

The Book of Philippians
United We Stand, Part 2
Philippians 2:1-5
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Tom Pennington, Pastor
Countryside Bible Church

Well, we continue this morning in our study of the book of Philippians so I invite you to turn to Philippians 2. I think I've mentioned to you before that many years ago, a friend of my father-in-law agreed to serve as the interim pastor of a small church in rural Georgia. The church had recently been through some severe difficulties; in fact, very close to a church split. It all started unbelievably with the issue of what color the roof shingles should be. Two factions formed around their specific color preferences. The issue got so out of hand that the only solution the leaders of the church could come to to keep from splitting the church was to do one side of the roof with one color and the opposite side with the other color. But it gets worse. After the roof shingles were installed, and I'm not making this up, the two factions sat under the side of the auditorium that had their roof color. It's funny, but it's also tragic because the testimony of Christ was seriously damaged in that community. Their utter lack of unity was forever, literally, shouted from the rooftop.

Disunity is such a tragic condition in the life of the church, Paul doesn't want his dear friends in Philippi to start down that path. And so, when he gets to chapter 2, the first 5 verses, Paul provides them and us with really the most concise, yet practical, teaching on the issue of unity found anywhere in all of Scripture. We began to look at it last week. I'll remind you that last week we looked at verse 1 which gives us the basis for unity, the foundation on which unity is built.

Today, we consider Paul's next two major points, the essence of unity, that is, what unity really is in verse 2 and the enemies of unity in the first part of verse 3. So, let's look at those together. First of all, the essence of our unity, what does it mean to be unified? Notice verse 2, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Paul has already told the Philippians that they bring him joy if you notice verse 4 of chapter 1. And he tells them in verse 18 of chapter 1 that in spite of his circumstances, the fact that he's chained to a Roman guard sitting in a Roman prison, he is still filled with joy.

But he tells them that they can make his joy complete. The word translated “make complete” is used of filling something up, for example, a jug of water. Paul is saying, “Listen, I have joy already, but you Philippians can fill my joy up to the brim, you can make it overflow [how?] by being of the same mind.”

But the main point in this sentence is not making Paul happy. His chief concern for the Philippians is that they strive for unity. Paul’s joy is simply another incentive added to the four we saw last week in verse 1. In the original, the expression “by being of the same mind,” that is the main concern. And the three phrases that follow define what it means to be of the same mind. Now Paul uses for that expression “being of the same mind,” a Greek word. He uses this word 22 of the 26 times it’s found in the New Testament and ten of those times it’s found here in the book of Philippians. Literally, it means “think the same.” You can fill up my joy by thinking the same. It means to have a certain disposition, a certain way of seeing things. But it’s not talking about uniformity. It doesn’t mean that we all have to have exactly the same opinion about everything which is a relief considering most churches have more opinions than people. The best way to translate this phrase is this: set your minds on the same thing. Set your minds on the same thing. Have the same mindset, the same disposition.

You see this practically lived out in chapter 4. Notice 4:2. You remember the two women who are having trouble getting along. He writes, “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony [there’s our word ‘be of the same mind’].” I urge them to be of the same mind, to set their minds on the same thing. In meaning, this is an imperative, that is, it’s a command. And if it’s a command to each of us, to set our minds on the same thing, then it means it is a decision that we can make. It’s something we can do. We need to individually decide to have the same mindset. This is the essence of unity, that each of us agrees to set our minds on the same thing.

But what is this mindset that we’re to have? Well as I said, it’s defined by the three phrases that follow in Philippians 2, “maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.” Those three phrases define what it means to think the same thing, to have your mindset the same. They fill out our understanding of what unity actually is. If we’re going to have unity, if we’re going to be united, the essence of our unity is first of all a common commitment, a common commitment. Notice the phrase “maintaining the same love.” This points back to the second phrase in verse 1, “if there is any consolation of love.” Paul is saying since we have been consoled in the midst of life’s troubles and difficulties by the knowledge of God’s love for us, then we ought to have the same love for others.

