

Philippians 4:1-4 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. (2) I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. (3) And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. (4) Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

In these few verses we have the apostle Paul writing to his beloved friends and brethren in the church at Philippi. He calls them his "joy and crown." They were his joy now, his crown hereafter. These brethren brought joy to his heart because of their faithfulness. Perhaps Paul felt as did John toward Gaius ***3 John 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.***

Paul encourages these brethren to do two things. One is to stand fast in the Lord and the other is to rejoice in the Lord. The expression "*stand fast in the Lord*" refers to the blessing one enjoys in the Lord, he should resolve to be steadfast and joyful. On another occasion Paul encouraged brethren at Corinth to be steadfast. ***1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*** Steadfast is a military term meaning to hold your position when the enemy is coming. So to these brethren Paul is saying don't give in to the wiles of the devil. Hold your ground, resist those temptations.

Secondly he encourages them to rejoice. A Christian can be joyful regardless of their circumstances. At the time of this writing Paul was a prisoner at Rome. He didn't let his circumstance steal his joy. And that is good advice for us. Whatever comes your way, you can rejoice because of the benefits and blessings that you have "*in the Lord.*"

There are some other words that we sometimes use that complement the word joy. Sometimes we say happy, or thankful, or caring. A joyful person will embrace those attributes. ***Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*** These

characteristics of a Christian should lead to rejoicing because your relationship is right with both God and man.

On the other hand we see the flip side of the coin in ***Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*** Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (the idea of demanding, shouting, screaming), and evil speaking will steal that joy. This is the problem that Paul addresses to the church in Philippi.

Go back and notice Phil 4:2-3. ***(2) I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. (3) And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, ...*** Here we see two women Euodias, and Syntyche that apparently was having a problem between them as Paul is urging the church to help bring them into the same mind. Now we don't know what the problem was. What we do know is that both these women were fellowlabourers; they helped Paul with the sharing of the gospel. Most likely they were skilful teachers themselves and active workers in the church in Philippi. So you would conclude that they both loved the Lord, but now there is a disagreement between them. There is a conflict in the church family.

So Paul said to a true yokefellow, ***“I intreat thee to help those women which laboured with me in the gospel.”*** We don't know who this fellow was, but apparently it was someone very special and qualified to deal with this matter. We know from 1:1 that the church in Philippi had bishops and deacons. Perhaps the yokefellow was one of them. While not mentioned by name, the church in Philippi must have known to whom Paul was speaking. Paul wanted this person to try to resolve the difference between these two godly women and to get them back together.

Here we see the effort to resolve this conflict within the church is extended to a third party. When you have a church family, like Blodgett for instance, where there are some 50-60 different personalities, there are going to be times when there is a little squabble. When you have a biological family of three or four kids, there is going to be

squabbles. People don't always see things the same way, and that's alright so long as we know the godly way to handle conflict. Paul wrote, ***Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (27) Neither give place to the devil. Eph. 4:26-27***

So for the next few minutes, let us consider the matter of **Conflict in the Family**, I'm referring to our church family. When there is a disagreement between members of the church. The one thing you don't want to do is ignore it. It's important to deal with it and resolve the matter. Let's notice a few scriptural guidelines along this matter.

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; (24) Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Here we have a situation where you have done something that has led to a brother having a problem with you. Maybe it's something you said or did or both. Regardless, he is at ought with you.

Jesus is using a Jewish illustration to provide a teaching on this matter. Under the OT law, the Jews worshiped God by bringing a gift to the altar. In order for this worship to be acceptable, they must first be sure that they are at peace with their brother. In this passage the responsibility is upon the person who did the wrong. In just a minute, we will consider Matt 18:15 and see the responsibility placed upon the person who is wronged. But for now in the passage we learn that if a person does not have a right relationship with his brother, he cannot have a right relationship with God. This is why I say you can't ignore a problem. Until the problem is resolved, you are not right with God.

