

On the Other Side of Conflict

Philippians #8

Philippians 4:1-3

Oh, how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

As I drew in my head and was turning around, down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound. He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot. And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot. For it Twas the Night Before Christmas. Has it ever occurred to you that there is a major flaw contained within that iambic pentameter of a poem? It works well for kids that have a chimney. But the ones that don't, not so much. And problem is compounded by the fact that mom always locks all six deadbolts on the front door and checks all the windows before she lies down for her long winter's nap. And dad always alarms the security system. Oh yes, friends, for kids without chimneys, Christmas Eve is a night Covert Operations to make sure Santa comes in the house.

What made the church in Philippi great was that they kept their doors and windows unlocked and their security system disarmed so that Jesus could come in. They didn't have a chimney because they didn't have a building. But they did have Lydia, the first to convert to faith in Christ not just in Philippi, but in all of Macedonia. When she invited Paul and his companions into her home, the church was born. Out of all the churches Paul planted and wrote to, the church in Philippi was not only Paul's greatest benefactor, but the one he was most found of.

But I want to tell you this morning, people of God, that when Jesus showed up at the church of Philippi, the devil was not far behind. He checked the front door to see if it was still unlocked. Then the back door. Then the side door. Then the window. And he finally found a slight opening. It came in the form of two women in the church, Euodia and Syntyche, who were not of the same mind in the Lord. They were not the Devil's soldiers. They were quite the opposite. They contended for the Gospel with Paul in Macedonia. But somewhere along the way a disagreement arose between them that was enough of an issue that Paul felt inclined to mention both of them by name in a letter about joy to be read to the whole church.

You see, conflict between Christians happens. It happened with Paul and Mark. It happened among the disciples. It happens in churches. And it happens in homes. And how you deal with and go about resolving conflict from your end – whatever the setting – effects not just the individuals at odds with each other. It effects the whole body. Consequently, Paul's message to the Philippians in 4:1-3 is crystal clear: Conflict isn't pleasant. But there is joy on the other side of it. In order to get there, we must see (1) Why Resolution Matters to God; (2) Why It Matters to Other Christians; (3) Why It Matters to the Parties Involved. Only then can we see, (4) What the other side of conflict looks like. Turn with me there.

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! ² I plead with Euodia, and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ 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. Why Resolution Matters to God (1a)

- **Hurricane Nights in Florida:** (1) I've been in Florida almost 16 years and I've yet to get used to the heat inside from power outages in Florida after a hurricane passes through. (2) The last time our power went out, I had all I could stand and couldn't stand no more. (3) I opened up a window without a screen to get a breeze. (4) I got one alright. But I also got a lot of mosquitos.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Lack of resolution from the heat inside makes Christians susceptible to the greater threats that come from the outside.
- **Therefore, in Philippians:** (1) Aside from "Jesus," the most used word in Philippians is "joy." The second is "rejoice." But the third is "therefore." (2) They link together all the major movements in the book: (a) "Therefore, if there be any encouragement in Christ, make my joy complete." (2:1), (b) "Therefore, work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12), (c) "Therefore, rejoice in the Lord (3:1), (d) "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in this way dear friends." (4:1). (3) This "therefore" links the real threats on the outside with call to "be of the same mind" that dominates this passage. (4) The real threat was contained in what came previously: "many were living as enemies of the cross of Christ. Some were Judaizers (law before grace), some were Antinomian (standards/law doesn't matter), some were flat out hostile (The crowds rioted in Philippi because of Paul's preaching of the Gospel). (5) Consequently, in order to combat that, Euodia and Syntyche had to be of the same mind on the inside. That's why resolution mattered.
- **App:** When you do your part to resolve conflict in whatever the arena, it says you are a Jesus person. You grow stronger and therefore more protected from the real problems on the outside. And it says to the world that the Gospel is the only option for resolving their conflict.

2. Why Resolution Matters to Other Christians (1b)

- **Restless Leg Syndrome:** (1) My brain and my right leg have a beef with each other. It's a problem they've had from birth. (2) My brain doesn't want my leg moving around uncontrollably at nighttime. (3) My right leg doesn't want my brain telling it what to do. (4) Their beef isn't with any other part of the body. It's just with each other. Yet, my whole body is affected by the conflict.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** A conflicts between brothers and sisters in Christ affects those on the outside of the conflict as much as inside.

