

# Love the Other

## Philippians: Fighting for Joy

2021-02-07 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Philippians 4:1-3

### CG Flow:

- Joy (5 min.)
- Canvas and Clay (5 min.)
- Dismiss to Sprouts & Mingle (5 min.)
- Preach (40 min.)
- Other Encounter Practice (10 min.)
- Who You Say I Am (5 min.)
- Living Hope (5 min.)

### Facebook Live Description:

Join us in person or online for Church in the Club! 10am Sunday mornings at the Boys & Girls Club of Manhattan or right here!

“Love the Other”

Philippians 4:1-3

February 7, 2021

Ben Deaver

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WEB: <https://tallgrass.church>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/tallgrasschurch/>

YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0drX4wrsE5n9yLza8HSNIQ>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/tallgrasschurch>

*Because God first loved you, you exist to love God and love your neighbors!*

*Joy + Canvas and Clay*

## *Announcements:*

- Super Bowl Blessing Box Blitz
- Elder Nominations
- Sexual Integrity: 101
- Ladies' Nights
- Galentine's Day
- If:Gathering

*Mingle Question:* What are you looking forward to eating during the Super Bowl? Write your Super Bowl score prediction on the whiteboard.

*Pray and dismiss to Sprouts and intro Mingle*

## *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor by Bach*

- We sit in so much tension everyday.
- Right now things are tense as a church...because some people who are involved in our church or are getting involved in our church...are cheering for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers tonight! Talk about tension.
- I was texting someone who has recently visited Tallgrass about them getting involved and they asked if they were allowed after saying this, "Go Bucs!" And come to find out it's even worse. They are a Bengals fan!
- Will we allow Bucs fans in our church? Will we allow Bengals fans in our church?
- Last Sunday we talked about relational estrangement between two women in the church of Philippi.
- Who remembers these women's names? Euodia and Synteche.

## *Philippians: Fighting for Joy*

- The next few weeks we'll talk about Paul's strategies for standing firm in Christ. How do we "let our manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" as mentioned in Philippians 1:27?
- This is where mere lip service about theological truths goes into practice in real life relationships.
- This is where the proverbial rubber meets the road.
  - Striving for unity
  - Battling anxiety
  - Cultivating gratitude
  - Feeding the mind

## *Last week's homework:*

Who do you need to seek relational harmony with? And what's the first step you'll take today?

- What's your one scary step of faith you can take towards relational harmony with someone? Explain why "scary" step of faith.
- **See A Peacemaker's Checklist resource**—Appendix A in "The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict" by Ken Sande

What will you surrender to the King this morning? Are you surrendering that thing?

- Each person who would like to participate should have a Post-it Note.
- Write something that you need to and are surrendering to the King, King Jesus. You can include your name if you'd like or leave it anonymous.
- Then come place it on the whiteboard as an act of surrender.

## *Tallgrass Church I Surrender... whiteboard*

- Approval and affirmation from men
- Fear
- Self-protection
- Valuing my appearance
- My electronics
- My need to have control—accept grace and have patience
- Anxiety
- My desire to constantly be entertained/distracted instead of being content with silence
- Clarity
- Hurt and resentment
- America in my image
- My need for information
- Wasting time watching TV, videos, and Facebook
- Timidness/Control
- Letting fear be the biggest factor driving my decisions
- All
- Everything
- My doubt of your presence. May you give me the strength to put my faith and trust in You, Lord.
- My need to control the future to protect myself
- Physical pain, anxiety
- Fear of failing school, Fear of letting others down
- Overthinking!
- Control and ownership over what is God's
- Jealousy, status quo
- Lingering anger and bitterness and resentment
- Stress over things to be as I know I don't want these before You
- Being on my phone
- Excuses (with a big list of what those are)

- Time and self
- Bitterness and perfection
- My insecurities
- Being judgmental and not an active listener
- Control, judgment
- Time and self
- What others think of me in favor of vulnerability

## PRAY! Palms up in surrender

**Philippians 4:1-3** <sup>1</sup>Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. <sup>2</sup>I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to *live in harmony* in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

## Ways to Divide the Church

- How should we take the Lord's Supper? How often and who can?
- Who should be baptized and when?
- Can women teach and lead in the church?
- Should the church care about social justice issues? If so, how?
- What does the Bible teach about human sexuality?
- How should parents parent? What kind of school should we send our kids to?
- How should we vote and can I relate to someone who doesn't vote like me?
- To mask or not to mask? To vaccinate or not to vaccinate?
- What am I missing?
- If we can't figure out how to talk about difficult things and we have the cross, forgiveness, the Spirit of God, the one another, etc. then who can?

