

A Focus on the Women in the Philippian Church

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Date: 06 March 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Once again we're glad to be able to meet together to worship God and everybody's welcome at our evening service including those of you who are joining us online as well and as always we pray that God will reveal himself to us through his word bless us as we come together in this way.

There are a lot of things on the bulletin sheet today to intimate I'm not going to go through them all. Do remember the prayer meeting tomorrow evening that's the monthly prayer meeting and particularly this time because we're focusing on Ukraine as you can see there in information everyone is encouraged to attend. It's going to be on Zoom only and you'll get the details from Lizzie if you haven't already got the usual passcode for our monthly prayer meeting. It'll be under that but if you don't have it just contact Lizzie and she'll give you the details. And so we want to focus on Ukraine especially and the situation that has developed there which as the notice says is most alarming and most alarming for everybody but there are lots of God's people also in Ukraine. Some of them have had to move and seek refuge elsewhere. Some of them have remained behind to minister to their churches and to continue to witness for God and the men of course especially many of them are advised or required to wait behind in their country to serve against the occupying forces. The prayer meetings through the week the midweek meetings you can see the details there as for next Lord's Day as well. Also there's a congregational meeting has been set by the Kirk session for Wednesday the 16th of March our normal midweek Wednesday meeting. That's at 7.30 and that the purpose for that meeting is to elect a minister for the vacancy in the assistantship in the congregation. Again the meeting will be held on Zoom only so the current Zoom details for the

Wednesday midweek will apply and we do want also to have as good an attendance as possible for the whole congregation because we're all hopefully going to fall behind the calling of an assistant minister.

And if you don't again have details just please contact Lizzie or Marianne if you wish any of those details. And again please notice the Blythwood Care Ukraine emergency appeal. As a church we're advised by Central Church in Edinburgh to make contributions through the emergency appeal that Blythwood Care have set up. Blythwood are experienced in bringing relief and care to Eastern Europe especially and so we're confident that we can channel contributions through Blythwood that they will reach their intended destination in Ukraine. Alternatively if you can't do it online you can see a detail there just put an envelope in the plate marked Ukraine appeal and it'll be dealt with in the usual way.

[3 : 0 0] There's also an appeal there for a wider broader prayer base for Slavic Gospel Association. Again they're very much concerned with ministry in Ukraine as well as other parts as you know of Eastern Europe so just follow through the details there for yourselves.

I want to also mention the appeal of the Stornoway street pastors who are hoping to take on New Street pastors this year. If you know of anybody you might be interested or if you're interested yourself do please consider that. If you want to have any information please just follow the details there. Contact the coordinator who is now Janice Brand in Point.

And there's quite a string of details there regarding WFM meetings. They take us right through to the September meeting but it's just so that you can put these in your diary. They'll be intimated in due course as time goes on. I just need to mention meantime the 22nd of March meeting that's at 7.30 when there will be two speakers again on Zoom. Kathleen McSween and Katrina Lamont are going to speak that evening. And the Saturday 26th of March is a fundraiser just like the previous two.

And again just read for the details for that yourselves there. Again it'll be in the bulletin sheet over the next few weeks. Let's now worship God. We're going to begin worship this evening singing Psalm 138. Psalm 138 that's in Sing Psalms page 179. We're going to sing from verse 4 through to the end of the psalm. O Lord let all earth's kings give praise when from your mouth they hear your word.

Let them extol the ways of God for great the glory of the Lord. Although the Lord God dwells on high the lowly person he protects. Whereas the proud and haughty one he knows afar off and rejects.

[5 : 00] Verses 4 through to the end in Psalm 138. Let's stand to sing. sing. O Lord let all earth's kings give praise when conquer and they hear your word. Let them extol the ways of God.

God bless the glory of the Lord. All to the Lord God dwells on high. The holy person he protects. Where does the proud and haughty one he knows afar off and rejects.

A kid's ce Khandake in the name of God. He supports the abstract in the name of God. In the name of God feels the hound■■■■■ as in crives. The Lord says, The Lord says,

Let's once more call on the name of the Lord, so we'll join together in prayer. O Lord, our gracious and mighty God, we give thanks that we are able once again to gather in this way, and help us never, Lord, to take it for granted that this will inevitably be the case for us.

[7 : 38] For we know that there are many places in the world tonight where your people are unable to meet together. We know that even for ourselves, O Lord, many things could prevent us from gathering together such as our own health.

And we pray, Lord, for thankful hearts every time we are able to come together, every time we are able to join in the worship of God, so that we sing your praises and call upon you collectively and are able to give heed to your word.

