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Permit #361

Following the upward call through Philipians ...

Make My Joy Complete

Overall, the apostle Paul was pleased with the congregation at Philippi. They responded well to the foundation the apostle and Dr. Luke had laid down, and were moving forward with the gospel with right attitudes and sound doctrine. What an amazing group of Christians these were! But Paul does not want them to slack off or back away from what they had been doing, but really to excel still more, as he phrased it to the Thessalonian brethren (1 Thessalonians 4:1,10). Hence, his serious and earnest request comes, with the tone set by a series

of weighty "ifs," "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Philippians 2:2).

▲ **Of the same mind** — The scripture exhorts the saints to have the same mind or same perspective about spiritual things. Ultimately, that same mind is to be "the mind of Christ." A good picture from the Old Testament writings comes from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, where the remnant of Israel rekindled their interest in the scrolls handed down from the times of Moses onward. "And all the people gathered as one man," stated Nehemiah, "at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel" (Nehemiah 8:1). They "gathered as one man"; this graphically illustrates being of the same mind.

▲ **Maintaining the same love** — Love, properly understood, is true concern primarily about another person's eternity. The Lord loves all mankind, and as much as He has done to provide for the physical side of man, He is much more concerned about their spiritual needs than their physical needs. "For God so loved the world," are the words of the most familiar verse in the Bible, "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The words of this verse, spoken by Jesus Himself, focus on the love of God expressed in terms of rescuing lost man from perishing in the fires of an eternal hell. The brethren in Philippi had this same love, but they were to maintain it.

▲ **United in spirit** — Paul uses the word "spirit" here to denote a general atmosphere or attitude which was to pervade the brethren's activities in a positive way. There was to be a sense of glorifying God in all activities, a continuing effort to make certain that the Lord Jesus would get proper credit in everything. All personal agendas were to be set aside, as well as "taking offense" of some at other's real or imagined slights. By focusing as a unit on the big picture, none of the small issues would actually ever become issues.

▲ **Intent on one purpose** — The goal of the local church is to help people get to heaven. Because of the amount of obstacles that have to be overcome, coming from a multiplicity of directions, this is no small task; the word *labor* keeps showing up in the inspired record in dealing with the brethren and the lost. As someone once said, "The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing!" One of Satan's goals is to distract the church, have them focus on all sorts of temporal or irrelevant issues, and neglect the purpose of the church in getting the people headed toward their heavenly home.

Teamwork in the body of Christ is critical in pleasing Christ and accomplishing his purpose. The concepts of unity of spirit, mind, and action are themes that run throughout the gospel accounts, the book of Acts, the epistles, and Revelation. The saint would do well to remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "He who is not with Me is against Me; and He who does not gather with Me scatters" (Matthew 12:30)!!

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