



If you have been following with us on live stream or here in the tennis club over the past weeks, you will know that we have been looking at Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, with its big themes of the example of Jesus, love between believers, rejoicing always, the power of the gospel and Paul's 100% conviction that the only worthwhile goal is knowing Jesus more and being involved in the spread of the gospel. Big, inspiring, challenging themes, opening up our eyes to the power of the resurrection and the new life that is possible in Christ.

Today, Paul's focus is on how all this works in real life. Paul's letter was never meant to be just something that the Philippians studied when they met together; it was meant to guide them as they lived their everyday lives. I would like to encourage you this morning to have open hearts as well as open minds. God wants to teach but also to heal, to encourage and to equip you this morning.

V.1 Paul is saying to the church, these people who he knows personally and loves dearly, Arise, stand up and stand firm. Live your lives in the fullness of who you are. Don't go for 50% or 70%. Go for 100% full, new life in Christ.

Verses 4-9 therefore, explains how to do this in practice. But first Paul has to deal with something that affects many Christians and stops them from enjoying their new life in Christ.

In v 2+3 we immediately come face to face with a real and not uncommon problem, and it is blocking people, and the church they are in, from experiencing the life Christ has for them - conflict between 2 people in the church.

Let's look at v 2+3

Euodia and Syntyche.v

What do we know about them? 2 women, co workers with Paul, highly thought of by Paul, keen Christians, committed to Jesus and to expanding His kingdom, their names are written in the book of life. No question-these are saints in Christ Jesus at the church in Philippi! We know that they had a disagreement with each other, we don't know about what. We can assume it wasn't something theological or false teaching, if so Paul would have dealt with it

(circumcision issue), but this was a friction of some sort, between 2 people, one offended by the other, one seeing things totally different from the other. Disagreements, tensions, offenses and relationship problems happen in real churches! We can also assume that it was serious or else these 2 godly women would have sorted it before it got this far, don't you think? We can assume that it was affecting other people beyond themselves and that was why Paul had to get involved. Paul named them, but not a name and shame, I think, it is just that it was common knowledge and maybe even had come up in the discussions. Epaphroditus, the church leader from Philippi, was having with Paul before he returned to Philippi. In a sense all very normal church life.

I imagine if I asked a show of hands for people who have been involved in or been caught in something like this, at some point in their church life many hands would go up. And I imagine that the more involved you are in church life, the more likely it is that your hand would go up. So what Paul has to say is helpful for now, or helps us, men and women alike, to move on from something in the past or equips us for the future. There is something for all of us this morning.

The good news is that, as Paul is convinced, these things can be sorted out as long as we want to. (we are talking about conflict between 2 believers). How? Paul advises Euodia and Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord NIV or *Be restored with one mind in our Lord* TPT. Note: he is not asking them to agree with each other. In these situations, the only solution is for each one to stop trying to persuade the other to see things from her perspective, but to come away from the problem and seek the mind of Christ on it. Then come back together, with their renewed mind, or the mind of Christ which will be a platform for discovering a way to resolve this. In Phil 2, explains this process, he calls it having the attitude or mind of Christ. Christ was secure enough in who he was that he did not have to hang onto position or status, or things. He was humble, loving, not doing things out of selfish ambition, not self-promoting. Forgiveness. With the same attitude, Paul is convinced that Euodia and Syntyche do not have to continue in the misery of a broken relationship. And if they cannot get there themselves, there are others who are equipped to help them.

There are some really helpful tips for all of us in these 2 verses:

1. Paul is very gentle..I urge, advise, entreat-not command. We will look at gentleness and what it means a bit more in verse 5.
2. Paul honours these women for their work in the gospel; he recognises them as fellow workers. There is no condemnation. He wants to build them up, to strengthen them to do what he is suggesting, not make them feel bad or guilty. Feelings of guilt and condemnation are counterproductive in situations like this. Offenses is very easy in these situations. Everything becomes personal. Pauls builds them up first, and in front of the others, from this place of acceptance they can face the problem.

3. Paul confronts the problem –he is not afraid to do this, he doesn't stick his head in the sand although he had a good excuse being in prison in Rome-he confronts the problem because he believes there is a solution.

4. There is only 1 possible solution- *to settle their disagreement and be restored with one mind in our Lord* tpt or *to be of the same mind in the Lord*.niv. Not one mind with each other, they are probably never going to have the same mind on this situation but first get to one mind with Christ, and from that position, and only from that position they will be able to restore the relationship.

5. Paul is practical-this situation, he says, might require someone outside the dispute to get involved, to be a helper to these 2 people. Someone with skills for this! Remember how Paul prays for the phil-in chap 1. 9-11. He prayed for more love, wisdom and discernment. He wants the church equipped for situations like this.

6. Paul knows this is a problem for the whole church. That's why the resources to help these 2 people are found in the body. Euodia and Syntyche should not be on not on their own with this problem. The right person, outside the dispute, but with the mind of Christ and gifts of discernment and wisdom, can make a big difference. Sometimes we need courage, we don't want to be that person, let's be honest. Sometimes we don't confront these issues at all and leave it to the 2 people stuck in a rut. But Paul would not be satisfied with this approach. When one part of the body is hurt, it affects every part. That's why Paul prays for God to equip the church-Love, knowledge and depth of insight, filled with the fruits of righteousness. In this sort of church, people get the help they need.