## Love Your Enemy

- What a difficult challenge and yet beautiful thing when someone loves their enemy! And we are called to love our enemy.
- **Matthew 5:43-44a** <sup>43</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44a</sup>But I say to you, Love your enemies...
  - See also Luke 6:27.
- But I would argue that it's an even more difficult challenge and beautiful thing when we learn to love one another within the church and as fellow Christ-followers.

## Love One Another

- **John 13:34-35** <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
  - The Gospel of John was written after the other Gospels.
  - I'm envisioning the Apostles observing what's occurred and occurring in the early churches and then scanning all the teachings of Jesus. They must've thought that His teaching to love your enemies was the most difficult to live out but when push comes to shove loving one another within the Body of Christ is even more difficult.
- **Hebrews 12:14-15** <sup>14</sup> Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled...
- Last week, who do you need to seek relational harmony with? And what's the first step you'll take today?
- The stakes are high!
- **Galatians 5:13-15** <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

## Bullet Points from our February 18, 2018 Launch Team Meeting

Why should we/people go to Tallgrass? Our Launch Team developed four main reasons: 1) Intimacy, 2) Get out of our comfort zones!, 3) Neighboring, and 4) Equipping

1. **Intimacy.** Tallgrassians want a grace-centered place to grow in relationship with Christ and others! We want a safe place where leaders speak truth in love, where there is close-knit community, a family, meaningful relationships. Where people can come and be known. Desire for intimacy.
2. **Comfort zone!** At the same time, we want to get out of our comfort zones! We want disruption, a growth mindset, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves, to be a part of God's thing, see the Holy Spirit move, high commitment, freedom to fail, messiness. Desire for growth.
  - Embrace the awkward—Awkward is the new awesome!
  - Microministry/discipleship
  - Do church differently
  - Organic; tangible Kingdom in everyday life; genuine Christians
  - Comfort with rough edges
  - Bigger than us—Kingdom work
  - Kick in the pants—unknown
  - Out of comfort zone
  - Excited to see God working
  - Plan B—What God has in mind
  - Have fun
  - Opportunity

- People pursuing the Lord, intentional, knowing God, not just “playing church”
- Something bigger than ourselves
- People growing and meeting people in Christ
- Big picture

### 3. **Neighboring.** Reach communities, neighborhoods, multiplication at all levels, diversity, generations

- Making/Having time in life
- Reclaiming neighborhoods
- Championing orphans
- Vision to serve people outside church
- Making disciples
- Excited to be looking at neighborhoods differently
- Availability-accessible to people
- Embracing others
- Love our neighbors, impact people for Christ

*Love Our Neighbor = Love the Other*

## **Neighboring—Relating to those Outside AND Inside the Church**

- **Colossians 4:5-6** <sup>5</sup>Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.
- What’s needed now?
- Do you know your neighbors’ names?
- Did the Philippian believers know who Euodia and Synteché were?
- Euodia and Synteché had become estranged. They were at odds. They needed Colossians 4:5-6 in their relationships even though they were both within the church.
- How often does this occur even in the closest of relationships? Even in marriages!
- Outsiders and “Insiders”
- We were all once outsiders! Maybe you feel like an outsider even now?! That’s ok. Welcome!
- **2 Timothy 1:6-7** <sup>6</sup>For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, <sup>7</sup>for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.
- **Colossians 4:6 MSG** The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.

