

October 8, 2017
SOMA: United to One Another
Philippians 2:1-4

Speaker 1: Good morning. Are you satisfied? All right, now it's the because of you I woke up with a cold this morning because now that wind just blows by it I feel the wind for the first time on my scalp and I can't get warm. I'm cold all the time. After I got cut, I ran to the mirror and looked and said, "whoa, that is way shorter than Sam's." Somebody paid off Holly and got her to cut it a like a half or a micro whatever. I kind of freaked out after I saw myself in the mirror and I didn't react really well and this is the age of cell phones and people catch things on cell phones and if someone caught it on cell phone and here's what happened.

Speaker 2: Are you not entertained? Are you not entertained? Is this not why you are here?

Speaker 1: You know I just caught something. I had looked just like Russell Crowe. I never caught that before so, I feel kind of embarrassed that that got caught on film but I apologize for my reaction to the whole thing.

Alright we're doing -- we're in the series or scholars **[unintelligible 00:01:31]** it's about the body of Christ. Jesus said that church is, if it lives authentically as a community of faith as Jesus defines in one of the passages, if we live out our faith in community with one another displaying all the qualities of Christ that He desires for us, we will become such a reflection to the world that it all convinced even though our most ardent critic and cynic of the reality of Jesus. That's why we're focusing on just becoming the body of Christ, like Christ desires for us.

Far we learned three qualities that we are to display to each other, one is simply as the body of Christ we're patterned after the original body with Jesus, so we're simply to do what Jesus did and just keep on doing what he did in the Gospels. Secondly, we talked about the importance of loving one another and that's defined by the cross and that's sacrificial service for the good of others at personal cost. We talked about last week about acceptance. The importance of accepting one another right where we are, which means we balance both truth and grace. We are neither a harsh and judgmental toward each other but we're patient and allowing God to change and mold us, at the same time we don't water down the truth. The most loving thing we can do for someone is help people discover how they are designed and how to live within God's design.

Now kind of about last week's message about acceptance, I had some great feedback, it's really important to get feedback so you can make sure you're communicating clearly. One thing I need to clarify, one is, and this is true that all the messages are on one of the passages we're doing. I'm not thinking at all about the past, my mind is completely on the present and the future. When I lift up these qualities, so I'm talking about -- what I'm doing is I'm lifting -- here's what it is, here's how we apply it to today and how we move into living into it in the future. It is not a critique of the past I'm not even really thinking about the past, and the past is really

immaterial because the past is past. There's nothing we can do to change the past. All we can do is learn about how to be faithful presently with Christ and then how to live that in the future.

Now if I were to make a commentary on last week's message about acceptance, I would say that journey and the existence of ethnic churches is the result of the Church of Jesus Christ in America not living out biblical acceptance. I think that gives us a wonderful motivation because we know what it's like when the church fails to be the church. The church fails to live out biblical acceptance, which I think it makes us and gives us a capacity to be very insensitive. In fact, I think that's one of the marks of the journey. One of the strengths of journey is that it is a very warm and welcoming place.

I think our growth edge is once people get settled in and become long-term members, our growth is we tend to be a little harsh toward each other and what we need to do is take that same warmth and acceptance we begin with visitors and keep doing that through the entire life of the church, especially for long-term members, we just need to be a little more gentle towards each other. Amen, you agree with that?

Now we're looking at unity today and I love this verse in Psalm 133, how good and pleasant it is when Gods people live together in unity and talk about the timeliness of the message because this week we saw how horrible it is when people do not walk in unity. When people develop grudges and hate and how it can create people to respond in monstrous ways we saw it in Las Vegas.

This is one quality that Jesus like love Jesus lifts up and says, **[unintelligible 00:05:27]** the Church can live this out. Like love, it can be an incredibly effective witness to the world because this quality addresses humanity's biggest problem. It's been an unsolvable problem throughout human history and that is the human race has a very difficult time getting along with each other. The human race has a long history of fighting and bickering and being critical enraged and losing it.

