



SUPER JOY - A STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS
(Week 11) - Why Can't We All Just
Get Along?

Introduction - I did not plan this, but had I planned it the timing couldn't have been more perfect. Therefore, I can only conclude it is by God's providence that the week before Thanksgiving when the reds and the blues gather around the Thanksgiving table that the subject of my message today is, "Why can't we all just get along?"

I don't know what Thanksgiving is like in your family, but generally we have people of different belief systems and different political convictions trying to share a meal without

any spit-takes of pumpkin pie. That's basically the goal of Thanksgiving — don't gag on the dark meat because of someone else's viewpoint.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians we'll be looking at three areas of conflict - conflict over primary issues, secondary issues and finally conflict over personality issues.

Philippians 4:1-3

4 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for,

He genuinely liked them.

my joy and crown,

He was proud of them.

stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Now, he's reminding them to stand firm "thus" in the Lord or in this way. Well, in what way? Chapter 3 begins with "rejoice in the Lord" and right after this exhortation, he tells them again to "rejoice always." The focus is on Christ.

- Gospel focus (or gospel-centeredness) will always assist us in our relationship

with others. "Forgive as you have been forgiven."

- Luke 6:37-38 - That's gospel focus. We forgive because we've been forgiven. We don't shower grace upon people out of self-interest so that we might get grace back. This isn't some sort of Christian version of karma. We shower people with grace simply because God has showered grace upon us in Christ.
- God's grace is not reciprocal, meaning you can't pay back what Christ has done for you — ever. It's not "give your life to Jesus because He gave His life for you." Your finite life can never come close to paying for the infinite love that God has lavished on you through the sacrifice of His Son. It's a gift that cannot be repaid. We shower grace upon others out of gratitude for the grace shown to us, not out of some obligatory pay-back.
- To stand firm in the Lord is to stand firm in the gospel that God has lavished grace upon you that you do not deserve

- Now, when that is our focus, it always assists us in our relationship difficulties with others.

Now, let's examine 3 of these difficulties.

2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

To entreat is more than to just ask. It is to beg. It is to implore. He's begging them to agree in the Lord. If we want to understand what it means to agree in the Lord, we need to look to the Lord and to His gospel and that's what we're doing now.

It becomes clear that these women were co-laborers with Paul in the gospel. They were hard workers and passionate about the gospel and that's probably why there was some conflict — because they cared.

Apathy might breed peace, but it's peace at the expense of truth.

Paul is not teaching (and nowhere does the Bible teach us) to get along at all costs.

So, the first conflict we look at is conflict over primary issues. And by primary issues I mean

the issues of life that matter more than all others.

Romans 16:17

17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

There is a difference in how we handle conflict with people who claim to be Christians over primary issues. We don't handle conflict over secondary or personality issues the same way, because the conflict he is talking here is about the truth of who Jesus is and what He did. The issue of the gospel is primary.

That's why Jesus said...

Matthew 10:34-36

34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

The word of God in Scripture is compared to a sword. It's a sword that cuts away falsehood. It's a sword that cuts away error. It's a sword that reveals the very thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. **36** And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

Happy Thanksgiving.

This again is about conflict because of truth, specifically the truth about Jesus Christ. Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Of all the issues that can come up over Thanksgiving dinner, remember this is the question that must be answered before all others. Who is Jesus Christ? And you will find that discussion brings a sword, because it's concerning truth with a capital T.

- unbelievers | believers | guarding the gospel

Now, the conflict between Yo-di-ya and Sin-to-key was probably not a doctrinal matter, because Paul doesn't address their dispute with teaching or correction. More than likely, it was a personality conflict. Euodia was a little bit country. Syntyche was a little bit rock-n-roll.

Or it might have been a difference of opinion on what we would define as a secondary issue. So, let's look at conflict over secondary issues next.

Secondary issues are still important, but they are not issues that are primary because they don't change the nature of the gospel. When we ask the question, "What does it mean to agree in the Lord?" It clearly doesn't mean there will never be disagreements among Christians over secondary matters.