- **The Appeal for A Resolution Between Euodia and Syntyche Is Made to the Philippian Church Directly, and Euodia and Syntyche Indirectly:** (1) When reading these verses over the course of the week, two questions immediately came into my mind and stayed there for a couple of days: If Euodia and Syntyche had a problem that was just between them, why wouldn't Paul tell Epaphroditus to sit them down when he returned or just written them a personal letter? Why in the world would he make a point to mention both of them in the letter and plead with the church to get them on the same page? (2) The answer is in the language and terms of endearment Paul uses to describe the Philippian church in v1 and v3. (a) "brothers and sisters" – terms used to describe Christians who are bought and paid for by the blood of the Lamb even though they may or may not be blood related. An idea that's like none other in all the world. (b) "whom I love and long for" – Philippi was the first church Paul planted in Macedonia. They supported him financially (ch 4) and he uses more terms of endearment to describe the church of Philippi than any other church he wrote to in the NT; (c) "my joy and crown" – a figure of speech (metonymy); a way of saying you, Philippians give me great satisfaction and victory; (d) "dear friends" – Paul wasn't just the shepherd of the sheep that were the Philippians, he was one of them; (e) "my true companion" (v3): the letter isn't addressed to a person. It's addressed to a bride. She was his true companion. (5) Paul appeals to the church directly because the whole body was affected by brain and restless leg involved in the conflict. That's why he wanted it resolved.
- **App:** When you have a splinter in your toe, it effects how your femur, your tibia, your fibula operates. When it's removed and starts to heal, it effects how your femur, your tibia, your fibula operates. That's why resolution matters to other Christians.

3. Why Resolution Matters to the Parties Involved (2-3)

- **Desmond Doss:** (1) I watched a movie several years ago about a most interesting fellow. His name was Desmond Doss, a military medic in WWII. The movie was Hacksaw Ridge. (2) Desmond Doss was a rarity because he was a pacifist. Yet volunteered to sign up after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. (3) He refused to carry any weapon of any kind. Yet saved countless lives in the front lines of the battle. (4) Desmond Doss lived for something greater than himself. And congress awarded him a Medal of Honor for it.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Resolution between Christians matters to Jesus because they live for something greater than themselves: they live for Jesus and to see the Gospel advance to all the world.
- **When Two Christians are Involved in a Conflict, There is a Tendency to Spiritualize and Demonize:** (1) This person is on the Lord's side. (2) That person is the Devil's spawn. (3) That is not the case here. (4) Euodia and Syntyche were deeply committed to the cause of the Gospel.
- **According to Paul, They Were on the Same Team:** (1) Paul says in v3 that Euodia and Syntyche have "contended at my side for the cause of the Gospel." (2) They fought strenuously for the faith alongside Paul and alongside Clement. (3) Clement is a famous name. He left behind a writing that lets us know what the Christian life was like – and the problems the church faced – after the death of the apostles. (3) Euodia and Syntyche contended for the faith alongside both of them because they were deeply committed followers of Jesus.
- **But According to Paul, They Had Forgotten in the Midst of Their Battle That They Were on the Same Team:** (1) That's why he writes in a public letter to the Philippians that he urges Euodia and Syntyche to "be of the same mind in the Lord." In v2. (2) In the book, there have been calls to "have this attitude in yourself which was also in Christ Jesus." There have been calls to humility. There have been calls to do nothing from self-ambition or vain conceit. Why? Because Euodia and Syntyche were acting in the complete opposite way in their conflict. (3) "Being of the same mind" means "agreeing" that what Paul just laid out before is how to solve the issue.
- **App:** In music theory, chords and strings are in tension when they lack resolution. But when they are resolved, the music is beautiful because the chords and strings live for something greater than themselves. The same thing is true for Christians.

4. What It Looks Like on the Other Side (3)

- **Our First Bible:** (1) On a shelf in your home, in your office, or on a nightstand, resides the first Bible you ever received. (2) Right inside on the first page, before Table of Contents, your name is written in that BIBLE: the Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. (3) In heaven, there is another book. It's the Lambs Book of Life. Euodia and Syntyche's names were written in it. Ours are too.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The phrase at the end is the most important phrase of the passage: "whose names are written in the book of life." It's what God is always working towards. It's the other side of the conflict.
- **The Book of Life Plays a Prominent Role in Revelation:** "The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels." (Rev 3:5)
- **And the Book Plays a Prominent Role in Our Lives:** It says, "we overcome by the blood of the lamb;" and it says "It is finished. I'm just following along in the script until it gets to that point. And said: "Euodia and Syntyche belonged to Jesus, and you do to if you know him."
- **App:** There is great joy on the other side of conflict. But to get there you have to invite Jesus in. And then lock the windows and doors to keep the devil out. Amen.