Lord, we pray for your blessing, O Lord. We have known your blessing so many times in days gone by. We have known your blessing even earlier this day. We pray that your blessing will again come to visit us, to dwell upon us and in our hearts.

We pray that your Holy Spirit will once again take your word and make it effective in our experience. Teach us, Lord, from it your way and lead us in your paths.

Give to us an insight into the meaning of your word as we attend to it this evening, even above what we have learned already and know from our experience. We need your Spirit, O Lord, at all times, each and every day, throughout each day.

[8 : 51] We thank you for the assurance your word gives us, that your people, as your Spirit occupies their lives and occupies their hearts and has made a dwelling place for himself there.

Lord, we give thanks that your Spirit sanctifies your people, blesses your word to them, enables them, Lord, to be upheld in the midst of trials and difficulties and challenges.

We give thanks, Lord, for that ministry of your Spirit that lies so largely hidden apart from its effects. And we pray, gracious one, that we may ever have a dependence upon your Spirit for everything that is required of us personally and in our life as a congregation.

We give thanks, too, for all, Lord, that you provide us with so that not only are we able to gather together in worship and have this time of worship together, and we thank you, too, for all the resources you provide us with by which we are able, Lord, to hold out the gospel and the message of the gospel to our community, are able to engage in practical works of necessity, of charity, of love.

O Lord, we ask that you would continue to provide for us in that regard. And may we be able to use further opportunities as they arise to exercise the work of the gospel throughout our lives in this locality and wherever else, O Lord, you place us.

[10 : 20] And we thank you tonight for the way we are able to gather in freedom for the way in which we enjoy such times of peace in our experience, in our communities, in our land.

O Lord, our God, we give thanks that this is your gift to us. We pray that we may not misuse it but that we may, Lord, use it in such a way as would value it so as to further the work of your kingdom in our own contribution to it as you call upon us to do.

We pray for where that is absent tonight in the world. and Lord we think again especially of the situation in Ukraine and we pray for that situation and ask you Lord that you would bless your people there especially that you bless that nation at this time a nation that knows at this time of so much suffering beyond what we ourselves can enter into and when we see oh Lord the devastation that is that is wreaked upon them when we see how so many of them have had to flee both their

houses and their land into other lands beside them Lord God be merciful we pray send relief we pray continue to provide for them we think of those parts of Ukraine at this time that are virtually besieged and have resources cut off and have ways of escape also closed down through the violence of those who have come to do such damage to them gracious Lord provide for them we pray provide for them food and water and other resources that are necessary oh Lord hear the cry of those who cry out to you from their distress and who especially value your word those of them who know you and from your word bring such request to you as arise from the word of scripture itself that fits their situation so exactly grant your blessing to that president at this time we thank you for his dedication to his people and to his post we marvel oh Lord at the frequency with which he is able to call for help to those of us in the west and to rally his own people oh Lord to further acts of devotion and courage against the oppressor we pray

Lord for the men to that oppression we ask you oh Lord to intervene and to do so in a way that you yourself are able to bring about and Lord we may think as we find ourselves so feeling at times so helpless even in what to pray for yet Lord we ask for your help even in that regard but especially for them we ask that you would bring your help to them and we pray gracious one that you'd bless all other parts of the world tonight where where violence exists against your people against your church where there is war by different warring parties against each other such as in the Yemen and other places where people now be set with poverty and famine and lack of resources Lord our God it is so obvious to us as you people that we live in a fallen world a world that needs your grace a word that need world that needs the the power of the gospel and people to be turned from the ways of darkness into the ways of your marvelous light we pray as your people Lord that we too may give an example to the world around us for too often we are inconsistent oh Lord in living the kind of lives that we ought to live not only personally but in our relation with each other and to our brothers and sisters in Christ elsewhere oh gracious Lord forgive us we pray for the ways in which we continue to fall short of the standard that you expect of us bless us we pray as a congregation of your people as we seek again Lord your blessing this evening we pray that that will continue with us day by day we pray for our young people we pray for our children we ask that you would bless them especially as they receive the teaching of the gospel and remember those Lord who come who may not have a church involvement and yet come to some of our activities from week to week we pray for them too as they come into contact with your people and with the gospel itself we pray for those who have been at Scaladale over the past few days and ask Lord that you would bless that time to them we thank you for those who gave of their time to to be leaders and for those of the young ones themselves who came and shared in this time together and again we pray that your blessing will follow these meetings Lord and that time that they spent together we pray that you would grant your blessing to all our other activities too we pray that you bless the work of the women in the congregation we thank you for them all we pray that you'd bless them not only the work of WFM but other groups that meet from time to time and other ways in which together

