

“What does it mean to serve like Jesus?” (Philippians 2:1-11)

We’ve been studying the letter to Philippians, the sermon series of “Living worthily of the Gospel.”

One day I was standing at a street intersection in downtown. Suddenly someone called me from behind, “Pastor”. When I turn around, there was a church member, and he asked, “Are you having trouble crossing the street? Shall I go with you?” He offered me help out of kindness. I answered, “Well, I am just waiting for the traffic light to change to green. Now it’s still red.” He looked surprised and left there without saying anything.

By the way, I can cross the street in Ho Chi Minh City, where there are so many motorbikes and cars without much trouble, so I have no problem crossing the street in Yangon.

To stop at a red light, and cross the road on the green light. Absolutely normal. It’s nothing wrong and nothing strange. Of course, you can do it alone, but when many people are doing it, it’s easier to do it. But if we are in the place where so many people are not doing what is right, then it will become a great challenge to do what we know is right.

It is the same with our lives as Christians.

We will face battles of faith. Last week, Tim gave us three examples. 1) Watering down your faith or witness. 2) Trying to go it alone. And 3) Tearing apart your own team members. If you missed that wonderful message, please check it out on the church FB or website.

You really want to share about Jesus. Whenever you share your testimony with your friend, he changes the subject. You talked about the Bible with your family members, but they look offended, upset and show their discomfort, saying “Do you really believe the Bible?” You invite your friends to a church event. They say, “I will come if I can.” But nobody shows up. When things like this continue to happen, we gradually get disheartened.

To live according to the Word of God is absolutely natural as a Christian, a citizen of heaven. But that itself is a battle in this world.

Some of you here may be facing a challenge about your faith in Christ. You may be wondering, “Possibly I might be wrong.” “How can I keep my faith, and live according to my faith while there are so many opponents?” If you are

struggling about standing for faith, like me, today's message is for you. This letter is written for you.

The church in Philippi was facing difficult situations. There were many opponents in the church and they were frightened by them (1:28). Paul told them to watch out for the dogs, beware of the evil workers (3:2). And many lived as enemies of the cross of Christ (3:18). Christians in Philippi were frightened and were suffering for their stand for faith.

Their faith in Jesus was attacked and they were shaken spiritually and mentally, and because of that, "they wavered in their commitment to the Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

Paul wrote a letter to them in order to encourage them, as their faith in Jesus was in danger of being weakened. He said, "Fight with one mind for the faith of the Gospel. (1:27)"

When Christians in Philippi read this letter up to this point, perhaps they might have thought, "You say we must be united. But that is the most difficult thing. Our faith in Jesus is shaken within the church. How can we fight with one mind for the faith of the Gospel? That is impossible!"

But Paul says to them, "You can do it, because you are already one." You are loved by One God, and moved by the love of One God and serving with One mind as One team, for One Lord. And Jesus is the best model for serving in this way.

This is the outline for today: 1) One God, 2) One Mind, 3) One Team, and 4) One Lord.

## 1. One God

### Phil 2:1

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy,

Here Paul asks them, think about this:

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Geoffrion, "The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians," Edwin Mellen Press, 1993, p.115

Have you ever received any encouragement in Christ when you were wondering what to do and didn't know whether you're on the right track or not? You have had that kind of experiences, right?

When you were in pain and sorrow and your heart was ready to break, have you ever received love from heavenly Father and be comforted, consoled? I am sure you have.

When you were lonely and feeling as if no one understood you, have you ever been reminded that God was with you and felt the fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Surely you have.

When you were discouraged, thinking "I am no good. I failed again. No one cares for me," have you ever felt surrounded by God's infinite love, his compassion, sympathy and tender mercy? You have had experiences like this, right?

Remember how you come to believe in Jesus. You have realized your sin, and that you had been opposing God's will and grieving Him, and when you realized that Jesus paid the penalty of your sin by being crucified on your behalf, you repented, and received God's forgiveness, salvation and His love. And you jumped into the relationship with God, is that right?

There are no identical experiences. Everyone's experience is different. But we have all experienced the same Jesus, the same Father God, the same Holy Spirit and the same love of God.

