

Philippians 4:2-3

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 10/07/2007

Addressing Conflict in the Body

Prayer

Father, thank You so much for Your goodness and Your graciousness towards us. And Father, I just pray that You would use Your Word to work in our hearts, that You would use it for Your glory, that we would not be just those who hear, Lord God, but those who do what You say. That we would be those who by Your power and strength obey You for Your glory. Father, I know I am not adequate to be able to present Your Word, and I know we are not adequate to hear it and respond, Lord God; but we ask You to intervene, to open our minds to understand the Scriptures so that we would be changed and that You would be glorified. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Sermon

Well you probably heard the old saying, "To dwell with saints above, oh that will be glory. But to dwell with saints below, well that's another story." I share that because that is reality. We know that in heaven, there will be no more tears, no more sorrow, no more sin. And we know that there will be no conflict, no disunity; that we will rejoice in the unity that we have in Christ because sin will be by that time totally taken care of. We have been redeemed now, but our bodies will be redeemed, and we will be sinless. And we look forward to that time. But right now as we are on the earth, as we are pressing forward towards that goal (the upward call in Christ), ultimately we realize that conflicts come about and that we have difficulties. And every family has difficulties; every family has conflicts. And we are not redeemed yet. We are not glorified yet. I mean we are redeemed; although we have been redeemed but not glorified yet, we still sin. And we as redeemed sinners, sometimes when we get together, sometimes we have problems. And evidently in the church in Philippi there were problems between two women. And we are going to look at that today, how the Apostle Paul resolves conflict in the body of Christ.

Now I praise God that we are not left in the dark concerning sin as believers. And I just praise Him that He gives us His Word concerning what we should do concerning sin. Matthew 18 is clear that if a brother sins, we should go to him and reprove him. And if he does not respond, if we do not win him, bring another brother. And if he does not respond there, then ultimately we tell it to the church so that God will work on him obviously. And if he does not respond to the church, he needs to be sent out as an outsider that God would allow Satan to work on him so that hopefully he would, or she would, repent. Titus chapter 2 speaks of how we should deal with factious people in the body of Christ. Paul tells Titus, "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that he is perverted and sinning." Galatians chapter 6 deals with how we should work with someone who is caught up in a trespass. Someone who is not deliberately condoning their sin but is caught up in sin. He says, "You who are spiritual come alongside and restore that brother or sister. But be careful lest you be tempted." You could be tempted in the same way.

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And now we have, I believe, in Philippians, how we can address disunity and conflicts in the body of Christ. A great paradigm the Apostle Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit gives us. And I think we are going to see in the next few weeks how we can overcome the hindrances to standing firm in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Would you turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 2, and we are going to look at verses 2 and 3. The Apostle Paul is going to share in the next few verses, we are going to see that we need to be reconciled. And we are going to see that we need to rejoice in the Lord. And we are going to see that we need to relax, or trust the Lord, not worrying but praying. And we are going to see that ultimately we need to renew our minds with the Word of God. And so today we are going to look at the first portion, I believe, which is about being reconciled. So let's take a look at verses 2 and 3. And actually let's go back a little bit, verse 1.

¹Therefore, my beloved brethren, (Chapter 4) who I long to see, my joy and my crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. ² I urge Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. ³ Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared in my struggle in the cause of the Gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. [Philippians 4:1-3]

Initially here we have Paul sharing that we should be reconciled in the Lord, we will see. After exhorting these believers to stand firm in the Lord, which we saw last week, Paul says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." He is addressing a conflict in the body of Christ. And he says, "Indeed true comrade, I ask you to help these women." Now on the surface, it looks like this exhortation to resolve this conflict between two women may be unrelated to the rest of the book. But I believe it is related. I believe this exhortation to reconcile is related to how we stand firm in the Lord and then how we walk in a manner that is worthy of this great calling that we have been called.

Paul has revealed in chapter 1 the wonderful truths that God has granted us to suffer together for the firmness of the Gospel. And we have seen Paul's example, how he saw everything that God was allowing as God sovereignly bringing about the furtherance of the Gospel. We saw in chapter 2 that we should be united in spirit, we should be humble and obedient like Christ, we should have this mind which was in Christ Jesus. We saw in the beginning of chapter 3 there are threats to having the mind of Christ. There are threats to thinking Biblically, to thinking like Christ, to being obedient. And we saw Paul's testimony as he shares that he was that way. He was confident in himself, but now he saw everything as dung compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus. And we saw the Apostle Paul sharing how he lives out those truths as an example in Scripture, that we are to press forward, not looking back. Press on to the upward call, this wonderful call in the Gospel, Christ-likeness. And we saw that we are not to walk like the many, whose end is destruction, who set their mind on earthly things. But we are to walk in a manner worthy, we are to press on because we are citizens of heaven. We have a heavenly citizenship. And the Lord is going to finish the work He started, He is going to conform and transform our bodies into His image, ultimately we will see.

