

Philippians 4.2-9

vv. 2-3

Paul has just exhorted the Philippians to stand firm in the Lord (v.1)... but cannot do that if there is disagreement and division in the Body.

He has just spoken of living as citizens of heaven awaiting the Lord's return (3.20f.), and the Philippians as his joy and crown. But if, when Christ comes, there is division in the Body, what will he say...? What sort of a crown will they be for Paul?

Will Euodia ("Success") and Syntyche ("Lucky") be found ready? Paul loves them too much not to appeal them to get sorted.

Appeals to them "to have the same mindset in the Lord." Exactly same language as in 2.2 where he also entreats them to complete his joy by "setting your minds on the same thing". i.e the same focus on Christ should transcend any lesser differences and enable them to be sorted.

But will require the same attitude of humility, submitting to one another, as spoke of in 2.3ff.

If they are "in the Lord" (having the mind of Christ) they cannot be out of fellowship with one another.

The fact that their names are written in the book of life (Exod 32.32f.; Ps 69.28; Dan 12.1; Rev 7x) means that they are already united in a heavenly sense – one in the Lord. It should be "on earth as it is in heaven" – or, as in heaven, so it should be on earth. NB. There would have been a written record ("book") of all the Roman citizens of Philippi. Again, citizenship in Heaven takes precedence.

Paul tackles issues of disunity pastorally carefully but head on, not delaying until his visit, lest positions harden and resentment solidifies. Given that Paul must have heard about Euodia and Syntyche from Epaphroditus, the disagreement between them must have been going on for some time already.

What kind of disagreement is Paul talking about/are Euodia and Syntyche divided by:

- Unlikely to be doctrinal as Paul would surely address it
- Possibly a personality issue, a misunderstanding which has not been sorted

- A petty rivalry? (cf. 2.2-3)
- Given that Paul's concern throughout has been proclamation of the Gospel, and refers to their labouring in the Gospel, most likely to do with administrative-type matter (e.g. how proclamation of the Gospel is done)

Significant that we know nothing of these women except that they have laboured side by side with Paul. Know from Acts 16 that women = first converts. Presumably leaders in the church.

That he names them = unusual. A measure of his love for them. Doesn't judge between them but entreats them to make up. Note that he entreats both equally: both are responsible and should make a move towards the other.

The trusty comrade (lit. true yokefellow) clearly known to community and respected as a/the leader. Possibly even Luke (Fee), as "we" passages stop at Acts 16 (after they arrive at Philippi, resuming when Paul returns to Philippi some 4-6 years later in Acts 20.1-5), or Lydia herself?

He is to take the initiative and help these women to reconcile. This is a duty of leaders.

Know nothing of Clement, but the mention of these 4 leaders seems to be an endorsement of the leadership; If correct, it's surely with the rivalries of 2.3 in mind.

vv. 4-7

In these verses Paul turns from individuals to address everybody (all pronouns plural).

3 commands:

1. Rejoice always
2. Be reasonable (and gentle)
3. Pray about everything

1 Assurance:

1. Know God's peace

Rejoicing is commanded while peace is promised. (Fee)

Paul's call for rejoicing refers to public celebration – as in praise and worship. And it should be truly joyful! Ref. Charles Wesley's great hymn "Rejoice, the Lord is king", picking up this verse and Ps 100.1.

It is in spite of circumstances.

The world watches how we behave under stress and when we disagree.

- Public worship of God as our first priority
- gentleness/reasonableness towards one another, (cf. Euodia and Syntyche). = Acceptance of one another as they are. The image is of a superior forbearing with an inferior. Christ is the paradigm – see 1 Peter 2.23 "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued trusting himself to him who judges justly."

are visible witnesses to the world of our labouring faithfully side by side in the gospel. They should be "known to everyone".

Is this true of our commitment to worship/priority of worship today? Have we not lost something in this witness by our casualness?? Cf. Israel, Muslims.

Fee: Since their present suffering is at the hands of those who proclaim Caesar as Lord, they are reminded that the true "Lord" is "near."

Living in the light of his return should cause us to reorder our priorities.

Every area of life is a matter of concern to God, and therefore for prayer (assuming a matter for genuine concern, not trivia or narcissism)

Anxiety and fear for those for whom the present is all there is, and is uncertain. Cf. Peter Philip. Has nothing and anxious about nothing. See Jesus' teaching in Matt 6.25ff.