Paul is saying, "See, we are all loved by one God. We have received the love from one God. You are already in one."

All Christians are in Christ. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit living in them. All Christians have been loved by God, received His love, and are reflecting His love and practicing His love.

Where can we experience this love of God? Often in a church, usually in the fellowship among Christians. When the unity in a church becomes deeper and closer, we will experience this love of God more and more abundantly, and we will come to realize how wide and long and high and deep is the love of God.

## **2. One Mind**

### Phil 2:2

make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

“One mind? I wish it would be like this, but it isn’t like this in reality. That’s why we have problems in church, don’t you know Paul? One Mind? That is just wishful thinking, unrealistic ideal. Are you telling us to realize that ideal? You are a happy person.”

That’s totally misunderstanding of what Paul is saying. He is pointing out, saying, “You actually already have the same mind in each of you. So, you can do it together! Make it better.”

**“make my joy complete.”**

In cp1, Paul already expressed his joy because of their partnership in spreading the Gospel, that is one mind, and their fellowship with him up to that point, even after he was put in prison, that is one mind. And here Paul already saw the same mind in each of them, and he was happy to see that they are practicing this like-mindedness. But it is not completed. Because at that time, the church in Philippi was in danger of losing it.

If selfish-ambition enters their church, their “one mind” will be destroyed. If self-importance enters their community, their “one mind” will fall apart. If self-centeredness enters into their fellowship, their “one mind” will be lost.

Ambition is the desire to succeed. There is nothing wrong with it, if you are purely looking for ways to accomplish the will of God, glorifying God. But the selfish-ambition is wrong. It says, “It is not enough to succeed. Others must fail,” and “Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies.”

Self-importance is the desire for personal prestige. To be admired and respected. Self-centeredness is being concerned only with oneself and own interest. “I am the center of the world I see: where the horizon depends on where I stand.”

Such selfish-ambition, self-importance and self-centeredness will easily cause fight, disunity and division.<sup>2</sup>

The church in Philippi was in a dangerous situation where these very things began to emerge and spread.

So Paul continues:

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<sup>2</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *A Life Worth Living*, Kingsway Publications, 1994, pp.44-47

**“be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”**

What can be common in all Christian’s minds? To bring the glory and praise to God (Phil 1:11). “Always Christ will be exalted in my body (Phil 1:20).”

What can be the thing all Christians work together with one heart? “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10).” Jesus said, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” and “Follow me” (Mark 1:15, 17).

What kind of love can all Christians have? “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ And, Love your neighbor as yourself. (Mark 12:30-31)”

We are “to be united in spirit, soul, mind and heart.”<sup>3</sup>

If you are a Christian, you should know you are loved by God, and you want to love God. There is no Christian who doesn’t want to love God. We wish to love God with all our might, all the time. But in reality it is difficult. Love your neighbor as yourself. “You can say this because you don’t know my neighbor!”

I have just listed up our mission which the Bible shows. You may think, “Of course I know. I know it in my head, but my heart and body don’t follow it.”

If we stay alone, we are very weak. We get easily discouraged, disheartened and depressed. But what if we have companions, and do it together with united minds?

Then we’ll be encouraged, feel uplifted and strengthened. Even when things don’t go well, we can think positively and have the courage to try it again. Even things we wouldn’t do on our own, if we have companions, we can try with courage.

To stand firm in one mind. You may be thinking that’s specifically for this person or that person. But it is for you and me. We can live out our mission, our call because we are in one mind, and not separated and isolated as individuals. We may fail, stumble, or get hurt sometimes. But when we stand together as we are in one mind, one purpose, we can support one another, encourage each other and go forward together.

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy, p.111

One mind. Because all of us are loved by One God, we already have One mind. We actually already have the same mind in each of us. Therefore, Paul says, remain true to who you are. Be united with one mind.

### 3. One Team

#### Phil 2:3-4

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

The opposite of selfishness is to look to the interests of others. The opposite of vain conceit is to regard others as better than yourselves. By contrasting the two opposite things, Paul is clarifying the meaning.