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And so we had the command last week to “so stand firm in the Lord.” It was in the context of a loving exhortation to these believers. The Apostle Paul wanted to see them. They were his joy and his crown. And now we see at this point by way of an unfortunate illustration, that these truths apply to our real-time conflicts. Again, verse 2, “² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. ³ Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women...” [Philippians 4:2-3a]

Now we are going to see, these were not sideline saints. These were not people who came on Sunday and did their own thing during the week. These were people who were entrenched in the good fight of faith. And there was evidently a conflict between two women. And as we know by Israel’s example in the Old Testament and this letter, that arguing and complaining is a horrible sin in the life of a saint. And Paul addresses this head-on. If you remember 1 Corinthians 10, we see God’s view towards grumbling with His people. First Corinthians 10:6,

⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. ⁷ And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.” ⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. [1 Corinthians 10:6-12]

Philippians 2, we saw in chapter 2 verse 12,

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing; (Why?) ¹⁵ that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation... [Philippians 2:12-15a]

It is crucial that believers walk in a manner worthy of their calling, that we are not like the world, grumbling and complaining and having conflicts together. It is crucial and Paul gives an illustration now in this chapter concerning two women who had a conflict. Obviously disunity in the body of Christ is a totally, incredibly devastating state. And it absolutely hinders us from standing firm, and it affects our testimony to a watching world. Do you see why this is important? We could read through this really quickly and, “Ok, these two women have a problem. Let’s move on.” But I believe we are going to see today in these two verses how we are to get through and resolve conflicts Biblically.

So again, first of all, I believe we are going to see two exhortations. One exhortation to the parties involved, and one exhortation to the rest of the body including leaders. So first of all, we have an exhortation to the parties involved, Euodia and Syntyche. Again, verse two, “² I urge Euodia and I urge

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Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.” [Philippians 4:2] Can you imagine this? Epaphroditus has brought this letter from the Apostle Paul from Rome now to Philippi, and he stands up and he reads it to the people. And in this you hear, “I urge Euodia (She is sitting out there, probably on this side) and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.” Paul names names. He addresses this situation straight on. Can you imagine the stares as Paul would name names? And evidently, there was a heavy-duty dispute obviously between these two women so large that the word had gotten all the way from Philippi to the Apostle Paul in chains in Rome.

And folks, sometimes we have this attitude that we should not say anything in churches, that we should not name names. But sometimes Paul does name names, inspired by the Holy Spirit. But we are going to see that he does not name names to put people down and to hurt people. 1 Timothy chapter 1, “The goal of our instruction is love.” And we will see that that is why he does it. Sometimes the Christ-like loving response is to name names as we will see here in this passage. And for example, Paul warned throughout his letters concerning threats to the faith and those who had gone astray. And folks, Paul shared their names in Scripture for us to have now forever. Turn with me just for a second to 1 Timothy, and we are going to look at a few passages concerning how Paul shares peoples’ names and addresses them head-on, just like he does in our passage. 1 Timothy chapter 1:18,

¹⁸ This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, ¹⁹ keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. ²⁰ Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme. [1 Timothy 1:18-20]

That is pretty heavy-duty. Second Timothy, scoot over to chapter 1 in 2 Timothy. Chapter 1, verse 13,

¹³ Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. ¹⁵ You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; [2 Timothy 1:13-16]

He names more people who left him. 2 Timothy chapter 4 in the end, if you skip to the end of the book. Paul writes to Timothy,

⁹ Make every effort to come to me soon; ¹⁰ for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; [2 Timothy 4:9-10]

Now Paul was not saying things to put people down. We know Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was saying things for the edification for the body of Christ and for the building up in love. And he says, “Demas has split, loving this present world.” That is pretty bad!

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And now in our present passage we have this, “I urge Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony.” Paul comes right out and says it. These two women have a problem, and certainly it was evident to the church. Now if you look at this, these were not as I shared sideline Sunday saints (verse 3). Apparently these women were entrenched in the ministry. And yet they had become at odds with one another. Again verse 3, “³ Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared in my struggle in the cause of the Gospel...” [Philippians 4:3] That word “struggle,” *sunathleo*, we get our word “athletic” from it. They struggled for the cause of the Gospel together with Paul! They contended, they toiled by one’s side. They were deeply entrenched in the good fight of faith. And now they were at odds.