Lord they collectively seek to serve you and whether they be through prayer or practical matters attending to the needs of the household of God Lord we pray that you would follow with your blessing all that they seek to do in your name for we know that they do seek your blessing and they do seek your power and your strength to carry through the various activities that they engage in we ask your blessing tonight for those again who are ill of our number at this time those who've been in hospital and still recovering from from surgery those who are looking forward to having procedures done and days to come oh Lord our God we ask that you would bless them all bless them as families we pray too for your blessing with regard to the ongoing COVID situation we thank you for the increased measures of liberty that have come to us we ask Lord too that you would continue to bless in such a way as would ultimately remove this virus or enable us to live safely with it

[16 : 39] Lord we commit ourselves to you in that regard as well as the Lord who presides over physical and mental and spiritual matters in our lives and whose providence moves us day by day and so we pray Lord because we know it is in you we live and have our being and Lord we pray that you'd continue to watch over us and provide for us and give us the grace to submit ourselves to your care and to the guidance of your spirit and now Lord we ask that you would help us as we turn to your word enable us there to listen for your voice and speak to us Lord we pray from your truth grant that we may leave this place of worship tonight all the more concerned to serve you in the world and to make you known to those who are around us so hear us now we pray pardon our many sins for Jesus' sake Amen I'm going to read tonight from 1 Corinthians not the passage that's mentioned in your bulletin sheet and we will come to the second verses mentioned in Philipians

chapter 4 verses 2 and 3

I want to read firstly though from 1 Corinthians and chapter 12 first letter of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 12 we're going to mention this in the course of our study of Philipians 4 and it's really difficult not to read the whole chapter because it's all very closely woven together in the way that Paul's teaching proceeds here from the beginning so 1 Corinthians 12 at the beginning now concerning spiritual gifts brothers I do not want you to be uninformed you know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols however you were led therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed and no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit now there are varieties of gifts but the same spirit and there are varieties of service but the same Lord and there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone to each is given the spirit the manifestation of the spirit for the common good to one is given through the spirit the utterance of wisdom to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same spirit to another faith by the same spirit to another gifts of healing by the one spirit to another the working of miracles to another prophecy to another the ability to distinguish between spirits to another various kinds of tongues to another the interpretation of tongues all these are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills for just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body though many are one body so it is with Christ for in one spirit we were all baptized into one

body
Jews or Greeks slaves or free and all were made to drink of one spirit for the body does not consist of one member but of many if the foot should say because I'm not a hand I do not belong to the body that would not make it any less a part of the body and if the ear should say because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body that would not make it any less a part of the body if the whole body were an eye where would be the sense of hearing if the whole body were an ear where would be the sense of smell but as it is God arranged the members in the body each one of them as he chose if all were a single member where would the body be as it is there are many parts yet one body the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of you nor again the head to the feet I have no need of you on the contrary the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and on those parts of the body that we think less honourable we bestow the greater honour and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty which our more representable parts do not require but God has so composed the body giving greater honour to the part that lacked it that there may be no division in the body but that the members may have the same care for one another if one member suffers all suffer together if one member is honoured all rejoice together now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it and God has appointed in the church first apostles second prophets third teachers then miracles then gifts of healing helping administering and various kinds of tongues are all apostles are all prophets are all teachers do all work miracles do all possess gifts of healing do all speak with tongues do all interpret but earnestly desire the higher gifts and I will show you a still more excellent way now it has to be said that some of those gifts that are mentioned there are uncertain to us today we are not sure exactly what was meant by some of these but the purpose of the apostle in actually writing this way is to reinforce his teaching that whatever gifts

God has given to his people have come from one spirit and whatever gifts an individual has are for the benefit of the whole body of Christ the whole church so that's really why he's talking in that way why he's writing in that way because the Corinthians as you know were not really following through in the way they should in the use of the gifts that God had endowed them with we'll say something perhaps more of that in the course of our study and we pray that God will bless the reading of his word to us before we turn now to Philipians let's sing again this time in Psalm 86 Psalm 86 from the Scottish Psalter page 341 verses 11 to 14 teach me thy way and in thy truth O Lord then walk will I unite my heart that I thy name may fear continually O Lord my God with all my heart to thee I will give praise and I the glory will ascribe unto thy name always verses 11 to 14 teach me thy way teach me thy way teach me thy way and in thy truth

O Lord then walk with I hear thy thy heart and I my heart O Lord My God is to my heart to thee I will wisdom And thy glory will us guide unto thy name always.

