



World Christian Fellowship

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Philippians 39 Peace and Joy

Philippians 4:1-4, *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.*³ *And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.*⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

We honour somebody who is

- uncompromising,
- resolute,
- firm,
- strong,
- bold, and
- courageous.

We call that integrity. Something very admirable about that kind of human character. We applaud it. We look for those kinds of people to be our models and our examples and our leaders.

The term “Christian” identifies us with Christ, and Christ was the most uncompromising, courageous, firm-standing person who ever lived.

Christ who,

- would not compromise.
- would not deviate from the truth.
- could not be bought.

He is the model of courageous integrity.

Repeatedly throughout the New Testament, Christians are called to stand firm over and over again in a number of different ways.

We are called not to be tossed around. We are called not to doubt or be unstable or be like the waves of the sea tossed to and fro.

Several times it says to be of good courage, to be fixed like men, to not be unstable. We are told to be bold, to be uncompromising in living for Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:5, *For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*

Our desire for you is that you might know the joy of seeing the good discipline that leads to a stable faith, an unwavering faith, a strong faith.

We would all desire to be strong. We don't want to be victimized by difficulty.

We don't want to be defeated by temptation.

We would be like the apostle Paul who saw the sin in his life but hated it and said, "When I do it, I don't want to do it."

I think we would all like to stand firm and be strong.

We also must recognize that it won't be easy because we are in a warfare.

We are soldiers and have been called into battle. That's why this term in verse 1, "Stand firm in the Lord," is a military term because we are on spiritual military duty in conflict with the enemy.

How do you be stable?

How can you reach that kind of stability?

If you look at Christians around you, you might assume that some are more stable than others, and that's a correct assumption.

Some appear very stable, some appear very unstable, and then all in between there are all kinds of different degrees of stability.

Why some people are unstable in spiritual things and some are stable?

Why some people are immature, and some are mature?

Why some people collapse under trials, and temptation, and others are not?

There's no real mystery to understand that.

It's a problem that can be solved by the development of spiritual stability that comes through certain principles.

Apostle Paul gives us the practical steps to overcome every instability comes around us.

1. Cultivate Peace/ harmony

Cultivate harmony or peace in the fellowship of love.

You will become more unstable in isolation from other believers.

The fellowship of believers, the close, intimate, loving harmony of the body of Christ is a tremendous factor in stability.

The church is all about,

- people holding up other people,
- accountability,
- caring,
- mutual love, and

➤ harmony.

V 2-3, *I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.* ³*And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life*

Paul identifies a problem of conflict in the Philippian church in no uncertain terms.

Paul is not vague; he names the two women who are the problem. Then he names a person to help the problem out. Very specific.

Paul is after here is unity in the church.

There are potential discords at many levels of church life that threaten stability.

When a church is generally unstable, when there is a conflict in a church at a high level, it will generate instability throughout the whole church. The people will fall victim to that instability.

On the other hand, where there is unity and oneness and peace and harmony, the people enjoy the stability that that provides for all of them.

Paul knows that these two women having a major conflict in a church can threaten the spiritual stability of believers throughout that congregation.

Because they will fall to all kinds of sins,

- party spirit,
- criticism,
- negative attitudes,
- bitterness,
- revenge,
- hostility,
- unforgiveness, and
- pride.

Paul knows that when people make peace and love one another and cultivate the relationship of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

When you know that people really love you, and when you have made loving commitments to others in the body of Christ.

When you know that the loving people of the church care, pray and working with you are working together with them.

When you are working together with them then you are held accountable.

You are also helped, encouraged, and nurtured, that provides stability. There are a lot of people in churches that don't have that, and they flounder.

Spiritual stability is related to the attitudes that you have!
It's not related to your circumstances.
It's related to how you think.

It's directly related to how you react to what is going on in your environment. If you learn to react properly, you will have spiritual stability and if you don't, you will not.

Paul is going to teach us here how to think.

Philippians 4:8, *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

It's how you think that brings spiritual stability.

It is not how you think about you, it is not how you think about your problem, it is how you think about God that controls your spiritual stability. Everything resolves itself in your theology, and how you think about God will control your spiritual life in every dimension.

Paul is in a pleading, begging, encouraging mode and he says, *"I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord."*

This is most fascinating!

Paul is this great theologian with this immense theological mind and this tremendous logical capability, and he is delving into the depths of great divine truth.

I could hear him say that, will you tell those two women to get their act together?

