

Conflict

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Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 00] Let me pray for us. Lord, we thank you so much for the privilege it is to gather together to look at your word. We thank you for your Holy Spirit who illuminates our minds to understand your word, who empowers us to live out what we understand of your word.

And we just pray that you would help us as we go through this to understand, to know, and to put into practice the things that you tell us. And we pray all this in the name of Christ. Amen. Amen. Y'all come on in.

All right. So make sure you grab a, I don't know if you've got a handout, but you'll probably need one as we get closer to the end. And then we're in Philippians chapter 4.

We're in the last chapter of Philippians. And we're going to look at verses 1 through 5. And we're going to talk about conflict today. Conflict. We're just all going to get mad at each other today.

All right. We can. So most likely, just as we're kind of looking forward to the future and kind of where we're headed, we will probably end up finishing the book of Philippians by the end of May.

[1 : 13] Like the last or second to last Thursday of May. Then I'm probably going to want to try to take maybe a week or two off.

And give us some time to, it'll give you time to kind of see where we're going to head next. And kind of chat up some things. So anyway, we're coming to the end of Philippians.

And so just know, as I get more clear in my head kind of where we need to go, what we need to do, I'll get back with you on that. But just letting you know that that's sort of coming kind of at the end of May.

So anyway, with that said, let me read our passage. We're going to do verses 1 through 5. And then we'll dive into it. Philippians chapter 1.

Therefore, my beloved, chapter 4, verse 1. Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see my joy and crown in this way, stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

[2 : 16] I urge Judea and I urge Synthica to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement, also the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. So, Paul comes kind of to the end of the book.

And before he's going to sign off, he's got one more thing, you know, a few more things he wants to deal with. And he's coming to talk about these two ladies. And everything kind of surrounding that sort of centers on this problem that we have.

And so we want to talk about conflict in two parts. We're going to talk about conflict itself. And then we want to talk about resolving conflict. We can't really resolve conflict in a biblical way unless we understand why conflict exists.

And there's a lot of things out there in the world trying to tell us why different types of conflict exist. But I believe that all conflict boils down to one source.

[3 : 40] And so we're going to see that. But let's just take a look. These two ladies. What does Paul urge these two ladies to do? To live in harmony.

Now, different translations say that a little differently. This one, this is the New American Standard Bible of 1991, I think it is.

Or 95. And it says to live in harmony. Does somebody have like an NIV, a King James? Agree. Yours says agree. Joy. Joy and crown.

Joy and crown, okay? Be of the same mind. Be of the same mind. In the Lord. That's right. So here's what's interesting is that this idea of living in harmony, being in agreement, being of the same mind, think back.

And that's exactly what you had in Philippians chapter 2. Where he says, be of the same mind. And then in verse 5 he says, have the same attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus.

[4 : 45] So that's sort of what he's getting at here. That he wants them to be of the same mind, which then reveals to us the nature of the conflict, right?

They're not of the same mind. They're not in agreement. They're not in harmony. Okay? So the nature of conflict comes because there's this lack of agreement, this lack of harmony between us. So I want to get more specific about the source of conflict. And I want us to turn to another passage. So you can open your Bibles and go to James chapter 4.

James chapter 4. And in this little letter, James is writing to Christians. And every part of this is to Christians.

And I want us to read chapter 4, verse 1 through 4. And I want us to read it very carefully and slowly because there's a lot here that helps us sort of grapple with the source of conflict.

[5 : 53] Alright? Here we go. He says, What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Now, full stop. Now, how much more clear can we be?

I mean, you just look at that. What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Now, when he says among you, right?

Here's what we know. He's talking about more than one person. It's something that's among you. He sees it in their churches. And he says, there's quarrel, there's conflict among you.

So what's the source? Okay? That's what he's going to answer. He says, is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

Okay? So, the source is pleasures. And these pleasures are waging war in your members.

[6 : 56] Now, here's what we've got to understand. What does it mean, members? It doesn't mean members of your church. It means members of your body. So, I have pleasures in me.

I have desires. That's what this word is. It's desires that are in me. And they're waging war inside of me. You have desires that are in you that are waging a war inside of you.

And when you and I meet together, the source of the conflict between us is that you have desires and I have desires. And they clash.

Does that make sense? Here's what's interesting. This word for pleasures. Now, I think the NASB could have done better. I think they could have used the word desire.

I think that would have worked better. Some of you, yours may have. It says your desire is for pleasure. Your desire is for pleasure. So, the word is the word that is sometimes translated for lust.

