

Phil. 4:1-3 Conflict

Series on Philippians

- Paul in chains, writing his beloved friends
- Just reminded them of their citizenship & future
- addresses a seemingly minor issue in a major way
- grave concern over a 'house divided'
- extremely relevant message for our days

'To live above with saints we love

Oh that will be Glory

To live below with saints we know

Now that's a different story!'

Phil. 4:1-3 *“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.”*

1. Encouragement

- therefore – look back at the exhortation of where there citizenship and certainty lies
- four key expressions of his care

- my brothers and sisters – calls them this 5 times
- loves and longs for them – yearning to be together
 - easy to accept rebuke from those who love you
- remain his joy – thrilled about them & their pursuit of Christ, participation in the gospel, love expressed to him
- my crown – considers them his riches and inheritance
- calling on them to stand firm in the Lord
 - this is a spiritual issue, with potential destruction
 - not appealing to their sense of loyalty to him, or obedience to a set of rules, but to their stand in the Lord

2. Conflict Exists

- problem with Euodia (you oh dia) and Syntyche (soon to kay) 'Udie and Sue'
- note no description of the issue
- note Paul not taking sides or addressing issue of wrong
- clearly calls them, 'contenders at my side for the gospel', co-workers with names in book of life
- fellow believers headed for eternity together
- There is conflict – love that the bible does not hide this
 - O. T. Full of stories
 - Paul no stranger to conflict with fellow ministers

3. Scripture on Handling Issue of Conflict

a) unity matters

- Psalm 133:1-3 ***“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.”***

- 1 Cor 1:10 ***“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”***

- Eph 4:1-3 *“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

- Heb 12:14-15 *“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”*

- Rom 12:18 *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*

b) Solving the Problem – Rom. 14:1-9

“Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. 2 One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand. One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. 6 Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God

“For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. 11 It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’” 12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. 14 I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died.”

- disagreements over food and observing certain days

- i) don't despise or judge one another

- belong to God, answerable to Him

- ii) all be 'fully convinced in own mind'

- doesn't say lighten up, no big deal, who cares

- does exhort them to be convinced of what God is asking of them! (not what others are asking)

- live by your convictions without enforcing them on others where scripture is not specific

- iii) opposite actions can be honoring to God

- obedience to what is asked of you important

- we will give account for ourselves not others
- God will measure your obedience, what are you convinced in your heart He desires

iv) do not enforce non essentials on others

- God may be asking differently of them
- You could become the stumbling block

4. Live This Out in Community

- Paul asks his 'true companion' to mediate and help
- Paul calls out these two publicly in the letter
- exhorts them to find 'common ground' – be of the same mind in the Lord

- following Jesus teaching Matthew 18:15-17

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

- go to them 1st – personal, giving opportunity
- take a mature 3rd party – open to advise and help
- take it to the body – everyone can help, restore, be a part of reconciliation
- love them but do not let this destroy unity

So What

1. Start from a Place of Love and Encouragement

- faithful are the wounds of a friend

2. Be Real about People and Conflict

- it's there – does not mean there is right and wrong side
- can be wonderful people that need attitude adjustments
- the issue is rarely the issue – needs spiritual approach

3. Be Biblical about Dealing with Conflict

- are you being judgmental?
- are you convinced about how you should live? Is it biblical, informed, prayed through?

- are you committed to unity?

- Will you find common ground, live at peace and accept the other person as God's child responsible to Him?

4 Are you willing to be Accountable in Community to This?

- going to the person 1st to resolve

- allowing mediation or mature 3rd party involvement

- being accountable for agreed upon solutions

*Conflict and how it is handled can be a great witness to God's love and the Gospel – will you be a participant?