



Bible Student's NotebookTM

The Herald of His Grace

Weekly

Presenting *every man perfect in Christ Jesus*. Colossians 1:28

Volume XXI
Issue 503

Be Likeminded

(abridged)

Part 1 of 2

by — Daniel Andersen

Introduction

In this publication I open my heart to thoughts and feelings that have been reached after years of Bible study. Years ago I was a zealous and dogmatic supporter of a certain line of “fundamentalist thinking” and could react with some indignation to those who differed with me. For in differing with me, my feeling was that they were in opposition to God’s truth!

I have realized the limitations and fallibilities of the thinking and reasoning processes of all human beings in general and of myself in particular. I have realized the power and grip of paradigms or patterns of thought over our thinking and how they limit and circumscribe not only our thoughts and views, but the very questions we ask and how we seek. Perhaps the best and truest patterns or paradigms of thought or summaries of doctrines on Biblical subjects have yet to be developed. I have written more fully about these in *Bible Study – A Personal Quest*.

— Daniel Andersen

Chapter 1

BE LIKEMINDED – ONE TO ANOTHER

Be of the same mind one toward another (Romans 12:16).

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus (Romans 15:5).

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you (II Corinthians 13:11).

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind (Philippians 2:2).

I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord (Philippians 4:2).

These Scripture passages all share a common thought: Paul’s exhortation to “be of the same mind,” or “be likeminded,” or “be of one mind.” Each of these phrases uses the Greek verb *phroneo*. We may well wonder just what Paul has in mind in these and similar passages. They apparently make a strong appeal for uniformity, but what *kind* of uniformity? Does Paul wish everyone to think the same things and in the same way? Is he exhorting believers to subscribe to a uniform set of *articles of faith*, to produce what we might call a *doctrinal accord*? Is it an appeal to embrace a codified set of statements, an early form of *orthodoxy*?

Chapter 2

STEWARD OF THE MYSTERIES (SECRETS) OF GOD

I’ll confess that for many years I thought Paul was urging for doctrinal uniformity. After all, he was steward of the most profound “secrets of God,” one who was an apostle (a commissioned one) of Christ Jesus. He could speak on behalf of Christ. Could he not urge upon all God’s people a unanimity of doctrine? Could he not call upon all believers in Christ to submit to a divinely produced creed, to accept an authoritative summary of the essential points that constitute the Christian faith?

For the sake of discussion, let’s assume that this is what Paul had in mind, that he was exhorting to a unanimity of thought in regard to those things “most surely to be believed.” If he sought such accord in his day when he minis-

(see *LIKEMINDED*, page 4427) ↗

Bible Student's Notebook™ Weekly

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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ABBREVIATION KEY

<i>Scripture Version</i>	Concordance (Knoch)
(Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the Bible Student's Version).	CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)
CV: Concordant Literal Version	CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)
DAR: Darby Translation	FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger)
DT: Dabhar Translation	SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible	TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
KJV: King James Version	UR: Unsearchable Riches
RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible	VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary
WT: Weymouth Translation	YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance
YLT: Young's Literal Translation	
<i>Reference Sources</i>	<i>Reference Notations</i>
AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)	cf. – compare
BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon	e.g. – for example
CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)	et al. – and others
CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)	etc. – et cetera (and so on)
CKC: Concordant Keyword	ff. – and the following
	i.e., – that is

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LIKEMINDED (continued from front page)

tered Christ, what about our day, almost 2,000 years later? We do not have Paul (or any other apostle) in our midst to dispense to us these *essential points of the Christian faith*. We do not have anyone divinely commissioned to give us directly a doctrinal summary of God's truth. But, it is claimed, we have Paul's writings (and more, the set of writings we call the New Testament). And so it behooves us to study, to search, to seek to understand and properly interpret these writings. Would that this were sufficient to produce a unanimity, a oneness, an accord among all believers in Christ! Sad to say, Christendom is characterized by factiousness, fragmentation, and divisiveness rather than by agreement, accord, and unanimity. Shall we strive to attain a common set of doctrines, to agree on a particular set of Biblical articles of faith, to reach one mind and be of total accord? If so, whose mind shall it be? Mine, yours, or someone else's? What set of doctrines shall all commonly embrace? Mine, yours, or someone else's?

