



## Life in the Local Church, Part 1

### Selected Scriptures

June 14, 2015

We're talking today about life in the local church. We've been in a series for some time talking about this, taking a break from our normal study of the Gospel of Luke. But last week we set a foundation for this Sunday and next by looking at Paul's teaching on the doctrine of the church. We've briefly looked at two passages, Ephesians 4:1-16. We looked through that, introducing the topic and then we ended in 1 Corinthians 12:1-27. Both of those passages defining, describing life in the local church. So if you missed that message, it's online. You need to listen to it because it's really foundational stuff from the Apostle Paul on the doctrine of the church.

We were emphasizing last week the diversity that we find in the local church. Which, that diversity testifies both to the unity of God, his oneness and also to the wisdom of God's design, what he purposed for the church. The variation that we find in the local church, if you look around, just the

uniqueness even in how you all dress. I mean, everybody's different, how you think, what your gifts are, your talents, your personalities. Everything is very different and that variation that we find in that local church, that manifold diversity, all of us different, all of us uniquely gifted. As we come to accept and appreciate our differences, as we embrace and work with that diversity that God put here, well the Lord is going to glorify his wisdom through that. He's going to glorify his wisdom in doing exactly what he's done, uniting us together because he's gonna produce a unity here in the local church. It's gonna show who he is and what he's like.

A couple of weeks ago, Melinda and I had an opportunity to attend the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. Talk about an illustration of unity through diversity that's it. That's it. There are four sections, if you're an orchestra fan, in a symphony orchestra. You've got strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion, each of those sections consisting of different individual instruments, all the individual instruments and all the sections coming together to produce a unified, harmonious, melodic, beautiful sound. Powerful sound.

Every single one of those musicians has practiced diligently, honing his or her natural talent, aiming it for excellence; and through dedication and hard work contributing to the whole. Each one sees his and her significance not in a sense of individual self-expression, not in isolation from one another, not in independence, rather the significance of each musician is found in his or her contribution to the whole, right? No solos, no one overplaying, trying to grab the spotlight. Everyone is submitted to the same sheet of music. Everyone is following the lead of the conductor, and they serve the unity of the author, the composer, by submitting to the conductor and the diversity of instruments, the individual talents results in symphony and harmony, not in cacophony and chaos, right?

I believe that's what the Lord wants for his church, don't you? Maybe we should change our name to Grace Symphonic Church. Do you like the sound of that? Just to make the point. Or maybe Grace University Church. You know, the word university joins together those two words unity and diversity.

God uses our diversity to unify us, and it sounds counterintuitive, at first, but that is the intent of the divine author of the church. That's the point. He's here to demonstrate his revealed wisdom. It's revealed. It's not something that comes from in our hearts. He had to reveal it; he had to show it. We had to read about it in his Word. It's all here and so that's what he's doing, he's demonstrating profound wisdom through the church.

Well, how does he do that? How does he unite us through diversity. On a human level, diversity fractures; it doesn't bring together. The multi-cultural European experiment, the multi-cultural US experiment, American experiment, we're watching the diversity not bring us together as much as it is starting to fracture more and more and more.

Well how does God unite us through diversity? How does he demonstrate his wisdom that way? Well, as we said last time, this diversity is his tool of sanctifying us. It's how he sanctifies us. Because first we need to learn to accept our diversity with one another, to accept one another's diversity,

something that's clearly ordained by our sovereign and wise God. We need to accept that. And when we accept that, you know what that does? It promotes humility in the local church. We humble ourselves before God's design. We humble ourselves, and humility allows us to accept the gifts that he gave each one of us. By humility we accept our own role in the local church. By humility we even learn to accept the circumstances of our lives in what we're able to contribute, in what we're able to do. Not only that, but humility is how we accept how God designed other parts of the body.