This is that familiar Greek word “agape.” It’s the love of choice. It’s the love of the will. I could define it for you this way: it is an unselfish, self-sacrificing desire to meet the needs of the cherished object. Let me say that again. “Agape” love is the unselfish, self-sacrificing desire to meet the needs of the cherished object. Someone once said, “True love begins when someone else’s needs are more important than my own.” Paul had prayed that the Philippians’ love might abound still more and more in verse 9 of chapter 1, and now he urges them to make a commitment, a common commitment, to loving one another.

Why is it important that we love one another? Well, at the most basic level, it’s because Christ commanded it. You remember on the last night before His crucifixion in John 13, He said this to His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another [it’s a command, this is something Christ, our Lord, commanded of us], even as I have loved you, that you also love one another [there’s the standard]. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.” You see, a common commitment to love each other is the soil in which unity grows. It is impossible for us to be united as a church, to be united as the people of God if we don’t make this common commitment to each other to love one another.

Paul says this in a number of places in the New Testament. Let me give you two of them. Colossians 2:2, he says our hearts [that is, we as Christians, our hearts] are knit together. What a beautiful image. But how is it that they’re knit together? What is the needle that stitches our hearts together? He says, “our hearts are knit together in love.”

Colossians 3:14, he says, “Beyond all these [other things I’ve told you] put on love [why, Paul, why is it that love is so important?] because it is the perfect bond of unity.” It’s the glue that makes us united. If we’re going to be united in, as a church, if we’re going to be committed to each other the way we’re supposed to be, then we have to make a common commitment to love each other.

But let’s get down to where we live. Let’s get down to the brass tacks of this. What does it look like in real life to love each other? Well, turn for a moment to 1 Corinthians 13. We have to start there because it’s obviously the chapter of love. I want you to notice how love expresses itself. In the first three verses, Paul says, listen, “... if you do not have love, then [what you say is worthless. It’s like] ... a clanging cymbal.” [If you don’t have love, what you do, even the ultimate sacrifice of yourself, means] ... nothing.” [It has no value.] And then he comes to verse 4, and he begins to identify or define what this love looks like.

Love is patient. [That means if we're going to love each other, we're going to be patient with each other.] Love is kind, [We're going to express kindness to one another.] Love is not jealous. [In other words, love doesn't respond when it sees someone else getting a position that you want or having gifts that you wish you had. It doesn't respond in jealousy.] Love doesn't brag and is not arrogant. [Love isn't out to set itself up and impress others. If we're going to behave in love toward one another, it means that we take the role of a servant not caring whether others recognize us or not, not putting ourselves forward as the best and the greatest, but rather serving each other.] Love does not act unbecomingly, [literally is not rude. We're not going to be rude to each other.] Love does not seek its own. [In other words, love isn't out for what it can get. Love is out to give. That's what love means. That means we're not going to be asking, Well, I don't know why so and so didn't reach out to me. I don't know why the church isn't doing more for me. Instead, we're going to take the opposite role, and we're going to express our love in reaching out to others. True love doesn't seek its own. It's] ... not provoked. [In other words, at the first hint of personal offense, love doesn't respond in anger. Love's quick to overlook a fault. In fact, that's what the next expression means,] it does not take into account a wrong *suffered*. [That means when we offend each other (and we will) that we don't put down another strike mark against that person. We don't sort of keep a list of offenses against us.] Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but it rejoices with the truth. [[Notice verse 7.] It bears all things, [literally covers all things. Love] believes all things, [Listen, if we love others, then we believe the best about them until we have evidence to the contrary. We don't immediately, when we hear about someone else in the church respond with a sort of "Well, that goes to figure. I mean, that makes sense." Instead, we respond by saying, "No, that can't be true." We believe the best. We "hope" ... and] ..., [love] endures all things.

That's how love expresses itself. But he goes on to say in other places in the New Testament that love expresses itself in other ways. For example, in Galatians 5:13, it says we're to "serve one another through love." Love means that we'll serve each other. We'll meet our, the physical needs of each other. When other people are in need, we'll reach out to them. First John 3:17 and 18,

“... whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

It means that when you hear that someone else in this congregation is in trouble, you don’t shake your head and offer a silent prayer for them although you will do that, but you get in your car and you drive to their house and you try to help them. You take practical steps to meet the needs that they have.

Love is quick to overlook personal offenses. First Peter 4:8, “Above all [Peter says], keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” Love is quick to overlook a personal affront. I’m not talking about a pattern of sin that needs to be confronted, but you know what? We ought to be slow to confront and we ought to be quick to overlook personal offenses against us.

