

Philippians 4:2-9

What was going on in the church (v. 2-3)? Some sort of internal strife/disagreement in the church involving Euodia and Syntyche. If it had been a serious doctrinal departure between these two Christian women, we know from Paul's epistles to the Galatians and the Corinthians that he would have confronted the issue head-on. Since Paul has nothing to say here, it's likely they were only petty issues.

Why then was this disagreement important to Paul? Disagreement causes divisiveness, which is like a cancer in the church. People start taking sides which could easily hinder the unity and effectiveness of the early church and therefore its witness to the world. **Do we see that sort of disagreement in the church today?**

What did Paul propose as the solution to the conflict (v. 2)? Christians were to agree with each other "in the Lord." Instead of taking sides or solving their problem, Paul simply advised them to be of the same mind in the Lord. Euodia and Syntyche had forgotten in their dispute that they had a greater common ground in Jesus Christ. We must put aside our petty personal differences so that the Lord may be magnified and His work advanced.

What character qualities need to be demonstrated in like situations? In a practical sense, this is a call to humility by laying aside our pride. Philippians 2:3: "...in humility value others above yourselves." For the sake of the church or the relationship, who will be the one to step up and display genuine humility? It is usually the one who is the most mature in Christ.

What was one of the main themes of Philippians (v. 3)? Partnership in the gospel. Throughout this letter, several "fellow workers" are identified as laboring alongside Paul in spreading the gospel.

What is the Book of Life? The heavenly book containing the names of all believers. Luke 10:20: "*Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*" Also Hebrews 12:23.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books....Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12, 15).

How do you ensure that your name is written in the Book of Life? By placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior.

What was Paul's five-part recipe for conflict resolution (vv. 4-5)?

- Rejoice in the Lord. Get beyond ourselves and look to the Lord.
- Let your gentleness be evident to all. Speak with kindness to each other.
- Do not be anxious. Relax and give it all to God.
- Be thankful. Expressing gratitude for our blessings
- Present your requests to God. Prayer realigns us with God, restoring peace

What were the two aspects of "rejoice" that Paul commanded in counteracting the attitude of disagreement (v. 4)? "*In the Lord*" and "*always*". Rejoicing "*in the Lord*" was a reminder of His authority over them, and that Euodia and Syntyche had much in common as sisters in Christ. Paul's joy wasn't merely sunny optimism or a positive mental attitude—it was the confidence that God was in control.

Rejoice always...How do we rejoice in tough times? "*In the Lord*"—who He is, what He's done—by reflecting on His many promises with an accompanying heart of gratitude. By looking back and remembering His goodness and faithfulness.

Paul was not urging us to be unrealistic, saying that we should never feel sad. Even Jesus wept (John 11:35). Paul was advocating focusing on the blessings we have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), being grateful for them regardless of how sad we may feel at times—such as his good example of singing hymns when he was in prison (Acts 16:25).

What does Paul mean by gentleness (v. 5)? It describes the heart of a person who lets the Lord fight his battles, knowing, *"It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord (Romans 12:19)*. Gentle people are not spineless but selfless—not insisting on their rights or privileges, but considerate toward others. Of course, there is a time to stand for what is right.

Gentle answers turns away wrath. The Greek word *epieikes* is translated as "gentleness," which is probably best understood as "yielded rights." We are to be gentle, yielded people.

What is the bottom line issue with anxiety (v. 6)? Anxiety is self-centered worry. Worry is a sin. It is unbelief at its roots. When we worry, we're really doubting that God can take care of us, that His promises are bigger than our problems, that God has our best interests at heart. We are doubting God's goodness, grace, and power in our lives. We're doubting that God has our back.

Note: There is a difference between anxiety and legitimate concern.

How do we deal with anxiety according to Paul? Prayer is the Christian's antidote for anxiety.

Present our requests to God, and what will happen (v. 6-7)? **Note:** this isn't necessarily saying we shall receive what we ask for. It is a promise, however, of a peace found only through the sovereign influence of Jesus Christ. This "peace of God," a phrase occurring nowhere else in the New Testament, acts as a sentry guarding the believer's heart (affections) and mind (thoughts). One of the purposes of prayer is to align our hearts with God's heart. The end result of such an alignment is peace.

What aspect of life does v. 8 address? Our thought life—a mental purity issue. The Bible clearly teaches that we can control what we think. While God's peace does guard our heart and mind, the responsibility to control what we think is our doing. The person with an impure thought life will not experience "the peace of God" guarding their heart and mind.

What kind of things hinder our thought life? Our sinful nature along with the things and immorality of the world—TV, movies, computers, books, magazines, etc. While not inherently sinful, when coupled with our sinful nature, these sensory input elements often undermine our relationship with our God.

How do we deal with immoral or impure thoughts? By prevention and substitution. We can prevent immoral thoughts by feeding our born-again nature, by developing the daily spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, confession, meditation, and Scripture memory. Memory verses from Scripture can then be substituted in our minds when immoral thoughts attack.

Colossians 3:1-2: *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above....Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.* "Set your hearts...minds" both require intentionality.

What is the source of sinful desires? Our sinful natures are the primary source of our sinful desires: *Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14-15).*

Right thinking is important, but what are the even higher standards (v. 9)? Just do it! Wholesome conduct (v. 9) should follow wholesome thinking (v. 8).

Was Paul being egotistical (v. 9)? No. He was saying "I follow Christ – behave like me." Do not behave like others, the Judaizers (3:2), or act like enemies of the cross (3:18).