Accepting differences in the church, it's a mark of humility and that's what God intends to produce in us, thereby demonstrating his transformative power and his wisdom. Accepting our diversity, accepting it, it's only the beginning because the sanctification process progresses as we learn to not only accept, but also appreciate diversity in God's design for the church. We need to appreciate it. Each member is different, possessing different gifts, different talents. Each member has been given a different role by God, and when we learn to appreciate that diversity, we grow in attitudes and expressions of love and unity here in the church.

That's where we ended last time. 1 Corinthians 12:24-25, "God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another." What a joy, right? "Having the same care for one another so that," verse 26, "if one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together." Such a blessed place to be!

So why don't we name our church Grace Mutual Care and Appreciation for One Another Church? That would be good, too. But you know, it would blow that great new logo that Bret put on your bulletin there. We got a new Logo that Bret helped design; there it is, Grace Church. But if we put all that other stuff in there, it's going to blow the logo. So it's a tad long, Grace Mutual Care and Appreciation for One Another Church. But that's exactly what we seek God to accomplish in our midst. It's exactly what we want. That's also how we want this church to be characterized.

And you know, that's exactly what the Lord will produce in our church as we continue to submit day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year to his design of showing forth his unity through our diversity. He's compelling us through all of that. We're not allowed to be comfortable, we're not allowed to be stagnant, we're not allowed to be just individuals off, isolated, doing our own thing. We're joined together, we're brought together and we're forced to grow in those virtues I mentioned: in humility, in love, in unity.

Those virtues, you remember from last time those are three of the significant themes that we find in the one another commands in the New Testament. Go through the one another commands, and that's how you can find those themes running all the way through them. That word, one another, it's the single word *allélón* in the Greek, and that points to the reciprocal nature of the command, one another, as well as the result of obeying the command, right? So we are all commanded to do it, and as we do it, we're all benefited from the result. When we all embrace our responsibility, when we all embrace our duty before the Lord, before Christ, to love one another, to humble ourselves before one another, to be of one mind with one

another, we all benefit, don't we? We all benefit from that. We all enjoy this environment of love, an environment of humility and unity. We all thrive in that atmosphere, as well. We grow; we get strong. There's an atmosphere of peace, of Christian camaraderie, of spiritual harmony.

So we said last time that word *allélón*, the word one another, it's used more than 100 times in the New Testament, and about 60 times to command the attitudes and actions of believers. I said this last time, you've seen it before if you've been a Christian for any amount of time, we call these the one another commands. The one another commands. About a third of the one another's, they exhort us to love one another; about a third of the one another commands, command us to unity or have to do with unity. High percentage of the rest of those commands have to do with humility, humility. So love, unity, humility and you can divide the commands, and categorize them, also, into categories of attitude and action. Attitude and action. Love and unity and humility, those are to govern our internal attitudes. And then as they do that, they're to become manifest externally in our external behavior, through our words, our actions.



So that's what we want to look at today, alright. These one another attitudes and one another actions. One another attitudes and one another actions. We're gonna start with the internal, and we're gonna move to the external; see what the Bible has to say. Not gonna be able to get through all of it today, so we're gonna punt to next week. We're gonna finish up the outline you see in your bulletin. We'll get to the rest of it next week. But we'll talk about some applications, talk about how would, how do we pull this off practically right here in this church. And I'm gonna have some very clear action items for you. Now you've seen, you can see that we've organized the sermon in your bulletin that way. You can see it. We're just trying to get a handle on life here in the local church. We want *this* local church to be everything that God designed it to be. We want to operate according to God's design. We want to manifest the Spirit's unifying presence among us. We want to demonstrate his saving, his transforming power in our lives, individually, corporately, demonstrating the Gospel. That's why we exist, right? That's what we're here for.

