

INTRODUCTION 引言

Unity can be a tricky thing for a team. People have different background, ideas and preferences. From where I grew up, people show prejudice to others for all sorts of reasons. For example, many people will call me a four-eyed creature because I wear glasses. People teased me because I was a skinny boy. People who speak with an accent are called villagers. Unity is critical when we work together. In today's passage, the apostle Paul urged the Philippian believers to be united. Paul had a special affection for the church. He and his coworkers founded it on the second of his three mission trips. When Paul wrote this letter, he was imprisoned in Rome for sharing the gospel. But he could not hide his joy in his words. Paul rejoiced for the Philippian church for its partnership with him in the gospel. He wrote this letter to thank the believers for their support of his work. Also, Paul encouraged them to carry on God's missions. They must be united with one heart in order to succeed. The same principle applies to any church. That is a message we need to hear often as we come together as God's people. Our lesson for today is simply this: we need each other to make a team.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Unity Makers 建立合一的因素

First, Paul tells the believers some unity makers. Those are some factors that unite a church. Paul lists four "if you have any" clauses in verse 1: encouragement in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit and tenderness and compassion. By saying "if" does not mean Paul doubts they were lacking in any of those ingredients. Those statements can be understood as "since you have" all these characteristics, then you should continue to practice them. We need to do the same things in our church. We cheer each other up with encouraging words. We display our love through actions. The word "fellowship" is more than a small group meeting. It means to have participation and interaction. Therefore, people build relationship and share their love in Christ through regular gathering. The Greek words for tenderness and compassion have similar meanings. They both refer to empathy and mercy toward someone hurting. Anyone can have physical, emotional and spiritual needs at any time. Those five elements should be evident in a Christian community. If I can use a simple word to summarize all five items, "care" is the word that comes to my mind. To show your care, you must first pay attention to people's needs. Then you take necessary actions. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the main character stopped and cared for an injured man. He treated his wounds and took him to an inn to rest. He even promised to pay for the lodging and related expenses. To care for another person, you must humble yourself and sacrifice your time and effort. We can foster our unity in Christ when we truly care for each other. Right actions are based on the right mindset. That is why Paul shifts his focus to our attitude in verse 2. He urges the Philippian believers to fill his joy in three ways: being like-minded, having the same love and being one in spirit and purpose. In plain language, Paul means that they should share the same viewpoints, same love and same feelings. There is actually nothing mysterious in Paul's instructions. The same things can happen to close friends, long-time spouses or relationship between parents with their kids. You know the person

so well that you know what is in his/her mind before he/she speaks. But here, the topic is not about one's preference on food or movie. It is about having the same heart as Christ's. Paul would share God's joy if they continued to mature in those things. It is like the apostle John writes in **3 John 4** – I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Any pastor should agree with that statement. I am happy when people bring me home-cooked goodies or compliment about my ties. But there is no greater joy when I see people being saved and grow in their spiritual life. Paul urged fellow believers to be united in those things. By unity, it does not mean uniformity. This is a Christian church, not a cult. We do not dress the same clothes or eat the same food. We can openly share our opinions and learn to submit to one another. How does all that actually play out in church life? Allow me to boil everything down to three principles. We ask if our decisions are true, wise or nice. Let me illustrate with a real-life example. Some time ago a couple asked me to officiate their wedding. I did not know either person. I sat down with them to understand their background. The man was divorced with kids. He grew up in a Christian family but he has not been attending church regularly. The lady is not a believer. They have lived together for some time. If I only chose the true thing, I could have lectured them that cohabitation leads to temptations. If I chose to do the nice thing, I could remain silent and fulfill their wish. I ended up choosing the wise thing. I told them that I had to think about the matter. Afterward, I respectfully declined their request. I told them that it would be against my conviction to officiate their wedding. We will often run into a similar situation in church life. We need God's wisdom to do the right things. We bring glory to Him and bring benefits to people.