Folks, when there are divisions in churches by Christians who are not in ministry, effectively not serving at all, those divisions rarely do much. But when there is a division between people who are trusting the Lord and following Him and fighting the good fight of faith and yet something comes up, it can be devastating for the church. Therefore Paul needs to address this situation. And we have an example for all division.

Now you may ask, “What is the source of conflict?” What is the source of conflict? James answers that for us in James chapter 4, verse 1. Let’s turn there also. James is going to tell us why we quarrel. He is going to tell us why we have conflict. James chapter 4, verse 1. And I believe this is the same reason why these women had conflict. Verse 1 of chapter 4,

¹ What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives so that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose, “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?” [James 4:1-5]

The source of our quarrels are our pleasures, our desires. And somehow and some way between Euodia and Syntyche, there became a type of spat here or something. So how does Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit respond to this struggle? First of all, we see the direct exhortation to the parties involved. Again, “² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.” [Philippians 4:2] We are going to see that he is urging them to be same-minded. And it is important to realize that Paul does not get into the issue here. He does not address it at all. It is totally absent from the picture. But we are going to see ultimately that Paul instead of getting into the issue, exhorts for like-mindedness in Christ.

And folks, I think (just a side note) we need to be very careful when we come alongside people. Often we get into the issues, and we get bogged down in those, whatever the issues are. I think there is a great lesson to be learned here. Paul does not get into the issues. Now there are a myriad of shows on

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the radio that will get you into the issues all the time, about your families and marriages and all this stuff; but they do not get you to the Word to be same-minded. And I think we can learn from this right here. He does not talk about it all. He gives them this command. He says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche..." And it is interesting in the Greek text, he exhorts, he says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche." He is saying, "Both you people." He is urging them both equally. And this word, "urge" is a word we know. It is called *parakaleo*. In its very basic form, *para* means "alongside" and *kaleo* means "to call." And it speaks of comforting, encouraging, imploring, all in the context of closeness. And so now Paul is exhorting these women. He is imploring them.

What is he imploring them to do? It says, "to live in harmony." Now if you have an NASB, that is the translation you have, "to live in harmony." And I usually prefer the NASB translation. But I believe the New King James does a better job translating this, because this word "harmony" here is actually the same word we have seen before, *phroneo*. And if you look in the notes of your NASB, I think it will say on the side there for this verse, "to be same-minded." And we have seen this before. We have seen this word *phroneo*. It literally means "to think." He is saying, "I urge you to think the same." That is where we get this idea of harmony. We get our English word "symphony" from "harmony." *Phroneo*, to think the same thing, to be in unity. Now the New King James I believe does a better job translating it. And with that in mind, this word *phroneo* has been used quite a bit in Philippians.

Let's go back and take a look where it has been used. Go back to chapter 1, verses 6-7. And I am going to read to you in the NASB, and then I am actually going to tell you what the New King James translates it, so we can see it is the same word throughout.

Philippians 1:6-7,

⁶ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ For it is only right for me to feel (Well that is *phroneo*, to think) **this way about you all, because I have you in my heart. [Philippians 1:6-7]**

Philippians 2:2,

² make my joy complete by being of the same mind (*phroneo*, NKJ, being like-minded), **maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one** (*phroneo*) **purpose** (of one mind). **[Philippians 2:2]**

Philippians 2:5,

⁵ Have this attitude (Literally *phroneo*. Have this mind) **in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 2:5]**

Philippians 3:15,

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¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude (Or literally “mind,” *phroneo*); **and if in anything you have a different attitude** (or “mind.” If you think otherwise, NKJ), **God will reveal that also to you.** [*Philippians 3:15*]

Philippians 3:19

¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, (He’s speaking of the many) **who set their** (*phroneo*) **minds on earthly things.** [*Philippians 3:19*]

Same word throughout Philippians. And now in our passage he says, “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to *phroneo*.” To be of the same mind. To be of the same mind. That is what he is urging them. He is urging them to be of the same mind. He is urging like-mindedness. And this is the only resolution to conflict. This is the only resolution. He is imploring them to be of the same mind. And this is what brings about unity. This is what will arrest the disunity. And folks, we have seen in Philippians that like-mindedness is what brings about unity in Christ.