Chapter 3**THE LEGACY OF ORTHODOXY**

Dogmatic adherence to a particular creed or *confession* as the basis for unity will produce unity only for the adherents to that particular system.

This, in practice, appears to be about the only basis for unity that is generally recognized. We suffer from what I call the "legacy of orthodoxy," the idea that one must submit to a particular set of dogmatically proclaimed *orthodox* beliefs to be a Christian, or to be a member of some church, or to have fellowship with other Christians. We observe dogmatism in so many human enterprises, in philosophy, in religion, in politics. It appears to be a universal human trait to be zealously engaged in supporting dogmatically held ideas. In world affairs we see the results of such dogmatism: fanatical zeal in the support of a particular cause. And so often it leads to more than fragmentation and division; it leads to bloodshed. Paul himself knew intimately what such zealotry could produce. It was a trait which once characterized himself, but which he ultimately discarded, casting it upon the refuse heap of worthless works of the flesh.

It appears totally impossible for Christians to experience a real unity if it is to be based upon a set of articles of faith or system of doctrines. If this is what Paul was urging, we'd have to say it may have been possible in his day, but it is certainly not possible in our day. Many seek to rise above petty differences and say that they will have fellowship with any who simply agree on *the fundamentals*. A petty difference might be whether grape juice or wine should be used in the communion service; or whether water baptism should be observed by immersion or by sprinkling. What about communion and water baptism themselves? Are they in the list of *fundamentals*? There are sincere believers in Christ who

do not observe these ceremonies and do not consider them as in the will of God for His people today. Would all who hold various points of view on these matters have fellowship with those who differ with them?

Again, most Christians embrace the concept of a Triune Godhead, a Trinity of persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. To many, the confession of being a Christian is practically the same as being a Trinitarian. And yet there are many sincere and serious believers in Christ who do not embrace the concept of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. Are they to be branded as heretics? This would certainly be a *fundamental* upon which there is disagreement. Must those holding one view reject fellowship with those holding others? If so, why?

Chapter 4**WHAT BASIS FOR ACCORD?**

Some will reply, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (Amos 3:3). Yes, but agreed on what? A topic or activity of mutual interest can bring harmony and agreement between people of the greatest diversity of views. That's why people form clubs and associations of all kinds. Have you noticed how friendly people are in a campground, visiting and sharing experiences? Or in a hiking club or biking club or health club, etc.? People from tremendously different points of view on many things can get along in great harmony when sharing something of common interest. So what should be the basis for harmony, for agreement among believers in Christ? Should it be concepts of the Godhead, some of the most complex and subtle theological doctrines that have ever been developed? What if a person, by diligent, honest searching and study, finds it necessary to change views on the nature of the Godhead? Is this one now to be expelled from fellowship? Even from that of one's own family?

Isn't this just what we observe in Christendom? There is a proliferation of groups, denominations, sects, large and small, some respected and venerated, some of long standing and some of recent origin. They are organized around some doctrinal basis or creed or *confession*. The concepts of *orthodoxy* and *heresy* become a matter of concern, but these are not easy to define and they vary in range and scope. Is it *orthodox* to believe the dead are conscious in heaven or hell, but *heresy* to believe the dead "*sleep in the dust of the earth*" awaiting resurrection (Daniel 12:2)? Is it *orthodox* to accept the Trinity, but *heresy* to accept the Oneness concept? (This is not to imply that these are the only options.) Is it *orthodox* to claim Christ is the eternal Son of God but *heresy* to understand that the Son of God came into being by conception and birth?

How many reach their ideas of what is *orthodox* by their own personal diligent study of the Bible and coming to their own private conclusions? Very few, I'm sure. ►

Most simply *subscribe* to a system that, for one reason or another, they are persuaded is *orthodox*. It could be argued that it would be impossible for everyone to reach the *orthodox faith* if left to seek and study and find it for themselves. I agree. And for precisely that reason we ought to dismiss the concept of *orthodoxy* and find a totally different basis for fellowship than agreement on a set of doctrines or a creed or a *confession*.