Both on the personal level and the national level and global level we have witnessed a history of conflict and violence and war, I don't have to go through all the different examples because you see it every day, you witness it everyday. This quality is God's answer to this human problem we just cannot solve and it is urgent that we begin to model it as a church because what Jesus is saying in I think it's John 17:22, "I am them and you and me so that they may be brought to complete unity then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me". Basically, Jesus says that if people see God bring in a diverse people together in unity and love of one another intensely. If they see God bringing just a diverse group of people together even such a powerful witnesses to **[unintelligible 00:06:59]** of Jesus and they will come to know him. What changes transform him people in such a beautiful way that they're not going to be spraying bullets in Las Vegas they'll be spraying the Gospel all over the world and loving each other intensely.

It's vital that we care for this and sometimes Christians are no better than the world which is tragic because the world needs the church to be the church more than ever right now because Christ is the answer. What the world needs is the power of the

new person. 2Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ he or she is a new creation. The old person is gone the new person has arrived." And that new person, especially when you look at the fruits of the spirit, is shaped in such a beautiful way, it is powerful. It'll be an incredibly effective witness as we live with that together in community. I love how the old testament captures -- it predicts the effects that Jesus will have on people's lives. I love this passage in Ezeiel here's what it says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" and I agree that's what we need more than ever.

We need the hearts of stone to be turned into hearts of flesh, hearts of mush and love for each other. Paul describes it this way, "God's purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of two thus making peace and one body to reconcile both of them to God, through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility". That's what my prayer made to God do that in our day put to death our hostility in our culture and in our world. He came to preach peace to you who are far away and peace to those who are near. It is time for the church of Jesus Christ to step it up and show the world this is exactly what God can do through us and through his people.

We're going to look at what biblical unity is which is another way of saying is simply looking at what God can do in the hearts of people who put their faith in Him and then who do life together. What God is able to do with the community of people who are sold out to Him. It is an amazing thing they will walk in unity. We are go9ng to look at what that is and then how do we get there. Let's pray, Heavenly Father, we come before you and more than ever our world needs the church to be the church. They need us to step it up in this area and that is, show the world how people who are very different can not only just get along but have such an intense bond of love. To be so connected spirit to spirit. We are like this band of brothers and sisters that have each others' back who wouldn't think for a moment of harming each other but just want to love and serve each other for our good and for the good of others.

Lord build that into our church, help us become that model to the world because people can see that Jesus is the answer and He solves this dilemma which we've never been able to solve as a people and as a culture in history and history repleted conflict. Lord, do your work in us so we become a model of what you can do in the world, we ask this in Jesus name. And all God's are people praying it, Amen.

Here's what Paul says in Philippians 2: 1-4, therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, he's talking to believers now, talking to us, if any comfort from His love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit, of one mind, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit rather in humility value others above yourself not looking to your own interest but each of you to the interests of others.

There's a real urgency in Paul's voice, he says four times "if" it means since you have this, this is what you've experienced in Christ, if you get anything out of Jesus and what He's done for you then please walk in unity, please make my joy complete by being like-minded having the same love being one in spirit and one abide because it's vital to the world because Paul lived in a world that was much like our

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world and that he lived in the time of the gladiators, he lived in a time where humanity were very inhumane.

It was a very cruel world, children were treated like property, people were cruel. If your family member became ill they tossed them in the street because they're afraid of getting ill. They abandoned their family members onto the street, the elderly were treated the same way, there were endless wars, they just went into long string of world wars, the Syrian empire, then the Babylonian empire came through, then the Greeks with Alexander the Great devastated the whole world, then the Romans came through and the Egyptians were always in the mess and this endless conflict is going on.

Paul saw the reality that human race cannot get along and they need an answer, they couldn't get along then they could not getting along now and they needed answer and the answer is Jesus. But the world's not going to believe in Jesus until they see what Jesus can do in His people. And I hope you feel the same urgency that Paul feels because it's urgent. We live in an urgent time when the world needs - - who we follow with, they need Jesus and He can do that wonderful work in lives that bring people together.

So, what is it though, let's get a picture what God can do with the body of believers who put their faith to Him. One, it says be like-minded, unity is being like-minded. What verse two, what does it mean? Like-minded does not mean same mindedness or having the same opinion. It's interesting, if you look at Ephesians 4, it's all about unity and Paul painstakingly sets out the foundation for unity and he say basically people realize all the things we have in common and all these things or have in common far outweigh any of our differences, so all these things we have in common they just make all our differences just a distraction and not really important so you can let them all go and we can walk in unity as a result.