[8 : 02] But the problem is this. This word is not a negative word. Matter of fact, there are places that it's used in scriptures where Paul says, I long for you.

Or it talks about how Christ will long for his people. Right? And it's the same kind of idea. So, it's a desire. But it can be a desire for a good thing or a desire for a bad thing.

I don't want. So, when I have a desire that's waging war within me, then I'm ripe for a conflict with somebody else.

Okay? Let's go on and see what else he's got here. He says, you lust and do not have. Okay? So, that desire is something I'm lusting for.

I don't have that desire. You okay? Man, you did great. I'm just glad you didn't fall. He says, you lust and do not have.

[9 : 02] So, you commit murder. Murder. Okay. So, I have a desire. And I want something. It's waging war within me. It has turned from a desire to a lust.

And I don't have it. So, in order to get it, I'm going to murder. Now, do you think that James is saying these people are actually physically taking someone's life?

No. No. No. No, he's not. Because if he was saying, you murder, then he would be going like, you need to be put in jail. Right? So, how should we understand this idea of murder right here?

Didn't Christ say that if you're angry with your brother? That's right. Look at Matthew chapter 5.

Okay. If you don't quit that, I'm going to throw you on the floor.

This is chapter 5, verse 21. You have heard that the ancients were told, you shall not commit murder. By the way, this phrasing, you have heard that the ancients were told, that's an indication that Jesus is not correcting the Ten Commandments.

[10 : 22] He's correcting bad teaching about the Ten Commandments. Just know that. Okay? That you shall not commit murder, and whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be guilty before the court.

And so, I think we as Christians, we can still be tempted to idolatry. That's why John, in his epistle, 1 John chapter 5, at the very last verse, says, avoid idolatry.

He says to Christians, avoid idolatry. And it's not because Christians like to build statues. It's because we have this desire that's ruling our heart.

You see it in the children, right? That, I want that toy, and that desire rules that child's heart so much, they'll do anything to get it. We're no different. We're just much more complex, and much more sophisticated with how we go about things.

Okay. I think we're good then. Let's then go to, back to Philippians, verse 1, because we talked about the source of the conflict.

[22 : 00] Verse 1 then, here's what I find interesting. How does he describe the Philippians? What are some things he says about them? Beloved brethren.

Beloved brethren. My joy. My joy. And crown. Crown. Yeah. So, so think about that.

He's talking to one church. He's talking to a group of Christians. He calls them beloved. a very strong term of endearment. He says that there is joy and his crown.

He longs to see them. Here's my question. Do you think that this is a church that Paul believes is doing pretty good at honoring the Lord?

Well, yeah. Yeah. I mean, there is joy, his crown. He longs to see them. Because if you go read the Corinthian letter, like, he doesn't have anything good to say about them.

[23 : 00] You know? Matter of fact, in his thanksgiving to the Corinthians, he says, I thank God for his grace on you. In all the other letters, he says, I thank God for you.

But not to the Corinthians. He does not thank God for the Corinthians. He thanks God for the grace that God's given to the Corinthians. Because they're full of problems. So here's my point.

They are living a very godly life as a church. And yet, they have disunity in the church. Here's my point.

Conflict is just a reality. Because we're all fallen creatures, because Adam sinned, yes, we're redeemed, yes, we're Christians and we are both sinners and saints, we're saved sinners, right? We're redeemed sinners, but we're still sinners. And there's going to be conflict. We can't run from it. It's going to happen. And so it's a reality.

[24 : 00] You're going to have conflict in your marriage, you're going to have conflict with your kids, you're going to have conflict with your grandkids, you're going to have conflict with me, I know that surprises you, but you're going to have conflict with me, you're going to have conflict with one another, it's just going to happen.

We can't get away from it. okay? So, we need to learn how to handle it the way that God would have us to handle it, so that we can deal with it properly, okay? So, how do we handle conflict? That's what the rest of this is about. This same verse, I think this is the ground from which we can resolve conflict. Paul longs for them. He longs for them. He calls them his beloved. He feels for them deeply, and I think that's one of the things that's missing in a lot of churches, right? How much, how much do you think the average church member loves everybody else in the church? Think about your experiences in other churches. Think about the way love is expressed or not expressed. Do you feel like there's a lot of love there? I think we have love in our church. Yeah, our church we do. I agree. I agree. I think there is. I think there's probably room for improvement. Right? But the thing is, is that if we don't have that, we're not going to be able to resolve conflict. That's why in marriage, right? The marriage is about commitment to one another. You know you're going to have conflict, so it's like, well, no matter what kind of conflict comes up between us, we're committed to each other. We love each other, and no conflict is going to tear us apart. But that's not... We're going to get over it. Yeah.