Here he is talking about the frame of mind, the mental attitude for them to be One Team which works with One Mind, moved by the love of One God.

The church in Philippi was right in the midst of the battle in which their faith might be shaken. So Paul was exhorting them to stand firm in one spirit, and fight with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

Imagine what it was like in the battle in those days. All of them were armed, with shields in front of them, advancing side by side, forming one line, as if they were one big wall.

What if some of them become selfish at that time? Someone might think, "Actually I'm more interested in other business. So, please excuse me. Thank you for your fighting." Then there will be a gap where he's supposed to be. Then, that spot will become a target of the enemy's attack.

They can advance safely, because they are united as one. If they break up and are separated from one another, they will be easily attacked by their enemy. So Paul says, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Because you are One Team which works with One Mind, moved by the love of One God."

What hinders unity is not the difference of opinions, but self-centeredness. That is to look only to your own interests. "I, I, for me, to me", "my right, my need, my plan, my benefit" just think about yourself, not looking to the benefit of the

whole team, but only to the benefit of yourself. Because of this, unity is lost, and disunity, division and discord will come about.

Another thing is selfish-ambition. We humans enjoy being praised, becoming famous, well recognized, or being in the spotlight.

In the battle, they are advancing side by side, forming one line. Then, if one of them thinks, "I am stronger than anyone else. I can run faster than anyone else. And I can also use a spear so well. It's pointless for me to be with these guys. Now I will achieve a feat, perform a great service and become famous! I must be hero." He leaves the line and runs out for selfish ambition. Now the team are disconnected, and not only he but the whole team are easily attacked by the enemy.

Conceit or vanity is to show off, and there is groundless pride. Vain, conceited people always try to draw people's attention and interest to themselves. And they hate people who don't pay attention to them, and they are hostile to them. There is no unity there.

We are fighting the same battle. We are not fighting alone. We each have our strength and our part. You may do a great job in one thing, but others may do better in another thing. Regard others as better than yourselves, Paul says, we are One Team which works with One Mind, moved by the love of One God.

In 2004 and 2005, we left Vietnam and stayed in Singapore for about 6, 7 months. I worked full time at a training center for cross-cultural mission, and I helped the trainees' mental care and stress management. In other words, my job was to sit down with trainees, have coffee together with them, and listen to them.

When the training course was about to end, one day I was having a meal with one couple. The husband was a medical doctor, and the wife was a primary school teacher. They had two children of primary school age. It was already decided that they would be sent out to Africa right after the course.

The husband was already thinking about the project, his role and jobs he would be engaged over there. And his mind was already occupied with concerns and anxieties as to whether he could do his job well, if he could fulfill his responsibility as a member of the international team, and whether he could get along well with the local staff and so on. He was full of stress even before he was sent.

As for his wife, she was concerned about their new life in the foreign land and their children's education. "Can I do it well? My husband has a clear job

description for himself. But I don't have anything clear. What will happen there? What am I going there to do? Will my kids be okay?" She was already overwhelmed by anxiety.

I was listening to them, as I was eating. I showed them the knife I was using for my meal, and said, "This is you Jonny." And I cut the potato on my plate into pieces. "You are very sharp, and you are always actively working." Then I showed them the fork in my other hand, and said, "This is you Susie." And I stuck the fork into the meat on the plate. "It looks as if it was not doing anything" saying this, I cut the meat with the knife. "The knife alone cannot do the job. The knife can do the job, because the fork is there, holding the meat. And the job is completed by the fork." And I carried the meat into my mouth with the fork.

As I was enjoying the rest of my meal, they hold each other's hands, looking at each other in tears. It's so beautiful.

One Team which works with One Mind, moved by the love of One God.

#### **4. One Lord**

We serve One Lord, under the authority of One Lord, for the glory of One Lord. Jesus is one. Christ is one. The Lord is one. One Lord.

It is not that we try our best, use our wisdom, negotiate, compromise and become one. We are already one. We are loved by One God, and moved by the love of One God and serving with One mind as One team, for One Lord.

