

Joy

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[0 : 00] Thank you for listening to this recording from Grace Evangelical Church. We'd like to apologise for the quality of the audio and like to warn you that the sermon cuts off at 24 minutes.

You still, however, may wish to listen to the first 24 minutes. Apologies. Alright, we're going to be in Philippians chapter 4 today.

Paul, as we've seen over the weeks, is very upbeat. About his sense of partnership in the gospel with the Christians at Philippi. And that arises out of their common experience of God's grace.

And that makes Paul all the more concerned to address what he sees to be the biggest threat to the well-being of the church in Philippi.

And it's interesting that he doesn't see the threat coming from external enemies or persecution. Those are real. The biggest threat to the well-being of the church in Philippi is, as Paul has sort of helped to see, failing to be shaped by the mind of Christ.

[1 : 12] You remember back in chapter 2, we saw the mind of Christ. Chapter 2, verses 5 through to 11, where Paul says, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

The biggest threat to any church family is failing to have the mind of Christ. For Paul, there was only two options.

Either, either they would continue to be shaped by their old, pre-Christian, sinful, distorted sense of self. And Paul said in the earlier chapters, he tells us how that would be, that would present, how that would be marked.

That would be marked by rivalry, by selfish ambition, by a lack of concern for righteousness, by an absence of true humility, an absence of maturity, and an absence of any sense of joy and unity.

That's one option facing the church. On the other hand, they would be shaped, the other option is they'd be shaped from the inside out by the mind of Christ.

[2 : 22] And that would be marked by a personal delight in Christ overflowing into a conscious, determined struggle to be as Christ to one another.

Two options. Health and lack of health. And Paul continues that theme, I believe, into chapter 4.

Helping them to see, you see, remember in chapter, verse 1, Dave dealt with last week, talked about stand firm thus in the Lord. So in chapter 4, Paul's helping them see what standing firm with the mind of Christ will look like in response to tensions and frustrations of personal conflict.

Which is what he leads with into this next section of verses. And in this context of chapter 4, verses 2 to 9, Paul uses three main imperative or three command words.

He uses other ones, but the three main ones. So verse 4, he commands the attitude. Imagine that, commanding an attitude of habitual rejoicing in the Lord.

[3 : 38] And then verses 8 and 9, he commands that they fill their minds with the good things, the attitude of worship.

And sandwiches in between those two commands, in verse 6, there's the command, do not be anxious about anything. And the idea of anxiety or being anxious has the idea of being worried or fearful or uncertain or tortured in mind.

And so I think Paul's picking up a play between the two sorts of minds that will be controlled by either the anxious mind or the mind of Christ.

See, conflict, and I'll show you a bit more of this in a minute, conflict chokes out the ability to rejoice. When a church or people are in conflict, they're not going to be rejoicing.

Why not? Because conflict chokes out the Christ-shaped mind. And what are we left with when the Christ-shaped mind is choked out?

[4 : 55] Well, it leaves us with the anxiety-shaped mind. Which robs us of our ability to worship and express unity and peace and enjoy peace.

Anxiety is a huge issue in our society. Anxiety. A psychologist now regularly describes anxiety in our society as an epidemic. At its most severe, it's described as a whole range of mental illnesses.

And at the other end of the scale, we all experience anxiety to some degree. Anxiety or stress response from time to time. Perhaps we worry about going to a new school.

Or perhaps we worry about starting a new job. Or joining a new soccer team. Or perhaps we're worried about some health issue. And so on and so forth. So we all experience a degree of stress or anxiety.

Sometime, rather. It's a huge issue in society. At either extreme, whether the really severe extreme of mental health issue, or just the sort of ad hoc thing we all experience.

[6 : 10] At either extreme, anxiety will present with physical, psychological, and behavioral responses. From the very ordinary of tightness in the chest and stomach.

To perhaps fear and a desire to sort of take off and flee. Withdraw. To the more severe levels of being totally debilitated.

So a person's unable to function properly. Or normally. And there's so much in our society that actually creates anxiety, I believe.

So for instance, we're told repeatedly. It's a mantra of our culture now. That we can be and do whatever we want to be and do. And that's got to create massive anxiety for people.

Because the actual reality of life says we can't actually achieve that. We're told we should be doing that. But our actual experience of life opens up this massive gap. Which then leaves us wondering, well, what's wrong with me?

[7 : 13] That lack of meaning and purpose causes massive anxiety, I believe. We don't have meaning and purpose in our culture. How do I fit into this world?

What is my reason for existing? What is the good life? Is my experience of life even worthwhile on the scale of things?

And relationships cause heaps of anxiety. Am I loved? Am I secure? Am I accepted for what I am? Am I just being used now only to be discarded later?

Will the relationship last? Will I be unfriended? Perish the thought. Will I be rejected? Will I be replaced? Am I being treated fairly?

And appreciated? Any one of those will cause anxiety. All of them together can be overwhelming. And social media platforms.

[8 : 15] Well, they've created their own level of anxiety. In the young and not so young. Crippled with anxiety. With a condition known as FOMO. See, you didn't think I knew these things, did you?

