

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS; 4:2-3 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

IN PHIL. 4:2-3, ~ PAUL TAKES A BRIEF MOMENT TO DEAL WITH A PROBLEM THAT HAD arisen in the church at Philippi.

▶▶ Interpersonal conflict had arisen between two of the women, ~ Euodia and Syntyche. ~
And we see that Paul wanted this issue dealt with and resolved.

▷▷ He urges them to resolve the sharp differences they had with each other. ~ In brief,
~ he calls them to stand united. ~ And he enlists another believer to help them do that.

▶▶ He writes, ~ "I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 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."

▶▶ What we have here is actually a specific example of a broader principle we discussed back in Phil. 2:1-4, ~ where Paul called believers to stand united, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and then proceeded to tell us how each of us can help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

▷▷ That's why we read this passage before the message. ~ And we'll draw some from those sermons today.

FOR PAUL TO BRING THIS PROBLEM BETWEEN THESE TWO WOMEN UP SHOWS THE seriousness of this matter of interpersonal conflict.

WHEN PERSONAL QUARRELS ARISE BETWEEN PEOPLE WITHIN A CHURCH, ~ THEY'RE to be dealt with, ~ as Paul points out here.

▶▶ They are not to be brushed aside or swept under the carpet. ~ And they are not to be treated lightly. ~ They're not to be allowed to fester. ~ They're to be dealt with/resolved.

▶▶ Why is that?, ~ someone might ask. ~ And the answer is this, ~ because of the negative consequences of unresolved interpersonal conflicts.

I SEE THE DANGER OF NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES IN AT LEAST FOUR AREAS.

IN THE FIRST AREA, ~ UNRESOLVED INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WILL LEAD TO negative consequences for a local church. ¶¶ 1/10

▶▶ This is in the sense that it will lead to divisions within the church, ~ as people begin to take sides. ~~ And subsequently, ~ divisions will tear a church apart at the seams.

IN A SECOND AREA, ~ UNRESOLVED PERSONAL QUARRELS RESULT IN NEGATIVE consequences for the gospel.

▶▶ If believers in a local fellowship are engaged in personal quarrels and divided, ~ or focused exclusively their own agendas and feelings, ~ 77

▷▷ then the gospel is not being focused on or shared.

▶▶ And that is to be our priority, ~ not our own agendas, ~ feelings, ~ and the like. ~~ Spreading the gospel is extremely more important than our own agendas, ~ feelings, ~ etc.

▶▶ Recall back in [Phil. 1:27](#), ~ that, ~ in the face of opposition, ~ Paul called on all believers to work as a team in defending the faith.

▷▷ Paul reminded us there that it is teamwork that wins victories. ~~ This applies as well to the gospel. ~~ We are to work as a team to spread the gospel.

▶▶ In fact, ~ Paul reminds Euodia and Syntyche of teamwork in [verse 3](#).

▷▷ In enlisting help to resolve the conflict, ~ he says, ~ "help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers."

▷▷ No doubt this would have jogged their memories that they were part of a team in promoting the gospel, ~ and were to work together with each other and their other teammates.

▶▶ We are to lay aside an exclusive focus on our own agendas and feelings, ~ and set aside personal quarrels, ~ and be a team player in order to advance the gospel.

NOW, ~ IN A THIRD AREA, ~ UNRESOLVED INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT RESULTS IN negative consequences for our personal witness.

▶▶ Recall from last week, ~ as citizens of heaven, ~ temporarily residing in this world to which we do not belong, ~ we have a responsibility to live differently than the people who do belong to this world.

▶▶ Unresolved interpersonal conflict, ~ or focusing exclusively on our own agendas and feelings, ~ will present us as being no different than the natives of this world. 11 2/10

▷▷ And if unbelievers don't see a difference in the way we live, ~ they no doubt, ~ and who can blame them?, ~ they no doubt will say, ~ "Why bother with this Jesus stuff?"

AND IN A FOURTH AREA, ~ A NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCE OF UNRESOLVED PERSONAL quarrels is that it will give Satan an open door through which to come and exploit the conflict.

▶▶ We need to take Peter's words in 1 Pet. 5:8 very seriously. ~ "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

▷▷ "adversary" = hostile enemy. ~ "devour" pictures the total destruction of the victim.

▷▷ The phrase "prowls around" tells us that Satan, ~ our hostile enemy, ~ is constantly looking for believers, ~ and also churches, ~ to totally destroy.

↪↪ We see this pictured in the book of Job. ~ On two different occasions, ~ in Job chapters 1 and 2, ~ God asked Satan, ~ "From where have you come?"

