

# Things That Bring Us Together

by Ken Baird

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*The sermon emphasizes the various elements that foster unity among believers, particularly through shared trials, love, and service as outlined in Philippians.*

**Duration:** 43:05

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Christian Fellowship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of unity among believers in Christ. He encourages the audience to submit themselves to the thinking of their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The preacher highlights a verse from the Bible that emphasizes the unity of the Trinity and Jew and Gentile. He then focuses on the book of Philippians, specifically chapter 1 and chapter 4, where the apostle Paul urges the believers to stand fast in one spirit and be of the same mind in the Lord. The preacher emphasizes that all believers should live by the same standard and principle, which is the word of God.

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## Transcript

I'd rather raise a quote on one of my favorite texts in the book of Ephesians. I'm not going to repeat it. Ephesians 2 and 18, for through him we both have access by one Spirit into the Father.

I want to tell you how big that verse is. That verse is so big that it contains the entire Trinity and Jew and Gentile in thirteen words. How do you do that outside of the word God? This afternoon I'd like to speak on a subject, if I were to give it a title.

It would have to be things that bring the people of God together. I think this will be good in our individual assembly, it's where we came from. And these are things from the book of Philippians.

I didn't realize that this last week I've been going through the book of Philippians. I'd read it through with one translation and I'd turn it around and read it through with another translation. And I just kept going through the book of Philippians.

And I didn't realize quite why I was doing it. Until I was brought face to face with my responsibility to your line of questions that I knew. And I'd like to speak from this book of Philippians on the things that will bring God's people together.

Now when I go on a trip, I like to take a look at the road map to see where I'm going. So we're going to take just a brief look at the road map and see how we're going to travel through the book of Philippians. First, in the first chapter of Philippians, in verse 30.

Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now here to be in me. And here we have the unifying effect of persecution, trouble, and trial. It will unify.

And then secondly, the second chapter in verse 2, fulfill me my love, that ye may be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and one mind. And here we have the unifying effect of love. Verse 18 of the second chapter, for the same cause also, ye joy and rejoice in me, I suppose we should read verse 17, really.

Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also, ye joy and rejoice with me. Here we have the effect of our service together, it's the same cause.

The unifying effect of service. Then in chapter 3, in verse 1, finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord, write the same thing to you. He indeed is not Jesus, but for you it is faith.

Here we have the same thing that he's writing. This is the word of God, and we will look, when we come to this portion, at the unifying effect of the word of God. Then in chapter 3, in verse 16, another famous 3.16, we have these words.

Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Here we have the unifying effect of principle. We have the unifying effect of God's way of doing things.

Then lastly, in verse 4, in chapter 4, I'm sorry, in verse 2, I beseech Jodeas and beseech Pentecost that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And here we have the unifying effect of submission. Now all of these will have a tendency to come back to us in our local assembly.

They will bring us together so that that assembly will function, indeed, as an assembly should function, in harmony and effectively for the Lord. First of all, let's go back to chapter 1, now since we've taken a little look at our road map. And notice the connection.

I read these verses out of context, and I probably shouldn't have done that. I wanted you to see where we were going. Now let's notice them, let's put these verses in their context.

Verse 27 of the first chapter of Philippians, O man, let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your prayers, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, deliverance, and that of God. For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which he saw in me, and now here to be in me. Now the Philippians were undergoing some of the persecution that the Apostle Paul had gone through.

And persecution has a unifying effect among the people of God. Now I don't suppose that you and I suffered this kind of persecution. Because in Paul's time, the persecution which they suffered was corporal.

They felt it in their bodies. They felt the strife. They felt the wounds.

They felt the buffeting. But you and I can go through trouble, and I would like to expand this, to take in the troubles and the trials that come to us mutually, and especially as assemblies go through trouble and trial together. I often wonder why we have so much troubles and trials.

So many things to pray about. Well those things have a tendency to bring us together. I remember years ago in speaking to a brother who had been dismissed from his job because, well, because he was getting near the retirement age.

They didn't want to retire him. So they dismissed him. So he wouldn't be their charge.

And he was talking to me about it, and he was just bitterly disappointed. He had been a machinist in that company all his life, up until this time. And he was talking with me, and I said to him, I called him by his name, and I said, why don't you come out to Boulder? We lived in Boulder at that time.

I said, there's a good job market out there. Why don't you come out there and look for work? And he says, and leave this assembly after all that we've gone through together? No way, he said. And I felt rebuked.