#### **Phil 2:5**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Jesus is my Lord. What does it mean practically? To think, act and live, making the mind of Jesus as your mind. This is practically what it means to make Jesus your Lord. And this kind of life proves that Jesus is your Lord. Not just saying or singing Jesus is my Lord.

To make the mind of Jesus my mind. This does not mean that we train ourselves, continue our effort to learn and achieve this. The mind of Christ is already in me, in you, in us. Because the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit lives in us (Rom 8:9). Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20). We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor

2:16). We have One Mind and One spirit, and belong to One Team for the glory of One Lord!

And our question is what is the mind of Christ?

“Christ is portrayed as an example of single-minded devotion to the will of God”<sup>4</sup> for the glory of the Father.

What does it mean to serve like Jesus? The simplest answer is to do whatever for the glory of the Lord. We are serving for the Lord, for his glory, not for our benefit, not for our name. The key is being humble.

Being humble is to be obedient to the will of God. Being humble is to say “Yes” to the Lord. The Lord asks me to do something, but I have a different idea and if I’m not humble, I would ask “Why me?” and I would argue with him. I wouldn’t be totally happy to do what he asks me to do. But a humble person says “Yes” wholeheartedly with happy attitude immediately.

Being humble is to say “I’ll do everything for the glory of the Lord.” “My success, my ministry, my fruit, my achievement, my victory, my failure, my sorrow, my suffering, is for the glory of God, not for myself.”

And being humble is the very mind of Christ.

### Phil 2:5-8

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.

I just talked about One God, One Mind and One Team. These are the very things we can see in Jesus. Jesus demonstrated how to serve in this way.

First of all, Jesus is God himself. And he proclaimed he and the Father were one (John 10:30). He knew very well that he was loved by the Father, and he lived in the love of the Father (John 5:20, 15:9). He had a close fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1, 14, 18). Triune God shows One God.

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy, p.114

Secondly, he came to the earth to do the Father's will (John 6:38). He gave up his life on the cross, in order to fulfill the Father's commandment. John 10:18, Jesus said "No one takes it [Jesus' life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. ... This command I received from my Father." He was in One Mind with His Father.

Thirdly, he worked with the Father (John 5:17). He always listened to the Father, and said what the Father told him to say (John 12:50). He always did what the Father told him to do (John 14:31). He and Father were One Team.

And fourthly, his desire was to bring glory to the Father. What he did was for the glory of the Father (John 14:13, 17:1, 4).

### Phil 2:9-11

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What is the purpose of every tongue which confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord? It is to the glory of the Father. Whatever Jesus did is for the glory of the Father, not of himself, even though he is called the Lord of all by every tongue.

He humbled himself in order to become obedient until death, even death on a cross.

For whom did Jesus die on the cross? He died for us, sinners, living in selfish-ambition, self-importance and self-centeredness. The cross symbolizes who Jesus is. He has no self-centeredness, such as looking only to his own interests. He has no vanity to exalt himself at all. He left the glory of heaven, he renounced his right as God, taking the very nature of a slave. He received curse for our sake, became sin for us, received ridicule of people, and experienced most excruciating suffering and died for us.

Jesus didn't have to do these. There was no reason for him to accept such an unreasonable role, while he actually had no sin. He could have just stayed in heaven, pointed a spear at sinners, blamed them and judged them, because he is God. But he accepted this unreasonable role and fulfilled his mission, the Father's will from out of love.

Just the night before he was crucified he prayed. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)" And then he took the way to Calvary.

We are loved by One God, and moved by the love of One God and we are to serve with One mind, as One team, for One Lord.

### **For Lifenet groups and self-reflection**

1. Have you ever had someone tell you something which shook your faith?
2. Have you ever experienced encouragement from Jesus, fellowship with the Spirit, and comfort, tenderness and compassion of the Father?
3. List up things Christians can do together with one mind. What are the reasons why it is difficult to do them together? What is the key(s) to maintain the unity in church?
4. What do you learn from the attitude of Jesus in Phil 2:6-11? How would you apply it to your life? How would you practice it in church?