## *My friendships with Bruce and Jonalu and Mike...*

- What do these three have in common?
  - They are all good friends of mine.
  - And we all have drastically different worldviews.
- Preachers aren't supposed to use themselves as positive examples. Don't view this as me using myself as a positive example. Rather, this is me inviting you into how I'm attempting to live this stuff out...
- Bruce
  - Moved into our neighborhood from Brooklyn in 2016 during my sabbatical. Went from the Big Apple to the Little Apple.
  - The local Bahá'í community leader.
  - Kids are the same age as Kate and Maddox. Plus, now they have a dog...just like us.
  - Bruce is trying to knock out his first half marathon this spring just like I did about the time he and I first met.
  - Bruce is an awesome neighbor.
- Jonalu
  - Sabbatical in 2016 and visiting the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.
  - Jonalu is the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.
  - Then MLK Prayer Breakfast in 2017
  - We have strongly opposing views on some important issues. For example, I believe that God has designed human sexuality to flourish in the context of a committed marriage relationship between one man and one woman for a lifetime...and she does not.
  - I believe that the Bible is God's divinely inspired Word and Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and that there's no other way to the Father but through Him...and she does not.
  - But guess what. Jonalu and I are friends.
  - Jonalu and her partner love to hike. In fact, in retirement they plan to travel the country in a sprinter van and hike. That resonates deeply with both Maris and me. We hope and plan to catch up with them one day and share a cup of coffee and conversation on some beautiful mountainside somewhere.
  - Jonalu showed me great kindness one morning at Bluestem Bistro when I had experienced a great deal of unkindness from many within the church.
- Mike
  - Mike is a cultural anthropologist.
  - He and his family host weekly meals through the summers until the Covid hit.
  - Mike cares deeply about his family and our community...just like me.
  - Mike cares deeply about taking care of his physical and mental and emotional health...just like me.
  - Unlike me, he doesn't believe in God.
- Character Coffee Friendships
- Worldview Panel Idea
- These relationships have brought me so much enrichment. I've learned so much from them. Has my faith in Jesus been shaken? No! Has the way I live out my faith in Jesus been challenged? Yes! Do I genuinely love these people and look forward to the time we get to spend together? Yes!
- Running in the blizzard story...
  - "For me, this is heaven."

- I could've chosen any number of friendships I have and highlighted both the similarities and differences between us.
- Personality
- Flexibility
- Time
- Curiosity and questions
  - Jesus in Luke 2:46-47 <sup>46</sup>After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup>And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.
- Image of God and Depravity
- The Beauty and The Beast
- Acts 17 and Paul's connecting with the "Other"
- Stress test your faith to make it stronger
- You may feel like the other, like the outsider...
- Want a simple next step? Commit to learning people's names!
  - "I'm not good with names..." Get better!
  - "I probably won't remember your name." Thanks! Thanks for not even giving me the dignity of remembering the word that corresponds with me!
  - Paul's writing from prison and sending letters that take a lot longer to receive than getting a text message does. And he can learn Euodia and Synteché's names. Get better at learning one another's names, your neighbors names, the names of people you interact with.
  - Use the Tallgrass Directory to cheat. Use Facebook to cheat.
  - Names stories:
    - Patrick Largen at Radina's
    - Paige at Paramour
- If we can't figure out how to have meaningful relationships with those who are different than us and we have the cross, forgiveness, the Spirit of God, the one another's, etc. then who can?

**Colossians 4:2-4** <sup>2</sup>Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup>At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— <sup>4</sup>that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

- Jesus moved into our neighborhood and He was treated as a total outsider.



## Homework:

Take on the Love the Other challenge!

- See *Love the Other* resource
- Practice the *Love the Other* challenge. Choose a question or two and take 10 minutes to have a conversation. There may be more coffee left too.
  - What would constitute a “perfect” day for you?
  - What are you most grateful for in your life?
  - If you could change anything about how you were raised, what would it be?
- Maybe you need to have an hour-long conversation with Jesus because He feels like the Other to you? Or you feel like the Other to Him?

## Resolve Toccata and Fugue in D minor by Bach

Imagine how beautiful the music will be in eternity when all dissonance is resolved in Christ! In the meantime, make Euodia and Synteche proud of us as we work to love one another and love the other and love our neighbor well. Make Jesus proud as we love like Him.