[24 : 43] Because thy blessing toward thee in greatness doth excel.

And thy deliver us my soul out from the lowest dell.

O God, the power of its dear eyes, and violent men have met.

That for my soul hath sought down thee, before them hath not said.

Philippians 4, I'm reading at verse 2. I entreat you, Odea, and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

[26 : 07] Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women 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.

We've entitled to study this evening a focus on the women in the church or congregation of Philippi. And as we've seen from reading in 1 Corinthians 12, one of Paul's main metaphors or images for illustrating the life of the church, the life of God's people together, is the way in which he takes our body, our physical body, and uses that as an illustration of the spiritual body of Christ.

Spiritual members of the body of Christ, those who are in the Lord, those who are his people, as they are united to him. In 1 Corinthians 12, as we've read, another chapter is Romans chapter 12, there in verses 4 to 5, you have a similar emphasis.

Two things follow on from that by way of introduction, just to lead our way into this part, these few verses in Philippians 4. The two things that follow on from that that we can just mention briefly in passing.

First of all, it excludes individualism. Individualism has become a real blight in many cases on our world and even on the church as well.

[27 : 40] Individualism means something like, I focus on myself as an individual. My main concern is myself. My main concern is my own personal advancement.

My main concern is just to focus in on who I am as an individual and sometimes virtually to the exclusion of others around me. That's what comes first.

That's what I need to look after first. I am focusing on myself. That individualism has certainly crept into the church, but Paul's teaching in regard to the composition of the body of Christ excludes individualism.

Each person in Christ is part of the whole body, and each person in Christ relates in some way or other to the other members, to the other individuals who are in Christ, who belong to the body of Christ.

And the second thing that follows, as well as the exclusion of individualism, is that what each person does or what each person does not do has a bearing on the whole body.

[28 : 52] That you can see, as Paul illustrated that from our spiritual body, if one member of the body, as you mentioned the hand or the foot, if any member of the body suffers, then the whole body is affected.

Or if one member of the body is honored, then the whole body is honored as well. And it follows through into our spiritual situation as well, as we are united together by Christ as members of the body of Christ.

The Lord's people are not only to exclude individualism, but to always bear in mind that if I don't do what God requires of me, then that has an effect negatively, that has an effect on the whole body, because my withdrawal of what I should be doing is obviously taking out from the body something quite significant.

However, I think of myself, if God has given me something to do by way of gifts that I use for the overall good of the church, and I don't use them, and I don't use them properly, or don't use them at all, you can see that that affects the whole body.

It's the same way the other way too. If I do the things that I'm required to do, that has a positive effect on the whole body in its advancement, in its growth. Personal spiritual growth, you can't separate the personal spiritual growth of a Christian from the growth of the whole body.

[30 : 16] If the whole body is going to grow as we must grow in our understanding, in our commitment, in our love, in our whatever it is we have set before us in the Bible, then every individual has to contribute to that in their own personal growth.

And the other way about, of course, as well, stands to reason that my personal decline, if there's personal decline on my part, a decline especially that is marked, then that's going to affect the whole body as well.

It's going to detract from the progress of the body in some way or other. It's going to affect the health, the spiritual health, if you like, of the whole body.

And if you take that with you now into what Paul is saying here in Philippians 4, it'll maybe help us just as we feed those thoughts into what he's saying here to understand what it is he's really saying and why he's saying it and what we understand from these two verses.

First of all, we'll deal with Paul's appeal to these two named women. Paul's appeal to these two named women, the names being Duodia and Syntyche.

[31 : 29] And secondly, Paul's appeal to a person he calls the true companion. We're not told who he was. We're not given his name, but it's somebody Paul knew very well and knew Paul very well and had obviously worked alongside Paul closely in the work of the gospel at Philippi.

And he's saying to him, you also have something to do with regard to this. Help these women. Help them to do what I'm seeking they do, to agree together in the Lord because their names are in the book of life along with those others who have labored with me, he's saying.

So as we look at these in turn, let's just follow through the points that Paul is making. Paul's appeal, first of all, to the two named women. I entreat you, Odea, and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

Now we don't know any of the details as to why these two women had some sort of fallout, some sort of division between them. We don't know what it amounted to. We don't know what led up to it. But we do know that Paul is appealing to them to agree in the Lord. So many has happened by which they need to be brought together again and come to sort whatever it is that's gone wrong.