→→ And twice, ~ Satan "answered the Lord and said, ~ 'From going to and fro on the earth, ~ and from walking up and down on it.'"

▷▷ And know for certain that in his roaming, ~ Satan will zero in on a church that has unresolved personal quarrels. ~ It presents a wide-open door to him.

▶▶ In the context of anger, ~ but applicable in all contexts, ~ Paul writes in Eph. 4:27, ~ "and give no opportunity to the devil." ~ Unresolved personal quarrels give Satan an opportunity.

SO, ~ UNRESOLVED INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT PRESENTS A DANGER IN AT LEAST four areas.

▶▶ As a result, ~ we see the importance of making every effort to prevent interpersonal conflicts from arising and to resolve them quickly when they do.

BEFORE RETURNING TO EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE, ~ WE SHOULD MENTION THIS.

THE ROOT CAUSE OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS IS SIN. ~ THEY ENTERED THE world when Adam and Eve fell.

▶▶ Paul points this root cause out in Gal. 5:19-21a.

▷▷ "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity [or hostility], ~ strife [or quarreling], ~ jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these." ↯ 3/10

OK, ~ IN VERSE 2a, ~ PAUL SAYS, ~ "I ENTREAT EUODIA AND I ENTREAT Syntyche to agree."

AS WE NOTED AT THE BEGINNING, ~ PAUL CALLS ON EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE TO resolve the sharp differences they had with each other.

▶▶ Again, ~ in brief, ~ he calls them to stand united.

AND AS WE ALSO MADE NOTE OF, ~ THIS IS ACTUALLY A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF A broader principle we discussed back in Phil. 2:1-4.

▶▶ Here we'll review much of what we said there. ~~ And purposefully so.

▷▷ In 2:1-4, ~ Paul covers the topic of unity in its more general sense and gives fuller details. ~~ So it's logical to review much of what we said there. ~~ & review is always good.

RECALL IN PHIL. 2:2a, ~ PAUL CALLS ON ALL BELIEVERS TO STAND UNITED. ~~ HE says, ~ "complete my joy by being of the same mind."

▶▶ Being "of the same mind" means conducting oneself in a cooperative manner, ~ to be on the same team, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and to go for the same objectives, ~ for the benefit of one another within our church, ~ for the proper functioning of our church, ~ and for the glory of God.

▶▶ Obviously, ~ interpersonal conflicts within a church means that not everyone is being cooperative, ~ on the same team, ~ or going for the same objectives.

▶▶ This implies that interpersonal conflicts are a detriment to other believers, ~ cause a church to operate dysfunctionally, ~ and do not glorify God.

▷▷ Consequently, ~ we need to make every effort to prevent interpersonal conflicts from arising, ~ to resolve them quickly when they do, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ and to promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

THEN VERY HELPFULLY, ~ IN PHIL. 2:2b-4, ~ PAUL TELLS US HOW EACH OF US CAN HELP promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

▶▶ And remember, ~ he did this through a series of five exhortations. ~~ I'm going to be summarizing these, ~ so if you want the fuller picture, ~ encouraged to re-listen

▶▶1st, ~ having Christ-like love for one another in our church will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity.

▶▶2nd, ~ Paul called us to be "in full accord and on one mind." ~ The idea here seems to be that Paul is calling us to live in harmony with one another.

▷▷Harmonious relationships between us will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

▷▷Over in Rom. 14, ~ Paul calls on believers to make every effort to do what promotes peace within our church. (Rom. 14:19a)

▷▷David: ~ "seek peace and pursue it" (Ps. 34:14). ~ Point is for us to go all out to promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain peace.

▷▷We should expend our energy on things that will bring harmony, ~ not on things that will produce division or strife.

↳↳Unresolved personal quarrels will not bring harmony. ~ They will only produce strife and division.

▷▷Now, ~ having said all that, ~ we need to sound the same note of caution we did when we first looked at 2:1-4. ~ Paul wants us to be united, ~ but not at all costs.

↳↳E.g., ~ we are not to sacrifice doctrinal purity and biblical truth in order to have unity. ~ Unity built on anything other than Bible truth is built on a foundation made of sand.

↳↳Furthermore, ~ we are not to tolerate sin in order to have unity. ~ In 1 Cor., ~ Paul, ~ who insists that we be united, ~ ¶¶

→→was very harsh with the Corinthian church because they were tolerating sin in their fellowship. (1 Cor. 5)

↳↳It's quite obvious, ~ we are not to sweep sin under the carpet or sacrifice doctrinal purity and biblical truth in order to have unity in our church.

▶▶Continuing our review of Paul's exhortations in 2:2b-4 that show us how to promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity, ~ he calls us to "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit."