## PRAY!

Then sing *Who You Say I Am + Living Hope*

# The Chopping Block:

## The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership

### Chapter 1: Thinking Gray, and Free

#### Three Types of Doubt:

Don't fear doubt. Be a lifelong learner. Don't shelter yourself but equip yourself. Defeat doubt and feed your faith!

1. **Intellectual Doubt**—Deals with our mind—the right brain specifically. Objective evidence is very helpful here. Are there good reasons to consider the claims of the Christian faith? Get your facts straight!
2. **Emotional Doubt**—Deals with the left brain, your emotions. Encounter the Risen Jesus! Subjective evidence is helpful here. Deals with our pain and feelings of guilt and shame. Dig into your soul! There is a lot of hurt and pain caused by people who either call themselves Christians and/or who connect themselves to a church.
3. **Volitional Doubt**—Deals with our will. CHOOSE to take the next step of faith. You've got to choose to take the step you know you should. Stop being stubborn! Repent. Can I say that, in love? I love you! But you're here for a reason. Take the step!

#### PROBABLY PUSHED TO NEXT WEEK:

#### Euodia and Syntyche—Women in the Church

- Wikipedia on Euodia and Syntyche: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euodia\\_and\\_Syntyche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euodia_and_Syntyche)
- Paul calls them out by name in a letter to be read to the whole church. This is a significant issue.
- They need to practice putting others' interests above their own. See Phil. 2:2.
- This is an opportunity to live out Phil. 2:1-5.
  - So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup>complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...
- From Gary DeLashmutt—Euodia and Syntyche were probably embroiled in a dispute about some temporal issue – possibly a political dispute. By referring to Christians as having their “names being written in the book of life,” Paul reminds them that their common citizenship in God’s eternal kingdom outweighs whatever other differences they have.<sup>1</sup> He thus urges them on that basis to live in harmony “in the Lord.”

- Paul doesn't silence these women. Doesn't have them separate. Encourages them to work through things.
  - This is significant. Women are not to be silenced in the church.
  - Complementarian vs. Egalitarian
  - These women have labored side by side with Paul in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of Paul's fellow workers. Side by side! Mutual submission. Laboring together. All of these folks have their names in the book of life. They have equal standing positionally before Christ AND equal standing as laborers in the church!
  - "fellow workers"
    - Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3, 9), Timothy (Rom. 16:21; 1 Thess. 3:2, Titus (2 Cor. 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), Philemon (Philem. 1), Mark (Philem. 24), and Luke (Philem. 24).
    - Euodia and Syntyche may be among the "overseers and deacons" of Phil. 1:1 but the text doesn't demand this be the case.
  - Paul considers himself a servant. Authority belongs to Christ...but anyone can exercise leadership.
- The Christian in Complete Armor by William Gurnall, Puritan minister, 700 page treatise written in 1655***
- "In heaven we shall appear not in armour but in robes of glory; but here they (the pieces of armour specified) are to be worn night and day; we must walk, work and sleep in them, or else to stand and watch, and never relax our vigilance, for 'the saint's sleeping time is Satan's tempting time.'"
  - You do well to put on the armor of God, brothers and sisters.
  - You do well to put help one another put on the armor of God and keep it on, brothers and sisters.
  - 4:2-3 <sup>2</sup>I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have **labored side by side** with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
    - true companion; side by side
    - *suzugos* (σύζυγος, 4805)—yokefellow; colleague
    - 4866—See 2:27

## *Ben's Cheat Sheet on Women in Ministry*

- Women were leading in the early church (See Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 11, Philippians 4, etc.).
- No church that I've seen actually lives out there complementarianism in a consistent way.
- There are alternative interpretations for the 1 Timothy 2 passage that make a lot more sense than the complementarian interpretation.
- If people think that men are to lead in the home, therefore men are to lead in the church they are forgetting that Christ Himself is the head of the church, not men. Men and women in the church are members of one another and together comprise the Bride of Christ.
- The "one another" exhortations apply to both men and women within the church.
- The spiritual gifts lists are given to both men and women within the church.
- Let's discuss mutual submission in the home from 1 Corinthians 7 and consider how Christ-like headship in the home from Ephesians 5 should look.
- Let's take a look at how patriarchy has influenced translators over the years who seek to make certain women in the Bible to be men because they couldn't concede the valuing of and lifting up of women.
- There are intelligent scholars that are complementarian and also egalitarian.
- There are godly men and women that are complementarian and also egalitarian.