We're going to get, we're going to work through it, get through it, and we're going to be on the other side of it. But that's not what happens in a lot of marriages, is it? I don't know. First thing that comes up, they split. I mean, if you don't have that, I love you, I long for you, I'm committed to you. If you don't have that, then trying to resolve conflict together is just...

I mean, you can go to somebody and you can say, hey, let's talk about this, and if they just go kind of turn and walk away, what can you do? You just, you can't, you can't resolve that conflict.

Let's look at verse 2 again. The goal is then being of the same mind, living in harmony together.

They need to think the same thing. I'll go back to Philippians chapter 2, verse 2, and Philippians 2, verse 5. It is this attitude of unity. It's the same mind of Christ.

[27 : 04] Christ. So here's the way I talk to couples that are about to get married, right? If you have Christ up here, and you seek to get closer to Christ, and you seek to get closer to Christ, then the closer you get to Christ, what's naturally happening? You're getting closer to each other, right? So the goal of conflict resolution is for both of you to be more Christ-like and to draw closer to Christ. Now think about that. The goal of conflict resolution is not me getting my way. The goal of conflict resolution is not us coming up with a good compromise. The goal of conflict resolution is for both of us to get more closer to Christ. Now that's not what the world will tell you because the world just wants to resolve, you know, peacefully and, you know, have a compromise and nobody really get their way. Immediate gratification. Immediate gratification. That's right. All right. Survival of the fittest.

Who's ever stronger, you know, gets their way or whatever. I don't know. I like what the New King James says. The same mind in the Lord. That's right. That's right. And that's where, here's some principles from all these verses then. I'm going to just go through them quickly because I want to show you. So, man, I don't think I put verse. So verse one, he says, stand firm in the Lord. If you're not standing firm in the Lord, you're not going to be able to resolve conflict because if the goal of conflict is to be Christ-like, then standing firm in the Lord is necessary. You as a believer must know your relationship with the Lord and you must keep that relationship firm. You must grow in that relationship because without that, you're not going to be able to resolve conflict either between you and someone else or between two other people. So you got to stand firm in the Lord. That's verse one.

Verse two, you got to seek for unity. You got to seek for unity or seek for the same mind of Christ. Verse three, Paul actually enlists help from outside. He's outside of the relationship. He's enlisting the help of this trusted friend. Let me see if I can show you. Indeed, true companion. I think he's probably talking to the pastor of the Philippian church or one of the pastors, right? Because they all had a plurality. So he's saying, hey, listen, you need to help these ladies. So sometimes you need to enlist outside help to resolve a conflict. And as Christians, we're to look to other Christians to help us resolve that conflict. We're not to go to litigation and take another Christian to court in order to resolve a conflict, right? Verse four, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice. Let me ask you something. What do you think it would do if you and another person who are at conflict both very sincerely decided to take a few moments from the conflict and sing together amazing grace or sing together something about the greatness of God? Do you think that would begin to change your attitude as you looked back at each other over this conflict? I think that's why Paul has this verse here, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I'll say rejoice because he has that verse sandwiched into let your gentle spirit be known to all, right? So in this conflict, he's saying rejoicing in the Lord, praising the Lord, spending time focusing on the Lord is something that's helpful in the middle of conflict. I think you both have to be in agreement with it, but there it is. And the last thing I would say is maintain gentleness. That's from verse five. The idea of this gentleness, this is not the same as the fruit of the spirit. The fruit of the spirit gentleness is like power under control. This gentleness is more like being considerate, thoughtful, kind to someone. And so with that said, I wanted to give you this tool that I came across years ago. It's called the slippery slope. I put it on the bottom of your page. And this comes from Ken Sandy. He wrote a book called The Peacemaker. It's a very biblical approach to resolving conflict. If you want to go deeper into it, you can get his book and read it. But what you have is you have two kinds of responses that are not biblical. And then you have sort of the biblical response in the middle with variations of that kind of response. So just if you start over here on this side, sometimes in conflict, people want to attack. Okay? And that attack can come in several ways. It can be an assault. That could be physical, but that could also be just emotional and verbal. Right? That like you do something I don't like and I can just say something ugly to you. Right? That is an ungodly, unbiblical way of responding to conflict is to attack someone. Now that can move to litigation and obviously at the worst end of things, murder. Right? That's where we have crimes of passion. We know that people actually physically murder someone. Right? We can put in here also then the thoughts of anger. Right? That as that anger is there and we won't let it go. You know, um, that's, that's been my biggest thing that I, I struggle with two or three big things. But one of the big things that I struggle with is my anger. And, uh, when I was a kid and my parents would tell me that, um, I couldn't do something, I would lay in bed at night awake and I would visualize my parents' death. Now, I would also then, you know, weep and cry because it just was so horrendous. Now, now you, you may not be like me. Not everybody is like me. But people who are

like me, they understand exactly what I'm saying. Because some people get so mad that they just sit there and they just visualize these things. Yeah? Are you a little child? I am.

