore, we are striving to accomplish the same goals. Our goal is, of course, different from the goals of the worldly. Their goals deal with wealth, fame, social standing, etc. Our goals are different from false religions. Their goals deal with social welfare, emotional outburst, entertainment, eating, fun and games, etc. Ours deal with spiritual strengthening. We are intent on serving the purpose of God, following His pattern for the church and our lives. We are intent on the purpose of saving the lost, building up the saved to go out and save the lost. We are intent on going to heaven.
- B. The thing that often hinders this kind of unity is the baggage we bring with us into the church. And we all have it. To overcome it, we must admit we have it, set it alongside the Bible and dispense with the parts that don't line up with scripture. This baggage is that little part of us that says, "My life is different. If you knew what I had been through, you would understand why that standard doesn't apply to me." Instead of allowing the standard of scripture to govern our lives, we sometimes allow our lives to govern the standard of scripture. When that occurs, we will not

have the one heart and one soul, because we have all had different lives and different experiences. But God's word is the same no matter our background.

- V. Being of the same mind means putting others first (**Philippians 2:3-11**).
- A. This is the most important part of this whole sermon. I am not dealing with theory now. I am not dealing with the overarching principles. I am now dealing with the practical aspect of being one heart and one soul. I am now discussing the one key that will accomplish everything else discussed in this lesson. Put others first.
- B. Being one heart and one soul means sacrifice. Paul gives three guidelines.
1. *Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit.* James says where selfish ambition exists, every evil thing exists (**James 3:13-18**). We are not to put ourselves forward as important and honorable. Paul and James are referring to a political mindset. One that focuses on politics within the group and not service to others. This church is not here to feed my ego or yours. We are here not to be honored but to honor others (**Romans 12:10**).
 2. *Regard others as more important than self.* That is hard, isn't it? "After all, I am the important one. My needs are the greatest. My desires are the most necessary. My ideas are the most effective. My plans are the most profitable. I am the one who knows how this show ought to be run." Right? Not when my life is governed by God's will. If we are to have proper relationships with one another, we must humble ourselves before one another. What is important to you needs to become important to me. Instead of being so caught up in our plans, thoughts and goals, we have to come out of our world and start looking through the eyes of others. What are their thoughts, feelings, needs and desires? If you want to have positive relationships with anyone, in any walk of life, this is the key. Formulate your life around what is important to them. When we are all striving for this action in our lives, not worried about whether anyone else is following this same guideline, then we will all be receiving what is most important to us. Then we will be one heart and one soul.
 3. *Do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others.* Don't be caught up in your interests and desires. Get caught up in other people. We live in a fast paced, busy society. We are involved in lots of things. In the midst of all this activity, **Philippians 2:4** is getting lost. We get up, go to work, go to the kids' games, eat, come home and go to bed. This kind of life is violating **Philippians 2:4**. Are you looking out for the interests of others? If you are, which others?
- C. All of this is demonstrated by our example: Jesus Christ. He did not push Himself forward, though He is God. Rather, He humbled Himself. Took on the form of man instead of presenting Himself in the form of God who ought to be worshipped. He came to the earth in order to save us, who didn't deserve it. How do our lives measure up to His?

Conclusion:

Being of one heart and soul is not something that is attained and then you have met the goal once and forever. Being united is a constant struggle in the face of personal difficulties, relational problems and outside interference. That we have been united in the past doesn't mean we are now. That we are now doesn't mean we always will be. Each of us as individuals must look, not at others, but at ourselves. What are you doing to bring unity to this congregation? What are you as an individual sacrificing? What are you devoting to others? What love and preference are you showing to others? We will only be united to the extent that each of us strives for personal involvement in the body. If we were all acting the way you are, how united would we be?