

RESILIENT



GIVING GRACE

Philippians 4:1 – 3
Pastor Brian Rayburn
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MESSAGE NOTES

Today, you are going to see that unity is NEVER achieved in the church. It is practiced and this is a team sport!

Paul will address two categories of people:

1. The offending people
2. The helpful people

Verse 1 — “Therefore” in the Greek is literally translated “so then,” but in English “therefore” flows smoother. Paul only uses this conjunction when he is going to apply a previous argument to a present problem. He is going to tell them that when he says “stand firm” in chapter 2, THIS IS HOW they are to do that! Solve problems like these!

— In English (NIV), you probably have “my brothers and sisters,” but in the Greek it is “my dear brothers” and “my dear sisters.” That is important because he is going to appeal to his close relationship with this church for the task he is about to assign them.

— Paul is then going to say “stand firm in the Lord.” Remember, you will never relate well until you stand firm. You cannot expect people content to remain selfish and self-centered to desire to work things out for the good of another. The book of James will tell us that the root of why we argue is selfishness. I want my way and will fight to get it. It’s likely some unmet need to be validated or approved or elevated; if I am not standing firm I will never relate well.

Verse 2 — These two women are not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament, only here. Gordon Fee says that this is why Paul specifically mentions “overseers and deacons” in chapter 1. Lydia and these women planted the church and also served as its overseers and deacons. Acts confirms this.

— Male chauvinism alone would assume this is a personal issue since these were women. However, they were leaders in the fledgling church, and the context (contending for the gospel) seems to suggest that this was some kind of ministry or theological issue.

— At issue here is not some petty squabble, but the very gospel in Philippi. This is clear in the fact that Paul didn’t need to mention the problem in the public letter; everyone in audience already knew what it was.

— Scholar L.M. White posits that one of the two decided to no longer follow Paul. Paul is going to say “come to one mind.” Just five verses earlier he said, “Have your mind on heavenly things. Things above.”

— “In your relationship with one another have the same mindset as Jesus.” Paul will go on to describe a Jesus who never played the God-card. He was self-limiting when He didn’t have to be! He released power, privilege, and position so others could benefit! Do you think we would resolve many more issues if we could do the same?

Verse 3 — “my true companion, HELP!” Who is this anonymous companion? There are as many theories as scholars. Could be Luke, Lydia, Epaphroditus. It doesn’t really matter. What matters is Paul understands the work of the church here to be to help these women come to an agreement, for the sake of the gospel.

— Scholar Fred Craddock writes, “In Paul’s view, this is precisely the nature and function of the congregation. Being members of the church means laying before each other joys, sorrows, and burdens, but ALSO issues to be settled. The whole congregation is to share in such work.”



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— You are always on the team and can be called into the game at any moment to help! Because helping others agree and figure things out is HOW we stand firm and HOW we protect the unity of the body of Christ!

— “Help” in the Greek is literally “to seize or take into your own hands.”

— First for the offenders — stand firm by coming to some kind of agreement, for the sake of the gospel. You both bear blame; remember what the mind of Christ is and fix it.

— To the helpful people — unity is a team sport; help them figure it out. And it’s to these people I want to speak to now.

In Galatians 6:1

— Too often we take sides

— We help them form arguments

— We help them spread their version

— BUT WE DON’T HELP THEM RECONCILE!

Paul says, companions HELP these women figure this out! Unity is a team sport!

So let’s be clear: if two believers are fighting, arguing or not getting along. If you are aware of two or more believers gossiping, slandering or holding grudges, THIS IS YOUR BUSINESS as a member of the same body of Christ! And that role is not to just be a safe place for them to vent or a listening ear, your goal is to bring the two BACK TOGETHER, to help them seek reconciliation.

Paul doesn’t say, “Go and listen to Euodia’s gripe, and tell her it will be ok.” He says HELP THEM come to the same mind!

FIVE LESSONS WHEN SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS A BEEF:

1. You are called to be a mediator, not a mercenary.
2. Be warned, the church is not a part of the market economy. We are committed!
3. Don’t defend them, defuse them!
4. Be cautious when you are being recruited to take up the offense!
5. Spiritual maturity is no safeguard against disagreements; it just means you handle them better.

For wolves to worry lambs is no wonder, but for lambs to worry one another, this is unnatural and monstrous.

— Puritan Thomas Brooks

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- What have you been gleaning from the Resilient series?
- What stuck out to you about this week's message?
- Brian mentioned a few ways people deal with conflict: Avoid, Attack, or Appeasing. Do you notice your tendencies in any of these three or can you name another?
- How do you know when you cross over from being a "listening ear" or "safe space" to taking up an offense as your own and perpetuating conflict?
- Reread chapter 2 of Philippians. When Paul says we are to "stand firm," he is instructing us to do what he describes in chapter 2. Name a few of those things (hint: relinquishing power, etc.)
- Euodia and Syntyche are only mentioned here in the entire Bible. This conflict is all that is mentioned of them. If you were to only have one or two sentences about you in the Bible, what would you want them to say?
- When is it hardest for you to not just defend your friend but help mediate a conflict with them and another friend? What makes this so hard?
- When we choose to not make someone else's conflict "our business," what happens? What value have we chosen instead of unity?