Um, none of that is excusable. Right? It's all sin. So, you know, I got saved at a young age. So when people say, well, what kind of sin did you commit? I look back at my life and I go like, I was a wretched sinner. I mean, just sit there and visualize the death of your parents. What kind of monster does that? Right? I am saved by the grace of God. There's no reason God should have saved me. [34 : 03] There's no reason he should have had me do anything that I'm doing. I deserve nothing. And when I tell you I deserve nothing but death and hell, I mean it. Right? So, you may not like my honesty about that, but there it is. All right. So, there could be attack responses. There could also be escape responses.

And this is where most of us live. We don't like, we don't like conflict, so we run from it. There could be a denial. So, if something can happen in a relationship and it's kind of like, well, you know, that's really not that big of a deal. It's like, well, no, that little conflict, that's kind of a big deal. That needs to be solved. But no, no, it just, it doesn't matter.

You can kind of see where running from conflict can end, can get in that perpetual cycle of being abused, whether it's emotional, physical, or whatever. Right? Flight, just run from it. Right? Just run from conflict. Not going to have anything to do with it. And so, if there's at all a difficult conversation, there's some people, what they do is they just hightail it and leave. They won't come back. Right? It is not biblical, it is not godly to run from conflict.

Suicide is the worst kind of fleeing. Right? A person is so brought up with whatever the conflict is that they just have to escape from this world because they just can't handle it. They just can't deal with it. So, we want to live in the middle. Right? So, in the middle, there's definitely some things we can do that are still biblical that kind of look like this. So, this escape response, overlooking an offense. You know, if somebody says something ugly to me and it's really not that big of a deal, I should have, and I struggle with this, I should have the Christian maturity to overlook an offense. As a matter of fact, in the book of James, he says that love covers a multitude of sins. And sometimes, people just say things, later if you were to confront them, they would be like, I'm so sorry. Well, you know what?

[36 : 07] If it's uncharacteristic and they just said it, believe the best, ignore it, and let it go and see if you can cover it over. If it happens again, becomes a pattern, that's when you have to say, okay, now we've got to step up our game and do something a little different.

Reconciliation. That's where, you know, we're at war with one another, so now let's bring this back together. You know, let's work towards reconciling us. Negotiation and mediation are kind of that middle part. Sometimes, I'm working with people, helping them, trying to negotiate some sort of treaty to get to some place or mediation. I've got to step in the middle arbitration, accountability. So here, oftentimes, we know somebody's done something they really should not do. We know it would be bad for us to call them names, but we feel something's got to be done. Well, that's where that person needs to be held accountable.

Right? They do something that everybody can tell is wrong, and so what we want to do is we want to say to them, hey, listen, that's really not the right way to act, and so we need to hold accountable. So, I mean, there's so much more about this that I could say. I'm just trying to introduce you to the concept that conflict is real, and there is a biblical way for us to resolve it. I have not given you a full-fledged, here, go, this is how you resolve conflict. It would take us a lot longer for us to walk through that, and down the line we can. But I just wanted to kind of, it's right here in this passage, so let's just deal with it. Right? Any questions about any of this?

How about resisters? Resisters? Yeah, you've got a conflict with somebody, you seek to try to, so in Romans chapter 12, it says, live in peace with everyone so long, as much as you're able to. So, if you think of a conflict, and you think of 100%, okay, it is never 100% somebody else's fault.

There's always your part. But your part may only be 10%. And now, in marriage, if you're kind of looking at yourself, kind of going like, no, it's always his fault. You know?

[38 : 26] Always. That's not true. Right? But what we tend to do, when I only have 10% of the responsibility, and my wife has 90%, I have a tendency to want to sweep my 10% under the rug of her 90%.

If I, if we've got a problem, and there's, I've got 10%, then I need to own my 10%, and I need to step up and do what's necessary for my 10% of the thing. So, if I've, if my wife, she did something terrible, and I responded ugly to her, and I just, just, you know, treated her with a cold shoulder and