And it's a famous passage he says, we have -- we're one body, we're one Holy Spirit -- we have the same Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, one Father of us all. But then in the next breath having laid this incredible foundation for unity, here's what he says in the next verse. He says and "you are different, we are all different."

But each one of us -- but to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned to it. He laid this incredible foundation for unity and then he says but no we're all different. Which is -- are we united? Are we disunited? Are we disjointed? And that's what unity is, there is a unity in diversity and diverse people can't live in unity but it would mean if we take this passage seriously, it would mean if all of us have different gifts and different roles, different abilities, we're going to see things differently.

And I used the analogy before and I'll do it again -- how at the gym, I've been doing a lot of weightlifting, I hope you can notice [laughter] Okay, let's go [background laughing] there are times where I really want to lift a weight and my arms say "Yes, baby! and my mind says "I'm going to do it", and my back **[unintelligible 00:14:48]** because I have a weak back, I've always had a chronic back problems, my back

says "No you're not, you're not going to do that", my hands say "Yes, you will, I'm going to do it" then my legs come in and say

[END OF AUDIO] "Guys don't fight about it, okay? If we all work together, if you let me do the heavy lifting, we can do this". Of course, you can do it. In that analogy, my hand and my back and my legs have very different perspectives, right? They say very different things. They see that weight very differently and yet they all come together in unity to accomplish the single goal, the single purpose. There is -- can be unity with diversity and there is in unity diversity. It's even captured by the analogy of we're the body of Christ. Paul says, "Hey, we're one body but we have lots of parts" Because we have lots of parts, we will see things differently. And the weird thing about this is it was God's idea.

This whole scenario about us being different -- all different was God's idea. That God created us all unique. Well, does that mean God has set us up for conflict and God's the problem? Why did God spread His qualities over two genders and not pour them all into one like into men? I don't know why that is. No. Most men think that God did that but God did not do that. He divided His qualities up between two genders, why does He do that? To set us up for conflict? To drive us nuts? No. We do that with differences. We take differences and use them to divide -- God gave us -- made us different in order to bring us together and the workplace knows this.

The workplace of all places have discovered what God was trying to do in creating people who are different. In the workplace, how people do work now, the best work is done how? Collaboratively because the workplace has discovered when different people get together and bring their different skill sets and they work together. They can do more but they do better work. We are better together and that's why God made us different. He didn't make us different in order for us to fight over our differences and cause conflict. The intent was for us to see our differences to realize we need each other so we collaborate and work in ministry which brings us together.

Not brings us apart that we make -- that we use differences to drive people apart, is **[unintelligible 00:17:05]**. That's all on us, we do that. That's because of a deep wound that we carry around with us, we're going to address it a little bit later on. But God made us different in order to bring us together. So like-mindedness means to set your mind on the same thing. It's to have a single goal, a single focus. Notice that the whole passage begins with the word, therefore. Therefore means He's made an argument from before. And this whole conversation of unity started in verse 27, chapter 1 verse 27.

And this is parallel to this section in 1:27 says, "Contend as one person for the faith, contend as one person for the faith of the gospel" Just as I used that analogy of the gym. We could be different but United between one purpose. Your body will do that. The same thing is true of the church. We are different but to be united behind one singular purpose, one singular mission and that mission is the faith. The faith which is the gospel. The word contend is even an athletic term. The word contend means to engage in an athletic contest. And we understand that this is something we can relate to.

The playoffs have just begun in the baseball. Everyone knows for baseball teams to be successful, they need to have a single vision. A single focus. And they want the single focus is to win and to get to the World Series. But every baseball team has so many different players and so many different positions, so many different personalities. And yet all of them can take their very different people diversity of skills and talents and positions and still can unite behind one singular purpose and be very effective. In fact, the degree to which the team comes together is a degree to which they're going to win and win well and probably win the World Series.