2. Unity Breakers 拆毀合一的因素

Paul encourages the Philippian believers to preserve their unity in the Lord. They have to work hard on the unity makers. But secondly, they also have to watch out for some unity breakers. Paul mentions two of them in verse 3: selfish ambition and vain conceit. The Greek word for the phrase “selfish ambition” has its background in an election for a public office. The single goal for candidates is to lobby for more votes than their contenders. People highlight their strengths and exaggerate the shortcomings of the competitors. Dirty tricks of rumors and slanders are nothing new. In a sport term, we call such antagonistic relationship a rivalry. Here in the south, if you watch any college sports, then you either love or hate the University of Alabama. There is no middle-ground! People filled with selfish ambition try to draw fans to themselves. Paul actually uses the same word in chapter 1. He describes some believers who preached the gospel out of selfish ambition. Perhaps they boasted about the number of followers they gathered. Another unity breaker Paul cautions us about is vain conceit. The phrase means empty pride. People puff themselves up to look good. There is only a shell but there is no substance. Three kids were bragging about how fast their dads were. One boy said: “My dad is the fastest man. When he throws a ball, he can run to the other side and catch it.” The second boy was not impressed. “My dad is faster than yours,” he said, “After he shoots an arrow he can dash to the target before the arrow hits it.” Then the third boy spoke: “My dad can beat both of yours! He gets off work at 5 o'clock but he can arrive home by 4:30.” It is all empty pride. People with selfish ambition and vain conceit love to attract others' attention. They say: “Look, I did it!” They like to talk about their accomplishments. I once read the resume of a pastor. He includes the details of his work before he was called to the ministries. I do not want to judge his motives, but I cannot help but wonder if it is that important to tell what positions he had in which companies, what products he

helped invent and what academic papers he published. I have two Master's degrees: one from a secular university and another one from a seminary. But I have yet to master anything. All that people need to know is that I am a sinner saved by God's grace, and now God gives me a privilege to be His servant. Brothers and sisters: let that be our identity. Before people recognize what you know and what you can do, tell them who you are in Christ. It is not about us. It is all about Christ! In the second half of verse 3, Paul tells us the antidote to unity breakers is humility. He says we practice humility by considering others better than ourselves. This world may think that humility means weakness. But true humility means to set aside the qualities you have so that they will not become obstacles when you relate to others. Say a little kid asks for help with addition. You can pull out your algebra or calculus books and give him a one-hour lecture. That will surely make him more confused. A better way is to stoop down so that you can see him eye-to-eye. You talk in a kiddy tone and teach him how to count fingers. Then you give praise to the boy if he can figure out the process. That is humility! You are mindful of the person's needs. We can never be humble if we focus on our own benefits. The irony is that when you think you are a humble person, then perhaps you are not. Many years ago, I was nominated to serve as a church coworker. I felt flattered that finally someone recognized that I had something to contribute. I vividly remember the advice from an older brother. He cautioned me to be careful with my pride when coworkers reject a seemingly good proposal from me. After more than twenty years, I still keep that wise counsel in mind. I may think that my suggestion is the best. However, I have to listen to others too. There may be different solutions to the same issue. More than likely, coworkers will come up with a better plan in the discussion process. It does not really matter who gets the credit in a church. We are not trying to earn a bonus or have our names put on the wall! But we want to please God before we try to please people.

CONCLUSION 結論

We need each other to make a team. God never intends us to be solo Christians. We do not hide in a cave to meditate about the meaning of life. Rather, God puts us in a church to grow together. We need to think less about ourselves and think more about others. A pastor made the following interesting analogy. There are about 18% Chinese in the world population. That means about 1 in 5 persons is a Chinese. The pastor speculated that the earth will be shaken if all the Chinese folks jump together. But the problem is: who will make the call? Shall I listen to you or you listen to me? In a church setting, we will have fewer headaches if we go back to the foundation of our faith. We all follow Jesus Christ. He is the Head of the church and He is our Great Shepherd. Jesus is our perfect model of humility. He humbled Himself to become a man. He suffered and died for our sins on the cross. He endured all the shame and pain to accomplish the salvation plan. We can have true unity when we unite our hearts with our Lord.

INTRODUCTION 引言

對於一個團隊來說，合一可能是一件棘手的事情。人們有不同的背景、想法和喜好。在我長大的環境中，人們會由於各種原因對別人有偏見。例如，許多人會稱我為四隻眼的生物，因為我戴眼鏡。人們嘲笑我，因為我是個瘦的男孩。講話帶有口音的人被稱為鄉下人。當我們一起工作時，合一至關重要。在今天的經文中，使徒保羅敦促腓立比的信徒要合一。保羅對這一所教會特別有感情。保羅和他的同工在他三次宣教旅程中的第二次時建立了這個教會。保羅寫這封信時，他因為傳福音的緣故被監禁在羅馬。但是他的文筆中無法隱藏心中的喜樂。保羅因著腓立比教會與他的伙伴關係而感到喜樂。他寫這封信是為了感謝信徒們對他事工的支持。另外，保羅鼓勵他們繼續履行神的使命。為了取得果效，他們必須合一。同樣的原則適用於任何教堂。這是我們作為神的子民經常需要聽到的信息。今天我們的功課很簡單：我們需要彼此才能組成一個團隊。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Unity Makers 建立合一的因素

