

Philippians 10 - One Mind for the Work of Christ

The Scripture passage for today hearkens back to *the lowliness of mind* in the second chapter.

Phil 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

The problem presented here is that of two people in the Philippian church who were apparently having a problem between them. When you are reading through the Bible it might be easy to overlook what was happening. The same thing can happen in churches today where problems get overlooked. God has given us *appropriate* tools for dealing with our day to day relationships in church.

1. There are no "big" people in the Bible

One of my favorite stories comes from history is the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Admiral Nelson, with 27 ships, faced the united forces from two nations with a superior 33 ship fleet. As part of his plans for a possible invasion of England, Napoleon sent the combined French and Spanish fleets to sail, knowing that he would only be able to carry out his plans after the British navy had been defeated. As the combat neared, Nelson learned that two of his officers had had a falling out and refused to even speak to each other, let alone cooperate for battle. He summoned them both to the HMS Victory, his flagship. When they arrived, he walked with both of them to the ship's rail. Pointing at the sails of the French and Spanish vessels looming on the horizon he simply said, "Gentlemen, yonder is the enemy." The two men patched up their differences, and together they won the battle.

There is no way for God's people to be victorious over the world around us if we are consumed with fighting each

other. Instead we are commanded to humbly work together, helping and encouraging one another in the face of our common enemy. When we realize the power of the forces aligned against us, we realize we have no time for disharmony and discord.

Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

Our love for God and the common presence of His Holy Spirit in each of our hearts gives us the basis on which to build a strongly united group of believers who are prepared to work together to win the victory.

We probably gloss over the lists of names of people Paul greeted in some of his epistles because they are not major figures in New Testament history. They are the "little" people. In today's Scripture, we are introduced to two of these:

Phil 4:1-3 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved.

2I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

By addressing Euodias and Synteche, we are reminded that there is no such thing as little people in God's sight. The "big" people do not stand by their own power. They are only "little people" who are used by a big God. There are numerous examples of this in the Bible,

but let's look at how God sees people in His statement about the choosing of Israel:

Deut 7:6-9 For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

7The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people:

8But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

Then there is Jesus' remark about the importance of *truly* little people:

Matt 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

The offence that Christ had in mind is the kind that will keep a child out of knowing Him.

Everyone is important to God.

Gal 5:13-15 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

15But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The point here is that each one of us is important. Not only are *your* concerns important, so also are the concerns of the people you work with.

2. Attaining oneness of mind -

We are not told what the problem was between Euodias and Synteché. This is just as well because all problems, when compared to getting the Gospel out, are not important enough to dwell on. It is mind-boggling and incredible how many stories there are of major problems in churches are caused by ridiculous issues. It is true that we have to be careful of theological issues in the purity of the church, but they are truly nothing compared to the kinds of things that more commonly destroy churches. One pastor compiled a list of his favorites that include disputes such as:

- An argument over the appropriate length of the worship pastor's beard.
- A fight over whether or not to build a children's playground or to use the land for a cemetery.
- A church argument and vote to decide if a clock in the worship center should be removed.
- A 45-minute heated argument over the type of filing cabinet to purchase: black or brown; 2, 3, or 4 drawers.
- A big church argument over the discovery that the church budget was off \$0.10. Someone finally gave a dime to settle the issue.
- Arguments over what type of green beans the church should serve.
- A major conflict when the youth borrowed a crockpot that had not been used for years.
- An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs

at the church meal (Only if it's balanced with angel food cake for dessert).

- A disagreement over using the term “potluck” instead of “pot blessing.”
- Some church members who left the church because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner from them. It resulted in a major fight and split.
- An argument over whether to have gluten-free communion bread or not.

If you find these unimaginable then count yourself blessed in your church.

There are ways to achieve oneness of mind that we have at our disposal.

- Talk with people with a view to making things right for the work.

The most common issue is the desire to find a way to keep the work on track. The steps designed in Matthew 18 are intended to work for people of good will who are looking to make sure we are moving forward.

Matt 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

- The problem of language.

