

Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 4:2-3)

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[0 : 0 0] Hey, men, you may be seated, and good morning. There is a story that has been told for many generations. It has been told on many different continents for many years, and the story goes like this.

There were six men who were stranded on an island. Two were Jews, two were Catholics, and two were Protestant evangelicals. And the two Jews cooperated together, and they built a church together on this island, and they entitled it the Temple Emmanuel.

The two Catholics cooperated together, and they founded the Church of the Holy Name. And the two Protestant evangelicals went their own way, they built their own churches, and they fought over who had the privilege to call their church Fourth Memorial.

Today, we're going to look at a passage in Scripture of two ladies in a church who just squabbled. And their fighting is so well known that it has been preserved for two millennia now.

And so, if you have a copy of God's Word, a Bible, I encourage you to turn to Philippians chapter 4. And we are going to be looking at verses 2 and 3 in a moment.

[1 : 1 9] Before I read the passage, though, and we get into the passage directly, I want to express my appreciation to Pastor Jay last Sunday, because he set up this sermon of where we find ourselves in the passage, in the book of Philippians.

Pastor Jay last week talked about us needing to be a people who are tethered to the Lord. And then, we additionally not only need to be a people tethered to the Lord, but we also need to be a people who are tethered to His people, to God's people, to the church.

And it is for the purpose of developing and maintaining this spiritual stability in us. But what happens when we lose sight of being tethered to the Lord and lose sight of being tethered to God's people?

Well, infighting can begin. Infighting can begin in a church. And so, we find a passage today that talks about this little bit of infighting between two individuals in the church at Philippi.

And so, I want to mention up front what is the big idea of the passage today, and it is this. We need to be a people who make peace. Make peace. For fighting does not fit those who are fit for heaven.

[2 : 3 6] Make peace. For fighting does not fit those who are fit for heaven. We find in this passage, we will see that firstly, in order to resolve this conflict and to resolve conflict, it is first the responsibility of those involved in the conflict.

It is first the responsibility of those who are involved in the conflict. Now, I would like for us to turn to the passage that is going to be our text today.

And would you please read along with me? Philippians chapter 4, verses 2 and 3. Paul writing to the church at Philippi, he says this, The principle that we're talking about right now is that resolving conflict is first the responsibility of those involved in the conflict.

What is so striking to me about this passage is that Iodia and Syntyche, that his admonition is so direct. Paul names names.

He publicly rebukes two people. And let's not forget how this letter arrived to the church at Philippi. Imagine, we read about Epaphroditus a few sermons ago, a few in chapter 3.

[4 : 1 6] Epaphroditus was this man who came, the church at Philippi took up a collection, and Epaphroditus was charged with this money that was to be given to Paul.

Paul, in Rome, he's under house arrest. And while he is there, he probably gives a report to Paul. Hey, how's the church at Philippi? They're doing great. Here's all the wonderful things that are happening. However, Iodia and Syntyche are kind of having a little problem right now. And so maybe, I'm speculating here, maybe that's how Paul found out about Iodia and Syntyche and this difficulty that they were having.

And then Epaphroditus, he almost fell ill. He almost died there in Rome while he was supposed to be of encouragement, and he was encouragement to Paul. And Paul is now sending Epaphroditus back.

And can you imagine, I have a letter from Paul, and imagine this letter now being read to the church at Philippi. And now Iodia and Syntyche's names are being named in the presence of everyone in the church.

[5 : 24] We have a letter here. And can you ever imagine everyone's little glances out there, corner of the eye? I wonder how, did Iodia hear that? Did Syntyche hear that? And everyone's checking to see if they heard that.

It's direct. It's a public rebuke. It would have been an awkward moment. It would have been probably quiet. And we don't know much about Iodia and Syntyche, but we can assume they were a few things.

They were influential women in the church at Philippi. Why do I say that? They were publicly named. They were publicly named. They likely had some influence in the church body themselves. They were church members. That is that they were believers in Christ as well. Why do we know that? Because their names are named in the book of life. We're told that they are indeed saints of God.

They are believers in Christ. And their prominence in the church is magnified by the disunity that they were causing. Here were some influential ladies who were in Christ, and they were causing some form of disunity that Paul saw fit to even name them publicly and name them in his letter to the church at Philippi.

[6 : 46] So first, resolving conflict is first the responsibility of those involved. How do I get there?

Because look with me in verse 2. I entreat Iodia. I entreat Syntyche. Paul, the word entreat could be some of your translations may have the word urge.

I urge Iodia. I urge Syntyche. Take it upon yourselves, these two individuals. And by the way, these could have been two men.