There’s a warning here in this command that we’re to maintain the same love. The warning is this: if you fail to love other Christians with the same love that God has showed toward you, then it proves that you are not a Christian at all. Listen to the apostle John. He couldn’t put it any clearer. First John 3:14, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.” If we’re going to have true unity, then we have to have a common commitment to love one another.

Secondly, Paul tells us not only must we have a common commitment to love one another, but we must have a common connection, a common connection. Notice the phrase “united in spirit,” united in spirit. This phrase translates one Greek word that’s only used here in the New Testament. It literally means “together in soul.” It’s similar to the expression back in 1:27, we’re to be one soul.” It means to think and act like one person, to live in selfless harmony with others.

The closest I can get to illustrating this concept is marriage. It’s like the relationship that my wife Sheila and I enjoy. We’ve become so much a part of one another that it’s hard to tell where I leave off and she begins. We think similarly about many issues. We finish each other’s sentences which can be annoying when we actually do it. We even act a bit alike. We are together in soul. We are soul mates. That’s what this is describing.

In fact, this Greek word was used this way in, on an ancient tombstone. A devoted husband wrote this, “We spoke the same things, we thought the same things, and we go inseparably to the

grave.” Paul says that not only are we to love one another, but we’re to think of ourselves as permanently united to each other.

Barbara Herbert, 18 years ago, found her lost twin Daphne. Barbara is in her early sixties. They were adopted as babies, these twin girls were adopted as babies into separate British families after their Finnish mother committed suicide. The similarities in their lives, even though they were apart, is absolutely amazing. Both women grew up in towns outside of London. Both left school at the age of 14. Both fell down the stairs at 15, weakening their ankles. Both went to work in the local government. Both met their future husbands at the age of 16 at a town hall dance. Unbelievably, both gave birth to two boys and a girl. Both tinted their hair auburn when they were young. Both were squeamish about blood and heights, and both drank their coffee cold. When they met, both were wearing cream-colored dresses and brown velvet jackets. These two ladies have been studied for years now at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Twin and Adoption Research. And at this center, they found that the two women had the same heart murmurs, the same thyroid problems, the same allergies and, amazingly, IQ’s one point apart.

Although you and I will never agree on everything like those two ladies, if we’re mature, if we’re spiritually minded Christians, we will not allow unimportant differences to divide us or to hinder our service. Let me just stop here and say that there are unimportant differences. You see, there’s a temptation to think that whatever we think is important is important. Seldom are the issues that divide a church truly important, but those who hold them think they are. We share a common connection, Paul says. We are “united in spirit.”

A third way Paul defines the essence of our unity, not only do we share that common connection, not only do we make a common commitment to love each other, but we have a common cause. Notice the final of those three phrases, “intent on one purpose.” This phrase speaks of our being directed toward a single goal. There is one aim on which we must focus together. You see, having a common cause unites people. I’ve seen that throughout my life in different contexts. I remember back in January of 1994 when the Northridge quake hit just a few miles, the epicenter just a few miles from our home and bridges and overpasses collapsed near our home. We, sustained significant damage to our own home. It was amazing to see the people pull together and unite and help one another in ways that had never happened in Los Angeles before. You’ve probably seen that. In the wake of or in the threat of other natural disasters, people respond the same. The common cause of withstanding a fire, or tornado, or a hurricane brings people together. They’re focused on one goal and that unites them.

The same should be true for us as a church. But what is to be our common purpose? What is to be the intent we focus on? Well, if you notice anything about the emphasis of Philippians 1, it's obvious. We saw it when we swept through chapter 1, or I should say maybe dragged through 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 17, 21, 27. Paul drives home the same theme of living, and that is Christ. Live for Christ, he says. Live for the gospel. Live for the good news. Live to tell others about what Christ has accomplished. Our lives are to be focused on Christ and His gospel, and listen, when the church's unity is disturbed, it is almost always because somebody has gotten their eyes off of that one purpose of Christ and begun to pursue their own selfish agenda.

