



Sermon Text: Philippians 4:1-3

Sermon Date: May 7, 2017

This Sunday, we saw Paul return to the theme of church unity. But instead of allowing the church merely to nod in general agreement, he presses two specific women—Euodia and Syntyche—to pursue reconciliation in their fractured relationship. Frank Thielman says, “Here he [Paul] shows us that the heady concept of Christian unity must be worked out on the ground, one quarrel at a time.”

THE ‘WHAT’ OF GOSPEL-SHAPED RECONCILIATION

Paul calls these women “to agree in the Lord.” That is, to put the gospel first in their relational problems. Specifically, he wants them to have a **gospel-saturated outlook**, seeing themselves and each other through the same lens of the gospel. They are also to have **gospel-oriented goals**, remembering that disunity hinders the all-important mission of making disciples in all the earth.

THE ‘HOW’ OF GOSPEL-SHAPED RECONCILIATION

Next, we saw how Paul went about pursuing reconciliation with these women. First, his appeal was **motivated by love**. He loved the church and these two ladies, and he knew their simmering disagreement was harmful to themselves and the entire church. Second, he is **gentle, fair, and reasonable**. He didn’t rebuke them, but beg them. He didn’t take sides. He didn’t blow the situation out of proportion, but affirmed the salvation of both women. Third, we must see that **sometimes arbitration is necessary**. Paul called for help. He asked a ‘true companion’ to help these ladies. Sometimes even mature, godly people need outside help to apply the gospel to relational difficulties. Fourth, gospel-shaped reconciliation is **difficult, but possible in the Lord**. If reconciliation were easy, Paul would not need to plead or ask for outside help. But “in the Lord” there is always hope for true reconciliation.

THE ‘WHY’ OF GOSPEL-SHAPED RECONCILIATION

While we naturally feel justified in our anger and division, Paul provides two weighty reasons why reconciliation should be pursued. He calls these women to **remember their labor for the gospel**. They worked side by side with him and others. They served in the trenches together. They impacted eternity together! And they are going to throw that away over a disagreement! Second, he wants them to **remember that both their names are in the book of life**. What unites them for eternity is way more important than the minor issue that divides them currently.

CONCLUSION

While it is easy to nod and amen the idea of church unity, Paul shows us here that we all must be willing to roll up our sleeves, swallow our pride, wrestle our hearts, and actually pursue unity in specific relationships. While this will be difficult, it isn’t hopeless. The Lord is with us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. What are some reasons we often struggle moving from general agreement to specific application?
3. What is one thing that you can start doing to apply this text to your life?