首先，保羅告訴信徒一些建立合一的因素。這些是使教會合一的一些關鍵。保羅在第 1 節中列出了四個「若有」的短句：在基督裡若有什麼勸勉、愛心有什麼安慰、聖靈有什麼交通、心中有什麼慈悲憐憫。說「若有」並不意味著保羅認為他們缺少任何這些條件。我們可以理解為「既然你們已經有」這些特質，那麼你們應該繼續實踐它們。我們需要在教會裡做同樣的事情。我們用言語互相鼓勵。我們藉著行動表達我們的愛。「交通」(英文翻譯為團契)不僅僅是指小組聚會。它的意思包含參與和互動。因此，人們通過定期活動建立關係並在主裡分享愛。希臘文中的慈悲和憐憫具有相似的含義。他們都提到對別人的受傷表達同情和恩慈。任何人隨時都可能有身體、情感和屬靈上的需要。這五個要素必須在基督徒的群體中表現出來。如果我可以有一個簡單的詞來概括所有五個項目，那麼「關心」就是我想到的那個詞。為了表現出你的關心，你必須首先關注別人的需要。然後，你要採取必要的行動。例如，在《好撒瑪利亞人》的比喻中，主角停下來關心一個受傷的人。他治療好傷口，並帶他去旅店休息。他甚至答應支付住宿和相關的費用。為了關心另一個人，你必須謙卑自己，而且付出時間和精力。當我們真誠地彼此關心時，我們便能建立在基督裡的合一。正確的行動基於正確的心態。因此保羅在第 2 節中將焦點轉移到我們的態度上。他提醒腓立比信徒以三種方式來充滿他的喜樂：意念相同、愛心相同、有一樣的心思和意念。簡單來說，保羅的意思是他們必須擁有相同的觀

點、相同的愛和相同的感受。保羅的說法實際上並沒有什麼神秘之處。親近的朋友、長期的配偶或父母與孩子之間的關係也可能發生同樣的情形。你對這個人非常了解，以至於在他說出來之前你就知道他的想法。但是在這裡，話題不是關於人們對食物或電影的愛好。它是關於擁有與基督相同的心志。如果他們繼續在這些事情上更成熟，保羅更能體會神的喜樂。就像使徒約翰在約翰三書第 4 節中所寫的一樣：**我聽見我的兒女們按真理而行，我的喜樂就沒有比這個大的。**任何牧師都應該認同這個說法。當人們送來自製的美食或是稱讚我的領帶時，我會感到高興。但是更大的喜樂，是當我看到有人得救並靈命成長。保羅敦促信徒們在這些事情上要合一。合一不等於劃一。這是基督教會，而不是邪教。我們不用穿同樣的衣服或吃同樣的食物。我們可以坦誠地分享自己的觀點，並學習互相順服。我們如何在教會生活中實踐以上的所有原則？請允許我將一切歸結為三個重點。在做決定時，我們必須問結果是否合乎真理、帶著智慧或令人高興的。讓我用一個真實的例子來說明。前段時間一對男孩和女孩請我主持他們的婚禮。我不認識他們。我和他們見面以了解他們的背景。那位男士有孩子並離了婚。他在一個基督徒家庭中長大，但他沒有定期參加聚會。那個女孩不是基督徒。他們住在一起有一段時間了。如果我只選擇做合乎真理的事，我便會教訓他們一頓，指出同居會導致的引誘。如果我選擇做令人高興的事情，我可以保持沉默並實現他們的願望。我最終選擇做帶著智慧的事。我告訴他們，我必須考慮一下他們的要求。之後，我客氣地拒絕了他們的請求。我告訴他們，主持他們的婚禮與我的信念有衝突。在教會生活中，我們經常會遇到類似的情況。我們需要倚靠神的智慧來做正確的事。使我們帶給神榮耀，也帶給人益處。