[32 : 43] And he puts it here, agree in the Lord. Now literally, that's very interesting, the words that Paul uses literally to actually take us back to chapter 2. Because literally what he's saying, I entreat you, Odea, and I entreat Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

And cast your mind back. Where did we see that earlier on? We saw it in chapter 2. What he's saying here, right at the beginning of chapter 2, especially verses 2 to 5, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind. What mind is that? The mind that was in Christ. The mind that was evident in the way that Christ was seen to live his life in this world.

And what he's saying here to you, Odea, and Syntyche is very much the same, have the same mind in the Lord. In other words, he is saying to them, he is appealing to them, not simply to sort it out.

[33 : 54] It's not just as if Paul is saying to them, look, you need to really attend to this. You need to sort this out. You need to deal with this. You need to mend this. You need to have it dealt with. He's not just saying that to them, though that's part of it.

What he's saying to them is, apply the mind that you saw in Christ. Be of the same mind. Be of that mind that he mentioned earlier in chapter 2.

Be of the mind that does nothing from rivalry or conceit. Be of the mind that considers others better than yourself. Have that mind, he's saying to them.

Be of the same mind in the Lord. In other words, whenever we do have disagreements, and whenever we do have, whether it's a falling out or something even short of that, what we're counseled to do by God is always look to the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

Because to mend broken relationships, you need to come back to consider what it was Jesus exemplified in the life that he lived. That he didn't live for himself.

[35 : 01] That he even put others ahead of himself in the way that he gave himself, even as far as the death of the cross, for the benefit of his people. He did not come into the world to say, I am the Son of God, and therefore surely it's not required of me that I live a human life in a way that other humans actually ought to live.

It's not like that at all. And what he's saying here is, to Euodia and to Syntyche, be of the same mind in the Lord. You belong to Christ's spiritual body.

You are two members of that body, he's saying to them. You each have your own gifts. Whatever they would have been, we're not told. And whatever it is will lead to their disagreement, we're not told.

But Paul is directing them to Christ, to the mind that was in Christ, to the principle of putting others ahead of themselves. And whenever you or I have a disagreement, whenever you and I come to have some sort of separation in terms of disagreeing over things, always remember, immediately come back to the mind that you know was in Christ.

Always come back to think, now I have to think of others better than myself, therefore I've got to deal with this problem. And I've got to sort it out on the basis that I am to regard others better than myself.

[36 : 29] I have to sort it out on the basis that that is what Christ shows me, on the basis that Jesus himself is my example. And you notice also that the two are actually named.

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche. And yet he doesn't actually name the one he calls true companion. For whatever reason, he doesn't name him.

We're not sure again. But he entreats Euodia and I entreat Syntyche. And not only does he name them, but the word entreat is applied to each of them.

He doesn't just say, I entreat Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. He's directing it to each of them. This entreaty applies to each of them.

I entreat Euodia. I entreat Syntyche. I entreat them equally to be of the same mind in the Lord. Now you might think, well, surely that's really a bit over the top.

[37 : 28] I mean, this letter would have been read in Philippi. These were letters to the churches at the time that Paul wrote them. This would have been read to the congregation in Philippi. They would have gone through all that Paul has written in what we now have as Philippians.

and it would have come to this point where these words were read out. I entreat Euodia. I entreat Syntyche. And they would say, well, that's me. And they're shown up in the life of the whole congregation as two individuals who need to actually apply the same mind as they saw in Christ, as Paul had mentioned earlier.

And you might think, is that not a bit severe? Why wouldn't he just have left it without being so specific about their names? Isn't that just unnecessarily calling attention to them in the presence of the whole congregation?

Well, it's actually the other way about because the custom in those days would actually have been if you left somebody's name out when you had to deal with something that was of some seriousness, that would be regarded in the custom of those days as a snub.

It would have been regarded as something that you were just showing, I'm shunning these people. I'm not letting these people into the overall emphasis that I'm giving to the congregation until I'm just leaving them out.

[38 : 52] They would have regarded that as being shunned, as being kept aside, as being ignored, as if the problem was there and Paul is saying, you sort it out, but you don't belong really here to the life of the congregation at all.

No, he's not like that. He's saying, I entreat you, Odie. I entreat Syntyche. I'm naming you because you're precious to me and you're precious to the cause to actually agree to be of the same mind in the Lord.

And of course, as I said, the word entreat is applied to each of them. So neither one can say, well, he entreated you, so you must have a bigger problem than I have.

The other one can't say that either. They're both equally being entreated by Paul to deal with his issue. And they're entreated by name, as we've said.

So that naming actually gives a very personal tone to the appeal that the apostle is setting out here to each of them. It's very personal indeed.