Chapter 5

PAUL'S DAY AND OUR DAY

Let's continue, for the sake of discussion, to suppose that Paul was urging believers to the doctrinal kind of unity we have been describing. As mentioned earlier, perhaps it could work in his day, but not in ours. Assuming this, we must inquire as to what happened later on. We have the answer in what is generally considered Paul's last letter:

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2).

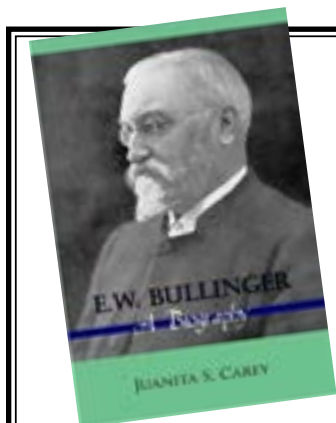
It would be wonderful if we could find a direct line of this commitment to faithful men from Paul's day to our own! But we seek it in vain. And we must admit that this produces a totally different situation from having Paul himself among us. Church historians have indicated that for quite an extended period there was a beautiful freedom of thought and inquiry. People would meet and freely discuss ideas about the nature of the Godhead and other profound topics of the Scriptures, as freely as we today meet and talk about the weather. There was no fear of embracing *heresy*.

As time went on there developed a crystallization along particular doctrinal lines. Systematic theologies began to be produced. Prominent church *bishops* attracted follow-

ings. Divisions along doctrinal lines developed. And then, to me, the most tragic event of all took place. Constantine the Great used Christianity to consolidate his power, nominally making the Roman Empire a *Christian Empire*. He convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., demanding that it unify the Christian Church so that he could more effectively administer the affairs of the empire.

This council, beset by factions and strife, finally produced what is called the *Nicene Creed*. It was declared to be the *orthodox faith*. All must submit to it or face the threat of persecution, loss of property, loss of family, even loss of life, and, of course, loss of salvation. No longer was there healthy inquiry and freedom of discussion. This was replaced by fear and submission to authority. Confessedly, church bishops and officials who, with the backing of the civil government, demanded submission by the populace, did not even themselves understand the intricacies and subtleties of the doctrinal system of faith they now enforced. Splits and antagonisms developed over the interpretation or meaning of a single word. Sometimes a word used to express a theological concept was not a word in the Bible itself. In the 4th century, insistence upon a particular interpretation of one such word, used to describe the Person of Christ, "let loose a fury among mankind that has rarely been paralleled. Millions suffered violence or death in the pursuant wars and persecutions. Hundreds of bishops were exiled or murdered at the command of other bishops who, when the tide turned, visited the same treatment upon their rivals." Those of opposing views "alike sought to use the secular arm to terrify and assassinate their opponents, and to seize their congregations, churches, and revenues by force." (Martin A. Larson, *The Religion of the Occident*, Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1961, p. 572).

We wonder how individual and personal faith in Christ as one's own personal Savior would be possible under such conditions. We might well wonder why we today should esteem as *orthodox* the deliberations of church officials who were so obviously manipulated. They produced a system that, by binding together a culturally diverse popula-



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tion, resulted in the aggrandizement of power both by a Roman emperor and by those same church officials. Let us be ever so grateful for the freedom we enjoy, freedom to investigate and examine and question, and to have personal faith according to our individual understanding in a living One, the One Who died and rose again on our behalf!

So, for the sake of discussion, we'd say that Paul could be dogmatic but we cannot be. He could urge agreement on a set of dogmatically declared articles of faith, but we cannot. We should welcome free and open discussion. We should welcome healthy and sincere inquiry. We should be free to work through to our own conclusions on all Scriptural topics and themes. Yes, I believe we should!

Chapter 6

WHAT WAS IN PAUL'S MIND?