2. Unity Breakers 拆毀合一的因素

保羅勉勵腓立比信徒在主裡保持合一。他們必須在建立合一的因素上努力。但是其次，他們還必須提防一些拆毀合一的因素。保羅在第 3 節中提到了其中兩方面：結黨和虛浮的榮耀。希臘文中「結黨」這個詞語的背景是選舉。候選人的唯一目標是遊說民眾投他一票。人們會強調自己的優點，並誇大對手的缺點。謠言和誹謗這些手段並不是什麼新鮮事。用運動的術語來說，我們稱這種競爭的關係為死對頭。在南部，如果你關心任何大學體育競賽，那麼你要不然支持阿拉巴馬州立大學，要不然就討厭它。沒有中立的路線！喜歡結黨的人會盡辦法吸引粉絲。保羅實際上在第一章中使用了相同的用詞。他描述了一些信徒出於結黨的心態去傳福音。也許他們吹噓自己招聚了不少追隨者。保羅要我們提防的另一個拆毀合一的因素是虛浮的榮耀。它的意思是空洞的自誇。外觀裝起來挺不錯，但是只有一個殼，沒有任何內涵。有三個孩子在吹牛說自己的父親跑得有多快。其中一個男孩說：「我爸爸是最快的人。當他扔球時，他可以跑到另一邊接住球。」第二個男孩不以為然。他說：「我的爸爸比你的爸爸更快。他射箭後，可以在箭擊中靶心前衝到目標那邊。」然後第三個男孩說：「我的爸爸把你們通通打敗！他五點鐘下班，但可以在四點半之

前回到家。」這都是虛浮的榮耀。愛結黨和愛虛浮榮耀的人都喜歡吸引別人的注意力。他們說：「看，這是我做的！」他們喜歡談論自己的成就。我曾經看過一位牧師的簡歷。他詳細地列出他在被呼召成為傳道人之前的詳細背景。我不想判斷他的動機，但我不禁要問，告訴別人他以前在哪些公司中擔任什麼職位，他協助發明了什麼產品以及他發表了哪些學術論文是否那麼重要？我有兩個碩士學位：一個是來自一般的大學，另一個是來自神學院。但是我並不覺得自己懂得多少。人們需要知道的是，我是一個蒙神恩典被拯救的罪人，而現在神給了我成為祂僕人的福份。弟兄姐妹：那應該是我們的身份。在別人知道你有什麼知識和才幹之前，讓他們先知道你是個基督徒。重點不是在乎於我們自己。重點是在乎於基督！在第3節的後半部分，保羅告訴我們，拆毀合一因素的解藥是謙卑。他說，我們要學習看別人比自己強來操練謙卑。這個世界可能認為謙卑意味著軟弱。但是，真正的謙卑是要放下自己，不讓這些強處妨礙你與他人的交流。比方說一個小孩請教你加法。你可以拿出你的代數或微積分的書籍，給他上一個小時的課。這肯定會使他更加困惑。更好的方法是蹲下來，這樣你的視線就和他的保持相同的水平面。你以小孩的語氣講話，並教他如何數手指。然後，當他搞懂之後，你就誇獎他一下。那就是謙卑！你注意別人的需要。如果我們只專注於自己的利益，我們就無法保持謙虛。很諷刺的是，當你以為自己是一個謙虛的人時，實際上你可能並不是。許多年前，我被提名擔任教堂的同工。我感到受寵若驚。我想，終於有人察覺到我可以有所貢獻了。我清楚記得一位比我年長的弟兄的提醒。當同工們拒絕我提出的建議時，我必須提防心中的驕傲。二十多年後，我仍然牢記那句明智的忠告。我可能認為我的看法是最好的。但是，我也必須聽聽別人的意見。同一個問題可能有不同的解決方案。在討論過程中，同工們可能提出一個更好的計劃。在教會中歸功勞給誰並不重要。我們也不是在努力想要賺取獎金，也不是想把自己的名字貼在牆上！我們在取悅人之前必須先取悅神。

CONCLUSION 結論

我們需要彼此才能組成一個團隊。神從來不希望我們成為單槍匹馬的基督徒。我們不是要躲在山洞中去沉思生命的意義。相反，神把我們放在教會裡和別人一起成長。我們需要少考慮自己，而多考慮別人。一位牧師做了以下有趣的比喻。全球人口中約有18%是華人。意思是大約五個人之中就有一個是中國人。這位牧師估計，如果所有中國人同一時間跳起來時，地球肯定會震動。但問題是：誰來發號司令？我該聽你的還是你聽我的話？在教會裡，如果我們回到信仰的基礎上，我們的頭痛就會減少。我們都必須跟隨耶穌基督。祂是教會的元首，也是我們的大牧人。耶穌是我們謙卑的完美典範。祂謙卑地成為一個人。祂為我們的罪在十字架上受苦而死。祂忍受了所有的羞辱和痛苦來完成救贖計劃。當我們與主合而為一時，我們就可以擁有真正的合一。