The next verse, Matt 5:25 begins with ***“Agree with thy adversary quickly.”*** So if you have caused a problem, you need to make it right as soon as possible. Paul wrote, ***Ephesians 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*** So if you have caused a problem in the family, you have a responsibility to make it right. Now this might entail swallowing a little pride. It's sometimes hard to admit you are wrong, but for the sake of peace and harmony, that's exactly what the Lord expects.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Let us now consider Matthew 18:15 ff where we learn what to do when someone has wronged us; when we are the victim. ***Matthew 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*** Notice carefully this verse and you will see that it's talking about when a brother **COMMITTS A SIN** against you; something that will cause him to be eternally lost. This verse is not addressing a grievance or misunderstanding. However for our discussion, we are going to expand this principle to include a brother that has offended you, because the same rationale applies. There may be a time when a brother offends you without committing a sin against you. When a brother says something that offends you, you should go to him, and you alone go to him and tell him of his offense. It may be he doesn't even know that he has hurt you. Again, a prompt response needs to take place.

There is no reason for discord to exist between brethren. If you have offended or if you are offended, you have the responsibility to go to the other party for reconciliation. I am convinced that the majority of disagreements will be solved at this point if the people involved would get together and discuss the problem in love and in the spirit of meekness. There likely will be apologies extended and/or forgiveness sought. Go to your brother. This may not be easy to do, but it's the right thing to do and that's exactly what the Lord expects in order to maintain peace within the church family. ***Colossians 3:12-13 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (13) Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.***

If there is a problem and it is not reconciled in a timely manner, then it will tend to fester and grow and lead to other sins like bitterness, hatred, malice. Recall the passage we saw earlier. ***Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.***

Notice what Matthew 5 and 18 do not say. They do not say for you to tell this

problem to others. In fact, when you share this problem with others, then you have wronged the person that you feel has wronged you. This would be “evil-speaking” that was mention if Eph 4:31 that should be avoided. Talking to others can do great harm to the unity within the body. But people tend to run to others to receive support; to get justification for the hard feeling that they are harboring. You may even go to others and talk about what has happened to you under the disguise of receiving advice. **YOU DON’T NEED ADVICE.** The Lord had told you what to do – you go to your brother and reconcile your differences. This conflict should remain between the two parties and no one else.

Now if he will not listen to you, Matthew 18 tells us to involve a few others. *(16) But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.* If your brother is adamant about not listening to you, then you get a few witnesses to go with you. This is what Paul was alluding to in Phil. 4 when a “true yokefellow” was to get involved. Blessed is the peace maker if he can restore peace.

There was a time long ago when things started off good between King Saul and David, but because of envy and jealousy Saul despised David and even made several attempts to take his life. Jonathan, Saul’s son and David’s friend intervened to mediate between the two. *1 Samuel 19:6-7 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain. (7) And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.* Jonathan was a true yokefellow and peace was restored, even though it was not long lasting.

Again we see conflicts being handled within small private settings. No more people need to be involved than those involved, and so much of this depends on the maturity of the people in conflict. If handled correctly and in the right spirit, this should handle most problems. On the rare occasion when it doesn’t, the Lord tells what needs to happen. *(Matt 18:17) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man*

and a publican. You take it to the church. Now initially, taking it to the church would be to the church leaders, the elders. But notice before taking it to the church, several attempts for reconciliation has already taken place, but with no success. Now it is time to get the congregation involved and the intent is to restore harmony. If that cannot be accomplished, then the one unwilling to reconcile is to be treated like a none-Christian – i.e. have fellowship withdrawn.

This does not give members authorization to dis-fellowship from others members, but rather this is something the entire congregation is to do and the purpose of bring forth repentance and restoration. We are talking about maintaining unity and harmony. Paul writes to the church at Ephesus and makes this point. ***Ephesians 4:3 Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*** “Endeavoring” means to put forth diligent effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The tie that binds brethren together is love. When brethren love God, love the Lord, love the word, love the church, love the brethren, then unity and peace will abound and any conflicts will be resolved

This lesson is intended to help us as children of God to grow and mature in our relationship one with another. Or as Paul put it in ***Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith....***

Are you a child of God, part of the family? Have been added to the Lord’s spiritual family by obeying the gospel?

Invitation