The essence of our unity is that we have the same mindset. And that mindset includes these three things, a common commitment to love one another, a common connection to each other and the whole-hearted pursuit of the common cause we have of Jesus Christ and His gospel. That's the glue that binds us together. That's what it means to be united. When those things are true, then there is unity in the church. So, we've seen the basis of our unity in verse 1. We've seen the essence of unity, that is what unity really is, in verse 2.

And now let's move to verse 3 and consider the enemies of our unity. Notice the first part of verse 3. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit." Those are always the two motives behind disunity in the church. Now in that brief phrase, there's no verb in the original text, but it's still an understood or implied command. There's also another interesting little grammar detail in that phrase. In Greek, it's a double negative. That's appropriate in Greek, but not in English. It reads something like this in the original, "nothing, no nothing at all from selfishness or empty conceit." This is a binding command on all Christians at all times. Never under any circumstances are we to think or to do anything from selfishness or empty conceit.

Now what exactly are these two vices? Let's look at them together. First of all, "selfishness," this is the same word that's translated back in 1:17 as "selfish ambition" where it's used to describe the motives, you remember, of those in Rome who were preaching Christ in order to get at Paul. And we saw when we examined verse 17 that this word is related to a noun that originally meant "day-laborer." But as the word evolved, as language tends to do, it came to mean the self-serving attitude of those who work only for pay. It particularly denoted the self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means. And it came in the end to describe the selfish ambition that has no conception of service, but is solely aimed at profit and power. This attitude demonstrates itself in two ways in the Scripture, one, jockeying for position and power, and secondly, the party squabbles, the divisive party spirit that results from jockeying for position and power.

Sometimes this sin is not shown outwardly, but it's only in the heart in the form of anger, resentment, and jealousy. Aristotle used this word, by the way, to describe selfish striving for personal advantage in the context of a group. We would describe a person like this in our language as, "Here's a person who has a personal agenda. Here's somebody acting in their own self-interest." They aren't concerned about what their actions may do to others. They're only concerned about themselves. It has the idea in it, this word does, of tearing other people down in order to build yourself up.

And in the church, this sin is usually clothed in pious rhetoric, "Well, I know I'm creating a problem in the church, but it's because of the concern I have for doctrine, or it's the concern I have for the health of the church." People like this will use whatever methods seem most advantageous to advance themselves. They'll use flattery. They'll use deceit. They'll lie. They'll make false accusations. And sometimes, they resort to the quiet and subtle undermining of the reputations of the people they oppose. I know that sounds a lot like the current campaign for president, but sadly, the same thing happens in the church.

Notice that Paul doesn't tell us what the issue in Philippi was. Nowhere in the epistle is it clear what the point of division was because it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter who was on what side and which side was right. In fact, the Philippians he's confronting here may have thought that they were in the right because their cause was right. But the real problem was the spirit from which they were pursuing their causes. We understand this. We see this from the earliest ages in ourselves and in our children. It starts young and not so subtle. You know, like when an older child tries to pull a bait and switch with the younger sibling? "Here, you don't want that old, dirty-looking quarter, do you? Look at this bright, shiny penny. Don't you want that?" And as we age, it gets uglier and more subtle.

If you struggle with this sin of selfish ambition, either you're sitting here thinking this applies to someone else, maybe the person next to you, or if you admit it to yourself, you may be tempted to think this is one of many commands in Scripture, and it's not really that important. But this is no peccadillo. This sin is at the heart of all rebellion against God. Romans 2:8 says it's a characteristic of those who are perishing. Galatians 5:19 and 21 lists it as one of the works of the flesh. In fact, you know what's interesting about the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5? There are 15 of them. Eight of them have to do with sins of discord. The sin of selfishness or selfish ambition was a part of the first sin in the universe. It was at the heart of Satan's rebellion. It's a very serious sin.