Let's leave disagreements and tensions and go onto more of what it means to stand firm as Paul encouraged us in V1. Obviously not being bogged down in disagreements helps a lot but Paul wants to go beyond surviving and beginning to thrive. He wants the Philippians to see resources that we have in Christ to live life well and thrive/prosper. Imagine you are an average person, not really poor but struggling week by week to pay the bills and stay on top of everything. Then one day you realise that you are entitled to a great inheritance. But instead of going to the solicitor and staking your claim, you ignored it and continued to live your life as if it wasn't yours. Paul says that some of us Christians live like this-we have tremendous resources for living well spiritually, but we don't use them. Instead of standing firm, we are always a bit wobbly, we don't experience the fullness of our new life in Christ.

In the letter to the Galatians Paul says that Christ has set us completely and wonderfully free but we can only live in that freedom if we choose to live by the spirit as opposed to living our own way. Gal 5, 1-*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.* We also looked at this a little in the bible study on Tuesday. When we choose to live by the spirit, He is able to cultivate the fruit of the spirit in us. These fruits are the resources within us to live our

Christian life to the full. This letter has already talked about love in Chapter 1 and 2: in v4 we are reminded about joy (common theme in this letter) and v.5 gentleness.

Don't make the mistake of confusing gentleness with weakness or timidity. Jesus described himself as gentle, yet he endured the cross for love of others. David, the warrior king said in Sam 22, 36 *your gentleness has made me great*. Bringing together the different ways this word is used in the. There is a lot of fear and anxiety and irritability, people are a bit more on edge. Gentleness stands out. It is part of the shining like stars Paul talked about in Chapter 2. But it is also practical. Imagine you are having a relationship problem with someone in the church. To say aggressively, "today, after church I want to see you outside the door and I have arranged for 2 witnessed to be there".... Or "to gently ask what would be a good time for us to get together, maybe over a coffee and chat this over" ...it is just more likely to work. It makes communication easier, makes the other person feel more at ease, and it promotes the atmosphere that the Holy Spirit can work in.

V6 Don't be anxious about anything!! How is that possible even possible? What Paul is saying really is do not cultivate/incubate anxiety. Of course, there are often very good reasons to be worried about something-job, business, family member etc. This again is very relevant for our time. But when faced with worry, don't cultivate it. Instead, draw on your inheritance, your permission to bring all your needs to someone who is capable, who actually has the power to do something about it-God, your father.

Paul gives a useful structure not that always have to do it this way. But when we are getting suffocated with worries and anxieties, it is helpful to have something concrete to help us get from worry to prayer.

So Paul says 1. Begin by talking to Him about the problem, take time, go into all the details, telling Him exactly what the problem is and what you see as the solution. Maybe write it down as you pray. Often at this point God clears up a lot of confusion and we are already beginning to see things differently, developing His mind on things.

2. Ask specifically for what you need- be clear.

3. Then remember the things he has already done. Be thankful. Declare his praises as you remember what he has done for you in the past. Encourage yourself and let the anxiety be displaced by the peace of God. You are only done when you start feeling the peace of God, and you have to go back to the start when you lose the peace of God.

Does it work? Yes. It is the peace of God, not the world's peace as Jesus said. But we have to **do** it, how often do we think about praying when we are worried. These are things to put into practice. It is not nice ideas.

V.7 This peace of God is something we have to protect. We can lose it. I am sure e+ S did as a result of this disagreement. One of the surest ways to lose the peace of God is to fill our

minds with things that distract from that peace. What happens when you are in a disagreement with someone-do you fill your mind with all their good points...or focus on their faults? Would Euodia have been focusing on Syntyche's work for the gospel and faithfulness to Paul...this is what Paul said about her. Maybe Syntyche's mind was focusing on other things, the hurtful things said, the lack of sensitivity etc. But as Paul says here-we have a choice about what we fill our minds with

V8.Our minds are not empty spaces, they get filled and we need to take seriously what goes in because it affects how we live. The problem is not that they come in, it is when we give them a home there! There are many warnings to be careful what you think. Proverbs 4, 23. Sums them up. Above all that you guard, protect your heart], because your thoughts run your life [Life flows from it]. This is not a sort of self help, nice thinking, happy thoughts idea. It is serious. If we want to live in the fullness of our new life in Christ, to stand firm as Paul said at the beginning of this chapter, we have to pay attention to all that stuff that goes on in our minds. Our model is Jesus, we need to have his mind, his attitude to be his people in this world.

So Paul, as he gets near the end of this letter V 9 is saying, this way of living works, as long as you put it into practice. Follow my example. Then the God of peace will be with you.

This passage began by addressing a disagreement between 2 people in the church. Paul did not condemn or criticize but did say very clearly that it needed to be sorted.

Some of us are leaving our spiritual inheritance untapped. God wants to grow the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace gentleness etc in us but we do things our own way, using our own resources, still yoked in slavery when freedom is on offer. We worry instead of praying, we live in anxiety as opposed to in the peace of God that He wants us to have. Instead of standing firm and enjoying the fullness of our new life in Christ it would be more accurate to describe ourselves as wobbly and insecure. Today is a good day to change that. Go back over the passage and the Holy Spirit will show you areas in your life where He wants to do more. God plan for you is to stand firm and enjoy his peace.