So let's start there with point one, point one, look at it there, the internal one another attitudes. We're looking at the internal and we're looking at one another attitudes. How you think. Here we're just asking a simple question. Let's identify them: What are the one another attitudes? What are they? Well, like I said, from sampling the one another's in Scripture, we're going to organize these one another attitudes into the three virtues I named here: love, humility, and unity, okay? Love, humility, and unity in that order. You can see it there in your bulletin. Let's take that first virtue: love. Turn in your Bibles to John 13. John 13, and we're starting, we're starting here with love because love is primary. Love is absolutely fundamental. It doesn't matter what else we do, if we miss this one here, we've missed it all, haven't we? We need to pursue love. Pursue love, that was Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 if you're familiar with the love chapter. He starts that chapter with this point. Love is absolutely fundamental.

Verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 13 says it doesn't matter if you're an oratorical genius, if you're rhetorician; it doesn't matter if you know all the languages of the world; it doesn't matter if you speak in elevated language of angels, which by the

way, holy angels never sin in what they say. So let's say you're sinless in what you say. It doesn't matter, how, what your vocabulary is; it doesn't matter if you have superlative, amazing expression. If you lack love, no one wants you to talk at the end of the day. Alright? You just become a bunch of noise. You're a clatter, you're a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. Without love, you're nothing more than a distraction.

Verse 2 in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says, it doesn't matter if you have the ultimate prophetic gift; all the data of heaven's hard drive has been downloaded into your brain; if you've got the wisdom of Solomon to implement all that, put it into practical use; doesn't matter if you have that prophetic gift; it doesn't matter if you have amazing mountain-moving faith, without love you're nothing. It's fundamental.

1 Corinthians 13:3, I know I'm marching you through 1 Corinthians 13, just quickly; it's setting up what I'm about to say in John 13. You're in the right place; stay there and don't keep turning. But in verse 3 of 1 Corinthians, if you demonstrate a superlative degree of generosity and sacrifice; if

you're a philanthropist and you're giving to every charitable organization, you're donating your time and your energy, and you're going overseas, and you're doing all that stuff to help the poor in the Third World; it doesn't matter if you've got compassion for all those issues, and you put your money where your mouth is, you're ready to sacrifice all to save the entire world. If you have not love, you gain nothing from that even if you make the ultimate sacrifice, it says in 1 Corinthians 13, "submitting your body to be burned," giving it to the flames, becoming a martyr. Love is absolutely vital to everything we do, everything.

In fact, love is so vital to our lives as Christians, Christ intended that virtue, that singular virtue of love, to define us as Christians. You can tell whether or not someone is a bona fide, card-carrying Christian by the presence or the absence of this one single virtue. Look there in John 13 verses 34 and 35, look at it there, "Jesus said," John 13:34 and 35 "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. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

I think he was pretty emphatic, there, don't you? I think there's no mistaking what he was trying to say. He wants Christians to love. And he said, "By your love you'll be known as my disciples." So what *is* love, exactly? A lot of ideas about that in our world. I can tell my wife I love her, and I can say, boy, I love this ice cream. Are those two the exact same things? No. I can tell you, no. We use love in a very, I mean it's got a huge semantic range in our culture, to where it sometimes, sometimes you're just puzzled. When someone says, I love this...I love that...I love this person...I love that person, what do they really mean? Especially in our distorted, perverted, degraded, defiled culture, what is love?

Four basic words for love in the Greek language. They actually, I love Greek because it gets so specific, it really does divide things up very, very well. And they had four basic words for love in Greek: *agapé*, *philea* (or *philos*), *eros*, and *storge*. I'm about to explain something, here. It's a bit of an oversimplification of the Greek, so just understand that. But it is helpful to make some distinctions between these four words. Basically, let's start with the word *storge*. *Storge* is a word

that refers to a familial kind of love, kind of like the love a mother has for a child; that kind of natural family affection. Okay? That's *storge*.

The word *eros*: word *eros*, very familiar with that in this country, that's a word that means a romantic kind of attraction, a sexual attraction. It's where we get the word *erotic*, and probably that word probably has more in common with lust than with love, probably more in common with covetous desire than with love. And that is precisely what many in our culture, so sadly, have misconstrued as love. That's all they understand. That's all they think. *Eros* is the only form of love that they'll ever know. And when it's perpetrated upon them and they're the abused and the victim in that, apart from God's grace, they're hopelessly lost in understanding what love really is.