I felt rebuked. But I thought of this verse, and this verse has made me think of that time when I talked with him and tried to get him out to Boulder. Actually, he wouldn't have done our assembly any harm at all.

We would have liked it. But I really wasn't, I didn't, I wasn't proselyting. I wasn't taking away from his own assembly.

I was just telling him that there was a good job market in Boulder, and that he was out of work. Come on out. Perhaps God would pay him.

He said, I'm not leaving this assembly, not after what we've gone through together. He experienced the unifying effect of trial. That assembly had gone, and you don't know what it is, who it is, and where it is.

But that assembly had gone through deep waters. Now this will bring us together. And sometimes I think we need to realize that troubles and trials are given to us to bring us together.

We find that out when we pray for each other. I think that probably we enter into the truth of the first, the first Corinthian epistle, chapter 14, the body. Through the one member of the body suffering pain and anguish, we find out the unity of the body.

I think we find it out sometimes more than the one member of the body is suffering, or experiencing honor. Of course, we all to a degree feel honor when our brother or sister is honored. But I think we feel it more poignantly.

I think we feel it really more immensely when we're going through trial together. Trial will even bring couples together. I think of couples that have stood beside a tiny deer and laid away a little one that was born into their family, and they stand there in each other's arms.

They're being brought together by that trouble, by that trial, as they could never be brought together in any other way. And I think that sometimes God does allow troubles to enter our lives. And even on the ascendant level, for the thought in mind of bringing us together, giving us something to pray about, and making us feel the unity of the body.

Through suffering with them. And we should, according to Hebrews 13, we should be bound with those that are bound. We should suffer with those that are suffered.

We should weep with those that are weeped. And certainly this will bring us together. Now, Paul is speaking of literal persecution.

I've expanded this. But he says they're having the same conflict, which he saw in me, now here to be in me. It brings us together.

It gives us a feeling of fraternity. We've gone through this thing together. Let's don't let anything separate us now.

I think sometimes of soldier boys that have been in units across the seas, and they've gone through battle together. You know, you can't break into that fraternity. That company, that group of men that went through that, as we say, that terrible hell on earth together, they feel a fraternity.

They feel a brotherhood. They feel a closeness that no one else can share. And you and I, if we are not unified, God may send trouble for that very purpose, that we might feel our oneness together.

But we have much ground to cover. Let's think of the second chapter. If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship with the spirit, if any bowels and mercies in inward affection, fulfill in thy joy, that she be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and one mind.

Let nothing be done through strength or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem another better than themselves, looking not every man to his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, as was also in Christ Jesus. Now, if we have the same love for all the things of God, we will hardly need these admonitions.

They will be easy to observe, easy to fulfill in our lives. Let nothing be done through strength or vain glory. Having the same love, that bond of love that we feel for one another in Christ.

And you know, we do feel that bond of love. We know we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. I like to throw that out sometimes as a test to people to find out, to let them find out whether or not they're in Christ.

That's one of my tests. I'm always taking tests. Whenever I read the Leader's Digest, there's a test in there to find out whether I'm an introvert or an extrovert or anything like that.

Oh, it's taken. I want to see what I am. All right, if you want to find out what you are.

Do you love your brethren or do you tolerate them? We know we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. Now, I could go on here at length, and I'm not going to try to, about this business of love. When God tells us to love somebody, he expects us to do it.

And his commands are his enabling. Now, that does not mean that I am necessarily bound to love all of his ways. That doesn't mean that at all.

But I tend to love the person for what they are in Christ. They're my brother and my sister in the Lord, and I'm to have the same love for all of them. The scriptures speak about differentiation between brethren.

James chapter 2, you know the verse very well. If you differentiate, you break the law. We're to come descendant to men of lowest faith.

If a brother or a sister has been singled out by the Spirit of God and brought into the body of Christ, they deserve an attention from me. They deserve consideration from me, which is not to vary from person to person. God has chosen them.

I'd better choose them, too. I'd better love them, too. We have that same love, though what a unifying effect it is.

Let me go on. Verse 18, well, verse 17 of the second chapter of Philippians. Yea, and I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.

I joy and rejoice with you all, for the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me. Now, I read this during the week, as I told you. I read in the book of Philippians, I would read through with one translation, and I'd read through with the other.

And I read, I suppose I have a dozen different translations. I don't know, I didn't get that. These translations do some strange things with these verses.