Now does Paul urge agreement on issues? No he does not. He says, “Be same-minded. Be like-minded.” Do you remember what we saw earlier in chapter 2? Let’s review that. Chapter 2, verse 1,

¹ If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, (And remember when we saw that, the answer is “yes” in the Greek. If there is, and yes there is. Then Paul says,) **² make my joy complete** (And as we saw last week, Paul’s joy was wrapped up in believers walking in a manner worthy, right? “Make my joy complete...” How so?) **by being of the same mind** (*phroneo*), **maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one** (Thought, or thinking, mind, *phroneo*) **purpose.** [*Philippians 2:1-2*]

How is it that these Philippians would make his joy complete? To think the same way. What does true unity look like? Is it people gathering around, compromising their faith to be united? Or is it thinking the same thing? In Scripture it is thinking the same thing. And you ask, “Well how can we who are so different think the same thing? Are we to be robots? Is that what he is saying?” Remember the exhortation in chapter 2, verse 5. He says specifically to the body,

⁵ Have this mind (or attitude) **in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.** [*Philippians 2:5*]

The attitude of humble obedience, seeing others as vastly more important than self. When we start to be like-minded according to Scripture, we are going to start to have unity together. “Have this mind.” Think this way. So what am I saying? It is only when we have the mind of Christ as revealed in the Word of God that we are going to be united together.

And you say again, “How can we have the mind of Christ? How can I have the mind of Christ?” Let’s review what we looked at back in chapter 2. I am going to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 also if you want to turn there with me. And the Apostle Paul is making a comparison between earthly wisdom and

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heavenly wisdom. And we see how he gave the example that he came not in his own wisdom but with wisdom that was from God, with the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:12,

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. ¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (There is the reason why if you do not know Christ, you do not understand the Word of God. If you come to church each week and you say, "What in the world is he saying?" each week, you do not know the Lord. It says, "The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them. But verse 15,) **¹⁵ But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. ¹⁶ For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ. [1 Corinthians 2:12-16]**

We have the mind of Christ. We have what God wants us to know about Himself in the Word of God. To be like-minded, we need to make a deliberate choice to renew our minds with the Word of God. Romans 12:2

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Right? *Phroneo*. Renew your minds), **that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. [Romans 2:12]**

"Euodia, Syntyche, be same-minded. Renew your minds. That is going to resolve your great issue, your conflict. Be same-minded."

Colossians 3:1,

¹ If then you have been raised up with Christ (If you are saved, if you are united to Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, if it all applies to you through faith, if you have been raised up with Christ) , **keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. [Colossians 3:1-4]**

We must have the Word of Christ dwelling richly in us. Colossians 3:16 speaks of that. "Let the Word of Christ dwell richly." And some of us have the Word of Christ dwelling poorly. And some of us do not have the Word dwelling at all. To be like-minded, we need to have God's truth ruling and reigning our minds, right? It is plain and simple that biblical unity is based on a true understanding and submission to the Word of God. Biblical unity is based on true believers thinking the same as revealed in the Word of

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God, and this is what Paul is exhorting Euodia and Syntyche, “Think the same. Be same-minded.” And in context, it is having this mind which was in Christ Jesus. They are to be thinking the same. It is when they think like Christ as revealed in the Word that there will be unity between these two sisters in the Lord.

Folks, again, I cannot stress enough, we need to stop getting into the issues when there are disagreements. Stop getting into the issues and get into the Word of God and renew your mind. Think like Christ. We get so side-tracked when we get into the issues of the conflict, rather than getting into the Word of God and having the same mind. That is what Paul exhorts them in this conflict.

You see why it is ludicrous to attempt to have unity apart from the Word of God dwelling richly. When true believers think biblically, when the Word of God is dwelling richly in the heart of true believers, when true believers set their mind on things above as revealed in the Word, when believers submit themselves to the Word of God, then true believers will have the mind of Christ and there will be unity. We do not need to fight for it. We do not need to make it happen. We preserve the unity there is in Christ. The defining mark of true unity is of being the same mind. “Make my joy complete, being of the same mind.”

Folks, if we do not know the Word of God and we are not applying it to our hearts in our day to day circumstances, we are going to have problems all the time. We are going to have difficulties. We are going to have problems all the time. And I ask you, do you wonder why you do not get along with your spouse? Do you wonder why you do not get along with other believers at times? Do you wonder why there is unity lacking in the church? It is because Christ is not reigning in the heart, by the means of His truth and thus sin is reigning. I want to ask you, are you continually renewing your mind with God’s Word? If not, conflict and disunity will abound. That is why we have so much conflict in churches that do not teach and preach the Word of God. We have so much conflict in families that do not see God’s Word as where it should be. I want to ask you, are you continually renewing your mind?