We must examine the possibility that Paul had something totally different in mind from what we have so far considered here. Do Paul's writings convey the impression that he imposed a codified set of doctrines upon those to whom he ministered? That he had a systematically organized creed to which people were to be subjected? Does he not rather appeal to people to believe God's truth, to receive the word of Christ in faith? Read again such passages as I Thessalonians 1 and Colossians 1, and try to get the feeling of Paul's ministry: his love, his prayers, and his concern for these believers. He tells the Colossians that as they received Christ Jesus the Lord, so they should walk in Him; having been rooted in Him, they should continue to grow up in Him (2:6-7).

This hardly suggests being subjected to a detailed system of thought. It rather suggests a dynamic, living faith that reaches out and embraces Christ in a most personal, intimate manner. The concept of growth implies development and change and adjustment. We were not born with the truth. The truth must be obtained. This is not

an effortless task. It requires diligence and effort. It must become a lifetime quest, never a total or absolute attainment. Psalm 119:105 describes our situation as walking along a path, with God's Word to give light, showing us where to place our feet, step by step.

Chapter 7

**THE VERB "PHRONEO"
"TO BE LIKEMINDED"**

Now we must come to grips with the Greek verb *phroneo* that Paul used in each of the verses quoted at the start of this publication. It comes from the root *phren* which literally means the "diaphragm" or "midriff". But the Greek, as well as many languages, often used such words to describe something beyond literal bodily organs. For instance, think of the literal and many figurative uses of the word "heart."

The Greek word *splagchna* (from *splen*, from which we obtain "spleen") literally means the "intestines" and is most often translated "bowels" in the *King James Version*. But it can describe inward and tender affection and compassion, as is clearly indicated in the contexts in which it is used. In a similar manner the word *phren*, and the family of words based upon it, came to have connotations far beyond that of the "midriff" or "diaphragm." Look up the words *phrenic* and *phrenology* in a dictionary that indicates the origins of words. The Greek word *phren*, diaphragm, will be indicated as the origin, but *phrenology* is the study of the conformation of the skull as indicative of mental faculties. The Greeks connected the diaphragm with the mind, but neither in the sense of pure reasoning nor in the exercise of the mental faculties in taking thought or thinking something through. It was rather considered the source of, or associated with, sympathy, with feelings of a sensitive nature. So *phroneo* carries with it emotional overtones. It includes the idea of a disposition, an attitude, a leaning, or inclination. The *Analytical Greek* ►



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Lexicon (Harper and Brothers, New York) includes under it the following: “to entertain sentiments or inclinations of a specific kind.” Thayer’s *Lexicon* includes the definition “to feel, to think.” How often we speak of our mental feelings or inclinations about things. Note how often we say “I feel ...” about a matter as an indication of our attitude or disposition or inclination about it. These remarks indicate the richness and flexibility of words in various languages.

Chapter 8

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Let’s now examine the use of *phroneo* in a few passages.

For I say through the favour which hath been given me unto everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly [hyperphroneo] than he ought to think [phroneo], but so to think [phroneo] as to think soberly [sophroneo] – as unto each one God hath dealt a measure of faith (Romans 12:3, *Rotherham*).

Here we have two occurrences of the word *phroneo* and two occurrences of compoundings of the word. The meaning is clear: “Don’t be highminded about yourself above what you ought to be minded. Don’t think too highly, too loftily about self, with overtones of superiority. Don’t have a high and mighty attitude. Don’t display a haughty attitude.” Reading the context of this verse indicates that the matter of relationships among the Roman Christians is Paul’s subject and concern. In this important matter he desires the appropriate attitude or inclination or sentiment to be exhibited by each to the other.

Be of the same mind [phroneo] one toward another. Mind not [phroneo] high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise [phronimos, adjective form of phroneo] in your own conceits (Romans 12:16).

Read the entire beautiful context of this verse. It is so obvious that Paul is dealing with *attitudes* to be displayed by people in their relationships with one another. He urges them to be intimately united in the acceptance of one another, to be condescending, to be open, outgoing, warm, concerned and compassionate in personal matters.

Chapter 9

CHRIST: THE FOCUS AND THE PATTERN

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded [literally, to mind (phroneo) the same thing] one toward another according to Christ Jesus (Romans 15:5).