Now, I'm not going to get into that problem. But I do derive a good deal of help by reading these different translations. Now, I love King James.

I'm used to it, it's like an old shoe. I feel at home. I love it.

But I do read other translations. Now, here I don't know whether all the translations would give you the same thoughts that I'm going to express here. But I'm going to bring before you, at this time, and I think that it's within the context, the unifying effects of service.

Now, Paul is saying in verse 17, Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. Now, Paul is thinking of his offering upon their sacrifice and service as the drink offering, a libation. And Paul says, compared with what you're doing with God, I'm just content to be the drink offering.

Now, the drink offering was poured over the burnt offering, the meal offering. And it was, in the case of a lamb, it was a third of a hen. In the case of a bullock, it was a half a hen.

In the case of a ram, I forgot my fraction. But it was a small part, it was just a small part, of wine that was poured over the sacrifice. It was a drink offering.

And this is what the apostle Paul is talking about here. He says, if I be offered upon, as the libation is poured on the sacrifice, if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all, for the same cause also do you rejoice with me. Why? Because they were in the same cause.

They were in the same service. And they found a unity in that service. Have you ever built a chapel together? It's fun to build a chapel.

We built one in Boulder together. You know, I don't think of the time when we were ever closer together than when we were building that chapel. Just working and laboring together, you know, building that chapel.

I like to work with my hands anyway. And it had a unifying effect. We had a project that we were all concerned with.

Well, after we got the chapel built and dedicated, I say dedicated, that's all right. We got to thinking, now look, we've spent all this time and all this money on this building. Now, does our sense of unity, our sense of striving together, end now that the building is up? For some, it may end.

I don't know. But we've just begun. We've just got the machinery together.

There was another building that was more important than this. God's church. And when we went, then later, we found our unity, unifying force of laboring together with the children and with the Sunday school and with the various projects of the assembly.

As you know, there's nothing that will bring you together any better or any quicker than this. To have a common cause, to be laboring for a common cause. And certainly, we can stand fast in one spirit and with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

And what cause could be greater than that? If you can find enthusiasm with working with people, and you know how I like to work with people, it's fun. If I enjoy working with people, I enjoy associations. Even in a secular sense.

Even in a professional sense. It's nice to do things together. And I'll tell you, it's nice when you have that spirit of cooperation, that spirit of unity, of oneness of mind and oneness of purpose in spreading the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let's go on. Chapter 3, verse 1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord, to write the same things to you and this was the word of God, incidentally, are to write the same things to you. The meaning, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

Now, the Apostle Paul says, I'm writing the same things to you that I've already spoken to you about. But I'm not apologizing. I'm writing these same things to you.

There is a unity in the word of God. Peter, in his ministry, said that he wanted to stir up the pure minds of those that were scattered abroad. He wanted to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance.

Remembrance of what? Remembrance of the word of God. And the Apostle Paul says, I'm not afraid of repeating. You know, so many times in our ministry, we want to hear something new.

Well, that's all right. I like it too. I really do.

If I get a new thought, I squeeze a brethren's hand just a little bit harder. And I get a nice new thought. Dan, what are you smiling about? I really do.

I like new thoughts. And I do. I squeeze a little tighter.

My brother has given me something very nice and new. He's just given me a new approach, you know. I like it.

But sometimes I feel that we hear clear of repeating things that we should repeat in the word of God. The Apostle Paul says, finally, my brethren, or for the rest, my brethren, some translated, rejoice in the Lord.

Incidentally, there's where you should rejoice, and there's the only place you can rejoice.

He doesn't tell us to rejoice in circumstances. He, farther over in this book, he speaks of circumstances. Let's notice that it's, I don't think of a better time to refer to it than now.

It's a digression, but I think it's pertinent. He says in chapter 4 and verse 10, But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath graced again, wherein ye were all so careful that ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of one, for I have learned whatsoever state I am, and whatsoever state I am, whether it's Colorado or Iowa, therewith to be content.

And that, of course, is not a perfect man. Now, you notice the word therewith is an italic. It's not in the original.

Don't put it in there. Leave it out. The Apostle Paul says, not that I speak in respect of one, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content.

Not with a case, but simply with the fact that it's the will of God. That he be in that state. God does not expect us to reconcile ourselves to circumstances.

No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but rather grievous. And I tell you, those are trying circumstances. And God doesn't expect us to be reconciled to those circumstances, except that he orders.