Most common word for love in both classical and *Koine* Greek, that is both ancient Greek of Socrates and Plato as well as the Greek that was spoken at the time of Jesus and his Apostles. That, the most common word for love during those

times, and even the highest expression of love in the culture at that time was this this idea of *phileo* or *philos*. Okay, we tend to put a a gloss on *phileo*. It's not always warranted, but it's helpful that that *phileo* is like friendship or maybe an elevated form of friendship, like a brotherly love, like the love that David had for Jonathan and Jonathan had for David, that's *phileo*; that's a close love, friendship. We get the word Philadelphia from this word, right? *Phileo*, love, *adolphos*, brother. Philadelphia: the city of brotherly love. Friendship is implied in this word, *phileo*, and that friendship can be of varying depth and varying loyalty. Sometimes it's superficial, but it can also indicate a friendship love that is very strong, like David and Jonathan. Or so strong that in John 5:20, it says, "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing." That's that verb form *phileo*. *Phileo*: The Father loves the Son. So it's not a bad word. It's a very, very good word. Without a doubt, though, *phileo* was the most common word for love in the Greek language.

There was a less common word, one that was neglected, overlooked, and that was the word *agape*, *agape*; the verb *agapaó*. And that word referred to sacrificial love, a love that

sacrificed solely for the good of the object of that love. When God revealed his love in Jesus Christ, that's the word he used. In fact, Christian writers are the ones who really took that word, defined it, injected it with all the divinely revealed meaning. That's why it's such a popular word today. The word *phileo*, the verb *phileo*, assumed in it a certain level of self-interest, self-interest, which made perfect sense to the Greek, and it makes sense to us Americans, too; that you love what you find lovely. You love what you find useful to yourself. You love what you find beneficial to you in some way. There's an inherent self-interest. The verb *agapaó*, that verb, this, this *agapé* kind of love, has nothing to do with the self. It has everything to do with the good of the object of that love.

No wonder it was so neglected in the common parlance of the ancient world, no wonder. No wonder it's a neglected concept in the vernacular of our world, too. We don't think that way.

*Philos*, *eros*, *storge*, we get those. Those make sense. We understand friendship. We understand romantic attraction, magnetic attraction to the opposite sex and all that. We understand that. We understand familial love, pictures of mother and child and fathers taking their kids to ball games and all



that kind of stuff. Those concepts make sense to us. But *agape*, no, not so much. In fact, not at all. Who loves expecting nothing in return? That's ludicrous.

No, that's not ludicrous. That's God. That's God revealing himself in Jesus Christ. Turn over to the letter of 1 John chapter 4, and you're gonna go the right in your Bibles almost to Revelation. 1, 2, and 3 John and in 1 John chapter 4, we learn something very, very important about this love. John has become known to us in the church, throughout church history, he's been known as the Apostle of love. But listen, that's not how it started. That's not how he started out. He was one of the notorious Sons of Thunder. Sounds like a motorcycle gang, doesn't it? Sons of Thunder, it's not a motorcycle gang. Sons of Thunder was the nickname for James and his brother John, the two sons of Zebedee. These two guys were harsh. They were harsh, they once wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans for refusing to allow Jesus to pass through their country on his way to Jerusalem. Okay, you won't let us come through your city? Okay—*genocide*! Whoa! Back off, Son of Thunder! That's pretty harsh.

So it's quite a story of God's transforming grace to see how John, one of these two Sons of Thunder would come to be known to us as the Apostle of love. Notice what John writes starting in 1 John 4:7, "Beloved," what a tender way to address his readers, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love, does not know God because God is love." It's one of his chief attributes, his chief characteristics. God is love.