Even Paul's life wasn't free of strong disagreements with other Christians over secondary issues. He disagreed so strongly with Barnabas concerning John Mark that they split into two missionary trips instead of the one they had originally planned.

However, even on secondary issues, when Christians disagree the focus is the Scriptures. We don't just have a common ground to go to — we have a common God to go to. And we always have to determine, "Is this a primary issue or a secondary issue?"

Realistically, which is why we find it in Scripture, there is sometimes separation even over secondary issues, but the concern is

how we treat one another in our disagreements.

So, let's take some time to focus on this idea that the Word of God is the common ground we gather around to navigate our differences.

Even when we have opinions in a matter, they should be opinions informed by the word of God.

“God is where his word is.” — John Frame

“God is always with and in his word. When we read the word, we encounter him; when we encounter him, we hear his word.” — John Frame

Deuteronomy 30:11-16

11 “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. **12** It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ **13** Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ **14** But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. **15** “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. **16** If you obey the commandments of the Lord your

God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

This passage in Deuteronomy that we just read (and there are many more like it all over the Bible) is the recipe for revival, for spiritual life in the church.

This passage isn't about salvation. It's about life after grace. God has shown you grace that you might live a life where you trust Him with every area of your life. And trust is obedience.

“Christ is near us in the word of faith, and as we grasp hold of it, we grasp hold of Christ, so we are saved.”

Romans 10:9-10

9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

- **We take the word of God for granted because it is so plentiful in this country.**

- We forget there was a time when the majority of Christendom didn't hear the word of God in their own language. Everything was in Latin. The church was afraid to have the Bible printed in the common language of the day because they were afraid that people would mishandle the truth. But the tragedy is that the truth of the word of God was hidden from them because they didn't hear it. So, the truth of the gospel was hidden from both church leaders and the laity. That's the story of the Reformation. And men like William Tyndale lost their lives for translating the Bible into English.

- The tragedy in our day is that we don't hear God because we don't avail ourselves of His word.

- When the word of God is our basis, we might have strong disagreements, but we also have strong common convictions.

Charismatic | Pentecostal | Arminian | Calvinist | cessationist | continuationist | complementarian | egalitarian

But none of those groups deny that Jesus is God in the flesh, that His death alone provides forgiveness for our sins, that He rose from the dead, that we must be born again to see the Kingdom of God, that He is coming again, that He will judge the living and the dead, that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, that we will live there in resurrected bodies where we will reign with Him forever.

On some of the other details we may have strong disagreements because we see through a glass dimly, but we also have strong convictions about the truth of who Jesus is.

So, the issue becomes how we navigate our other disagreements.

Now, when it comes to personality conflicts, the focus is still the gospel. This is the third and final area of disagreement — personality conflict.

- Do you believe Christ has accepted the person you are in conflict with? If the answer is no, then you have to provide biblical evidence as to why this person is

in conflict not just with you, but with the will of God.

If the answer is yes, that you believe Christ accepts them, then what is preventing you from accepting them? Are you in a greater position than the Lord in determining this matter?

So, the reconciliation over the conflict over personality issues is always a matter of humbling ourselves before God and each other.

This is how we help each other get along.

3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

How do we help each other get along?

- Communication. It's such a common sense item, but the Bible is full of common sense. Communication breeds understanding. Hearing someone else's perspective breeds understanding. It takes humility.**

- To communicate you actually have to hear the person. Ask questions. "Explain your viewpoint. How did you arrive there?" Listening takes humility.**
- If you're trying to help each other get along you're not trying to win an argument, you're trying to understand. It takes humility.**
- It's harder to vilify someone that you actually know.**
- It's not always about trying to resolve your differences, it's about getting along with your differences.**

There is great diversity in the body of Christ, because there is diversity in God Himself. There is one God (unity) who is three persons (diversity). So, we find unity and diversity all over the body of Christ.

The goal is not that we agree on everything. That's impossible. We see through a glass dimly, so no one will always have the right perspective. That truth in itself leads to differences.

The issue is not our differences. The issue is how we treat one another while having differences. We can get along with people with whom we strongly disagree.