

# Contagious Joy

## Part 16 – Can't We All Just Get Along?

Philippians 4:2-5

August 2, 2009

Intro: 1991 Rodney King... His passionate plea echoes in our hearts as it relates to churches and getting along.

As Paul begins to bring his letter to a close, he brings up what appears to be a small, trivial relational squabble; but it's not! We all know that what can start out as a minor disagreement can turn into a full-fledged war in the church!

*Proposition: What is Paul's advice for resolving relational conflicts?*

### I. **Live** in harmony (v. 2)

*I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.*

#### A. Background

1. After addressing as what he sees are threats to the church from outside the body, he now addresses one that comes from inside the body.
2. Imploring the church to “live in harmony”, is not a new theme for Paul. **Rom. 12:16... live in harmony.**
  - **Urge:** He appeals to the conscience; he comes just short of demanding.
  - When the Body doesn't get along, it sends the wrong message to those outside the church.
  - **In the Lord:** God is the ultimate authority, not us.
3. He has hinted that there was some relational stuff going on in previous chapters...
  - 1:27 – Conduct yourselves in a worthy manner

- 2:2 – His plea for unity
  - 2:14-16 – His warning about grumbling and disputing
  - He doesn't identify the issue. Obviously it wasn't doctrinal, or he would have said something more specific or sided with the one who was "correct".
4. They were two dedicated women, Euodia ("success") and Syntyche ("lucky") in the church. They were not outsiders. Euodia and Syntyche may have been two of the women who heard Paul preach when he first came to Philippi (Acts 16:13).
  5. They felt passionate about whatever they were disagreeing about. Each thought she was right and the other was wrong! *Rom. 12:16 don't be wise in your own estimation!* [Matsumoto story](#)
    - How about you? Are you struggling with something at our church that you think you are "right" about? Does your preference become someone else's moral imperative?
    - **Unanimity in the church is not always possible, but unity is.** [They were like porcupines.](#)
  6. They were a potential "threat" to the unity of the church. Infighting can damage both our joy personally and our unity corporately. [How would you like your legacy to be after 2000 years that you were the 2 women who couldn't get along?](#)
  7. [Dragons: Marshall Shelly p.179](#)
- B. How do we live in harmony?
1. He doesn't address how to specifically, he just says do it! It is a frequent theme in the NT...
    - I Cor. 1:10 – No divisions
    - I Pet. 3:8 – Be harmonious

2. Hint: **Focus on your common purpose not our personal differences.** We tend to elevate our differences to monumental proportions. They had shared in the common struggle (v. 3). They had fought on the same side. Why fight now?
3. **It is a choice.** You choose to get along. Make it happen. Work at it. Don't stop trying! *Rom. 12:18 As far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men!*
4. When shouldn't you? When truth or doctrinal purity is at stake!

II. **Look** to others for help (v. 3) ...Sometimes you need an arbitrator.

*<sup>3</sup>Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

- A. Who is it? If it was Epaphroditus or Barnabas, why not just mention them directly? It is possible that “true comrade” is a play on words and actually the one identified to help these women is an elder by the name of Suzugos. His name means “yokefellow” or “true comrade”.
  1. Paul made a similar play on words in *Philemon 10–11*, “*I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful (Onesimus means “useful”) both to you and to me.*”
  2. Similarly Barnabas lived up to his name, which means “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36).
- B. This guy and a guy named Clement are asked to help sort out what happened and correct the situation. And if that isn't sufficient, then enlist other mature believers to help!
- C. *Sunathleō* (shared my struggle) means “to fight alongside of” or “labor together with.” It is obvious that they were invested, which makes this struggle even more intense. Paul wanted it fixed!

D. Hints:

1. Help them find common ground. Establish that relational bridge.
2. Give them a way to “give in” gracefully, so they are not “shown up”. Pride often keeps us from admitting our mistakes. **Application: Our elders do that for me.**

III. **Lean** into the positive (v. 4)

*<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!* cf 3:1

- A. For the 15<sup>th</sup> time this word joy, rejoice, etc. is used. He will use it only one more time in this epistle.
- B. When you are in conflict, look for the positive... lean into it! Is the glass half full or empty? Are you looking for the best in others or assuming the worst?
- C. **Rejoice: What can you thank God for in their lives? If they are a brother or sister in Christ, how can you encourage them? Is there anything you can rejoice in the Lord in about them?** If not: Rejoice anyway. Don't get bitter and back stab them!

IV. **Learn** to cut others some “slack” (v. 5)

*<sup>5</sup>Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.*

- A. Def.: (Gr. *epieikes*) Gentleness; yielding, kindness, patience, forbearance, leniency, and magnanimity.
- B. The **forbearing person is not spineless but selfless.** He is reminding us of what he has already stated in 2:3-4.
- C. *The Lord is near*: Speaks of his imminence, not his abiding presence. When Jesus comes, He will right the wrongs and vindicate those who have given up their rights for the glory of God and the welfare of others (cf. 3:20-21; James 5:8). (Constable).
- D. **Is the bride of Christ coming to heaven with a bloody lip? Do you have to always be right?**

### **Table Talk:**

1. Why did Paul wait till the last chapter to address this issue?
2. Both these ladies seem to be sincere in their faith. What kept them from “settling” their differences?
3. What other scriptures come to mind that “flesh out” the idea of living in harmony?
4. What keeps people from talking to each other, when there is an issue between them?
5. Is there anybody you need to talk to in order to resolve a conflict?

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