My researcher does good work. FOMO. Fear of missing out. Missing out on the experiences that others might be having. Or are having, supposedly.

Fear of missing out on being included. On what others are experiencing or sharing. And young people, and not so young people, are being crippled by that. Anxiety is a huge issue.

So let's jump into the text and see what Paul has to say about anxiety. And responding to it. So we've got these two women. Yodia and Sinti. Our case study I'm going to suggest this morning.

In resetting the mind of Christ. So it's very simple. If you don't hear anything else this morning. Just hear this sentence. Paul's solution to conflict and anxiety.

[9 : 19] Is very simple. Reset the mind of Christ. Reset the mind of Christ.

And with that rejoicing. Unity. A deep inner peace. Delight in the Lord. Will be the inevitable outcome. Paul leads into this section, as I said before.

By focusing on two women. Looked. Locked in conflict. Now it's very interesting that Paul doesn't actually give us the detail of that conflict. Conflict. Presumably that means it's not important. What is important to Paul.

Is that the conflict has resulted in a loss of ability to fellowship together. For these two women. That's the real issue for Paul. Now it's not hard to imagine what was happening in the hearts of these two women.

Regardless of who was right and wrong. And remember we're not told that. Regardless of who was right and wrong. As Christian women. In their hearts. They would both have been in a state of anxiety no doubt.

[10 : 28] A state of restlessness. Fear. Uncertainty. All the stuff that comes with conflict. Relationships were at stake.

All those things that would rob them of joy. At pretty well every point in their life. Most likely. Because we know what we do in conflict.

Most likely. Each of these ladies. Would have thought. Genuinely thought in their heart. That what they were longing for. Was only fairness and justice to prevail. If only I can get fairness and justice.

Then. This will be the solution to the conflict. And everything will turn to normal. But here's a thought. Perhaps what they really craved.

We just didn't recognize. Perhaps what they really craved. Was. A removal of their anxiety. A restoration. Of the peace and joy.

[11 : 31] In their hearts. The quietness of mind. That they once experienced. And which they assumed. Would come as a result of getting justice. And being vindicated.

I know what I'm talking about. In this area. Believe me. But I also know. That the reality is. That justice and vindication.

Fail to restore relationships. And fail to restore peace in our hearts. Of itself. Yep.

They smooth things over on the outside. And after a fashion. We can say things are restored. But I'll tell you what. It's a desire. And bitterness.

Will continue to eat us away on the inside. And kill off. Any ability to express joy. Or experience unity and peace. And no doubt.

[12 : 39] Their conflict. Was just oozing out. With tentacles. Grabbing others. In the church family. Whether that grab.

Was through. People just observing. Two. Outstanding. Christian women. Whose. Previously. Strong relationship. Was now just crumbling. Before their eyes.

That's enough to cause anxiety. Across the church family. Isn't it? Or. Whether. It's a bit more direct. And there was some pressure. From either one. Or both of these women. To form sides.

And form factions. You know. Join me. I'm the one that's in the right here. You need to hear this. About what she did to me. What she did to me. What she did to me. What she did to me. What she did to me.

Anxiety. Will spread. Across the church family. And into that scenario. Paul presents.

[13 : 38] An alternative model. A gospel shaped model. A mind of Christ. Shaped model. Which would restore. Peace.

Joy. Community. To the whole church family. Given that it had been squeezed. Out of gospel shape. By conflict.

That's what conflict does. Squeezes. Out of gospel shape. So. Some thoughts. As to what that model looks like. The first one is. Paul's really saying to these people.

Don't accept. Broken fellowship. And relationship. As. Just the way it is. Verse 2. Paul's language.

Reveals the urgency. Of action. I entreat. I plead. I beg with you two women. Names them each. Individually.

[14 : 37] I beg you. Agree in the Lord. Yes. I also ask. True. I also ask you.

True companion. Help these women. Help them. Paul understands. That this conflict.

While it exists. In the church family. Is an immediate. And present. Threat. To unity. Partnership.

In the gospel. And joy. Reverse it. And all those things. Will be restored. Simple equation.

Hard to do. Simple equation. And Paul's picking up here. That their. Their external disagreement. Is driven by. Internal attitudes.

[15 : 34] And desires. And thinking. Which is again. Contrary. To the mind of Christ. Christ. They need. To restore. Practically. The mind of Christ. That means.

That's what he's talking about. When he says. Agree in the Lord. It doesn't mean. They can no longer. Have a difference of opinion. But they have to find a way. To operate. On that difference of opinion. That restores. Practically.

The mind of Christ. And brings. The mind of Christ. Into that discussion. And among. Other things. That will involve. Bringing.

The grace of Christ. That they've experienced. Individually. To their dispute. And notice verse three.

Paul's not in the least bit. Embarrassed by these women. It's not as if they're an embarrassment. Or a nuisance to him. He speaks so highly of them. It's actually.

[16 : 30] His concern is quite the opposite. Of embarrassment. His concern for them. Is the same concern. He expressed for himself. Back in chapter two. Verse 16. He doesn't want them to run.