In this case, they're two women, but it could be a man and a woman that cause conflict today. All of us can cause conflict and squabble in the church. In this case, we have two ladies.

But Paul is using the same verb twice for both ladies. It could have been easy for him to say, I urge Iodia and Syntyche. He could have said, I, I, but he doesn't.

[7 : 48] He says, I urge or entreat Iodia, and I urge or entreat Syntyche. Both ladies get the same verb. I urge you both to agree in the Lord.

Both of you. And it's up to you to do this. So to resolve conflict in the church, it is first the responsibility of those involved in the conflict themselves. Another principle that we can apply is before interpersonal conflicts become a problem of others, it must be resolved between the two in conflict with themselves.

I already mentioned that. I want to reflect back on what Paul or Jesus says in Matthew 18, verse 15. I think we have that verse perhaps on the screen.

It says this, that if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained of your brother.

And so it is not only in this case, I entreat Iodia, I entreat Syntyche, but it also we're informed by Jesus' words himself that if someone sins against us, we're to go to them individually alone.

[9 : 06] It is primarily the responsibility of the two involved in the conflict to resolve their conflict. Many relationships or many relational problems and conflicts in the church would be quickly resolved if this were the case and the simple guidelines that we would follow every single time.

To take the initiative, going to the other person, to try to clear up the problem, the sin, the conflict that is between two individuals. It is a common mistake and a sin for the one who has been wronged to talk to many people about being wronged by the other person without going to them directly.

It is permissible to go to someone who is in spiritual leadership, an elder type person, who can also be co-opted in the solution of the problem to be asked for wisdom before going, but I want to caution us in this case.

But it is not okay to talk to several others about being wronged. Imagine, I have an issue with Jay, between Jay and myself.

Yeah, it's not hard to imagine. Yeah. And so, if this were the case, imagine it would be wrong for me to talk to a lot of different people about my issue with Jay.

[10:33] I should just go to Jay and say, Jay, you've hurt me, here's how, and to be reconciled. The best solution is for the offender and the offended in conflict to resolve their dispute.

One grows in humility and courage to go, one grows in humility and courage to receive correction and feedback, and we all would grow in appreciation for the other, and I may find that I may be all, I may also be at fault in the disagreement.

This should happen all the time without anyone knowing. This should be happening all the time without anyone else knowing, because we are to make peace.

Fighting does not fit those who are fit for heaven. In preparation for a brother and sister to go to one another, I think there's a helpful tip to identify the true problem and the source of the conflict.

We do not know the problem or the root cause between this difficulty, between Iodia and Syntyche. We know it is not likely a theological problem, because the Apostle Paul calls out theological problems in other places when he calls people out and he corrects them with boldness.

[11:58] Paul had no problem confronting theological problems. However, in this case, and I would say in most cases, I think we can group common problems that a church between true church members have in some categories.

The first is there's a personal wrong. Someone has sinned against another and did something to offend the other. There is also a personality clash, a person that just rubs you the wrong way. There is also a methodological difference. You disagree with how they are doing something, because after all, you and I could have done it better. And there could be a combination of the above.

All of this is compounded by either one's maturity or immaturity. It is embarrassing to admit for all of us, but there is to some degree that we all get caught in some form of self-love.

It is love for oneself that is a common root problem in places of disagreement. I want to be right. I want to make sure that someone else is proven wrong.

[13:11] That exists in all of us. When I was in my young 20s, I had an older gentleman hurt me by saying something to me, and I felt self-justified, and I went to that person because after all, that's what you're supposed to do, and I knew at least that much.

And what he shared with me in return shocked me. And he said to me, Scott, correct me if I am wrong. Is there truthfulness in my words?

And so I admitted, yes, there's some truthfulness to your words. Secondly, let me share with you the motives for which I'm sharing these things. And he shared with me why he shared those hard words with me.

And then thirdly, he explained how he was trying to help me in sharing that with me. And then he said to me, could it be that I did not hurt you, but your inflated ego is such that it was hard to hear the truth of what I was saying?

It's good to grow. It's good to grow. And he was actually right looking back. And I'm so grateful that he helped me see.

[14:33] So what I'm saying is this. A helpful tip is to identify the true problem and the source of the conflict. The conflict wasn't really the issue, the words that he shared with me that were hard to receive.

The issue was my inflated ego. And I know that's sometimes hard to identify what is the real problem. I also want to mention there are other ways in which Scripture identifies how to resolve a problem.

Oftentimes we think Matthew 18, go to them alone, Iodian Sintake, I urge you, I urge you, get resolved, is the only way to solve a problem in the community of faith.

