

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-4

Note: Today we are going to talk about living in fellowship within the church. **Dr. Gutzke** talks about us when we first get saved. He says at salvation the human nature stays the same; our change is spiritual. That is the part of us that is a new creation. He writes "Whatever a man's natural desires were before he accepted Christ, he would still have those natural desires afterward. Every human being has his own ego, his own self, his own interest. Accepting Christ does not change that." However God has placed us into his body which is the church. As God uses us and works through others we begin to change.

1. Believers sharing blessings from God should unite us. Philippians 2:1 *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

a) Consolation in Christ means to be encouraged by His presence and works in our lives. We all got saved by hearing the Bible convicted by the Holy Spirit and deciding to accept Jesus as our Savior. The Holy Spirit within works in each of us as we seek to learn about God by reading the Bible and attending church.

b) God's love in us and through us should unite us. *comfort of love 1 John 4:7; 9-10 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.....In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Comfort of love is comfort which comes from knowing we are loved by God and the joy we get as we love and receive love from the brethren.

c) Bowles and mercies refer the work of the Holy Spirit causing us to have compassion for the brethren. This means we come along side of anyone who is hurting in a non-judgmental way.

d). God teaches us the importance of being likeminded. Since we have the same love we should have a singleness of purpose. That would be to lift up the name of Jesus, help each other grow in the knowledge of the Lord and to reach out to the lost.

2. Putting others ahead of ourselves is the key to humility. (3-4) *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* Let's face it; some of like to be in charge and have everything done our own way. Strife usually occurs when people don't agree with what we want. We need to be working together to reach the community for Christ and to help us grow in the Lord personally.

II. Make sure you use your spiritual knowledge to build up your brother. Romans 14: 16-19 *Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.* I realize this chapter speaks to conditions in Rome. Meat was offered to idols and some folks could stumble into idolatry. Paul warned against that but I believe he is giving us the positive exhortation here. Instead of judging, condemning and separating strive to promote righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

1. God wants us to focus on the majors or essentials of the faith. (17)

A. Righteousness is living according the will of God. There are two kinds of righteousness for us to consider. One form is the imputed righteousness we get at salvation. The other is right living.

B. The next major is peace. There is the peace with God and the peace of God. Peace with God is salvation. This is the peace that brings us into a relationship with God. It comes as we accept Jesus as

Savior; the Holy Spirit enters into our minds and we come to know God personally. The penalty of sin is paid by Jesus reconciling us with God. Peace of God is resting in Jesus power. We access the peace through prayer but the peace actually comes from Jesus.

C. Joy is a result of righteousness and peace through Jesus. John 15:10-11 If ye keep my commandments, (righteousness) ye shall abide in my love; (peace) even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. What we are saying is God is interested in us; he wants a relationship with us. People are far more important to Him than ritual or rules.

III. Our actions in the church should build our brothers faith. Romans 14:18-19 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. If we live according the commands in the Bible we will live a life acceptable to God and will not drive people away with our hypocrisy. In verse 19 we see the word edify; that means encourage; promote harmony. This is not saying ignore sin it is helping someone grow in areas where they have no experience. God gives spiritual gifts which we are to use **Ephesians 4:12-16** For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. To edify means to enlighten or build up the body of Christ. These verses tell me the reasons for the gifts are to equip the church with what it needs to do ministry. Our faith increases as we see God work in us and other believers. As we begin to profit from doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness our knowledge about Jesus increases. Another side benefit is we won't be so gullible; so easily deceived by false doctrine. The unifying factor is love. We proclaim the truth about Jesus with love; we correct the erring brother with love always pointing folks to Jesus. As we grow in our walk with Jesus we will be walking in the Spirit which produces love in us.

IV. Some final responsibilities. Hebrews 13:15-17

1. We must offer the sacrifice of praise. (15) By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. We can give thanks for our salvation, for His faithfulness, that he will never leave us or forsake us, that He is never changing and that He bids us to freely to throne of glory. We can praise Him for who He is.

2. We should offer the sacrifice of good works. (16) But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased This is really doing good works for people; it can be giving food to the hungry; mowing the lawn for the widows; things like that. Many times when folks realize you care you can reach them with the Gospel.

3. Respect the spiritual leaders in the church. (17) Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. . Pastors realize they are accountable to God for how much the flock has grown in their sanctification. The believer's responsibility is to submit to their leadership. Remember what **Dr. Gutzke** said: "Whatever a man's natural desires were before he accepted Christ, he would still have those natural desires afterward". For some folks submitting to authority is the most difficult change God has in their lives. The warning for believers is don't make the Pastor say at the judgment seat of Christ; I taught them sound doctrine but they would not listen. During the journey the Pastor fights his own natural desires, the wiles of the Devil and the enticements of the world. He should not have to fight with folks who will not submit. Fellowship means we do our part to see God's work is completed.