[39 : 55] It's very much a pastoral appeal, as you would expect, of Paul, but as a pastoral appeal directed specifically and equally to each of them to be of the same mind in the Lord.

In other words, if they were to ask the question, well, something's come between us, but who really should take the initiative to sort this out? We've got this disagreement between us and here is Paul writing to our church and here we are named in our church.

So if they were to ask the question, which one of us, who of us, of the two of us, should take the first steps to sort this out? The way Paul has put it is, you should each do it.

Even if you could be convinced, you would, let's say, let's say the fault was with Euodia primarily and Syntyche had been offended by what had happened, Syntyche was not allowed to say, well, it's actually Euodia's fault.

She's the one who started all this. She's the one who caused the disruption. She's the one who caused the disagreement, the separation. So I'm not going to do anything. I'm not obliged to do anything until Euodia comes to me and says, I'm sorry, let's sort this out.

[41 : 08] No, Paul is saying, that's not what I'm saying at all. The onus is on each of you. Whoever is actually at fault, because your concern is the body of Christ, because your concern is the praise and the glory of Christ and the well-being of that body, even if it's the one that's been offended or against whom the offense was done, still, Paul is saying, because your main concern is not yourself, but the fellowship of the body, if the person that offended you is not prepared to come and say, they're sorry, you take the first steps and say, look, whatever has come between us, we have to sort it.

The Lord's cause is suffering because of it. It needs to be dealt with. Let's be of the same mind in the Lord. That's how he's putting it.

And that is not just useful for us, but very important for us. Because we might think at times that if something comes between us and somebody else, and it will inevitably come to that at some point, even within the best of marriages, for example, you'll still find sometimes when there's an element of hostility and when I might say, well, it was your fault, you're the one who mentioned this, you're the one who spoke in such a way, so it's your fault, so I'm waiting for you to say sorry.

The onus is on me. If I'm the offended party, the onus is on me to say, look, this marriage is so important to me, you're so important to me, our well-being in the relationship is so important to me, we actually have to really sort this now.

Can't let this go on. Let's be of the same mind in the Lord. That's what he's saying to these two individuals. And so tonight, if you yourself have something that's come between you and somebody else, if it's something that you need to attend to, a relationship that's somehow or other gone a bit wrong, well, because you're in the body of Christ by being part of the church of God on earth as a member of that body, whether you're a professing Christian or not, you do belong to the church in the wider sense.

[43 : 21] And so Paul is saying to us, think of Jesus. Think of what he showed himself in his life of putting others first, of not being individualistic.

Think of the way in which he gives us the great example of the mind that we ought to have as well towards one another. So I beseech, I entreat you, Odea, I entreat Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

That's the first thing, Paul's appeal to these two named women. But secondly, in the next verse, you find Paul's appeal to the true companion. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women 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.

Now, we don't know who this true companion was. Some people suggest that the word that's used in Greek, there's just one Greek word for these two words, true companion. It's a word, a *syzygus*. Some people suggest, well, that's the name of the person. We don't know. The word certainly means true yoke fellow, as the AV puts it, because it really is somebody that was yoked to Paul.

[44 : 47] And then, of course, when Paul uses the word yoked, he always means a very, very close companionship or relationship. So, this man, this person in Philippi was somebody that had been yoked to Paul in the work of the gospel, worked very closely with him, so he's now able to appeal to him, you have to help these women.

It's your contribution that I require as the apostle to actually sort this matter out. And so, he's saying, help these women.

In other words, he's saying, help them to actually come to be of the same mind in the Lord. He doesn't tell him how to do it. He just says to him, it's your responsibility and I want you to attend to this.

Help these women. Help them to come to be of the same mind in the Lord. Now, that's not an easy task ever, is it, coming? I'm not saying that because there were women, obviously, because all the way through the Bible and this congregation itself is an example of it.

We'll see in a moment the valuable place that women have in the church and the contribution they make to the church and most of the time that I've had to deal as a minister with down through the course of the years with relationships breaking up and with some severe disagreements coming between Christians.

[46 : 04] It's not been women, it's been mostly men. So, I'm not saying that from the point of view of the fact that these were women. It's always a difficult thing to do whenever you come to a broken relationship, small or great, especially if it's become a rift that's gone on for some time.

It takes the wisdom that comes from God and much grace to actually seek to bring people together once again as they ought to be. And so, he is saying, help these women.

Help them because they have labored side by side with me in the gospel along with those other persons, people, that he mentions. But notice what he says.