All through this passage, all through the book of 1 John, actually, John is using the word *agapé* and the verb *agapaó*. In fact, the word *phileo* that kind of love does not show up even once in 1 John. It's always *agapé*, always *agapaó*, personal sacrifice for the good of someone else, expecting nothing in return; not even a tax benefit, nothing. John says there in those two verses, John says *agapé* comes from God. The world doesn't have it. You don't find it resident in the human heart. It's not found in the Christmas spirit, American patriotism, or whatever. This *agapé* kind of love is not in the heart of an innocent child. It's not even in the heart of the mother for her child.

This *agapé* love that kind of love comes from God and *only* from God. Get this, it's only those who possess that kind of love, who belong to God. John calls them beloved, those who have been loved by God. No achievement, there. Nothing earned. No merit. Christians are those who have become the recipients of divine love, those who are loved by God. And those who are loved by God, they are transformed by that love to begin loving like God loves. The love with which they love others is God-like. They love in the same manner; they love according to the same means. I just say they don't love to the same degree, right? None of us has a sinless son that we send to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world, right? We don't have that. So not in the same degree, but in the same manner and according to the same means. By loving in the same manner, you know what? They learn to sacrifice like God sacrifices, giving, expecting nothing in return. By loving according to the same means, they love in the way that God prescribes. That is to say, they don't come up with their own definition of love, doing whatever *they* think is loving. They love according to how God tells them to love. They look to the Bible to see what the Bible says what love is and they do that.

For example, many people run around the world today within evangelicalism and other religions, too, and they perform all kinds of social welfare projects, ostensibly to spread the love of God, right? Nothing inherently wrong with that. It's good to help people in Third World countries build infrastructure in their countries. You don't like to see starvation and people going without water and medical help and all that. That's a good thing. The problem is if you're digging a well, but you're never confronting people about their sin, you're never teaching them to put their faith alone in Christ alone, no merit of their own, but just trusting in him, believing in him; if you're never teaching them about the sovereign grace of God and his demands for repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, well, then you're not really loving them at all, are you? Not according to this definition. Not according to divine love. People can be well-fed and well-watered in this life, have great medical care and spend the next eternal life in hell. That's no good!

So 1 John 4:8, Those who do not love like God loves, you know what? Those people do not know God, and we are utterly dependent on God to receive this kind of love. Why? Because we

didn't know anything about it until he revealed it. Look at 1 John 4:9-10, "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." Wow! There it is, ultimate sacrifice, wholly for the good of the object of the act of love, not seeking anything out of it in return.

You say, didn't God get something out of it? Nothing that he didn't already have. I mean, was God completely fulfilled in his inner Trinitarian relationships? Yes. Did the Father and the Spirit love the Son; does the Son and the Spirit love the Father? Does the Father and the Son love the Spirit, perfectly, without any lack? Absolutely. There is no lack in inter-Trinitarian love. There is no lack in the Trinity. There is no lack in God. There is no need in him that prompted him to create the world to redeem sinners like us. He didn't do it out of need. He did all this out of love. Love, doing it wholly for the good of us, expecting nothing in return. And notice, his love confronts sin. What does it say there? "He sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." We need to realize we have sins.

We need to face the facts. So God does the hard work of confrontation to show us, here is what you really look like. Don't fool yourself. Don't pile up your good deeds and think you're okay. Look at the standard of the divine Scripture. See God's character on display. Take a look in *that* mirror and compare yourself. You know what? We have "all sinned and fall short of the glory of God," right?

God confronted us in our sin. That's loving. God sacrificed his own son on the cross. That was loving. He poured out all his wrath on *him* for the sins of all of those and only those who will ever believe. So costly! And don't miss those two statements of purpose, there. What motivated God's love for us? Purpose number one, verse 9, "so that we might live through him." Purpose number 2, verse 10, "he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." He wanted us to have life. He wanted us to have forgiveness, a clean conscience. He wanted us to be pure and holy, and to stand perfect and accepted in Christ. How kind. How good. How merciful. Can there be any confusion about the implication that John draws there in verse 11. Look at it there, "Beloved, if God so loved us," that is to say, if he so loved us, if he thus loved us, if he loved us in

that way, "we also ought to love one another." This is the natural, logical conclusion, and if we'll love one another, you know what? We'll glorify God. Look at verse 12, "No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us." Wow!