However, if we read Proverbs 19, 11, it says this, it is to one's glory to overlook one's offense. It's to one's glory to overlook an offense. I don't need to go to someone every single time I'm hurt or offended or feel like I'm sinned against.

I can also just say, Lord, you know what happened. I'm going to choose to overlook this. And we take a lot of things into consideration to do that.

[15:44] And we say, it's to one's glory to overlook an offense. Secondly, we find another one in 1 Peter 2, 23. This one reads on the screen, the speaking of Jesus, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but he continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. What did Jesus do? When he was reviled, did he revile in return?

When he suffered, he did not suffer, he did not threaten, but he continued to entrust himself to the Father and say, Lord, one day you're going to judge all things. This is yours.

I share this because there are multiple ways to resolve conflict in the church. You can overlook it and you can entrust yourself to Jesus who will judge righteously one day. That being said, in this case, these two ladies should be reconciled.

So we must identify the true nature of the problem and the source of the conflict. Another, I think some helpful questions when going through a conflict with another believer.

[17:04] We need to be careful. We need to remind ourselves of what the goal is. What is the goal? Look here. I entreat Iodia in verse 2.

I entreat Syntyche. And what's the goal? To agree in the Lord. You two ladies, you need to be in agreement with the Lord. And so, I like how Paul in Philippians 2, earlier in the book of Philippians, he says, be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. And what was that purpose? To proclaim the gospel, to know God and make Him known. And so this is what you should exist for, Iodia and Syntyche. This is what we exist for. Be of that same mind.

Agree in the Lord. This is where your agreement should lie. Why? Because when in conflict, what do we want to do? We want to win the argument. We want to be proven that we are right.

And we want to ensure the other person maybe perhaps needs to be put in their place. And demonstrate yourself as better than the other. Those are the fleshly motives that can often get riled up when things are really sensitive and when you are hurt.

[18:17] But we should strive for unity and reconciling with a brother or sister in Christ because it glorifies God and is helpful to be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ to one another and to the watching outside world.

So we must ask ourselves, what does God want to teach me in this situation? What does God want to teach perhaps the other person? And how can we help portray that our ambition is to be of one mind in the Lord and to agree in the Lord, being of one mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose, to know the Lord and to make Him known.

And why is this? Because we are to make peace because fighting does not fit those who are fit for heaven. Resolving conflict, though, sometimes is not possible between two people, whatever the reason is for that.

Whether it be an immaturity issue, whether there is a deep root of bitterness, for some reason, sometimes two people cannot get resolved alone. So Paul, knowing this, he says in verse 3, Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women.

I ask you also, true companion, to help these women. This word, true companion, he's enlisting someone to help these two people.

[19:50] And he's calling him here true companion in our English translation. It is literally translated yoke fellow. Whoever this person is, he's saying, you and I, Paul and this yoke fellow, have been yoked together like oxen pulling a common plow.

They have a common purpose. They've been yoked together. They agree on the same thing. And Paul says, I know you, true companion, you help Euodia and Syntyche be of one mind in Christ Jesus.

You help them. And I find that in this case, I wish the word companion was left untranslated and left in the Greek for us. Why? Because I believe it to be someone's proper name.

For example, we have the names like Faith today. We meet a young lady, Faith Iverson. We have individuals who are named these names.

Faith. We have individuals who are, you meet a young lady whose name is Joy. We meet a young lady whose name is Hope. We meet a young lady whose name is Grace.

[20:57] Not only is this a proper name, but there's a meaning to that name that's self-descriptive. Well, this name, if it were left untranslated, would be Susikos is the Greek word.

I believe it to be his proper name. This man's name. So when Paul writes and he says, I ask you true companion, I like to think that Paul is saying, I ask you Susikos.

And your name literally means yoke fellow. Just like the name faith literally means faith and joy, joy. And so I believe he's called it like what we see in Barnabas.

Barnabas' name is son of encouragement. So he would, and Onesimus' name means useful that we find in the Bible. So I think these are proper names and I believe he's asking this Susikos, I ask you true companion, you who have been yoked together, you yoke fellow, that's what his name literally means, Susikos, would you please help these two ladies resolve their conflict together? Perhaps Susikos is maybe the pastor. So when, if Susikos himself is reading this letter from the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi, he may be reading his own name.

[22 : 15] I ask you, Pastor Susikos, help these two ladies. It also may be an elder in the church. We don't know who he is exactly, but obviously he is someone who is deeply appreciated for his spiritual maturity and Paul thinks he has the capacity to help these two ladies, he's qualified to help these two ladies be resolved in their conflict.