- There are denominations on either side.
- There are bad examples on either side.
- Women aren't inherently more prone to deception. And if they were, the last thing we should do is relegated them to only teach others who are also prone to deception, women and children.
- Talk about prone to deception, look at all the white, theologically conservative men who believe the 2020 election was stolen from Trump.

## Notes:

- Chapters 1-3 to chapter 4—We've had three chapters of indicatives and now we get some imperatives. We transition from orthodoxy to orthopraxy.
- Φρονέω—phronéō (from 5424 /phrén, "the midriff or diaphragm; the parts around the heart," J. Thayer) – properly, regulate (moderate) from within, as inner-perspective (insight) shows itself in corresponding, outward behavior. 5426 (phronéō) essentially equates to personal opinion fleshing itself out in action (see J. Thayer). This idea is difficult to translate into English because it combines the visceral and cognitive aspects of thinking.
- Other translations
  - "live in harmony in the Lord" NASB
  - "be of the same mind" NIV/KJV
  - "iron out their differences and make up. God doesn't want his children holding grudges." MSG
    - "Syzygus" for "true companion"
- Matthew written between 68-85 AD. Mark written between 64-70 AD. Luke written between late-50s to 70 AD. John was written between 70-150 AD (at the earliest and latest). Remarkable consensus of scholarly opinion that John was published somewhere between 80-100 AD.
- Ed Stetzer article on QAnon
- St. Augustine quote—"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."
  - <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/essentials-unity-non-essentials-liberty-all-things/>
- Burden that vents through prayer.
- Paul's humility
- Silence doesn't equal peace.
- Maris thinks we need to step out of our comfort zones and talk more about hard things.
- Connection between the Resurrection, the imperishable seed through the eternal Word of God, and loving one another earnestly from a pure heart...
  - **1 Peter 1:10-12** <sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, <sup>11</sup> inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.
  - **1 Peter 1:13-21** <sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing

that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.<sup>20</sup> He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you<sup>21</sup> who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

- **1 Peter 1:22-25** <sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,<sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;<sup>24</sup> for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

<sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

- 2021 Daily Holidays that fall on January 31, include:
  - National Backward Day
  - National Eat Brussels Sprouts Day
  - National Hot Chocolate Day

## *Homiletics:*

- Preach the Bible, not your dog—  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyo9dfkX11Q&ab\\_channel=Crossway](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyo9dfkX11Q&ab_channel=Crossway)

Bullet Points from our February 18, 2018 Launch Team Meeting

Why should we/people go to Tallgrass?

- 4. **Intimacy.** Tallgrassians want a grace-centered place to grow in relationship with Christ and others! We want a safe place where leaders speak truth in love, where there is close-knit community, a family, meaningful relationships. Where people can come and be known. Desire for intimacy.

- Meaningful relationships
- Family
- How easy to be embraced, to feel loved well
- Hospitality—being accommodating
- Authenticity
- Want to be seen
- Eyes open, ears open
- Humility
- People
- Living life with people
- Be loved well
- Community
- Support

- People who helped them get excited about the Lord
- Home

**5. Comfort zone!** At the same time, we want to get out of our comfort zones! We want disruption, a growth mindset, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves, to be a part of God's thing, see the Holy Spirit move, high commitment, freedom to fail, messiness. Desire for growth.