▷▷Boiled down, ~ being guided by "selfish ambition and conceit" is a "me, ~ me, ~ me" attitude. ¶¶ 5/10

▷▷ "selfish ambition and conceit" enthrone self instead of God. ~~ They put self in front of others, ~ totally unlike what Jesus did.

▷▷ Having these sinful motives causes us to care only about our agenda and opinions, ~ to act as if our agenda and opinions are the only ones that count and are right, ~ 77

↳↳ to act as if we are God's gift to the universe, ~ and to promote ourselves, ~~ all to the detriment of others.

▷▷ Being guided by selfish ambition or conceit will tear a church apart at the seams.

↳↳ Therefore, ~ they must be avoided like the plague in order to promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity.

▶▶ Paul goes on in 2:2b-4 and shows us the 4th thing that will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity. ~~ "in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

▷▷ Simply put, ~ counting others as more significant than ourselves is example of humility on display.

▷▷ Counting our brothers and sisters in Christ more significant than ourselves means that we put them above ourselves in priority.

↳↳ They come first. ~~ We come last. ~~ We give them the place of honor. ~~ Their needs and concerns take precedence over our own.

▷▷ Obviously, ~ this is not what the culture in which we live teaches: ~~ "Watch out for #1." ~~ But believers are to do the exact opposite of the worldly culture surrounding us.

↳↳ The people of God are not to be cultural. ~~ We are to be countercultural. ~~ We are to be at variance with the social norms of this fallen world.

↳↳ As we know, ~ our way of life and set of attitudes are to be different than the prevailing way of life and set of attitudes of this present evil age.

↳↳ As noted, ~ believers are to be governed by the laws of our homeland. ~~ And one thing this means is that we are to value our fellow believers above ourselves.

▶▶ And the fifth and final thing Paul shows us in 2:2b-4 that will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity.

▷▷ "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." 77 6/10

▷▷It's important to understand that it's not that believers are not to look out for our own needs and concerns. ~ Paul says "look not only" to our own needs.

▷▷But we are not to make our needs and concerns a priority to the exclusion of our fellow believers' needs and concerns.

↪↪Our sphere of concern should be broader than ourselves, ~ and should include the needs and concerns of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

CARRYING OUT THESE FIVE EXHORTATIONS WILL HELP US PROMOTE, ~ STRENGTHEN, ~ and maintain unity in our church. ~ It will also go a long way in preventing personal quarrels.

GETTING BACK TO EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE, ~ IN 4:2b, ~ PAUL EXHORTS THEM TO resolve their interpersonal conflict "in the Lord."

THE PHRASE PROVIDES A SOLUTION TO INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS AND ALSO A preventive measure against them.

▶▶Of course, ~ in the larger context, ~ carrying out the 5 exhortations help prevent personal quarrels, ~ as we've seen.

▶▶But what Paul says here, ~ "in the Lord," ~ I would suggest, ~ is key in providing a solution to interpersonal conflicts and acting as a preventive measure against them.

▷▷And it acts as a preventive measure against and provides a solution for personal quarrels in at least four ways.

FIRST, ~ IT REMINDS US THAT WE BELONG TO JESUS.

▶▶In 1 Cor., chapters 6 and 7, ~ Paul says that believers "were bought with a price." ~ "bought" means "to purchase as one's own."

▶▶Believers have been "bought with a price." ~ And Peter and Paul tell us exactly what that price was and who did the buying.

▷▷In 1 Pet. 1:18-19, ~ Peter writes, ~ NIV, ~ "18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

▷▷And Paul told the Ephesians elders in Acts 20:28, ~ "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." ↴↴ 7/10

▶▶ Jesus' blood was the payment. ~ And he did the purchasing. ~ Recall that "bought" in 1 Cor. means "to purchase as one's own."

▷▷ Jesus did not purchase us in order to give us away. ~ Jesus purchased us to be His own, ~ that we would become his people exclusively, ~ solely his and no one else's.

▶▶ We belong to Jesus. ~ And that means Jesus is our Lord. ~ And because he is our Lord, ~ and he has told us to stand united, ~ then we are to stand united. ~ To not do so is sin.

▷▷ And more to the specific point of Euodia and Syntyche's interpersonal conflict, ~ Jesus does not want us to engage in interpersonal conflicts.

SECOND, ~ THE PHRASE "IN THE LORD" CAUSES US TO FOCUS ON JESUS AND NOT ourselves or others.

▶▶ When Jesus is the great object of our affections and thoughts, ~ we will be more likely to bury all our petty differences and animosities.

▶▶ In a more general sense, ~ this is what the author of Hebrews calls us to.