We can learn more about the nature of this sin by turning to James 3, James 3. We get a little more insight into this sin in this context. Notice the sin itself occurs in verse 14, “selfish ambition” is how it’s translated. But notice verse 13, that it’s contrasted with being wise, with having understanding, with having the gentleness of wisdom. It’s the opposite of that. In verse 14, we learn that this sin is often accompanied by bitter jealousy and arrogance. Also in verse 14, we find that usually the people who are guilty of this sin don’t recognize it. They are utterly self-deceived. They’re quick to think they see it in others. They always see conspiracies because that’s how they operate. Notice in verse 15, it is the spawn of “earthly [that is, earthbound], natural and (even) demonic wisdom.” Verse 16 says where it ends, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder [by the way, that word “disorder” is similar to our word “anarchy.” That’s what selfish ambition produces – anarchy] and every evil thing.” In other words, people who struggle with the sin of selfish ambition will eventually produce disputes and factions. There will be anarchy. In fact, if you were to look at two places in the New Testament where the word “selfishness” is used as a plural [that would be in 2 Corinthians 12:20 and Galatians 5:20], it’s translated not as “selfishness,” but as “disputes” because that’s where it always ends up.

The most graphic demonstration of this kind of attitude in all of Scripture is found in the Corinthian church. We pick on Corinth a lot because they deserved it. First Corinthians, turn to 1 Corinthians 1. I read these verses last week, but I want to call them to your attention again and give you a slightly different view and perspective of them. Notice 1 Corinthians 1:10,

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind [there’s our expression] and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s *people*, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” (well) I’m of Apollos,” “I’m of Cephas,” and (then the, as I said, the really pious ones) “(Well) I’m of Christ.” “Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

Now what’s going on here? It’s not as simple as it may look on the surface. It probably was not simply that there were people in the Corinthian church who liked Paul better than they liked Peter by just their personalities. What’s probably involved is a nuance of these men and their teaching as it usually happens in the church. They were lining up behind the teacher that best captured what they believed in the way they wanted it said. You could just hear one of them now

there in Corinth, “I just don’t see how you can be so devoted to Paul’s teaching. I mean, after all, did you read his latest newsletter? Did you hear how he said what he said?” Listen, these people in Corinth were not interested in honoring Paul. They were not interested in honoring Apollos or Peter. They were only interested in elevating themselves. They weren’t serving Christ. They were serving themselves. That’s why Paul says, “do nothing from selfishness” or selfish ambition.

If you find yourself often thinking something like this, “Well, it’s me” or “It’s me and my group against them” whatever it is you hold to, and whatever the “them” holds to doesn’t matter. If you find yourself in that kind of mindset, then you may be guilty of the sin of selfishness or selfish ambition, and you may be flirting with the spirit of a factious person.

Notice the second vice Paul lists in Philippians 2:3, In addition to selfishness, there’s “empty conceit.” It literally means “empty glory.” We fed our culture with decades of self-esteem and finally the chickens are coming home to roost as they say. Even the secular specialists are seeing the terrible results of an entire culture drunk in empty conceit. You may have seen the article recently in the *Dallas Morning News* about now the specialists are seeing the dangers of having taught our children that they need to believe the best about themselves because now they believe themselves to be great when in fact they’re not. They think they’re better than they are. They, there was a recent survey I read where they, they surveyed a number of students and they asked them how well they thought they did in various subjects and then they compared that against their actual performance. Shockingly, they all thought they did better than they really did. That’s what we’ve taught them for years.

But my favorite example of this was in the *Star-Telegram* a couple of days ago. You may have seen the article. It has to do with the sizing of clothes. Perhaps you’ve wondered how you’ve gained ten pounds and still fit in the same size. I have bad news for you this morning. It’s because of what’s called “vanity sizing.” The manufacturers have changed the sizes of clothes to accommodate our empty conceit. The article said, “It is not unusual these days to hear young women who aren’t all that tiny bragging about wearing a size zero because what once may have been a six is now a zero.” The whole culture is built around vain glory or empty glory. But the problem of empty conceit didn’t start in our culture.

The Greek word occurs frequently in the ancient secular literature to describe those who think too highly of themselves. It describes a person who has an inflated sense of self-importance and self-worth. It’s the absolute opposite of humility. This person is conceited. This person is

ambitious for his own reputation. And challenging others is a pattern of his life because he always arrogantly claims to have the right opinion about everything, even when he's clearly wrong. So, he expects everyone else to agree with him. And if they don't, he's willing to fight to prove he's right. He's like the fool in Proverbs who, put in a room with seven men who can give him a reason why he's wrong, still clings to his story. The sin of selfishness seeks personal goals. The sin of empty conceit seeks personal glory. It's simply arrogant pride.

