

- ***READ Philippians 2:1,2*** Unity was a huge topic of discussion within the early writings of the early church. This makes much sense seeing as how there were many different facets of life and faith that could've caused a great deal of disunity among the first disciples. They were often a people of different ethnicity, language, creed, and religious background. And yet, we don't see Paul or any other New Testament writer giving even an inch of leeway in them allowing those differences to cause disunity that would hinder the purposes of God. Truly nothing can hinder progress more quickly, more efficiently, and more effectively than disunity among those involved.
- These same principles continue to be true for us as disciples within this century some nearly 2000 years removed from the first disciples. If we are not a united people then we will not find the success that we have every ability to achieve. If we are not striving for unity within this group then the plain truth is that Satan is winning and taking a foothold in this place. Therefore, we must be on guard against anything that might divide us and stand strong against it.
- The question might be however...in what ways ought we to be unified? I think that question can be answered from this text here in **Philippians 2:1,2**, but I would like to instead look to a very practical Old Testament example of a people who were on the cusp of accomplishing an amazing feat because of their unity. This example is one that we would do well to imitate even within this place, but it might not be the first example that comes to your minds. What if I were to tell you that the people of Babel give us a tremendous example of unity that could even help teach us a thing or two? Let's turn to **Genesis 11:1-9** and take some time this morning considering how we might take another step at reaching our full potential as a church in growing mightily and prevailing by Imitating Babel. We have spent much of this year considering how we can be a growing people, and the example of Babel leaves us with a beneficial and effective plan as to how we can take full advantage of our efforts from this year through being a strong united people.

I. The Story Of Babel

A. The people of the earth were a single unified force

1. In **Genesis 11:1,2**, following the worldwide flood that cleansed the earth of its pervasive sin (**Genesis 6:6,7; 7:4**), we find the descendants of Noah and his sons being a truly united people upon the earth. Naturally being from the same family, we find them having an easy time communicating which of course is a key component of unity. Because of this easy of communication, this people had a plan as to how they wanted to move forward.
2. This plan seemed to involve them moving about from place to place until they found a place in which to settle. The text tells us that they moved together eastward until they settled on the plains of the land of Shinar. It is in this location that this people established their dwelling, and they began to build a life for themselves. Again, we will note that this was made possible by the fact that these people were able to freely and effectively communicate to accomplish the goals that they had set out for themselves.

B. They sought to build a tower that would give them a strong name.

1. One such goal that we see stated within the text was not to just build a city for themselves, but they wanted to build a massive structure that would show others that they were a great people. *"Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."* (**Genesis 11:4**)
2. Historians tell us that the most likely goal of these people was to construct what is called a ziggurat. These were massive towers that would have served as a central structure within their communities. These towers would've housed many different centers of services such as public

buildings, civic buildings, food supply and storage, and such. The construction of such a massive structure would've told anyone who saw it that these were a great people who were highly successful within themselves.

3. This massive structure would've also served as a great foundation for the future generations that were to follow. Many early cultures put much thought into what they could do to help for the future generations to find success. Legacy was an important component of these early cultures, and constructing this massive tower would have served as a way in which the names of the earlier generations would've remained. I believe it is these two factors that would've played into what we see being said by the people in **Genesis 11:4** when it is said that this needed to be done or else the people would be scattered all over the face of the earth. If the people were able to stay and work together as one in this effort then they would be able to establish everything within this place that they would've needed to be a great people. They didn't want to be scattered about because they saw strength in unity and numbers.
4. I know I have heard it said that these people thought they could literally reach into heaven where God was, but I don't see that within this text. Further, we know this is an impossibility for so many reasons, one of which being the fact that God's abode isn't present within this material world. Instead, I see a people in this story who developed an extraordinary plan in which their name and people would have a strong foundation laid for future success and prosperity. And yet, this plan wasn't something that God approved of.

C. God objects to their efforts and scatters them by confusing their language.

1. We find in **v.5** that God descends onto the earth and sees the tower that the men had put their heads together to build, and He didn't like what He saw. In fact, He says, *"Behold they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them."* It might seem strange for God to object to people being so successful within a task such as building a tower. I can't think of anything inherently wrong with building a tower like structure, but God seems to be highly concerned with what their success was leading them towards.
2. In order to understand God's concern I might ask...did you happen to notice what or who was not mentioned in their plans? They talked about unity which was great. They talked about preserving their legacy and lineage in which there is nothing wrong with. However, what is missing is any mention whatsoever of God! We must remember that these were God's people! These were the direct descendants of Noah and his sons. They were the people of God, and He had commanded them to go forth, multiply, and fill up the earth with God's people, but it seems as if these people had collectively decided to ignore God's wishes, do their own thing, and make a name for themselves.
3. This obviously isn't the first time that God's people had rebelled against Him and it wasn't the last, but it is another example of God having to step in and deliver strong ramifications for sin. God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. (**Genesis 3:22-24**) As has been mentioned, God destroyed nearly all of mankind through a world wide flood because of their sin. (**Genesis 6:7;7:4**) Yet, I want us to recognize that God was having to punish the people by confusing their language in this instance because these people were becoming extremely successful without considering the will of God in their plans. That was their great mistake. It was this confusing of the languages that actually brought about the name of this tower as Babel.
4. To me this is an absolutely fascinating portion of the Biblical narrative, and while we could focus and learn about the need for us to always consider the will of God. While we could talk about the need to avoid prideful pursuits that would give ourselves a great name instead of God. While we could focus on these issues...I'd instead like to focus specifically on the unity that was displayed by these people. If these people had a unity that caused God to act then that unity

ought to be something we strive for. What were their keys to their unity? We could speculate about the areas in which they were unified, but thankfully God tells us directly the ways in which these people were unified and how they were able to have such great success. *“Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which the purpose to do will be impossible for them.” (Genesis 11:6)*