Next comes the problem of language. Human language is inherently fraught with difficulty. Words mean things and the same word can mean all *kinds* of things. There is a whole area of

philosophy devoted to language. For example, consider the problem of defining the word *game*. If you said that a game involves physical activity, would chess count? If a game is supposed to be pleasurable, would boxing count? If all games involve competition, then is Solitaire a game? If games are a pastime, then would war games be excluded? If games are won by who has the highest score, then what about golf? If games are harmless, then may you talk about people who play mind games?

Preachers work hard at trying to prepare a sermon. They go over sentences to see if they are too long. They try to pick just the right words so they can give the most accurate sense. they have to consider style, regionalisms, colloquial expressions, words that will help both young and old, native and non-native English speakers. There are rhetorical devices to use. Sometimes reading a sermon out loud beforehand will reveal problems. For all of that, there are still adjustments to be made while delivering the message. There will be times of composing even while speaking. Even trying so hard to get it all right, there are still plenty of times where people misunderstand, ways to sound insensitive without absolutely any intention to, and people who need things explained to the nth degree. There are things that have to be left out in the interest of time that would have been helpful to include.

By comparison, when we talk to each other on the spot, it is a wonder that we don't have *more* problems of communication.

Prov 10:19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise.

The more people talk, the greater the probability that sooner or later they are going to say something that will leave you scratching your head. Generally speaking, we can assume that most people don't realize how they are coming off when they talk to you. Christians are supposed to work diligently on how they

talk, but there is also a sense of graciousness that Christian *listeners* should have towards others.

Have you ever noticed how as a native speaker, you can generally figure out what a non-native speaker is trying to say? This is how we can generally work with each other, also. There are many things that can sound terrible until we realize what someone was actually trying to say! Give the benefit of the doubt, not just that they probably didn't mean what they said, but that they were trying their best to express themselves and sometimes they just don't get it right. Our job is to lovingly help them get out what they are saying.

- Act out of love (this is the premier method of achieving unity of mind and work).

1Thess 5:12-13 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

Col 2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Eph 4:1-2 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
2With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3. A mind for the work of the Gospel -

I hope that some of these methods for getting to single-mindedness are helpful, but there is a greater context for this. We are not just looking for people to play nice together because being pleasant is all important. Paul cast single-mindedness in the context of the greater purpose of preaching the Gospel.

Phil 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with other* my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

Notice that on the heels of talking about unity for Euodias and Synteché that Paul speaks in terms of being *yokefellows* and *fellowlabourers*. The whole reason that we need unity is so that we can work together for the blessing of those who are being attacked by the devil. This is one of the great purposes behind communion.

1Cor 11:26-33 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

27Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

29For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned

with the world.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

Paul wrote about his admonition for *as often* as you eat the bread and drink the cup. He didn't tell us *how* often that should be. There is a concern that receiving communion can be taken for granted and turned into a mere ritual. But by saying *as often* the implication is that there should be some regularity to make sure we take time to examine ourselves. We should not become irregular Christians. The connection to the issue of unity is contained in vs. 33. We are to make sure to *tarry* for one another. A major component of communion is to make sure that our unity is not in jeopardy.

Working against each other is only one kind of disunity, however. There is also the disunity of not joining in. Sitting back and not participating in the work of the Lord is just as non-productive and not being unified. It is nice to know that someone's has good *thoughts* about you. When it comes to the work getting done, that is not a time when, as they say, "it's the thought that counts." Plug in in your abilities in God's work. For those who are at the beginning of their spiritual walk, they need to get baptized as a testimony of their commitment (it is not their salvation, just their commitment to the Lord).

There are many who are satisfied with spiritual *thoughts* but don't turn their hearts and life over to God, repenting of their sin, and seeking salvation.

There is no such thing as half-way salvation. Once we are saved, serving God should be a whole-hearted effort.

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which* is your reasonable service.

Phil 2:3

1. There are no "big" people in the Bible - Eph 6:12 , Phil 4:1-3, Deut 7:6-9, Matt 18:6, Gal 5:13-15
2. Attaining oneness of mind - Matt 18:15-17, Prov 10:19, 1Thess 5:12-13, Col 2:2, Eph 5:2, Eph 4:1-2
3. A mind for the work of the Gospel - Phil 4:3, 1Cor 11:26-33, Rom 12:1