He's not just saying help them, but help them because this is the kind of people they are. They are people who are committed to the work of the gospel, although presently that's being badly affected by the way that they don't have that same mind in the Lord.

But you have to help them come back to that so that they'll take up again what they once were as workers side by side with me in the gospel.

[47 : 15] And that is a really interesting description. Not only does it reinforce what he's saying to this unnamed true companion to actually help those women to come together again, but he's also describing for us there the valuable contribution that Euodia and Syntyche made to the work of the Lord in Philippi.

They were not apostles. They were not in office as we would call it, such as elders, deacons. But there's not much else short of that that they were not able to do.

And we always have to be careful that we don't excessively restrict the role of people who are unordained, who don't have office, that we don't restrict the contribution that they make to the well-being or to the work of any congregation.

Because I know this congregation, for one, like most, if not all, of our congregations, have an immense amount of work done by their women. Just look at this congregation tonight.

As I look here from the pulpit and look out over the congregation, it's obvious that the majority of people here are women. women. And what Paul is saying is these women are so valuable to the work of the gospel in Philippi that it must, as an imperative, be attended to this dispute, whatever it is.

[48 : 48] You have to help them again to be of the same mind in the Lord because they are laborers with me, Paul is saying. And you see, he's putting it in such a way that they worked side by side with him.

They weren't just making the tea. They weren't just serving coffee. They weren't just in that kind of side. I'm not denigrating that sort of work.

Of course, you understand that. What I'm saying is that it wasn't as if they were just very much on the periphery of the life of the congregation. They were, he says, laborers side by side with me.

They were my companions in the work of the gospel. Whatever it is they actually did were not told. But Paul really valued their contribution, their spiritual contribution, their practical contribution, their companionship possibly as well, their fellowship in the Lord.

The work of this congregation is an example of such a thing. Because as you look at the work of the congregation, you don't have to go very far to actually say that the work of the women of this congregation is valued and valuable to the overall well-being of the congregation.

[50 : 09] And that's why it's so important that we regard each other in the work of the gospel as fellow laborers, as laboring side by side in the gospel.

just because I'm the minister or the elders are the elders, it doesn't mean that the women folk of the congregation have very much a secondary contribution to make to the gospel, to the work of the gospel.

So there's a great gulf or a distance between the value of the work that we do in the eldership and the work that you do as women of the congregation. Indeed, as men as well, but the focus is on women.

Are we focusing just on the women here in Philippi and so on the women of the congregation here as well? And it's amazing what valuable work is done by the women of this congregation.

And I mean all the women of this congregation who come to support each other and support the work of the gospel in the congregation. Not just by your presence at services, or even having your own times of prayer, but by so many other ways in which you contribute to the work of the gospel and in which your work is valued, not just within the congregation but out in your communities as you serve the Lord.

[51 : 33] And so, as the leadership of the congregation, we as the elders of the Kirk Session are ourselves committed as far as we're possibly able to give you the role that God has gifted you for.

And don't be reluctant to contribute in your own way, in the way that you know God has gifted you to the life of the congregation. And that's why God has given you such gifts, whether they're gifts of a practical kind or of a spiritual kind or of a supportive kind, of an encouraging kind, whatever it is, it's there for the overall well-being of the body of Christ.

These women labored, he said, with me side by side in the gospel. And then in the rest of the verse there, he packs in so much.

You could say that he packs the rest of the verse with the word with. It's difficult to say that, isn't it? He packs the word with into the verse.

You can see how it goes. They help those women who have labored side by side with me. In fact, the word side by side itself is a type of the word with.

[52 : 48] It shows togetherness. But it's with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life. Side by side with me, together with me, workers with me.

What's he doing? He's building up all of these terms following on from what he said about these two women and the important place that they must have in the congregation and therefore how their relationship must be mended again.

He's packing together all these words that mean to be with or to be together so that he will emphasize the unity that must exist in the body of Christ.

Not just a spiritual unity of being one in Christ and sharing together in the salvation that is in Christ. That is the the bottom line unity if you like. But that unity must be expressed outwardly.

A unity in how we live together and how we think of each other and how we respond to each other and how we share together in the work of the gospel. And so the major emphasis there is on unity, unity in Christ and unity in the work of the gospel of Christ.

[54 : 02] Christ. And if I may say this congregation itself is an example of that. We recently had a communion after such a long time without it but one of the things that was obvious was the unity that exists in the congregation and how that itself contributed to such a blessed time at that communion.

Because although there were changes, there were changes that were necessary in many ways but they were brought about in a unified way. They were brought about in a way that people didn't complain about this or that.