Well, that's why, several times, John pointed his Christian readers back to that original command of Jesus in John 13, that they'd be known by their love for one another. Again, here's some one another's from 1 John. This is the way they demonstrate their discipleship, their devotion to Christ. 1 John 3:11, "This is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." 1 John 3:23, "This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he commanded us." 2 John 5, "Now I ask you, dear lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, that we," what? "love one another," right? The Apostle Peter, he understood this as well. He commanded Christians to love one another, and he intensified the command with a little modifying word, it's the Greek word *ektenés*, which means fervently, earnestly, eagerly, consistently. Listen to just a couple of passages from Peter. 1

Peter 1:22, "Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly." That's the word *ektenés*. Love one another fervently, passionately, from a pure heart. 1 John 4:8, "Above all, keep loving one another *ektenés*." Earnestly, passionately, fervently, constantly. "Since love covers over a multitude of sins." You want harmony? You want no offense from other people's offenses against you? Love. Love them fervently. You'll overlook a lot if you love the person, right? Love one another fervently, earnestly, eagerly, that's the attitude. God commands us to be aggressive in our attitudes of love for one another.

Listen are you aggressive about loving your brothers and sisters here in this church? Are you? I know we could all grow. Paul pressed this love for one another command as well. Romans 12:10 says, "Love one another with brotherly affection." He's talking about what comes out of the heart, what actually affects your guts. That's the terms that are used there. In verse, ah, in chapter 13 verse 8 of Romans, "Owe no one anything except to love one another." I know every budgeting program in the world uses that "owe no one anything" portion, but don't forget the rest, okay? Yea, okay, fine, get out of debt, pay your bills,



don't owe anyone anything. But owe everyone this, that you love one another. "For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." Okay, so that's the most important thing. Your finances, okay, good, but love one another, and be indebted to that forever.

Listen, you know what? This sounds so high and holy and hard, but you know what? We can do this. We have the power of the Spirit in the Word of God to help us to do this, to change, to grow. Apart from Christ, there is no hope from doing anything like this because "love comes from God," after all. And if you don't know the love of God in Christ, you don't have any of this. You need to be saved. You need to be born again. You need to be regenerated to a living hope and know the love of God from the very beginning. But if you do know that love, if you have had that love shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit that's in you, you know what? With God's help, we can become not only effective, but very effective in loving one another. That is what is so encouraging. Whole churches can become characterized by loving one another.

The Thessalonian church was one of those churches. Paul wrote, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, "Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another." Isn't that amazing, coming from the pen of an Apostle, a giant in church history. He says, you know what? I don't even need to write about this for you guys. You do it. You love one another. You've been taught by God to love one another. They were known for it. The, the reputation of the Thessalonian church had sounded forth throughout all of Macedonia and Achaia, all through the Greek world. I mean, they were known. Isn't that a great thing to aspire to? Wouldn't you like this church to be known for its love for one another, not in Greeley, but Colorado? Wouldn't that be awesome? That is such an encouragement to us, such a thing to aspire to.

Well look, love is just the first of three internal attitudes we see in the one another commands of Scripture, but it is so foundational. We had to spend a little extra time on it. Let's get to the second internal attitude. Gonna have to move a little more quickly, I can see my time is withering away. The enemy is on that wall back there, it's called a clock, it's

telling me I have got to hurry up. Okay, second internal attitude is humility, humility. If we're going to love one another, we're forced to humble ourselves with one another as well. There's no room for pride in the local church, no room for pride. I mean how can you have pride when God the Father sent his son, the perfect Son of God, second person of the Trinity, be incarnated in a little baby, who grew up perfect, sinless, die on a cross for your sins, and then gave you a righteousness you did not deserve. How can you have any pride in light of that? Can you match that? Your gifts pretty good? Gonna measure up to that? No! Look, we are forced in this love attitude, loving one another, we're forced to humble ourselves with each other as well. We're forced to it. Pride is utterly unfitting, here.