▷▷ Heb. 12:1-2a, ~ NIV, ~ "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus."

▶▶ Related to this, ~ is Paul's exhortation to us in Col. 3:1:2, ~ NIV.

▷▷ "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ ~ [i.e., ~ to new life with Christ], ~ set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

▶▶ When our affections and thoughts are focused heavenward, ~ there is much less danger of us engaging in personal quarrels.

THIRD, ~ THE PHRASE "IN THE LORD" REMINDS US THAT WE ARE FAMILY.

▶▶ We are brothers and sisters in Christ and ought not to be estranged and engaged in interpersonal conflicts.

▶▶ As the psalmist says in Ps. 133:1, ~ "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers ~ [i.e., ~ God's people] ~ dwell in unity!

▷▷ Also, ~ as the song we sing says, ~ "Oh how good it is to embrace his command, ~ To prefer one another, ~ forgive as he forgives. ~ ~ 77 8/10

↪↪When we live as one we all share in the love of the Son with the Father and the Spirit."

AND FOURTH, ~ THE PHRASE "IN THE LORD" REMINDS US THAT WE ARE TO HAVE THE same attitude that Jesus has.

▶▶Recall in Phil. 2, ~ Paul called us to Have the attitude in ourselves which was also in Jesus.

▷▷As we noted there, ~ the idea that Paul was expressing was this: ~~ "In our relationships with one another, ~ we are adopt the same attitude toward each other that Christ Jesus had."

↪↪TPID, ~ In our dealings with our brothers and sister in Christ, ~ each one of us is to let the same way of thinking guide us ~ that guided Jesus.

▶▶And then Paul goes on and describes Jesus' attitude. We learned there that, ~ though Jesus was God, ~ He did not consider His deity as something to be selfishly exploited for His own ends."

▶▶Jesus did not live to please Himself. ~~ He came to serve ~ not to be served. ~~ Though He was rich, ~ for our sake He became poor.

▶▶Jesus had an attitude of selflessness, ~ humility, ~ others-centeredness, ~ servanthood, ~ self-sacrifice, ~ and giving with no thought of selfishly getting.

▷▷This is the way of thinking that guided Jesus, ~ the sovereign creator of the universe, ~ the King of kings and Lord of lords, ~ almighty God.

▶▶In our relationships with one another, ~ my . . . ~ we are to adopt this same attitude toward each other. ~~ TPID, ~ we are to always have a Christ-like attitude toward one another.

▷▷To be humble, ~ others centered, ~ self-sacrificing, ~ to have a servant's heart, ~ and to give with no thought of selfishly getting.

▷▷This is the way of thinking that is to constantly guide us in our relationships with each other in our church.

▷▷This means that we must continuously reject an attitude of selfishness and pride, ~ all notions of self-seeking gain and personal advantage, ~ ¶¶

↪↪any inkling of thinking we should be served or that we're better than others, ~ and anything else that is contrary to a Christ-like attitude. ¶¶ 9/10

▶▶ And when the same way of thinking that guided Jesus directs us, ~ personal quarrels are much less likely to occur.

OK, ~ THOSE WERE FOUR WAYS THE PHRASE "IN THE LORD" PROVIDES A PREVENTIVE measure against, ~ and a solution for, ~ interpersonal conflicts.

NOW, ~ AS WE NOTED AT THE BEGINNING, ~ PAUL URGES EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE to resolve their interpersonal conflict.

AND HE ALSO ENLISTS ANOTHER BELIEVER TO HELP THEM DO THAT.

▶▶ He says in [verse 3a](#), ~ "Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women." ~ I.e., ~ help them resolve the sharp differences they have with each other.

▶▶ This tells us that others are to get involved and help believers resolve personal quarrels they have with each other. ~ It is not to be a "mind your own business" thing.

▶▶ I think the importance of standing united has been driven home this morning.

▷▷ And now we see that we are not to take a "hands off" approach when the unity of our church is threatened by interpersonal conflict.

↪↪ We are to get involved in order to help bring about a resolution.

▶▶ In brief, ~ we are to be peacemakers, ~ not troublemakers. ~ And we are to do all that we can, ~ short of moral and theological compromise, ~ to live in peace with everyone.

▷▷ [Rom. 12:18](#), ~ "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

▷▷ And [Prov. 12:20](#) says, ~ [NIV](#) ~ "Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy."

CONCLUSION.

WELL, ~ THAT CONCLUDES OUR LOOK AT THESE TWO VERSES.

▶▶ Much to absorb, ~ to give thought to, ~ and to put into practice. ~ And I encourage everyone, ~ including myself, ~ to do so.

LET'S PRAY 10/10