Thanksgiving should always be a key element of any prayer (see too 1 Thess 5.16-18). "Lack of gratitude is the first step to idolatry (Rom 1.21)" (Fee). An acknowledgement of our dependence on God as his creatures.

We all need a guard over/around our hearts and minds. God's peace (= complete wholeness/contentment in Christ) is that guard. It stops us wanting that which we don't or shouldn't have, or having our own way (cf. Euodia, Syntyche), or being jealous of others (2.3), keeping our hearts and minds fixed on Jesus so as to imitate him and be ready for his coming. It is supernatural (i.e. God-given), surpassing all understanding. It is peace even in the face of death.

But "the God of peace is also the God of power" (Motyer). It is

- The first-fruit of Calvary, where God made peace between himself and sinners. It was Christ's first resurrection greeting "Peace be with you" (Jn 20. 19, 20, 26)
- The God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus" (Heb 13.20)
- The God of peace (who) will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16.20)

"The God of peace is thus the God of victory. In the light of all this the promise of peace is very comprehensive indeed – salvation, power and victory all in one." (Motyer)

NB. For Paul peace is primarily a community matter – peace between people (e.g. Eph 2.14-17; Rom 14.1-15.13; Col 3.12-4.6 esp. 3.15 "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.") Goes with having the same mindset.

A key in evangelism: we have a peace which only God can give as he renews minds by his Spirit.

vv. 8-9

Paul's final instruction is to "think about/ponder/give proper weight and value to" things that are good. This could be a list from Greco-Roman moralism (Fee), but Paul has drawn it from Hebrew wisdom literature.

As with all such lists, is representative rather than definitive/exhaustive.

Really about practical piety, which again is seen by the world.

Part of Christian reasonableness is to appreciate and enjoy all that is good in this world, as created and given by God. And surely this means to be involved in such things too (art, literature, music, drama, film, sport...) – but with discrimination and discernment. Not all good and much to be avoided, but plenty that is good and wholesome too.

Has important implications for Christ and culture. If culture can be sanctified and used for the glory of God, then should be (rather than abandoned).

Heading list = whatever is true, i.e. finding its measure in God. Opposite = falsehood/suppression of truth, which leads to idolatry (see Rom 1.18-25). Truth (and rightness) = defined by God and his character.

'Pure' = relates to moral character

Closes with another appeal to imitate him – in deed/practice: learned, received, heard and seen. Paul's actions consistent with his words/teaching.

Summary of vv.8-9

1. Embrace what is good, wherever you find it, including in the culture/s in which live
2. Do so in a discriminating way
3. In accord with the Gospel ("the faith once for all delivered")

Truth is not relative and morality is not up for grabs. Much of what championed by modern media, even the arts, is neither true nor honourable, nor beautiful nor acceptable to God.

But do not reject all that God's world has to offer, be discriminating, looking for what is true, uplifting and admirable.

True peace can only come from knowing the God of Peace

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Paul means when he entreates Euodia and Syntyche “to agree in Christ”? What might that involve and how might they reach agreement?
2. How might the “true companion” be expected to “help” these women to agree?
3. What does it mean that our lives are written in the book of life? What does it mean to you?
4. What place does thanksgiving have in your prayer life?
5. What are some things in our day which we might “ponder/give weight to” in the light of verses 8-9? What are the benefits of Christians being involved in such things?
6. In what way/s do you experience God’s peace?
7. Consider Elisabeth Elliot’s list of 8 ways to lose your peace (below). Do you agree with these? Do any particularly apply to you? Pray for one another.

Elisabeth Elliott – 8 ways to lose your peace

1. Resent God’s ways.
2. Worry as much as possible.
3. Pray only about things you can’t manage by yourself.
4. Refuse to accept what God gives.
5. Look for peace elsewhere than in Him.
6. Try to rule your own life.
7. Doubt God’s word.
8. Carry all your cares.

And the antidote: 8 ways to not lose your peace:

1. *“Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them”* (Psalm 119:165 KJV).
2. *“Don’t worry about anything whatever”* (Philippians 4:6 PHILLIPS).
3. *“In everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God...will guard your hearts”* (Philippians 4:6,7 NEB).
4. *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...and you will find rest”* (Matthew 11:29 NIV).
5. *“Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give”* (John 14:27 NEB).

6. *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”* (Colossians 3:15 NIV).
7. *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing”*
(Romans 15:13 KJV).
8. *“Cast all your cares on him for you are his charge”* (1 Peter 5:7 NEB).