I remember when I was growing up listening to round-by-round coverage of the boxing matches of Muhammad Ali. Now I think boxing is a terrible thing and probably should be outlawed, but I enjoyed listening to the fights on the radio which was the only place you could get round-by-round at that point. And you probably remember Muhammad Ali. He was really the first professional athlete to say what other athletes actually thought. You remember "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, his hands can't hit what his eyes can't see?" Or "I'm so fast that last night I turned the light switch off in my bedroom, and I was in bed before the room was dark?" And his most famous line was (what?) "I am the greatest."

Well, he began the trend probably as sort of a marketing stunt, but now bragging is not simply acceptable, but expected and even praised. And it's exactly contrary to what God says. Listen to what God says. Romans 11:25 warns us "... not to be wise in our own estimation ..." Galatians 6:3 says "... if anyone thinks he's something when he's nothing, he deceives himself." You see, empty conceit is by nature self-deceiving. You don't know you have it. You think you really believe your own press.

How does this attitude show itself in the church? How can you diagnose your own heart to see if you have this sin of empty conceit? Well, let me give you a little test. You may be guilty of the sin of empty conceit if you find yourself often thinking these things, one of these things.

Do you sometimes or often find yourself thinking that your convictions or standards are more godly than others? That your interpretations are more biblical than others? That your personal preferences about everything from the style of music to the color of the carpet are more important than others? That your views of whatever are more accurate than others? That your personality is more enjoyable and desirable than others? That your plans or ideas are more practical than others, more workable? That your gifts or abilities are more useful or praiseworthy than others? And that your heart is more spiritually mature than others? If you often find yourself thinking down one of those paths, then you may in fact be guilty of the sin of empty conceit.

The word “empty conceit” in the Greek language comes from two Greek words put together. One of those words means “empty” and the other is the word for “glory.” The word “glory” is used four other times in the epistle of the Philippians, but it’s used of the glory of God. You see, if you glory in yourself, if you take glory in what you are or what you’ve accomplished or what you perceive yourself to be, not only is it empty and worthless, but it is an attack on the true, unvarnished glory of God who alone deserves the glory.

Behind these two sins of selfishness and empty conceit is pride. And pride is always the enemy of unity. Notice in chapter 2:3 - as soon as he leaves this issue of these two sins, “do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,” his next concern is to command us to be humble, the need for humility, because pride is usually the culprit that lies behind these two sins and that ultimately lies behind disunity and division in the church.

Turn briefly to James. I want you to see this, James 4. Paul deals in the first few verses there of James 4 with the quarrels and conflicts that are a part of these churches. I’m sorry, James does. He deals with the, the, the source of these quarrels and conflicts that are among the churches that he’s writing to, the Hebrews that have spread. And he says it lies in your lust, that is, your craving, and you don’t have it, so you commit murder, you fight, you quarrel. But what’s the true source? Notice he finally gets there in verse 6. It’s this, pride. “But He gives greater grace. Therefore [he says], ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” You see, what lies at the foundation of all conflict is pride. What lies at the core of these two sins of selfishness and empty conceit is pride. Pride is forever the enemy of unity. And if we’re going to be united, then we have to be humble.

What’s the remedy for these two sins of selfishness and empty conceit? Simply this, confess them to the Lord. If you find yourself sitting here today guilty of these sins, confess them to the Lord. Put on humility, which we’ll learn about next week, and pursue what we learned in verse 2 is the essence of unity, “maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.” Make a common commitment to love others.

Remember that you have a common connection to them, that you are united to them. You’re soul mates. Choose to make that true. And then choose to live for a common cause, to obey and to bring glory to Christ and to tell others the good news about Him. In a word, you want to overcome these sins? Have the same mindset as Jesus Christ, which we’ll see next week.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for how it instructs us. Thank You for how it convicts us, how it confronts us with our sin. Lord, forgive us for sinning against the unity of Your church by having selfish ambition and empty conceit. Lord, help us as a church to be committed to maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

And Lord, for those who might be here this morning who find themselves absolutely bound by their selfishness and their empty conceit, open their eyes, Lord. Help them to see in spite of their profession that they are not in Christ, and help them to turn in true humility to You, to fall before You and plead for Your forgiveness, plead that You would change their hearts, that You would give them a new heart.

I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.