

**Remnant Life Church**  
May 15, 2022  
**The Danger of Disunity**  
Philippians 2:1-4

Paul is sitting in a Roman prison, but his thoughts are on a small province over 600 miles away

- It is the town of Philippi, located in southern Macedonia (modern day Greece)
- It gets its name from Philip II of Macedon who was the father of Alexander the Great
- At the time of Paul's imprisonment, Philippi is a recently honored Roman city and a military post for the Roman army

This letter is being written to the small church located there

- Not the first time Paul's thoughts were on others in spite of his imprisonment
  - Of the 12 NT books written by Paul 4 were written while he was in prison
  - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon
- The particular new Christian church, the first in Europe, was established by Paul, along with his co-workers Silas, Timothy, and Luke on his second of three great missionary journeys
- He was in Philippi because of a vision he was given by God while in Troas located on the coast of the Aegean Sea in modern-day Turkey ([Acts 2:1-4](#))
- It could be said that Paul was perhaps the closest to these early Christians because of their dedication to the faith in spite of being in the midst of the Roman culture

Paul is writing to them for very specific reasons

- First, to thank them for their generous gift of support
- Second, to update them on his current situation
- Third, to assure them that his ministry was still active and vibrant in spite of his current situation
- Finally, to encourage them to press on in their desire to know the Lord in unity, humility, friendship, and peace.

**READ** – [Philippians 2:1-4](#) (Dave Booth)

Just as Paul does, we have also talked a great deal about the importance of unity

- Certainly, in this church
- But also in the home
- In your relationships
- Wherever you find yourself

While we would certainly agree that unity is a good thing, is it so important to merit the amount of attention we give to it?

- Well, in his passage Paul not only speaks of those aspects of unity which are important
  - Like-minded
  - One in spirit and purpose
  - Living in humility
  - Considering others better than yourself
- But he also provides two causes of disunity for them to be aware of

- One of the things amazing aspects of the Bible is that the truth it contains is still just as relevant today
- Paul's words of caution to the church in Philippi are perhaps even more needed today some 1960 years later
- Unity should be desired by every church because disunity will, at some point, destroy it
- It must be remembered that every church that has come to that place of splitting, closing their doors, or enduring some other tragic end, never thought it would happen to them.

Paul provides a warning of what can cause disunity that we should all be aware of

- Notice what I did not say –
  - I did not say I needed to be aware of
  - I did not say the leadership of the church needed to be aware of
  - No one is excluded from guarding the unity of the church
    - But that is not done by being on the look-out for what others are doing
    - It is being mindful of your own heart, actions, and motives
- Because we should and must ALL be aware of these things

Paul points out two things here for us to be on guard –

The first is selfish ambition

- This means that we must always be cautious that we are working for the furthering of the Kingdom and not ourselves
- In the original language, selfish ambition is the word *air-rrreh-thya* (eritheia)
  - It translates as strife or contention
  - One element of this dangerous attitude is to be a person who is always causing strife rather than harmony or unity
    - Argumentative; contradictory; contentious
  - But how do we go from that to selfish ambition
    - Because eritheia is actually a term used in courting
    - It means to put yourself forward for distinction through low means or trickery
    - If you are operating in this fashion, you are only concerned about your own appearance, success, and recognition

How can you tell if you are operating in selfish ambition?

- The first is through honest reflection by answering the question...
  - Why do you do what do for the church?
  - Is there a reason other than wanting to serve the body?
- Jesus spoke of this often when referring to the Pharisees
  - Listen to what Jesus says in **Matt 6:5** - *And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.*

The second thing we must be careful of is vain conceit

- This is pretty straight forward but it bears repeating – often
- The most direct way to understand this is by asking the question when I do something at church, at work, or at home, do I have to be thanked?
  - Perhaps a more telling question would be do you get upset, offended, or your feelings hurt if you don't get thanked for something you did?
  - The need to be thanked means that there is a need and a desire for recognition, to be noticed – but so often those things will backfire

There's a story about a newly-elected congressman. He went into his assigned office on Capitol Hill. The only thing in the office was a desk, a desk chair, and a telephone sitting on his desk. He sat down in the plush leather chair and was taking it all in when he heard someone in the reception area. As the footsteps came closer to his office door, the congressman thought, "I'd better look busy."

He picked up the hand piece on the phone and said loudly, "Yes, Mr. President. I'm glad you were able to use my plan. Thank you. I knew it would work. No sir, you don't have to give me the credit publicly. Just knowing my plan helped to save thousands of lives is enough." Then he hung up.

Thinking the man now standing in front of him was a reporter, he said, "Yes, sir, what can I do for you?" The man replied, "Well, I believe I am here to help you. I came to activate your phone."

- Pride will put you in all kinds of positions that you do not want to be in
- **James 4:10** says, *Humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up*
- **Daniel 4:37** -...*those who walk in pride He is able to humble.*

Former heavyweight boxer James "Quick" Tillis was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Leaving the Sooner State behind, he moved to Chicago. He fought out of the Windy City in the middle 1980s and was the first fighter to take a young Mike Tyson the distance in their fight. But this is how he described his arrival to the city: "I got off the bus with two cardboard suitcases under my arms in downtown Chicago and stopped in front of the Sears Tower. I put my suitcases down and I looked up the tower and I said to myself, 'I'm going to conquer Chicago!' When I looked down, both my suitcases were gone."

- What we are speaking of is empty conceit and churches have been promoting it even if innocently because we embrace what the world says is important for our lives
- A.B. Bruce, was a mid to late-19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish pastor, professor and theologian.
  - He wrote a number of works regarding the life of Jesus
  - His Christian literary classic called *The Training of the Twelve* covers the historical association of Jesus with the first disciples
  - In this work, Bruce observed, "The whole aim of satanic policy is to get self-interest recognized as the chief end of man."
  - In the garden, satan's appeal to Eve was to build her self-esteem by getting her to think she could be like God. All this self-esteem teaching that has flooded the church is not from Scripture, but from satan. It does not help you to have

harmonious relationships; it is directly opposed to harmonious relationships because it feeds pride.

- Bruce wrote his words over 150 years ago but it is no less true today

The greatest model for living a life in humility is the one lived by Jesus Christ

Thank about what Paul writes as the characteristics of this type of Christian walk...

1. Like-minded
2. Having the same love
3. Being one in spirit and purpose
4. In humility consider others better than yourself

We must be diligent in this

- Not just for time
- For always as satan never stops trying to divide Christians knowing what that says to the world

But remember, it is not vigilant of others, but of yourself.