Not for the circumstances' sake, but just simply because it's his will. Now, the Apostle was in prison when he wrote this, and I think that we need to emphasize this. For the rest, brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

Not in circumstances, whether they're good or the lack of rejoicing when they're otherwise. We are to rejoice in the Lord. He's the one that controls the circumstances, and we can always rejoice in the Lord.

To me, to write the same things to you, to me indeed, to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is painful. You need this. Here's what he wrote.

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of incision or mutilation. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Now, there's a sermon in itself that we're not even going to enter.

The three things that distinguish us as being truly are circumcised in the heart. Worshiping God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh. Now, I know that it's sometimes behavioristic ministry is not accepted.

Well, it's in the Bible, however. We're told not to do certain things. And sometimes people resent when you minister along behavioristic lines.

And when you bring out the word of God, as it has a bearing upon our lives. Somebody says you're interfering with my private life. Stay off.

Ease up. I don't like this. But here is something that the Apostle Paul had warned these people about.

And he says, I'm going to do it again. And I'm going to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is painful. Now, I think that this, to me at least, is the meaning of this.

But now I'm going to expand a little bit here again. This is the fellowship of the word of God, because the same things that he wrote to them perhaps will have a bearing in your life and in mine. Now, there is a fellowship that is brought out by the word of God.

I like to hear people's experiences as they have been shaped, met, solved, consummated by the word of God. I like to hear people's experience. And I like to hear them speak of what the word of God has meant for them.

I love to hear it, because I find out that I can identify with that person in many instances. I say, I have gone through that, I know exactly what they're talking about. And doesn't it increase your feeling of fellowship? You hear a brother and sister of Christ, or a sister in Christ, say, I want to tell you how God solved my problem.

They'll use a scripture that God has used to solve one of your problems. And you feel a kinship with that person, you feel a closeness with that person. The word of God will bring a unifying effect, because you and I are governed by it.

You and I are indeed ruled by it, guided by it, directed by it, comforted by it. It's the same word. We have the same problems.

And God uses the same word. Isn't it wonderful how, that when the word of God is ministered at a Bible conference, how the Spirit of God can take that word up and meet individual needs in the meeting. Only the Spirit of God can do that.

But there's a fellowship in the word of God. And when the word of God is ministered in the power of the Spirit, they don't rush out of the chapel. They stay around and talk a while.

As a matter of fact, sometimes they even talk about the subject the preacher was talking about. And that's always tricky. It got in.

It had an impression. It's left a lasting impression. There is a fellowship in the word of God.

Oh how wonderful it is that we share it together. So let's go on. In the third chapter of Philippians, verse 16, well verse 15 we read, "...let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, and if anything else be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." I'm sorry we can't read more of the context.

"...nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Now, the various translations treat this verse differently. I like the King James. It fits my sermon better.

As a matter of fact, I'd have an awful time preaching the way I'm going to preach and minister from some of those translations that I read. Now I'm not naming them down. I'm after all the information that I can get.

I never forget what Tom Olsen said once on one occasion. Some of you may have had the privilege of sitting under Tom Olsen's ministry. Tom Olsen, the greatest tract writer probably that ever existed, said on one occasion at a Bible conference in Albuquerque, he said, "...don't be disturbed by this multiplicity of translations." He says, "...all the different shades of meaning that are brought out in these translations, all of them combined, still fails to convey all the mind of God." That he intended, well that is, I'd better not say it that way, that he tried to convey to us God doesn't have any trouble conveying things.

We have trouble receiving them. But Mr. Olsen said that, and it helped me. It helped me to realize that there are different shades of meaning.

Now, I tried to, in reading the different translations, and I believe that I reached a consensus on verse 16. Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Now, I've gathered from all these translations that we are all ruled by the same principle.

There are not varying principles in the church of God. God doesn't have one set of principles for his people, and not one set of principles for the apostles or his servants, as the case may be. The sheep and the shepherds, they all walk by the same principle.

The New American Standard does a good job, I think, in translating this verse. I'm speaking as if I'm a Greek scholar, I'm not. But the New American Standard says, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

Now, in every one of these translations, it's we and us. Now, the apostle is treating himself with those that vilify. There are not two standards.

Sometimes I think that some people think there are two standards of Christian living. We live as we ordinarily live, but when the preacher comes, we change a few things. Don't be afraid of preachers.