Now notice this command here. He says, “I urge Euodia (back in chapter 4) and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony, to be of the same mind in the Lord.” It is in the Lord. It is in the context of your relationship with the living Lord of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who was exalted above all because of His humiliation, because of His obedient humiliation. And folks, if you are not in Christ, conflict and disunity are part of your life. You cannot help it because you are self-centered and self-focused. And what is the result of that? “Through presumption comes much strife.” You have to be in Christ. And he says, “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.” It can only exist in the context of a relationship with the living Lord, our hearts humbled before the Lord, when He is allowed to rule as Lord in our lives. It is only when we believers are thinking the thoughts of God as revealed in the Word of God that we will have unity.

And folks, stop going to counselors who drag you through the issues; and get into the Word of God and renew your mind to the attitude you should have right now by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is usually an attitude problem. It is your mindset. Confess your sin and praise God for what He has done in Christ.

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And renew your mind with the Word of God, considering others as more important than yourself, seeing Christ as the example. "Have this mind which was in Christ Jesus." Selfless, obedient love revealed in the Word of God.

So we have the direct exhortation to these ladies, straight out, flat out, here are their names, "Be same-minded." But then at this point, Paul gives an exhortation to the rest of those involved, the whole church. For the whole church to come alongside. I will read verse 2 and then verse 3,

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. ³ Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. [Philippians 4:2-3]

First of all we see an exhortation I believe to the leaders to come alongside these women and help. "Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women..." Now Paul does not say who it is that he asks to come alongside, and we do not know who this person is. But we have some clues. It is in a masculine gender, and obviously he is a mature believer. You say, "How do you get that?" Through that word "true comrade." It means "genuine yoked fellow." Someone who is genuine, who is yoked to me. Obviously in the context of the ministry. True comrade. And although there is a myriad of possibilities to who this person is, God does not tell us who it is. But I think quite possibly it is Epaphroditus. He delivered this letter. He read it the first time. Paul has already commended him to the Philippians saying,

²⁹ Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; [Philippians 2:29]

And now I think he or some leader is being asked to come alongside these women and help them. Come alongside. And notice a man named Clement is also asked to do this, too. "Together with Clement also."

Now again, notice these women have shared in the struggle for the Gospel. They have been like athletes, exerting energy for the cause of the Gospel together. *Sunathleo*. Folks, unfortunately these days in our modern churches, it is all about us and felt needs. We have become so sensitized to seek after our own needs, that when someone comes along with the interests of Christ, often we will see they become offended. And unfortunately, we have probably seen this myriads of times. You have probably seen this. You come alongside someone like these guys are exhorted to do. This one unnamed person and Clement. And someone comes alongside and it is possible they might get offended.

Well what are they supposed to do when they come alongside? It says, "Help these women." Now this word translated "help" is an interesting word. It actually has a really wide range of meanings, including the idea of "conceived," when sin is "conceived," or "helped." It also has the idea of "catching," catching fish. It also has the sense of someone who is grasping or arresting someone. When they arrested Jesus they used this word to describe it.

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So what is he talking about here, this help? Well I believe he uses this word to speak of someone who comes alongside and really comes alongside someone to help them. Almost like they are grasping them to helping them. They are right there. This word was used in Luke 5 when Jesus had told Simon to put his nets out, and he caught too much fish. And they are put in the boat, and the boat is sinking. And they signal the other boat to come over and help them, to come alongside and help them. And folks, the point I am trying to make is this help is not from a distance. It is not an email help, it is not a phone call help. It is coming alongside. It is coming alongside and in context, exhorting them also to be same-minded. Leaders should be helping these women to be same-minded, which comes through a heart submitted to the Word of God.

In Hebrews chapter 13, we see what godly leaders should be like. Now given, there are a lot of ungodly leaders. But we see what godly leaders should be like. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 13. It says in verse 7... He just got done sharing that the Lord will never forsake us. What could man do to us? The Lord is my helper. God is there. He is taking care of you. And guess what? Remember!

⁷ Remember those who led you. (How did they lead you?) Who spoke the Word of God to you. And considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. [Hebrews 13:7]

Then it says in verse 17, in context,

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls... (These are the leaders that come to you and speak the Word of God to you.) ...they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. And let them do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. [Hebrews 13:17]

Paul is exhorting these leaders in the church to come alongside these women, and I believe exhort them in the Word of God. Probably Epaphroditus or Clement, are called to come alongside.

And I want to ask you, what is your response when someone comes alongside you and shares the Word with you? What is your response? What is your response when someone reproves you with the Word of God? What is your response? Dennis read from Proverbs, and we see the response early in Proverbs of what Solomon is telling his son how he should respond and the consequences if he does not respond to the Word of God. Proverbs 1:23, and this is wisdom personified speaking.