You look at the team that's most United, they're probably going to be the ones who win. And that's what the church is called to be like. Is there a picture in scripture that still shows us? Well, yes if you're looking to look at Acts 1, there's the issue of replacing Judas. And they got together and they talked about it and they prayed about it and God helped them find a decision. Look at Acts chapter 15, they're divided over circumcision. How do we handle the Gentiles, how do we bring Gentiles into the faith? And they brought everyone together, they listened to both sides, they prayed about it, they considered both sides and they finally came to a decision and here's how they decided.

James stands up and says this, "It is my judgment therefore that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" What was the deciding factor as to how'd they make a decision? It all had to do with what was best for the furtherance of the gospel, what fit with our mission of furthering the gospel. And actually, it's interesting the verse before James quotes scripture and that's the deciding issue. It's not human opinions decided the matter but that the scripture actually decided the matter. And as the body of Christ Christ is our head and he is the defining, deciding factor. Unity is being single of purpose which is defined by our head which is Christ. Like-minded means being on the same page, knowing what our business is. Having the same vision and mission which is the gospel. But it's more than that. It is having the same love and that same love is defined by the cross and then Paul immediately goes to -- here's an example, here's a picture of what it looks like of having the same love. Talking about Jesus who

Talking about Jesus who being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in the appearance of a man. He'd humbled himself, he became obedient to death, even death on the cross. Which is the definition of love. It's service for the good of others at personal cost. It's something we've experienced in our vertical relationship with God and something we were called to express in a horizontal relationship with others.

As we experienced that vertical love of God it will heal us in such a way that will enable us to love people in two ways and this is mentioned in verses 3 and 4. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit rather in humility, value others above yourselves. Not looking to your own interests but also each of you to the interests of others. Basically saying when you experience this love of God, one, it'll help you get rid of conceit and selfishness but also enable you to value each other and look out for the common good. Not just live for yourself. We're going to look at that a little bit deeper a little bit later.

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I love how Gordon [unintelligible 00:21:38] says, love begins with when someone else's needs are more important than yours. I think that's good. Unity is unity of purpose. It's unity of love, having the same love and it's one more thing. It's unity as being one in spirit and a purpose. Paul is not repeating himself here. It's not just he had a single focus. It's not that at all. The parallel is the last half of chapter 127, contend as one person, the word person is soul, contend as one soul. The difference between the two phrases of being like-minded and one in spirit in purpose is like-minded points to having a single focus. Being one in spirit and purpose refers to giving your all, putting your entire soul into it. Your whole spirit, your very soul, your very purpose for being. You put your all into it. Jesus said it this way, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. Put all these three together. What is unity then and what should we look like as a people. What can God do with all of us just living in this out?

Biblical unity is a bond of all believers -- is a bond all believers share due to the love they've experienced through Christ. A love that inspires both their love for one another and in all in commitment to the Ministry of the Gospel. See it another way, it is a love- it is a love a diverse body of believers share for Christ and one another that empowers them to act as one person with one mission which is the gospel under the leadership of one Lord, Jesus Christ. If you want a really simple image of unity it is, I like 127, to picture 127, Philippians 127, contend as one person for the faith which is the gospel. That's where God can take us. Now how do we get there? That's captured in four phrases, how do we get there, of these four first, its clauses in verse one. That if we drill down with these things we have experienced but if we take them to heart, if we drill down, if we repeat them and-- not only in our minds but experientially what Jesus has done for us. All four of these

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As a result, if we allow ourselves to be shaped by these things rather than fighting we will prefer to love each other and serve each other and forgive and refuse to be offended and refuse to offend. We will become a band of brothers and sisters who love Jesus, who love each other and have a laser focus in the gospel ministry and nothing else will matter. Nothing else. All those petty things that cause people to fight, nothing will matter. What are these four things?

Well, first he says the encouragement of being united with Christ. What is the encouragement? It means comfort. What comfort do we have by being United in Christ? It actually addresses verse three mentions the two reasons why people tend to fight and these are the two root causes of conflict.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or being conceited and our union in Christ actually helps heal and address these two areas. Selfish ambition is the pattern of behavior. Being conceited is the root of what are the two. Selfish ambition is hyper fighting. It's the proneness to fight. There is something in every one of us there is a button or a tendency, a flashpoint in your soul deep down inside you that when someone hits it you get inflamed. You get enraged. It really affects you, for instance, I've told you when someone tries to make me feel stupid, it's the ignition switch and where is that coming from? The ignition switch, where is that? The thing inside of the proneness to fight for others if you're in the disagreement and a person totally discounts what you say and belittles what you think and how you feel for some people just they get inflamed or if people ignore you as if you don't matter and you're a nobody, for some people it is that inflames you what inflames you? The issue is that what inflames you is the fact that you have a burden