Or labor in vain. He describes them. As companions. 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. Here's the rub. Paul would not overlook.

Or simply. Accept. This conflict. As an unfortunate. Background. Private. Dispute.

Which was easily offset. By the really good. Gospel ministry. These two women. Were involved in over here. He wouldn't play that game. He wouldn't do the trade off.

[17 : 33] Their names are in the book of life. Says Paul. What's the book of life? Well. Among other things. I'm just going to paraphrase it. And say something like this. It's God's official register. Register.

Of those. Of those. Being renewed. By God's spirit. For God's glory. Why would Paul say that?

Well it's this. The credibility. Of their testimony. As Christians. As Christian women. The credibility.

Of their ministry. Would be undermined. If on the one hand. They were proclaiming. The gospel of reconciliation. And unity in Christ.

While living easily. With broken relationships. Within the church. Second point.

[18 : 40] Recognize. And welcome. The role. Other believers. In the church. Have. In the church. Family. Have to play. Verse three. Paul nicely. Deploys.

The resources. Of the pastor. Timothy. That's the urgency. Help these ladies. Find a way. Through this. Dispute.

Back to. The mind of Christ. You. Is singular. In verse three. So clearly. It's a reference.

To Timothy. But verse one. If you go back. To verse one. And then. The verses after. Verse four. And onwards. The pronouns. Are plural. So.

I'm one. I'm going to suggest. To you. That. That while. Timothy. Was going to take. The lead in this. As a matter. Of first. Urgency. For the church. Family. That Paul.

[19 : 35] Was suggesting. That the whole. Church family. Has a. Has a role. To play. In the dispute. Of these two women. And seeking.

A resolution. Of that dispute. How would that be. Well. Because. The whole church. Family. Then. Has a. An opportunity.

And indeed. A responsibility. To model. The mind of Christ. To these two women. Who are struggling. To have the mind of Christ. At that particular time. How might that happen.

Well. It would. The mind of Christ. Would be seen. As others. In the congregation. Refused. To take sides. Knowing. That taking sides.

Would create. More rivalry. And division. The mind of Christ. Would. Would urge them. To move. Towards each other. Constrained. By the love of Christ.

[20 : 32] Rather than. Avoid each other. Or simply gossip. About the problem. With each other. The mind of Christ. Would. Be praying. For generosity.

Of spirit. In these two ladies. Preparedness. To admit wrong. Preparedness. To seek forgiveness. Preparedness. To offer forgiveness. And for new desire.

To be as Christ. To one another. The mind of Christ. Would urge people. To speak God's word.

To them. As appropriate. Which in fact. Is just speaking. The mind of Christ. To them. Speaking verbally. The mind of Christ. That they've sort of. Get squeezed away from. At this particular time. Helping them.

Identify. To identify. And move away. From the old. Default. Distorted. Sinful. Mind. The third thing.

[21 : 30] Paul urges them to do. Then. Is just to go back. To basics. Verse four. Consciously. Rejoice. I've actually used that word. To try and highlight it.

Like that. Consciously. Rejoy. Yourself. By reflecting. On who you are. And what you have. In Christ. Now this is a command. It's not an optional extra.

For Christians. It's a command. Which we need. To action. So how do we do that? Well. I'm playing on the word.

Mind again. So we need to remind ourselves. That is. Re. Mind. Re. Mind yourself. In a situation of conflict.

That you're more sinful. Than you could ever understand. More loved. Than you will ever comprehend. Saved by grace. Just like the person.

[22 : 27] Who you think has failed you. And wounded you. Or who's annoying you. Remind yourself. That the Lord is working.

In each of you. To bring you to maturity. That he wants. In each of you. To produce the fruit. Of righteousness. That this. Conflict.

Is an opportunity. To produce. The fruit of righteousness. Remind yourself. That joy.

Is not about. How we feel. And having. Hassle free. Circumstances. And living. But about knowing. That we are totally.

Loved. And totally secure. In Christ. And therefore. Are free. To reach out. To others. At great personal cost. To ourselves. As the mind of Christ.

[23 : 20] Led Christ to do. Verse five. Be known. For your reasonableness.

That's a strange. Little verse in there. Isn't it? Be known. For your reasonableness. I thought about that. A long time. Over the last. Two or three weeks. And I've got there. A sort of. Sub point.

Leading off it. Be known. As a peacemaker. Rather than a brawler. So what is it.

To be reasonable. In a situation. Of conflict. How will the mind. Of Christ. Make us reasonable. As opposed to being. Unreasonable. And unreasonable.

Is just hard to deal with. Isn't it? When people are being. Unreasonable. They're just. Impossible to engage with. So what will. How will the mind. Of Christ. Make us reasonable.

[24 : 18] Perhaps. It'll be like this. Perhaps. Paul's saying. Look. Be known. As the person. Who is quick. To take ownership. In your part. Of the conflict. Be known.

As the person. Who is quick. To move. Towards the one. Who has wronged you. And. Thank you.

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