- Embrace the awkward
- Microministry/discipleship
- Do church differently
- Organic; tangible Kingdom in everyday life; genuine Christians
- Comfort with rough edges
- Bigger than us—Kingdom work
- Kick in the pants—unknown
- Out of comfort zone
- Excited to see God working
- Plan B—What God has in mind
- Have fun
- Opportunity
- People pursuing the Lord, intentional, knowing God, not just “playing church”
- Something bigger than ourselves
- People growing and meeting people in Christ
- Big picture

**6. Neighboring.** Reach communities, neighborhoods, multiplication at all levels, diversity, generations

- Making/Having time in life
- Reclaiming neighborhoods
- Championing orphans
- Vision to serve people outside church
- Making disciples
- Excited to be looking at neighborhoods differently
- Availability-accessible to people
- Embracing others
- Love our neighbors, impact people for Christ

**7. Equipping.** Teaching, every member a minister, active participants (not passive observers), invest in parents, marriages, spiritual gifts, holistic health (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual)

- Logistical needs—reducing barriers of entry, parking, food, etc.
- Leadership
- Knowledge
- Good teaching
- Willing to take stances on things, admonish well, keep accountable, love well
- Personal growth, expectation of learning
- Growth mentality

## In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity

by Mark Ross

Philip Schaff, the distinguished nineteenth-century church historian, calls the saying in our title “the watchword of Christian peacemakers” (*History of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, p. 650). Often attributed to great theologians such as Augustine, it comes from an otherwise undistinguished German Lutheran theologian of the early seventeenth century, Rupertus Meldenus. The phrase occurs in a tract on Christian unity written (circa 1627) during the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), a bloody time in European history in which religious tensions played a significant role. The saying has found great favor among subsequent writers such as Richard Baxter, and has since been adopted as a motto by the Moravian Church of North America and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Might it serve us well as a motto for every church and for every denomination today?

### **Unity**

Those who are united by faith in Christ are thereby united to one another in the church, the body of Christ. We call this union the communion of saints. It is a mysterious thing, and to understand it properly we will need to see it both in its “now” and “not yet” aspects. Because it is a union created by Christ in baptizing us all by one Spirit into His body, the church (1 Cor. 12:12–13), it is true of all Christians now, a fait accompli. But the manifestation of that unity is not always apparent. Christians can display ugly divisions between one another, as at the church of Corinth (1:10–17). Their disunity could be seen in the public square as members sued one another before the ungodly in civic courts (6:1–8). Even the Lord’s Supper was not sufficient to bring them together in love and unity (11:17–34). Manifesting fully the unity in Christ that already is given to us belongs to the “not yet” perfection of the faith that will come at our glorification. With deep longing our Lord prayed for our unity, knowing that on it rests our own blessing and the credibility of the church’s witness for Christ (John 17:20–23).

### **Liberty**

Tensions arising from diversity of belief and practice among Christians are already apparent in the pages of the New Testament and remain with us today. There was apparently a thriving vegetarian faction within the church at Rome (Rom. 14). “One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables” (v. 2). There was also a difference among them about whether certain days were to be honored (v. 5). How do we live with such differences among us? Paul says, “As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions” (v. 1). Such a person is to be welcomed, says Paul, and not just welcomed for the purpose of quarreling with him over his views. Love for such a person, weak in faith though he is, must continue.

In that love, we must extend liberty to each person to hold fast to his own conscience on what Christ has commanded (Rom. 14:5); but how far can that liberty be extended? Apparently, it would extend far enough to include vegetarians and those who maintained that Christians should continue to honor the Jewish feast days. But would it also include baptists receiving into church membership people with paedobaptist convictions, or paedobaptists receiving members with baptist convictions? Should believers who hold to a corporeal presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper admit to the table those who believe the real presence of Christ in the Supper is spiritual and not corporeal? After two thousand years of church history, Christians are still divided on many key doctrinal issues, even on the very signs of our unity in Christ — baptism and the Lord’s Supper. How, then, can we be one in Christ and demonstrate the communion of saints? It would seem that either we must ignore our doctrinal differences and treat

them as inconsequential, or we must remain permanently divided and in opposition to one another until Christ returns. Is there not a more excellent way? (1 Cor. 12:31).