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Now, what's the root of it? Root of it is vain conceit and vain conceit sound like pride but it's not pride. Vain means empty, conceit is glory that we have the empty glory in that there is inside of us a huge need to feel important, to feel proud that we matter, that we are valuable. As a result of that deep down inside of us, all of us fear that we don't matter, all of the fear like **[unintelligible 00:27:15]** that we are dust in the wind. We don't want to believe it but deep down we fear that that just might be true and if you really believe in evolution, this is the point of evolution is that, if there's no God there is no purpose and if there is purpose, we are just an accident and there is no meaning and we are just the spec floating around in a very cold cruel cosmic world.

That's something we are afraid of and fight against deep down and as a result, we try to manufacture importance. We try to find reasons why or to prove to ourselves and the world that we are somebody and it could be degrees, it could be work, it could be a position or a status or a recognition or your looks or the success of your kids or popularity. All these try to manufacture reasons for taking pride in order to address this fear that we have that we don't matter. Which is our worst fear our worst fear isn't failure or embarrassment or rejection, our greatest fear as human beings is to be ignored, to be forgotten? That's why people fear dying because they're afraid that when they die everyone will forget them, history will move on. That's why we try to memorialize ourselves and create all kinds of statues in history books and everything because we want to matter, we have a need to matter and what wounds us most deeply is when people treat it as if we're nobody, as if our opinions don't matter and our feelings are invalid.

When you experience that it just drives you nuts because that's what we fear the most and most how the union with Christ addresses this with being united in Christ says this pain you are adopted into God's family. Think about how important you are,
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think how valuable you are, think about the fact that you matter, you are a child of the king and God is omniscient mean he sees all. You don't have a God that ignores you. You have a good shepherd who watches over you who dotes on you. Paul says He lavishes His love on us. He knows the number of hairs on your head He knows that I have fewer now but that's how valuable you are.

You have a God doesn't ignore you. He cares for you every day He watches over you every second and when you realize this, you realize how valuable you are. If you realize how valuable you are in Christ you don't have to manufacture your own glory or own sense of self-importance or pop yourselves up which makes you less prone to be hurt because your ego isn't so fragile and less dependent on the opinions of others so rather than giving people words that are powerful over you, you are living by the power of God's word over you so the human word no longer has power over you to affect you. The second way Union in Christ addresses our need is it remedies our biggest need and that is -- I will illustrate it this way, I remember seeing a sign saying no one is born a bigot. No one is born a bigot. That's an interesting sign. What does it mean? It's communicating something to us, it is saying that bigotry is learned. If bigotry is learned, what's the problem? It's human ignorance. How do you address human ignorance or education? People we have been on that horse for millennia.

Think of the history of thought the history of philosophy. After the Golden Age of philosophy which was Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the gospel entered in a blue across the world, why? Because all that human philosophy created the Roman Empire and the Roman Empire was falling into the mire of human **[unintelligible 00:31:04]**. It was falling with downward because the greatest problem in humanity isn't ignorance and the remedy isn't education, there is something deep, deep inside of us that's wrong. We don't need new ideas, we need a new person. We need a new heart. We need to take the heart of stone and turn it into a heart of flesh that beats with the heart of God and the heart compassion and the heart of love.

The problem is spiritual. The fact that we have left God out. We are disconnected from the source of our life. We are no longer in a relationship with the creator of our being, as a result, we don't know even who we are. And had Steven Paddock actually heard the gospel, like people heard the gospel, but had he put his faith in Jesus trust me the narrative today would be very different. He would not have been in the hotel in Las Vegas. He would not have been spraying bullets across the area. He'd been sharing the love of God with his neighbors. That's the difference that Christ can make and union with him is a power of the new person to transform us.