Never be afraid of the preachers. But you know, on my earlier days, I fell into this trap. I thought these men are a little bit holier than I am.

Shouldn't have felt that way. I thought they've got a little higher standards than I have. I shouldn't have felt that way.

I feel that they have a greater grasp of the word of God, and that I would correct and change. But we all live by the same standard. Don't you think anything otherwise.

There are not two standards. There are not people among the people of God that can see you. Well, I don't take a prominent place.

I don't need to be quite as careful as maybe the preachers. Don't you believe it. We have one standard.

We all live by the same rules. We all live by the same principles. It's us and we involved in proving those Philippians right with themselves.

Now that's a high standard, and it's a unifying standard we're all led by. Now the last one. In chapter four, verse one.

Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Jodeas and beseech Seneca that they be of the same mind in the Lord. The same mind.

I've got some things to say about this that I hope will be constructive. Now these names, Jodeas and Seneca, are female Greek names. They're both Greek names.

They were sisters. Now, I believe that he mentions these sisters in the very next verse. And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with

other my fellow labors whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

And so forth. Now, I heard somebody say, a preacher one time say, these two sisters had it in for each other, and there was a spirit of competition between them. One of them got a new hat, an exclusive creation.

The other one just aspired, went out and found the same kind of hat, and bought it, and wore it. He says, you give me six sisters that are on fire for God, and he says, you can have all the bread. That's the way he put it.

These sisters were laboring with the apostle Paul. But there was a disagreement as to how this grew up. And so the apostle Paul of Marny said to them, I beseech Jodeas, I beseech Pentecost, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Now what does this mean? Does this mean that you and I have got to think exactly the same thought? No, I don't believe so. I think being of the same mind in the Lord is having the same attitude in the Lord. That attitude of forbearance that we read in verse 5, let your moderation, your yieldingness be known unto all men.

The Lord is standing by, the Lord is at hand. Now you and I don't have to agree on everything. I had a brother in the Lord whom I loved dearly, who's been with the Lord now for a number of years.

Some of you have heard me mention him. Carroll Brown was an immensely successful businessman and a tremendously spiritual power in the things of God. We had a wonderful relationship.

I still miss him after 24 years. I can still hear that voice. He said to me, Ken, one day he said, I made a marvelous discovery.

And I said, Carroll, what do you mean all this? What was it? He said, Ken, I have discovered that my wife and I don't have to agree on everything. Well, I said, Carroll, that is something. That's fine.

I'm glad to hear that. Now you and I are individuals. We won't have the same, we won't think the same thoughts.

We won't reach the same conclusions about how the work of God should be done. But being of the same mind in the Lord, and having that attitude that he had that expressed earlier in the chapter, we read the verse, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. This mind of just esteeming others better than ourselves, this mind of agreeableness, this mind of yielding, this mind, this attitude of moderation.

And we made difference. And you know, to go back to that chapter, to that, well, it's not a chapter, that illustration that I used about the building of the Boulder Bible chapter. I was sure when the building got to a certain height that we'd gone high enough.

All the other brethren said, no, I think we need another row of blocks on there. I said, I think it would be cozier if the ceiling was just a little bit lower. And they said, no, I think we need another row of blocks on there.

Well, I gave in. We put another row of blocks on there. And there was nobody any happier than I was with that extra row of blocks on there.

It needed to go up. We needed that extra height in the ceiling. And I was so glad that I gave in.

It doesn't hurt to give in once in a while. It doesn't hurt to submit once in a while. And the unifying effect of submission will bring the people of God together.

Just to realize that perhaps they may have something. The Lord brings this out in the Terminal of the Mosque. I'm not going to go into the Terminal of the Mosque.

But he says, you and your adversary are going before the judge. Agree with your adversary. Quickly.

Now this has a very practical application. I know we've heard it in God's convenience. If they were to agree with their adversary quickly, he'd settle it out of court.

Because if the judge says that it has to be a certain way, that's the way it's going to be. Whether you like it or not. And the Lord told his disciples, the way he handled that proposition to your brother, that justice must stand being right.

Did you know that? And I'll tell you, I think experience will prove it. That we should submit ourselves to the thinking of our brothers and sisters in Christ. And not hang out to the bitter end.

To see all of the plans put into practice. Put into practice. Now this is yours to pursue.

I think I've got it. This is just a brief rundown on the unifying forces of the House of Revenue.

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