²³ "Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. (And here is what happens if you do not listen.) ²⁴ Because I called, and you refused; I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention; ²⁵ And you neglected all my counsel, And did not want my reproof (If you have an attitude that you do not want to hear reproof from the Word of God, this is how God warns us here. He says, "You did not want my reproof."); ²⁶ I will even laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, ²⁷ When your dread comes like a storm, And your calamity comes on like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come on you. ²⁸ Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they shall not find me, ²⁹

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Because they hated knowledge, And did not choose the fear of the LORD. ³⁰ They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. ³¹ So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, And be satiated with their own devices. [Proverbs 1:23-31]

I want to ask you, when someone comes alongside you, how do you take their reproof? I am talking about godly reproof through the Word of God, when they share the Word of God to you. I want to ask you, are you willing to allow shepherds to come alongside you and reprove you with the Word of God if it is necessary? Or do you get offended? Do you take it personally? Folks, that is just plain pride. You need to confess it, be restored, and allow the body to function properly.

Well here we see ultimately in our passage, it is not just leaders that are exhorted to come alongside those who are having a problem, it is the whole body exhorted to come alongside. Let's read the verses again back in Philippians. " ² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. ³ Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." [Philippians 4:2-3] Folks, we need to get this. The body of Christ needs to be involved. We do not live in isolation. At this point, it is like the white blood cells being called in and directed to the infection of the body for healing. He says, "...the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." They are to come alongside and help these women.

Well who is the rest? It is everyone else who is left, right? It is everyone else. There is trouble in the church, these women have a problem. They are to be same-minded. The leaders are to come alongside and exhort the same thing, and the body of Christ is to come alongside them and exhort them to the same thing, to help them, to come alongside closely. These are believers. They are fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Revelation 21:27 speaks of those whose names are recorded in the book of life. Those are those who are not thrown into hell. Those are those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are believers. And I think he makes it clear in this process that these are true believers that are going to come alongside. Those who have their names written in the book of life.

If you do not want to do that, if you have no desire to be obedient, maybe you are not saved. Maybe your name is not in the book of life if you have no desire to be obedient.

Also here, notice he says they are "fellow workers." Fellow workers – they expend energy, *sunergos*. They expend energy together for the body of Christ. He does not say, "Some of them are fellow workers. Some of them are not." He says, "the rest who are fellow workers." And folks, at this time in this church here in Philippi, you could not be a sideline saint. You could not just come to church on Sunday and do your own thing. He calls them "fellow workers." You could not be a part of the body of Christ and live your own life. You see, you were a fellow worker for Christ, and each and every member of the body was expected as exhorted and commanded in Scripture to employ your gifts for the benefit of the body. And each and every member is commanded to be together. And each and every part

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needed to be around, doing the Lord's work. And therefore, Paul calls the rest "fellow workers." Fellow workers.

And folks, if you are truly a believer, if we are truly believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility as the body of Christ to come alongside. Do you see why we need to be together? We need to be together. Acts 2:42, the first church was continually devoted "to the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread (fellowship), and prayer." And now we see that the body is to come alongside with those, to address the conflict in the body. And folks, this is not anything new in Scripture. Scripture is clear that we are to watch out for one another in love. Matthew 18 as I shared earlier lays forth the process of how we address someone who is sinning in the body. Galatians 6, how we address someone who is caught up in sin. And there are other passages of Scripture that show that we should be coming alongside one another. Let's take a look at a couple of those.

Romans chapter 15, verses 13-14. And this is a verse, I believe, that puts all Christian counselors out of business. Romans 15:13-14,

³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ And concerning you, my brethren, (He is speaking to the entire church) I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. [Romans 15:13-14]

You are capable, you are filled with the Word of God in all wisdom, you are filled with His goodness, you are able to come alongside others in the body and admonish. The word means to "warn" or to "instruct" with the idea of warning, to place into the mind, *noutheteo*. You are able to do it. You should be doing it. Now, is this a Nazi, Gestapo, police church that is looking for sin in every corner? No, it is a church that loves the Lord and is submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ; and when there are difficulties in obedience, they come alongside and admonish with what? The Word of God.

First Thessalonians chapter 5, let's turn there too. First Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 12,

¹² But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, (You see the idea of leadership just giving the Word of God.) ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. (And who is that going to happen?) ¹⁴ And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly (Those that are out of step), encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. [1 Thessalonians 5:12-14]

He talks about not returning evil for evil after that, which I believe, when you come alongside someone to admonish them, the very real possibility is that they are going to treat you evilly. That they are going to come back and snap at you. They are going to be offended; they are going to be upset at you. And folks, you need to be obedient. Trust the Lord and allow Him to work through you. "Admonish the unruly."