Let's start with what's probably a foundational text for Peter. Turn to 1 Peter 5:5. If you're in 1 John, just back up a couple of pages and you're gonna be in 1 Peter 5:5. Peter, as you know, he was the Apostle with the foot-shaped mouth. That guy had so much to learn about humility, and I don't know about you, but I am grateful Christ chose him because he gives us hope. He is such an encouragement to all of us because if the

Holy Spirit can accomplish so much in and through Peter, you know what? All of us have hope. All of us can grow. You may remember that Peter once promised Jesus and he was standing there in front of all the other disciples. Jesus is promising his, you know, being arrested by the Jewish leaders and tortured and crucified. And he's saying, "You're going to all fall away." And Peter said in front of all his buddies, he's been spending three years with them, and he was fishing buddies with these guys. He had a fishing business with James and John. And he says, Though, "Though they all fall away because of you, I'll never fall away." Jesus, I'm better than them. I'm better than them. Just a few hours after he said that, he fell away. He fell. He denied Jesus three times. Such proud beginnings for this man, so self-confident, so self-assured. Peter had a lot to learn about humility, and God was so gracious to teach him. You watch him transform after Pentecost; you watch him transform in the church. You see it in his writing in 1 Peter and 2 Peter and after many years of serving the Lord as an Apostle, he wrote this in 1 Peter 5:5, "Clothe," yourself, "yourselves all of you with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

You know what? In that verse Peter identified the fundamental principle that undergirds our pursuit of an attitude of humility. If you want to hold on to your pride, you know what? God will oppose you. You set yourself on the opposite side of God. You set yourself, there's the line of scrimmage, you're on God's side, as soon as you go into pride, you know what? You go on the other side. And he, like a bulldozer running back is going to run right over you. He's going to drive you into the ground! God opposes the proud; he'll thwart you. He will resist you. He will frustrate you. You can't win against an omnipotent God. He's too strong for you.

So if you humble yourself before God, he will give you grace. He'll give you grace. He'll lift you up. He'll prosper you. He'll encourage you. He'll strengthen you. He'll use you. Here in the local church, God is going to use you through an attitude of humility that's dependent on him. Someone once said, "It's amazing how much can be accomplished if you don't care who gets the credit." That is true. And that's why Paul commanded, Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." Look, when you get yourself out of the way, you're able to see

what God wants done. You're able to see what Christ wants for his church. And you're also able, like we said at the beginning to accept and appreciate the diversity in the body of Christ. You're able to rejoice in how the Spirit uses all kinds of people with all kinds of gifts. Galatians 5:26, Paul said, "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." "Rather," Romans 12:16, "Live in harmony with one another. You are not to be haughty, but to associate with the lowly, never being wise in your own estimation." You'll come to understand, God uses all kinds of people, the greatest, the least, and everyone in between because nothing is garbage to God. Everyone who comes in these doors counts. Everyone who is a member of the church counts; everyone matters. No spare parts.

Well, motivated by sacrificial love, maintaining an attitude of humility and even striving for it, you can see how those produce a third attitude: a desire for unity. A desire for unity. Again, we're just moving through these one another commands in the New Testament. Just this one more, I've got to wrap up. One of these humility-producing one another's that we just talked about, Romans 12:16 says, "Live in harmony with one another." Live in harmony with one another. You know, that's

also a unity-promoting command, right? Harmony is the byproduct of attitudes of love and unity. It's, it's an interest in corporate unity, in people getting along, in people being in agreement. Harmony is what's produced when all the members of that symphony orchestra I mentioned, when all of them are giving of themselves, submitting themselves to the corporate good. That's the emphasis in Ephesians 4:2-3, we mentioned that last week: "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain," what? "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," right?