Secondly, there's the comfort of his love and that addresses our basic human need for love. All of us want to be loved. I've always watched American Idol and always been amazed by their common stories contestants have and that is how many of them crave the love of their parents especially their father, but never got it. And it created this incredible hole inside them, this crave that needs to be filled and loved up. Kelly Clarkson's one song piece by piece which it chronicles her father and how conditional his love was, you know he she traveled 1,500 miles to see him and he wouldn't want to even take the time to see her. It's how much she needed his love.

And finally, she made something of herself and now he wants to be part of her life. She says before when I didn't have what you wanted, you said I was worthless but now that you have something that you want, now you want to love me. Which we repulsed the idea of someone trying to get something from us, loving us in order to get something from us, that's repulsive. We want people to love us because of who we are. And she discovered that in this wonderful man and in the song she says, "Piece by piece you restored my soul." That's what God has done to us in Christ. He loves us unconditionally. And if you experience his love, piece by piece, He restores your soul and as He restores your soul you're filled with a capacity of love that is so full, you not only will love yourself, it'll come spilling out into love for others and it'll be powerful.

The third thing we have in Christ, or that if we really drill down, it will heal us and give us the capacity to walk in unity and that is common sharing in the spirit. What is that common sharing in the spirit? There's a shift in the verses now before you talking about Gods' -- this is what we have in Christ. His love, union with Christ but now it shifts. It doesn't say the common sharing in his spirit, it's common sharing in that spirit. Oh, he's talking about what? He's talking about what believers share in Christ, this is what we have in union with Christ but also what we experience with each other. That we need to realize and that is if you come to faith in Jesus you have the Holy Spirit but everyone around you has the Holy Spirit.

Well, what's the implication of that? We are connected more deeply than any human relationship. I've seen ancestor.com maybe the ancestor.com have a little DNA test and people trying to get me to do it and just recently a story where this woman discovers a blood relative she's a blood relative and she's never seen her before but the mere fact that they're blood relatives and she sees her for the first time, she breaks down into tears and they're hugging and kissing each other and that's the bond that the blood relationship creates and actually we share a blood bond between each other because our salvation is based upon the blood of Jesus.

So we share a blood bond we are blood relatives but we share a deeper connection than that because blood relatives oh you guys have blood relatives right? Some of you-you're not really connected to them are you? And so there's no connection with some of your blood relatives and here's what we have in Jesus and that is we share a spirit to spirit bond a spirit to spirit bond. That's why you can fly across the world, you meet someone here they're a believer it's like you've known them for a long time it's like that's what we share in Jesus that's what we share in Christ and if we realize it and we live that out, how can you harm each other? How can you be treating each other harshly? How can we wound each other when we have such an incredible bond? We're family **[unintelligible 00:36:23]** we are family you can seal break out in that song.

Even families overlook faults and stuff, families -- think about all your families you love them despite and they have traits that just irritate you right? But you overlook them because that's who they are and after a while those things that used to grate on you now you become grateful for them because that's the unique them. That's how we need to treat ourselves as well even more. Then lastly, tenderness and compassion that we experience in Christ and through each other tenderness and compassion and this addresses another fear we have and that we fear that we're a

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disappointment to God, that we are screw-ups, that we let Him down that we deserve judgment in fact when bad things happen to us the first thing we ask is hey why did I do to deserve this? People fear dying because they're afraid we're going before the throne of God and sitting in judgment and I saw this one cartoon you're familiar with Ernest cartoon Ernest this little guy cute little figure and he's standing before the pearly gates and Peter looks down and here's the caption of the cartoon, "Ernest do you understand the phrase close but no cigar?" It's a little humble guy but that's our fear. We're afraid we get to the pearly gates that God's going to look down to us and say close but no cigar.

Then lastly, tenderness and compassion that we experience in Christ and through each other tenderness and compassion and this addresses another fear we have and that we fear that we're a disappointment to God, that we are screw-ups, that we let Him down that we deserve judgment in fact when bad things happen to us the first thing we ask is hey what did I do to deserve this? People fear dying because they're afraid of going before the throne of God and sitting in judgment and I saw this one cartoon -- are you guys familiar with Ernest cartoon? Ernest this little guy cute little figure and he's standing before the pearly gates and Peter looks down and here's the caption of the cartoon, "Ernest do you understand the phrase close but no cigar?" It's a little humble guy but that's our fear. We're afraid we get to the pearly gates that God's going to look down to us and say close but no cigar.