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Folks, we could learn from this example. The body is called into action as a whole to address this rift. And we need to be together to function properly.

And again, I want to ask you, what is your attitude towards difficulties in the body of Christ? Are you willing to come alongside someone to help them with the Word of God, to seek the mind of Christ? Are you willing to allow someone to come alongside you? Are you willing to submit and allow someone to say, "Hey, can I show you these passages? I am seeing something; it is concerning me. There is danger ahead if you continue in this direction. You are going to hurt yourself; you are going to hurt your family. It is like you are driving on the edge of a cliff. You are about to go off." And show them the Scripture. Are you willing to listen to someone who comes alongside? This is God's means of bringing unity with those who are truly His, those who have their names written in the book of life.

So how can we overcome disunity, those threats to standing firm in the faith? First of all, the parties directly need to be addressed; they need to have the same mind. And secondly, the body of Christ needs to come around, leadership and the body of Christ, and exhort them also to same-mindedness. And it is only through the Word of God that we overcome these great hindrances by the power of the Holy Spirit and thus are able to stand firm. When we think biblically, when the Word of God is dwelling richly, when our minds are set on the things above, when we submit to the Word, then we are going to have the mind of Christ and unity.

Now there are some of you here who live your entire life in conflict and strife. And that is what you live in all the days. There is always a conflict; there is always strife all the way around your life with everyone around you. There is always conflict and strife. And the reason it is, is what we saw in James. It is our desires, right? It is friendship with the world, which is friendship with the worldly system, which focuses on self, right? It is because we are sinful; that is why. And quite possibly it is because you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. And God is gracious and kind, and He sent His Son to die for your sins. Just repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there are those who are believers. Conflict is inevitable, right? Maybe there was conflict on the way over to church in our cars. I mean, conflict is inevitable, large and small. We know from Scripture that through presumption comes much strife, and I believe that is the core of much of our conflict. We presume something about someone else. We do not really know; we do not go to them; we do not talk to them. Through presumption comes much strife.

What are you going to do when it comes? How are you going to handle it? Are you going to say, "We've got to talk about this issue," and spend time talking about it? Or are you going to seek the mind of Christ? Get into the Word of God. If you seek the mind of Christ, you seek His things first. The issues resolve themselves. The differences may not be gone, but our attitudes change towards Christ. Towards each other. As a church, are we willing to come alongside those who are in conflict? Are we willing to do that? Are we willing to step out? It is very difficult. It is very difficult; some of the most difficult things you have done is call someone or go over and talk to them when they are sinning. "Do

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not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good." They are going to treat you badly. Keep sharing the truth. Overcome evil with good. Do not return evil for evil.

There is great, temporal risk to those who desire to be obedient to the Lord because people will hurt you. People will hurt you when you say the truth to them from Scripture concerning their lives. Just keep your eyes on Christ, trust Him, and know it is for their benefit. The goal of our instruction is love. It is for their benefit. Do we have teachable spirits? Do you have a teachable spirit? Are you willing to hear the Word of God and listen to it and pray about it? Sometimes people come alongside, and what they are saying is not true. We do not say, "Ok." We do not have a false humility. If it is not true, it is not true. And we stand with our consciences clean before the Lord.

I had a situation at our old church where I had a roommate who basically went off the deep end. And we had to kick him out. We put up with it for about six months, and he was stealing things and was not paying his rent, and we finally kicked him out. And he stood up in the middle of church, 800 people, and said, "That Greg Lundstedt has put me out on my ear," and you know, just on and on and on. And he wrote letters to all the pastors. And one of the pastors came up to me and he gave me this letter, and he said, "I got this letter from Eric." And he said, "I am not going to read it, you read it. If there is any sin in there, confess it. If not, just throw it away." So I appreciated that; but ultimately, we need to realize that sometimes people will come to you and maybe you have not sinned. Have the right attitude toward them also.

But examine yourselves. Is there something that, what they are saying is true? "Is there something that maybe I have been doing that I need to be reproofed about?" It is the Word of God that convicts and reproves; it is not the way someone says something. It is the Word of God. We believers need to have teachable spirits, and we need to respond correctly to reproof. If you do not respond correctly to reproof, you may not be saved. Seriously. Where do I get that from? The book of Proverbs. I am going to go through as we close here, and go through some verses in the book of Proverbs that will hopefully help us see this. So if you want to turn there with me, to Proverbs, we are going to start in chapter 3. Folks, when we are in the body of Christ, we are going to come alongside one another; we are going to reprove one another in love; we are going to do it. Proverbs chapter 3, verse 11, Solomon is instructing his son ultimately to hear the Word of God, to be reproofed by it, do not go the wrong way. Proverbs 3, verse 11,