That commitment to the unity of the Spirit, as we said, in Ephesians 4:4-6, the next verses, it's forged out of a doctrinal clarity that's outlined there in those verses. That commitment to the unity of the Spirit that's what supports, that's what maintains, that's what even produces an environment that's permeated with friendship and congeniality. It's permeated; it creates a spirit of harmony and agreement. Sweetness of Christian fellowship, it's clear evidence of God's blessing on a congregation. And Paul acknowledged that in Romans 15:5, he said, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ

Jesus.” It’s God who produces that. And he does that through the means of our striving for it, of our working hard for it, counting it worth pursuing, counting it worth of sacrificing for.

Just take a look quickly at Philippians, Philippians chapter, ah let’s look at chapter 2. Philippians 2. Two times Paul commanded in the epistle to the Philippians and he was writing, you understand, that letter known as the epistle of joy; two times he commanded the pursuit of unity explicitly. I mean it’s thematic in the, in the, in the book, in the little letter. But two times explicitly he commanded it. He says in Philippians 1:27, “Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” Remember back to that picture of the symphony and what we learned last week from 1 Corinthians 12. The diversity in the local church is produced by the same Spirit in service to the same Lord. It’s energized and directed by the same God. It is the Word of that one Triune God that brings us all together. It unites us. It’s the Word of that Triune God that unites us



all, as he says there, "with one mind, striving side by side for faith of the," What?, "gospel." Are there many Gospels? No. One Gospel. One Gospel. All of us reading from the same sheet of music, all of us following the same conductor.

Take a look at the next chapter Philippians 2:1-2, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord," or full harmony, you could say, "and of one mind." When Paul says he wants us to be "of the same mind," he's literally saying that we're to be thinking the same thing.

How does that comport with diversity in the body? Are we cult members, turning off our brains to submit to some kind of groupthink, peer pressure? What are we talking about, here? Simply this, just as the diversity of an orchestra is subordinated to the composer's music, just as each instrument plays in time, following the conductor's lead, so also are we in the local church. All through our diversity, we are to be subordinated to the same authoritative Scripture. We're to be

directed through God's Word by the same Spirit. Same sheet of music, same conductor, right? It forces you to ask the question, Do I trust this sheet of music? Do I even believe that there is a conductor? It's what you gotta reckon with before God. God calls you to believe it. It's authoritative Word of God. It's his sheet music; it's his, it's his composition. You either believe it or you don't. But again, this unity, the same mind, same love, being of full harmony, that unity is going to be produced in the spirit of humility. There in verse 3, "doing nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others as more significant than yourselves."

We could keep going but we can't, okay? We, we can honestly, this could cascade into a kaleidoscope of sermons. I could preach on all different aspects of Christ's demonstration of love and humility, all in the pursuit of unity. 'Cause that's where Paul goes in Philippians 2:5 and following. He goes into Christ's example in sacrificing himself. But I just, we just have to stop here, and next time we'll pick it up into the next main point, there in your outline. But for now, let's just bow our heads in a word of prayer and ask God to produce these things in our lives.

Heavenly Father, we do give ourselves to you afresh, having learned from your Word, from these one another commandments. Pretty penetrating, father, especially when we're confronted with the example of your love for us. When we're confronted with the example of your love, your sacrifice, expecting nothing in return, we're amazed, and we do not have any room for pride. We humble ourselves before you. We know that you oppose the proud, but you do give grace to the humble. So we humble ourselves before you. We want love to permeate this congregation. We want humility to be all of our attitudes. And we want unity to be our aim, our goal, our greatest desire. I pray that this would affect the way we live, the way we think, what we do with our time, what we do with our schedules, even how we spend our money. Father, let it permeate everything that we do. We want to do it for the sake of your glory, for the glory of this great Gospel we've just been describing, the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It's in his name we pray. Amen.