

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEB 13TH-14TH, 2021 // BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

FRIENDSHIP & UNITY (PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3)

Christian friendship is a gift that strengthens us and brings joy, but that only comes when we are committed to unity.

- Paul gives the blueprint for how we achieve this unity by living in humility and keeping our eyes focused on Christ.
- In vs. 1, he addresses this church in familial terms and calls them his "joy and crown" and says that he misses them.

Then he addresses a specific situation in the Philippian church, a disagreement between two women-Euodia and Syntyche.

- This conflict may be why he has talked about unity and humility throughout this letter.
- Paul isn't taking sides or gossiping, but he's not being passive in his remarks either. He addresses the problem and gives the Church a template to use for future disagreements.

What were they fighting about?

- The text doesn't really say, but we do know that they were true believers and were most likely leaders in the church.
- Even the most mature, Godly individuals can find themselves engaged in petty squabbles and disagreements.
- James 4:1-2 identifies the root cause of all conflict as selfishness.

Paul appeals to someone he addresses as a true companion or yokefellow to "help these women".

- There's no entering into the drama, no choosing sides, and no slandering.
- There's only strong, urgent, logical and mature language that insists these women are helped and this matter is put behind them.

Unfortunately, some of us actually enjoy drama and conflict, and our relationships attest to that. For some people, drama provides them with...

- An exaggerated sense of importance
- A distraction from focusing on their own lives
- Something exciting or sensational to talk and think about
- A sense of identity (victimization)

Even though disagreements and conflicts will happen, we are to work to resolve them quickly and lovingly.

- Drama, quarrelling, and contention should have no place in Christ's church.
- God is the author of peace (1 Cor.14:33), and as His children we are to be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

First Paul instructs us to be of the same mind. This only come by imitating the humility of Christ.

- Walking in maturity by listening to others' needs and perspectives, and not just focused on our own ambitions.

Second Paul calls for intervention. Involving a Godly, wise believer to mediate the conflict and help bring about resolution. We can't be afraid to ask for help when we find ourselves in conflict with other believers. Third, it is because of the Gospel we should be reconciled, for we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We can't put ourselves above the Gospel.

- Outside of major doctrinal issues there should be no reason why brothers and sisters within the Church should be divided if we are truly living in humility.

PREVENTING DAMAGING CONFLICT

- Do we see ourselves as a threat to the unity of the Church?
- Are we willing to ask for help when we are in the midst of a conflict?
- Are we prepared to give help in the midst of conflict?

PEACE AND CONTENTMENT (PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9)

Sometimes peace and contentment have to be fought for- and for believers, the battlefield is the mind and the affections.

- We are not victims of circumstance- all of us must face our own unique set of trials, troubles, and sufferings.
- Paul gives the Philippian Christians a set of strategies to fight for joy in the midst of real-life and suffering.

"Rejoice in the Lord always..." (v. 4)

- The first step in having joy is to rejoice!
- Joy begins with our relationship with the Lord, not our circumstances. It's not about getting what we want but being grateful for all that we have in Christ.
- We are always to rejoice, even in the midst of pain and struggle. "As grieving yet always rejoicing."

"Do not be anxious about anything..." (vs. 6)

- Anxiety and worry accomplish nothing. They only drain us of strength and peace in the moment.
- Worry is often a lack of faith in the sufficiency of God and happens when we believe lies.
- Anxiety make us more self absorbed, consumed by ourselves instead of others.

"But in everything with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving..." (vs. 6)

- The strategy against worry that Paul gives the Philippians is prayer.
- While worry accomplishes nothing, prayer accomplishes much.
- While worry drains us of strength, prayer clothes us in strength.
- Thanksgiving is where we pray from.

"Let your requests be made known to God..." (vs. 6)

- No matter how big or small our needs, we're invited to bring it to God.
- There is freedom in knowing that we're not called to carry everything on our own!
- We have a promise that God actually CARES about our burdens.

"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding..." (vs. 7)

- The peace of God comes from prayer that involves both asking God for our earthly needs and thanking God for His presence and provision.
- This is a peace that cannot be understood in human language.
- It produces calmness, wholeness, and confidence in the outcome of our lives.

"Will guard your hearts and minds..." (vs. 7)

- The word picture is of a garrison of Roman soldiers standing guard and protecting your thoughts and emotions from worry and doubt.
- When we take our worries and doubts to God in prayer, instead of letting them fester in our minds, God gives us peace to protect us from future fear, worry, and doubt!

"...think on such things" (vs. 8-9)

- Our minds have a strong influence on the quality of our lives. Right thinking is the first step towards righteous living.
- What is right thinking? Thinking devoted to that which is good, beautiful and true by the standards of God, not our own standards.
- Thinking on God's truth and constant prayer will relieve our worries and lead us to peace.
- This isn't a quick fix, a magic pill or a silver bullet- it's hard to do in the moment of worry!
- Just because the answer is simple doesn't mean it's easy.

OPEN-HANDED LIVING (PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23)

"You were indeed concerned for me..." (vs. 10)

- Paul now turns his attention to God's provision or him through the gift brought by Epaphroditus for the Philippian church.
- Sometimes God works through people to meet human needs. Once again, we find Paul rejoicing!
- He was so grateful because of their renewed commitment to help support him.

"In whatever situation I am to be content..." (vs. 11)

- Despite all his joy he wants to make known that it is not dependent on the gift he received.
- Paul says he is not in need but has learned to be content in every circumstance.
- He speaks of a secret- not the kind of Greek and Roman cults or stoic philosophers- but a strategy that he has relied on throughout his life. His secret was his radical reliance on Christ.

Paul is careful in vs. 17 to ensure the Philippians again that the motive for his thankfulness is not to secure another gift.

- He wasn't interested in the gifts for his own physical advantage, but for the spiritual advantage of the Philippians.
- Their generosity was an example that God was completing a good work in them.

"And my God will supply every need ..." (vs. 19)

- Paul tells us that God will meet our needs if we are willing to trust Him by being generous to meet the needs of others. Your attitude towards money is an indicator of the spiritual condition of your heart. "You can't serve God and money..." (Matt. 6:24)
- Generosity is a preemptive strike against the spiritual cancer of worry and anxiety.

God doesn't need your money. What He wants and values from us is a heart that overflows with gratitude to the God who has saved us and who given us all things through Christ.

- A heart that truly trusts God gives generously, willingly, and cheerfully in response to the love and grace that abounds in Christ.

Paul concludes this letter by sending his greetings and the greetings of the saints with him in Rome.

- "Caesar's household" is probably a reference to those employed by the emperor, maybe even the Roman guards that had become believers as a result of Paul's imprisonment in Philippi.

LIVING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Our souls are the personality centers of our beings from which our mind, will, and emotions operate. With our souls, we choose either to listen to and obey the lusts of our flesh or the desires of the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:16-17, Rom. 8:9, Mark 14:38) All our actions start on the inside. Is there peace in your soul and in your spirit? In our relationship with God, the only path to peace is found in absolute surrender.

THE GRACE OF JESUS WITH YOUR SPIRIT

Do you need to reconcile a strained or broken relationship? Do you need to start living open-handedly and trusting God with your money? Do you need to trust God with your greatest worry through prayer and right thinking?