II. 4 Keys To Babel’s Near Success

A. The people were united as one.

1. This might seem like a “duh” statement since we’re talking about their unity, but what I mean by this is that the people were a single unified force. In the truest sense these people were a single big family, and this could have something to do with them being united as one. However we all know that even within families there can be factions and divisions. They could’ve divided over preferences of any sort. They could’ve sought to elevate themselves depending on which son of Noah they were a descendant of. They could’ve divided only any number of issues, but instead they chose to work together.
2. This people possessed a spirit of unity among themselves that allowed for them to be engaged in this successful work. That same unity of spirit must be had amongst any group of God’s people if we hope to be successful in the efforts that we put forth. If we don’t believe this then we simply need to read what is found within the first few verses of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. *“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgement.” (1 Corinthians 1:10)* It was necessary for Paul to write such a thing to this church because this group of believers had been torn apart by all sorts of infighting and dividing. While this church had many other issues besides the divisions, we have to understand that these divisions only exacerbated the other problems because they prevented an atmosphere of reconciliation and peace. If we want to find great success such as these people in Genesis 11 found then we must be a people united as one.

B. The people had one language.

1. Not only were the people a single unified force, but they also all spoke the same language. Again, this fact might seem very obvious to us, but can’t discount how important this was for these people. It wasn’t as if they could just pull out their smart phones and use google translate to communicate if they spoke different languages, so all of them speaking the same language was of the utmost important. This becomes extremely clear to us when we see that the confusion of their language caused them to abandon their work all together and move away to live apart from one another. However, the usage of different languages isn’t as much a big deal for us since we do have Good translate and other translation abilities, so how might it be that we need to speak the same language?
2. I would suggest that we need to speak the same language by making sure that we are all using our words for good and not harm. We must all use the same beneficial words amongst ourselves. We ought to be well aware of the power that our words possess. James reminds us, *“Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a ver small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire.” (James 3:4,5)* We must recognize the strong power of our tongues and therefore be sure that we are only united in following the words of Paul from **Ephesians 4:29**, *“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”* We must be united in only speaking with grace towards one another.

C. The people had one purpose.

1. Being a people who were united as one and speaking the same language allowed for these people to move forward with one purpose and vision. They had a single purpose and goal in mind, and as we have noted that goal was for them to gain for themselves a strong name that would keep them from being scattered across the land. This unity of purpose kept the people from being pulled in many different directions which would have most certainly resulted in them not being able to accomplish anything great at all. Such unity of purpose is something that all groups of God people seeking to serve Him ought to share amongst themselves.
2. We might also phrase this as the need to have a unified vision as a local body of believers, and this gets back to our understanding of what the purpose of the church is. I am a firm believer that the most succinct and straight forward description of what being a church which belongs to Christ is all about can be found in **Ephesians 4:11-16**. Within this text, we see that God established a body that was to focus on the *"equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ."* This equipping would allow for the saints to not be like little children who might be swayed from their faith with difficulties arise. **(Ephesians 4:14)** It would allow for the saints to be able to speak the truth in love when the opportunity arose. **(Ephesians 4:15)** It would allow for *"the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."* **(Ephesians 4:16)** This is the purpose and vision of the Lord for how His churches ought to be conducting themselves. These are the goals, and yet there must be a total commitment to working together to achieve these goals.

D. The people did one work.

1. This unity in the work is the final component to what made the people so successful in the building of this great tower. God recognized that they were one people with one language and that they were working hard together to achieve that one purpose. These people were bought into the vision and all that was left for them to do was to work together towards that vision so that they might achieve their goal. Friends, we can have the most spot on vision, but if we are not willing to work together to achieve such a vision then it truly is worthless.
2. So how is it that we can work together? Does this mean that we each must work in the exact same way doing the same things. Of course we know this isn't the case at all, and we know so from the great illustration that Paul gives us in **I Corinthians 12:14-31**. Paul teaches this critically important concept by using the illustration of the body and how it has many parts that work together. The different parts have different roles, but each role is equally vital to the success of the body. He even mentions in **v.28** how God has appointed different people within that time that served various important purposes within the church. It might even remind us of what we saw in **Ephesians 4:11**, and it should because the two ideas are nearly identical with the bottom line being this: Each of us need to find what role we can play within the body, and we need to play it well. **(Ephesians 4:16)** Each of us needs to evaluate our skills and find the best place to use them. Yes, we are all unified in our work, but that doesn't mean that we do the same work. However, what must be the same in is the love that we have for one another and our God. Any work not unified in love is worthless and will only hinder our progress in the goals we are trying to achieve together.

While we might not naturally consider the story of the tower of Babel to teach us much of what we ought to do if we want to be successful, I hope these considerations this morning will help us to see the importance of unity, being one people with one voice, having a proper vision, and buying into the work that each of us can do in order to achieve such a vision. May we take all that we have studied this year on growing mightily and prevailing and use it to truly do such in this place and in any place we might be in the future. As always, may God be gloried as we seek to serve Him in all that we do.