### **Charity**

Love for Christ must include a love for His truth, and so we can never treat as inconsequential anything that Christ has commanded. Only those who abide in Jesus' word are truly His disciples (John 8:31), and disciples are to be taught to obey all that He has commanded (Matt. 28:19–20). So the route that we might call doctrinal minimalism is not open to us. We cannot simply reduce the number of doctrines to be taught and believed to what we can all accept as important and ignore the rest. Movement in that direction always seems to lose its brakes and eventually nothing distinctive of Christianity remains. But neither can we lock ourselves up in very small groups with maximal agreement on doctrine and morals, and then separate from others and refuse to acknowledge as Christians those who do not embrace all our distinctives. The multiplication of small groups who pride themselves on purity but who denounce and despise those who fall short of that standard does nothing to express the truth of "the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church" for which Christ died. The love we must have for all of Christ's disciples has no expression in this path. Where, then, is the more excellent way?

As we have observed above, the unity that we have is by the Spirit of Christ baptizing us into Christ and into His body, the church (1 Cor. 12:12–13). Our expression of that unity must therefore be a unity of the truth "as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21). Ultimately, that will be all the truth that is in Jesus, but our unity with Jesus does not wait until that perfection is achieved. Salvation comes to us by faith in Christ, so there must be a defining core of truth that is ours in faith, sufficient to unite us to Christ even if not yet complete in all its detail. Defining this core precisely might prove to be as difficult as living out the whole truth faithfully, but it will surely include that God, the creator of heaven and earth against whom we have all sinned, was in Christ, reconciling to Himself all who believe in Him, not counting their sins against them, but forgiving them through the redemption that is found in the sinless life and atoning death of Christ and received by faith alone, calling for obedience to Christ as Lord under the authority of His Word in the Holy Scriptures. Where Christ is truly preached, there is the gospel; and where the gospel is truly believed, there is the church.

Yet as we have seen, the church that is in Jesus is a diverse church. This diversity among Christians is due to our lack of conformity to Christ. He has chosen to sanctify us gradually in this world. As the progress we make in sanctification varies both in doctrine and in practice, there will always be a need in this world for those who are united in Christ to live in love with one another while dealing with differences. Sometimes these differences result in the formation of different churches and denominations in order to maintain a good conscience toward God. But such divisions need not be a defeat of unity among us, so long as we do not permit them to destroy our love and welcome for one another in Christ. Some divisions are of practical necessity anyway, for not all Christians in the world can meet together at the same time in the same place.

Many distinct gatherings of Christians spread throughout the world can actually serve the purposes of God, by sprinkling us among the lost to shine the light of Christ. Our multiple groupings can also serve us well, encouraging us to be faithful to what we believe Christ has taught us, bringing us together with those with whom we can cooperate most fully. But if we allow our divisions to become breaches of love and occasions for pride and rivalry, then we will have failed in our calling, and our witness for Christ will be marred.

The saying of Rupertus Meldenius strikes the right balance. It calls for unity on the essential things, the core of truth in our union with Christ. In non-essentials (not the unimportant, but those things that if



lacking do not prevent our union with Christ), it calls for liberty so that all might follow their consciences under the Word and Spirit. In all things, however, there must be love (“charity” from the Latin *caritas*, or “love”), “which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14).

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Rom. 15:5–7).

### 1/31 (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday)

- Take the Lord’s Supper together!
- Kansas Day was January 29<sup>th</sup>. Kansas turned 160 years old! Happy birthday, Kansas!

### 2/7—Do not be anxious!

<sup>4:4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### 2/14 (Valentine’s Day!)—With thanksgiving!

<sup>4:4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### 2/21

<sup>4:8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- Revisit imitation/discipleship
- *No Silver Bullets: Five Small Shifts that will Transform Your Ministry* by Daniel Im
- Bible Reading—<https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/07/02/few-protestant-churchgoers-read-the-bible-daily/>

### 2/28—Zoom Only?!?!

<sup>4:10</sup> I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

### 3/7

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. <sup>15</sup> And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. <sup>18</sup> I have received full

payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

**3/14**

<sup>19</sup> And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>21</sup> Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. <sup>22</sup> All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

<sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.