And he's enlisting them to help them. I like also how Paul does not take sides. By reading this in Paul's letter, you don't know who, oftentimes we like to think, I wonder who's majority fault.

You know, like at least 51%. There's got to be someone who's held majority responsibility in this disagreement. Paul doesn't tip his hat because he gives the same encouragement.

I urge you, Iodia, and I urge you, Syntyche. It's hard to determine who is more at fault, and I love that. I love that. That third-party person should be pretty objective.

The person needs to be objective. And why is that the case? Proverbs 18, 17 says, when one who states his case first seems right until the other comes and examines him.

[23 : 41] And so it's hard to know who is at fault. And when both parties are telling their story and it is in disagreement with one another, the only thing I'm left to do in those kinds of cases is talk about their heart attitude of which they think of the other person because I don't know what's true and it's important to be objective.

But their love for one another has certainly drawn cold. Another characteristic of that third party is that they should be open, direct, and truthful.

I can't imagine having a letter read and my name is named in the whole assembly and my sin is publicly shared. And from the first century until today, Euodia and Syntyche are known for their conflict.

Paul did not beat around the bush. He names names. He enlists others to help these two who are in conflict. But what I also love is that Paul and whoever that third party is who may be enlisted in the resolution of a conflict between two people needs to be affirming and positive when possible.

What I love is there's actually more. Yes, their disagreement is public. But there's also more that is said positively about these two ladies than perhaps negative.

[25 : 15] Notice with me in verse 3. He enlists Syzygus, the true companion, help these women. And now notice what it says about these two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement, whose names are in the book of life.

Do you know how there is far more positive things that are mentioned about Euodia and Syntyche than negative? Yes, the negative is what gets them written in the book, but these two ladies are named because they have labored with Paul in the gospel.

Perhaps when Paul founded the church there, the gospel reached the church at Philippi, the city at Philippi, perhaps Euodia and Syntyche labored with Paul.

They had to have because he names them and said, they are known for having labored with me in the gospel. So it's hard for Paul, sitting in house arrest in Rome, to think of these two ladies having such discord.

And he affirms their names are written in the book of life. Make peace. Fighting does not fit those who are fit for heaven.

[26 : 43] As I reflected on this passage this week and last week when I began, I was thinking there is an unstated weakness of the church at Philippi that we have to acknowledge.

Why, my question as I was thinking about this was this, why did it take the apostle Paul to name these two ladies for this conflict to get resolved?

Obviously, that conflict had been going on in the church. Epaphroditus was so bothered by it that he reported it to Paul. So I suspect, I don't know how Paul really heard it, but that's how I, in my imagination, think it happened.

So Epaphroditus knows of it. Everyone knows of it. The church knows of it. These two ladies are at each other and they cannot get along. They cannot speak well of each other. Whatever the issue is, we don't know, but there is a conflict and it seems like the church seems powerless to do anything

and it's acceptable.

We have these two ladies who are in conflict and we're just going to let it go until Paul writes and then now we have to take action because we're told to. So there is an, if you will, there is an acceptable sin going on in the church undealt with and the church just kind of grew numb to it.

[28 : 13] So it made me think I wonder what is the nature of the acceptable sin at Fourth Memorial Church that we just would accept but if we had a pastor come visit us and go, you guys really tolerate this?

Don't you see this? It would be apparent to us then but we've just kind of grown old to it. It's just been kind of acceptable to us that this kind of thing exists, whatever it is. And should it be conflict, I want to encourage us in this way.

So here's, we just went through a church covenant, a sermon series on our church covenant in the fall. We had about 13 sermons on it and all the church covenant basically says is we know and we understand that as members of the body of Christ here at Fourth Memorial, we have a responsibility with one another and for one another.

It's with that in mind that I want to encourage us when we know that there is a conflict between two individuals in the church that we are prepared and we're going to help each other so that this kind of thing isn't tolerated.

This kind of conflict isn't tolerated. What do I, what are some, I have four things that I recommend that we do. When I hear of a conflict with someone and I believe the person to be pretty spiritually sensitive, I make this testing comment to them.

[29 : 40] I will say this. It sounds like you have a lot to talk to about that person. It sounds like you have a lot to talk about with that person. So if it were Pastor Jay and myself, someone should say to me, hey Scott, it sure sounds like you have a lot to talk to Pastor Jay about.

I mean, what are you doing? You're taking responsibility for me to say, hey Scott, the issue that you just brought to me, it feels a little bit like gossip and slander and so you really ought to talk to him about that.