That's how we view God that's not God God at all. We think we could do something wrong God is going to get the belt out, here's what God says about himself, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger abounding in love, He does not treat us as our sins deserve or a past according to our iniquities for as far as the heavens are above the earth so great is His love for those who fear Him as far as the east is from the west so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Think about that, In Hebrews, it says that He sympathizes with us, we think we make a mistake we fall in temptation that He judges and criticizes us. He says, "when you fall into temptation, I sympathize with you that must have been horrible. When you experienced a burden or a wound or a hurt or a loss, He doesn't say back up, He says, "That must be horrible, that's a horrible thing to go through I sympathize with you" think about that.

When we mess up, He says that if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just and will forgive all our sin all you have to do is tell Dad and He'll forgive us it's easy as that. That's the compassion and tenderness of that, think the compassion and tenderness of God is on the cross. He took the thing we fear the most, we feared being ignored, we fear being nothing. He said He emptied himself He became nothing He went to the cross He cried out in agony "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" And God ignored him but he experienced cosmic ignoring so we would never be ignored because we matter to God and when you're in touch with that kind of compassion, it enables you to be compassionate towards others and when you are in the church long enough and you experience the compassion of God through others it makes you a compassionate person.

Ever seen the movie pay it forward, pay it forward a great movie. That's what God did in Jesus He paid it forward and as we pay it forward to others it creates a capacity compassion for us so putting this all together what does Paul say? He says
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this," People you are united with Christ. Realize the power of the new person running through your veins. You have experienced His love. Lavish yourself, realize the incredible love He has for-- He tossed himself on the top of your humanity and He took the bullets for you. You have his spirit, as a result, every believer you share a blood bond but a spirit to spirit bond. As a result, you never can be alone. And you have experienced God's compassion and tenderness both through Himself and through His people. I hope you experience through his people. And if those things you have experienced, if you realize them, if you drill down in them, if you let them shape you, it'll transform you in incredible ways.

One, it will cause all the fruits of the Spirit become part of your humanity and you'll become an incredibly beautiful person and it will take out your inner emptiness that seeks to be satisfied in order to overcome this deeply held belief that you're insignificant, that you're dust in the wind. It'll heal you in such a way that you become so internally secure that you will refuse to be offended and you will refuse to offend. And then you will have a love that affirms you so profoundly. You will not only have enough love for yourself, you have enough love to nurture others and care for others.

And then you will realize you will never be alone, you can never lack hope, you can never be helpless because you're surrounded by a billion people who know Jesus and has your back. And God has your back. And there's always a place for you to belong. Cheers, we want to be a place where everyone knows our name, that should be the church. And God definitely knows your name. We have that kind of God. We are to be that people, that kind of church. And if you -- and we have a God that does not criticize, does not nitpick, does not talk behind your backs, does not judge us, does not treat us harshly or hypocritically but tenderly and compassionately.

And if we realize these things and we drill down and let them heal us in the way that they are intended to be, Paul says, "Then you'll be able to walk in unity. Then you'll make his joy complete but also God's joy complete because you'll be able to walk hand-in-hand with ardent love for each other as we focus on one thing them and the only thing worth fighting about is the gospel ministry" And if we realize that all those other things that get in the way, all those things that divide us and cause irritation and misunderstanding, the issues that seem so important will seem in the light of what we have in Jesus. They will be seen as insignificant, they'll be seen as distractions of the enemy.

Petty things that are aren't worth one moment of thought. And if we can get there, if we can love authentically, if we can forgive and reconcile, we will be a model to the world that desperately needs an answer to its problem. And that is, it does not know how to get along. And Jesus is the person, is the answer to that human dilemma. The problem is, they won't know it or believe it until they see it amongst His own people, so let's get to work.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit. And I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Even so Lord Jesus do that in our midst. Lord build us into the type of people that though we may not see eye to eye, we can lock arm-in-arm because we're in love with you and we are in love with each other

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and we are clearly focused on what's important, what is not. And what's the most important is the gospel. Let nothing else distract us, bring us together we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Speaker 3: If you are able to would you please stand as you respond with.

[00:44:13] [END OF AUDIO]