

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"When the Theoretical Has a Real Name"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 4:1-3; Phil. 3:17-21; Phil. 1:27; Phil. 2:2-4; Phil. 2:5-11

There are a lot of things we can hear in a message and immediately say, "Amen." We know they are true. We agree that we should have the mind of Messiah, walk in humility, put others ahead of ourselves, and live as citizens of heaven. It all makes perfect sense while we are sitting in Bible study or reading a devotional. But then we close the Bible, turn off the teaching, walk into the next room, go to work, answer the phone, or see that "particular person"—and suddenly the theoretical has a real name. Now "having the mind of Messiah" is no longer an idea. It has to be lived out with a real person, in a real relationship, in a real situation where feelings and disagreements are involved.

That is exactly where Paul takes us in Phil. 4:1-3. He has spent this letter calling the Philippians to have the mind of Messiah, to put others ahead of themselves, to walk worthy of the Good News, and to remember that their true citizenship is in heaven. Now he brings all of that theology directly into the nitty-gritty of congregational life. He even names names: Euodia and Syntyche. The message moves from what believers should believe to how that belief should actually be lived out in the practical. And that is where the Word confronts us too: What happens when the person I am being called to love, forgive, serve, or put ahead of myself has a face and a name?

1. STAND FIRM IN THE LORD — EVEN WHEN IT GETS PERSONAL

Paul begins, *"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown—stand firm in the Lord in this way, my loved ones"* (Phil. 4:1). Notice the warmth surrounding the command. Paul piles up these expressions of affection: brothers and sisters, loved ones, longed-for ones, my joy, my crown. He is about to bring correction, but the correction is rooted in relationship. He wants them to know, "I am saying this because I love you." Then comes the imperative: *"stand firm in the Lord in this way."* This is not a suggestion. In light of everything Paul has already said about Messiah, our heavenly citizenship, and the coming transformation of our bodies, he is saying, "Keep standing. Keep walking this out."

And "in this way" points us back to the life Paul has already described. Earlier he said, *"Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the Good News of the Messiah...standing firm in one Spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the Good News"* (Phil. 1:27). Standing firm is not merely refusing to abandon a doctrine. It also means refusing to abandon the **way of Messiah** when relationships become difficult. It means living like a citizen of heaven when everything in us wants to respond according to the patterns of earth. The test of whether we are standing firm often comes when obedience becomes personal.

2. HAVE THE SAME MIND IN THE LORD — ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU DISAGREE

Then Paul gets specific: *“I urge Euodia and Syntyche to be in harmony in the Lord”* (Phil. 4:2). The idea is literally to have the same mind in the Lord. Paul appeals equally to both women; he does not choose one side and condemn the other. These were not simply two cantankerous people creating trouble. Paul identifies them as women who had labored beside him for the Good News. They were coworkers, faithful people who had contended side by side with Paul. Yet faithful people can still disagree. Mature believers can still come into conflict. The issue is not whether disagreement will ever happen; the issue is what we do when it does.

Paul has already explained what having the “same mind” looks like: *“Do nothing out of selfishness or conceit, but with humility consider others as more important than yourselves, looking out not only for your own interests but also for the interests of others”* (Phil. 2:3–4). Having the mind of Messiah does not mean that everyone suddenly has identical opinions. It means we stop approaching conflict primarily concerned with protecting ourselves, defending our rights, or proving that we are right. Messiah humbled Himself. He laid down His rights. And when both people begin asking, “How can I put the other person ahead of myself?” something changes. The question stops being, “How do I win?” and becomes, “How can Messiah win in this?”

3. HELP ONE ANOTHER — BECAUSE RESTORATION IS A COMMUNITY WORK

Paul then turns to another believer and says, *“Yes, I ask you also, true companion, to help these women—they labored side by side with me in spreading the Good News, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life”* (Phil. 4:3). Paul does not simply tell Euodia and Syntyche to work it out and then leave them alone. He calls someone else in the community to help them. That gives us a beautiful picture of the Body of Messiah. Healthy community is not standing around watching to see which person wins. Healthy community comes alongside people and helps them move toward reconciliation in a way that honors the Lord.

And notice how Paul describes these women: they had labored *“side by side”* with him in the Good News. They were fellow workers, and their names were in the Book of Life. This conflict did not erase everything God had done through them. Paul does not question whether they belong to Messiah; he calls them to live out what belonging to Messiah means. Sometimes we need someone mature enough to step into a difficult situation—not to take sides, spread the story, or determine who gets to win, but to help everyone look away from their own interests and toward the interests of Messiah. The goal is not victory over one another. The goal is that Messiah wins.

CONCLUSION

The wonderful thing is that Paul never tells us what Euodia and Syntyche were arguing about. They knew. Clement knew. The “true companion” knew. But we do not know—and perhaps that is exactly what makes this passage so useful to us. Because now their names can be replaced with the name that is in our own lives. The issue can become our issue.

We can bring that relationship before the Lord and ask, “Lord, when the theoretical has a real name, what does having Your mind look like here? How can this situation be resolved in a way that is pleasing to You?”

Maybe as you have read this, a name has already come to mind. You did not have to search for it. There is a relationship that is strained, a disagreement that remains unresolved, or a person toward whom you find yourself continually defending your position. Perhaps you have been waiting for them to change, apologize, understand, or admit that you were right. But today the Lord may not be asking you what *they* need to do. He may be asking you, “Will you have the mind of Messiah? Will you stand firm in Me here? Will you put their interests alongside your own?”

Bring that person before the Lord. You do not have to pretend the issue does not matter, and reconciliation does not always mean that every disagreement disappears immediately. But you can surrender your right to win. You can ask the Holy Spirit to show you where selfish ambition, pride, hurt, or self-protection has shaped your response. And where help is needed, allow mature believers to help bring healing. Tell the Lord, “I want You to win in this. I want my response to look like Yeshua. When the theoretical has a real name, teach me to live what I say I believe.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Paul mean when he tells the Philippians to “*stand firm in the Lord in this way*” (Phil. 4:1)?
2. Why is it significant that Paul appeals equally to both Euodia and Syntyche instead of taking sides?
3. How does Phil. 2:3–4 help explain what it means to “*be in harmony in the Lord*”?
4. Is there a person in your life right now who has turned the command to have the “mind of Messiah” from something theoretical into something very practical?
5. In a current disagreement, are you primarily trying to be understood or proven right, or are you asking how Messiah can be honored and the other person can be served?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I want to know Yeshua not only in what I believe, but in the way I live. Give me the mind of Messiah when relationships become difficult and obedience becomes personal. Help me stand firm in You rather than responding out of my own hurt, pride, desires, or need to be right. Teach me to consider others above myself and to look not only to my own interests, but also to the interests of others. Holy Spirit, bring to mind the places where I need to pursue peace, humility, forgiveness, and restoration. Give me courage to take the first step when You ask me to, and give me wisdom to receive help from the Body when I need it. Lord, when the theoretical has a real name, let my life demonstrate the reality of the Good News. Let Yeshua win in me, in my relationships, and in the way I treat others. I want my life to bring You joy. I want to make You smile.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.