Again, the context must be studied to appreciate Paul’s thoughts. He appeals to these believers not simply to live to please themselves, but to live to please others, to live for the good of others, edifying and building them up in the faith. Christ didn’t live to please Himself and a person who allows self to suffer the reproaches directed at another isn’t living for self. The quoted Scripture is for direct application and instruction, bringing endurance and encouragement.

In :5 Paul prays that the God of that endurance and encouragement would grant them the same mind Christ displayed. This is in order that, with one accord and one mouth, they might glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, to pull it all together (:7), *they ought to receive one another in the same manner and spirit that Christ received them*. This would be to the glory of God!

It is fascinating to read this passage in different translations to see how various translators attempt to express Paul’s thoughts in English. Here is Moffatt’s rendering of :5-6.

May the God who inspires steadfastness and encouragement grant you such harmony with one another, after Christ Jesus, that you may unite in a chorus of praise and glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Here is Phillips’ rendering of :5-7.

May ... God ... give you a mind united toward one another because of your common loyalty to Jesus Christ. And then, as one man, you will sing from the heart the praises of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So open your hearts to one another as Christ has opened his heart to you, and God will be glorified.



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No passage could indicate more clearly the importance to God of how His people relate to one another and what their attitudes should be to one another. Christ Himself is the model and motivation. He didn't live to please Himself. He receives all that come to Him without discriminating, without qualifications, and without presenting a list of prerequisites. The Roman Christians must have been a very mixed group of people with a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds. Many, perhaps most, were Israelites dispersed from their homeland, some of whom may have become indifferent to their ancient heritage under the Law of Moses. Some may have sought to remain loyal to that heritage in whatever way they could. Others were likely Italians with backgrounds in ancient Roman religions. Still others may have come from various ethnic groups in the civilized world of the day. Some had high social status, some low. Some were wealthy, some poor. Some were highly educated, some uneducated. Christ received them all. Thus they should receive one another. There should be no discrimination, no overriding concern about status, genealogy, family background, roots, intellectual or mental level, capabilities, financial status, educational background, religious background, etc.

So it is clear that Paul is dealing with attitudes, with feelings, with inclinations. He is not speaking of subscribing to a codified set of doctrinal statements, of being indoctrinated into a creed or confession. He appeals for the unity of a warm, loving, compassionate reception of one another as Christ received them. Their acceptance of one another should transcend every kind of distinction that would tend to cause division and differences among them. Paul clearly indicates that Christ is the focus, the model, the pattern. And, wonder of wonders, the glory of God is in it!

Should we not apply Paul's exhortation to ourselves today? Should we not receive to ourselves in every way possible all those whom He has received, all who have *named the name of Christ*? Should we not remove all prerequisites and qualifications and embrace into our fellowship all who have committed themselves to Him? And isn't that the basis for unity, for fellowship: *the Person of Christ Himself*? Shall we make demands that He does not make? Shall we erect barriers that He would not raise? Shall we exclude where He receives? Shall we demand agreement on subtle and complex theological notions when He looks for simple faith?

Going on to another occurrence:

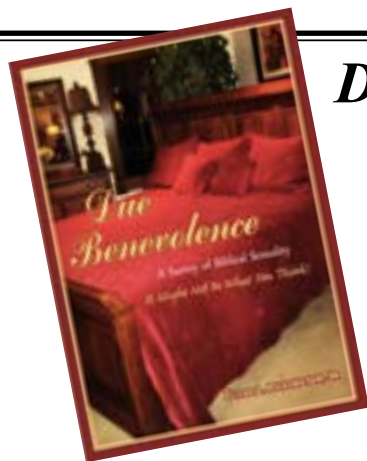
When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood [phroneo] as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things (I Corinthians 13:11).

Here is Rotherham's translation of this verse.

When I was a child I used to speak as a child, to prefer [phroneo] as a child, to reason as a child: now I have become a man I have laid aside the things of the child!

It seems plain that the Greek word we are investigating, *phroneo*, does not here refer to what we might call intellectual concerns. It describes what we might call "child-mindedness" and speaks of the attitude, preferences, disposition and understanding that is typical of a child. When maturity comes, these things, along with manner of speaking and manner of reasoning, change to those characteristic of adulthood.

(to be continued)



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