That's what you're doing to me and you're doing for me. And then, when I make mention of that statement to someone, I will then say, hey, I'll check in with you next week to see how it's going because I want that person to go.

Second, if that doesn't work, I will say it's, or I perceive the person to be a little more difficult and not so sensitive, I will say, it sounds like that you need to be reconciled with that other person, when will you schedule a time to go and meet with that person?

You've got a lot to talk about and so now I'm going to say, when are you going to schedule that? And I will then again check in the next week to see if they've scheduled that appointment. Third, and it gets a little more pointed, can I go with you to be reconciled to that other person?

[31 : 04] I want to play the role of Susagus. I'm the third party, I'll insert myself, I'm willing to go, you two have a lot to talk about, I'd be happy to participate.

I'm available next Wednesday. Fourthly, and this now gets a little more pointed, I will say, you must be reconciled to the other person.

You have one week to talk to the other person. Next Sunday, I will be calling that other person and let them know what you have shared with me about them and I'm certain that they may be meeting with you after that.

And I am going to offer myself to them to come with them to meet with you. This is how the church can care for one another so that lodia and Syntyche don't exist.

How was it that the church at Philippi had to have the apostle Paul write to them about something that was very apparent to the whole church? It was no surprise that lodia and Syntyche! were named in that letter to the church at Philippi.

[32 : 18] Everybody knew it. Everyone was cutting eyes at them. So how did it get so accepted? Because individuals didn't do something like this.

So I encourage this church to care for one another in this way. Last, resolving conflicts is necessary so that the church can focus on the work of the gospel.

notice in the passage, they labored side by side with me in the gospel. That's where the focus should be. That's what Paul remembers them.

That's what was supposed to unify them. That is what this was all to be about. And they labored together side by side for the gospel's sake.

That's how we must labor not against each other but labor for the gospel's sake. Lord Nelson was a Royal Navy captain of the British Army or British Navy.

[33 : 26] He lived, he was born in 1758. He died in 1805. He was a very strategic and unconventional in his tactics for the day and many have heralded him as the greatest naval commander in history.

many victories in the Fritz Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were had at his hand because of these tactics that he used. Lord Nelson one time came upon the deck of his ship.

The enemy flotilla was out there. The enemy ships were out there. They were preparing. They were getting the gunpowder out. They were getting the cannonballs out. The whole ship was very busy preparing for the battle what was about to come and everybody knew it.

And there were two of his captains on the deck that, two of his officers on the deck that were having a quarrel and he interrupted them adamantly and said this, gentlemen, there are your enemies.

We need to remember there is a real enemy to the church. We're not it. there is your enemy, not us.

[34 : 47] We're to have one mind. We're to agree in the Lord. We're to make him known, proclaim him. There is work to be done. People are dying, going to hell, and we're quibbling and quabbling and squabbling.

Why? There is your enemy, not one another. So make peace. Fighting does not fit those who are fit for heaven.

So I have a couple questions to conclude. Am I at odds with anyone in this church? Am I at odds with anyone in this church?

If so, by next Sunday, would you seek to be reconciled? call them and say, hey, brother, sister, I'd like to share something with you and there's just something and I'd like to get it resolved.

Please do that. Is there any, are you at odds with anyone in the church? And then, secondly, there's a way for you to be at odds with someone in the church and that is to be involved in ministry.

[36 : 00] So I'm going to ask, where are you involved in ministry? And serving side by side with individuals gives you opportunity to have conflict, to seek reconciliation, to, do what Proverbs 19 says, to your glory to overlook an offense, to be like Christ who will give it to the Lord who judges righteously one day, but our enemies are not with one another and so let's serve joyfully and be of the same mind in Christ Jesus.

That is my prayer for us. Let's be a unified church. I love that Paul said of these women who are known for their conflict, but he says of these women, they have labored, they have striven with me side by side for the gospel's sake and let's do that together and let's be known for that.

We strive alongside of each other for the gospel. Let's pray. Father, I pray that we as a church would be a faithful witness.

Lord, that we would have a witness that is to one another and to the world that says we are a unified people. We know who our enemy is and it is not one another.

I pray if there is conflict with someone, someone is at odds with someone in the church, Lord, I pray that this week that would be resolved even by this afternoon.

[37 : 46] thank you, Lord, for this wonderful two ladies who are mentioned in this passage, Yodia and Syntyche.

We thank you for them. We thank you for their example. We thank you that they labored for the gospel and their names are written in the book of life. Thank you that we get to know that about them and how encouraging.

Lord, forgive us for the times that we don't represent you well and it's in your beautiful name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.