We got together, we had our minds together, we were of the same mind in Christ Jesus and the unity that seeks the well-being of God's cause, not to the detriment of truth, not to the detriment of weakening the emphases in Scripture whether it's the Lord's Supper or anything else.

But nevertheless it shows, as Paul is saying here, together, working together in the work of the gospel side by side and together with.

And, you know, unity, overall unity, outward unity, unity as it's seen in our relationships with each other, it's one of the most precious things that we possess, one of the most precious gifts that God by His Spirit has given us.

[55 : 29] And when you come to Ephesians, and Ephesians 4 especially, and see where Paul there speaks about the unity of the body of Christ, one of the things he calls it is the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.

But he's saying that in that context, in such a way as says, this is what the Spirit has given you. and in dependence on the Spirit, in full dependence on the Spirit, on the power of the Spirit, Paul is saying you have to look after it.

You have to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. The creator of it is God, the Spirit of God.

But the maintenance of it is ours. He's given us that responsibility, not detached from the Spirit, not in our own strength, but nevertheless, the responsibility is ours.

Paul is saying here is what God is saying to us. I have given you this marvelous gift for which Christ has died, that you would have the Holy Spirit as the uniting power in your lives.

[56 : 44] And that Spirit of unity, that unity that he's given you, you have to look after. It's a thing for which we are grateful, but also have to be careful to maintain.

So this is all packed into the way that Paul is addressing this problem of Iodi and Syntyche and to come back to agree in the Lord. But you notice how he finishes verse 3.

He mentions others as well. Clement, we don't know who that was either, but he would have been known of course in the congregation. So there it is, these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, workers with me whose names are in the book of life.

Why does he mention that? What is this book of life? Well, the book of life, of course, spiritually speaking, is the book in which God records the names of his saved people. It's not a literal book, but it's pictured as a book as if God has written the names physically into this book of life. It's the names of all for whom Jesus died. And the point is this, they're not in different books. They are all together named in the one book, the book of life.

[58 : 07] life. And that's a powerful way to end his argument here, to end his presentation here of the points that he wants to make, whose names are in the book of life.

It's really just reinforcing what he said earlier, and it's driving home the point. If their names are in the one book of life, then they should live together with the mind that agrees in the Lord, with the one mind that serves Christ.

They're all named together. the Odie, I can't say, well you, Syntyche, you're in an appendix outside this book somewhere that's added to it, nor can the other one say that of the other either.

All God's people are named as one body, as one people in God's book of life. And that's a powerful argument and reminder to us, that being in the one book of life means, that we actually seek daily to be of the same mind in the Lord, the mind that was also in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray. Eternal God, we express our thankfulness to you for the creative work of your spirit.

[59 : 31] For we know, Lord, like you tell us in your word of those people in the likes of Philippi, who were at one time without God, who were at one time not together in Christ, we give thanks that we can identify with them, and also that we can come to say that you have unified us by the work of your spirit.

Lord, we pray that all of us tonight may be concerned to be found in Christ, and therefore to be found led and living by the same spirit of God that unites his people.

We give thanks, O Lord, for every evidence of unity among us as a congregation. We give thanks for that as your gift. Help us, Lord, to look after it, to maintain it, and enable us to regard ourselves meaningfully as part of the overall body of Christ.

Free us, we pray, from any sense of individualism or of personal advancement at the expense of others, but give us, we pray, to be humble as you require of us, to think of others better than ourselves, to fulfill that mind that was also in Christ Jesus.

And so continue to bless us in the gospel, we pray, and pardon our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We're going to sing now from Psalm 133, that psalm that we often sing in respect of unity, Psalm 133 in the Scottish Psalter, that's on page 424.

[61 : 05] Behold how good a thing it is, and how becoming well together such as brethren are, in unity to dwell, like precious ointment on the head that down the beard did flow, even Aaron's beard and to the skirt did of his garments go, as Herman's Jew, the Jew that doth on Sion hills descend, for there the blessing God commands, life that shall never end.

Singing the whole of Psalm 133 to God's praise. Amen. Amen. for the my throne CHOES Amen.

Hes and quiero In ■ex■e Sprengiceps se overlege in ■■■■■ i satsaarva kona liq hu Involved to the Wisdomes■■■, that it is nonviolent and devised It is the G generic bitter it is not the end.

Thy spreading deep I can bypass, I can approved.hollowed. The music I. It is not the truth of the■■■ADE It is our escarmer if I cling to the church By your hills descend For there the blessing of God Life that shall never end Life that shall never end Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father The communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you this night and evermore Amen