¹¹ My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD, Or loathe His reproof (Do not hate His reproof), ¹² For whom the LORD loves He reproofs, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights. ¹³ How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding. [Proverbs 3:11-13]

Skip to chapter 5. This is in context of those who have gone and got caught up in sexual sin, the temptation of that and I will just read the latter portion of it. Proverbs chapter 5, verse 8,

⁸ Keep your way far from her, And do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ Lest you give your vigor to others, And your years to the cruel one; ¹⁰ Lest strangers be filled

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with your strength, And your hard-earned goods go to the house of an alien; ¹¹ And you groan at your latter end, When your flesh and your body are consumed; ¹² And you say, "How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof!" [Proverbs 5:8-12]

Consequences of not listening to what God says through His Word. And the process is He brings His body around to do that. Go to chapter 10, verse 17,

¹⁷ He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, But he who forsakes reproof goes astray. [Proverbs 10:17] Clear words. Chapter 12, verse 1, **¹Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,** (And pretty blunt words here) **But he who hates reproof is stupid. [Proverbs 12:1]**

And God is clearly saying, "You are dumb. You are stupid to do that. If you hate reproof, you are in trouble. That is your attitude toward reproof." Chapter 13, verse 18,

¹⁸ Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, But he who regards reproof will be honored. [Proverbs 13:18]

Regarding it, from the Word. Proverbs 15, verse 10,

¹⁰ Stern discipline is for him who forsakes the way; He who hates reproof will die. [Proverb 15:10]

Folks, if you have an attitude towards reproof, you are in deep, deep trouble. We ought to be saying, "Lord God, I know I am sinful. I have got areas I messed up. Lord, help me. Oh thank You so much for that person." And that is our pride that gets in the way right? Proverbs 15, verse 31. Skip down a little bit.

³¹ He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof Will dwell among the wise. ³² He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding. ³³ The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor comes humility. [Proverbs 15:31-33]

You have got to humble yourself to listen to it, right? Chapter 29, verse 1. And here is kind of a pinnacle of the warnings concerning reproof. And by the way, reproof comes through the Word of God, not through our own opinions. It is through the Word of God.

¹A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy. [Proverbs 29:1]

That is pretty serious. If you are hardening your heart towards the Word of God, God says you will suddenly be broken. Twenty-nine fifteen, we will continue here.

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¹⁵ The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. [Proverbs 29:15]

Ultimately as we are children of God, and we go after our own way, we do not respond to His reproof- we are going to shame the Lord. We are going to shame the church. And I believe that Paul believed that these women would respond. "I urge Euodia, I urge Syntyche to be same-minded. Come alongside them, and encourage that same-mindedness. Help them."

How do you respond to reproof? Are you willing to be reproofed? Or do you take it personally? Are you willing to step out? And I believe it is much more difficult to come alongside someone to reprove them, to show them where they are wrong from the Word and encourage them in the right direction, encourage them to confess the sin and be restored with the Lord who paid for that sin on the cross. Has your response to reproof been sinful? Has someone come alongside you and reproofed you, and you have been sinful in your response in the past? You need to confess that. God will forgive you. And you need to go to that person and say, "I am sorry. I had a sinful attitude towards you, and I am sorry."

We have a gracious God who will forgive you and I. Disunity is a terrible threat to the work of the Gospel. We cannot stand firm in the Lord if we are divided in our own desires. We need to have the mind of Christ, as revealed in the Word of God and then there will be unity and we will stand firm in the faith.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Lord, it is hard for us to hear reproof at times. But I pray we would take on the attitude that You exhort in Your Word, that we would love reproof. That we would love it, that we would love Your reproof. We know as Your hymn-writer wrote, "Lord, prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Oh take my heart and seal it; seal it for Thy courts above." Father, may we recognize one of the means in which You keep us focused on You and Your Son is through reproof. May we not kick against the goads. May we gladly accept it. May we rejoice in it. May we be thankful for it. May we praise You for Your love for us. Father, I pray for the body that we would be gracious, that we would come alongside those who are struggling in the faith. That we would admonish the unruly, those who are out of step. That we would encourage the discouraged, we would come alongside and speak truth to them and encourage them. That we would help the weak, Lord God. Please, I pray that we would be a body that does this. So that in all things, You will be glorified. May we have the mind that is in Your Son, from Your Word. May we be same-minded so that the world will see something different. The world will see Your light shining through us, so that they will give You glory. We pray this now in Jesus' name.

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