In this same epistle Paul calls the false doctrine Judaizers as dogs and evil workers and false mutilation.

He attacks every false teacher in Philippians chapter 3 very harshly. He goes to extend that they were enemies of cross.

Also, when Paul was dealing with such a theological problem and it's also important for him to deal with discord in the church.

Why would he suddenly pop up and say, **“Get those two women together”**?

Because he understood how discord is equally a deadly threat to the life of the church. It will rob a church of its power and it will destroy its testimony.

The church's discord and infighting are one that they use frequently. This could be devastating to the testimony of the Philippians.

They were under glass; everyone was watching in this pagan culture. Discord, disunity, conflict at the level of the church could have devastated the integrity of their testimony.

Philippians 1:27-28, *Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,*²⁸ *and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.*

He's crying for unity there. He recognizes that they've got opponents are there.

Philippians 2:2, *fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*³ *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*⁴ *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*⁵ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

There was obviously some discord.

Philippians 2:14, *Do all things without complaining and disputing*

That had to stop.

Now Paul focuses a little more directly on the problem. Here are two women who are leading two factions of discord in the church.

What do we know about these two sisters?

We don't know much about these women.

But what we can surmise from this one verse and the background.

a) The dispute is not Doctrinal.

Theirs was not a doctrinal issue. It was not a debate over doctrine, or he would have resolved it by taking one side or the other.

If one was teaching truth and one was teaching error, Paul would have sided with one or the other. It had nothing to do with reality in terms of truth. Somebody who is teaching error has got to be exposed and eliminated. Anybody preaching a false gospel is cursed in Galatians 1.

A heretic must be admonished and then put out.

It has to do with opinion rather than doctrine.

b) They were prominent members

These two sisters were prominent church members.

They simply are known by name here, prominent church members who are having personal conflict that's not related to doctrine.

Here two women who couldn't get along with each other, had picked sides, caused a conflict, and lined up people on both sides against each other. They were prominent women and they were obviously beloved women who were having an impact.

V3, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel

They formerly working with Paul in the struggle of the gospel.

Acts 16:12-13, *and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.*

There was no synagogue in Philippi.

The reason was it took eleven men to constitute enough to have a synagogue. There weren't eleven Jewish men there who lived in that city. So, there was no synagogue, but some faithful Jewish women met together to worship Jehovah God by the river. They didn't have an official synagogue.

Paul would always go to the synagogue and preach first to the Jews, win them to Christ, then get those converted Jews on his side and go evangelize the Gentiles in the city.

So, Paul went in and that's where the church really began, with that ministry of evangelism to those women. It's very possible that among those women were these two, Euodia and Syntyche.

We do know that they were creating havoc in the church, such havoc that the church was not striving together in one mind for the faith of the gospel. Because of this issue they were not maintaining a mutual love for one another.

They needed to be reminded of the fact they were proud rather than humble. They were self-serving rather than serving others.

So, he simply says to them, "Let them live in harmony." Recognizing that the only issue was an issue of a lack of harmony, a lack of love, which is always the presence of pride and the absence of humility.

They were demanding their own way rather than being concerned about the other.

Two people who are right with the Lord are right with each other, is that not true?

If I am walking in the Spirit and I am right with the Lord and you are walking in the Spirit and you are right with the Lord, we are going to get along great, no problem.

V 3, *And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.*

Please for a moment imagine with me this. This letter is been sent from Apostle Paul. Everyone is seated right there and eagerly waiting as they read the letter.

Now a direct line calling out two sisters name!

Right here Paul asks Clement to help these women get together in harmony. This is part of the mutual ministry of the church, the believers.

“true companion/ comrade.”

It is translated to “yokefellow,” somebody who carries a common load. A yoke, two oxen in it, pulling the same load.

Who is this true companion?

There are several possibilities.

One, he is referring to somebody we don’t know, somebody that was known as Paul’s yokefellow. We don’t know who it is, but it’s somebody unnamed.

That would seem a little strange to me since he just named the two women so explicitly, since he names Clement so explicitly in a moment.

Why would he not name this person?

Since he was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and had perfect recall of everything, it wasn't that he forgot the guy's name.

So why wouldn't he put his name in here?

So, it wouldn't seem to me to make any sense that this is the name of somebody whose name isn't here but who knew who he was and would know that this was him.

The other option is that he is using this singular term in a collective sense and he refers to the church.

Indeed, as a church entity, you are my yokefellow, so I ask you, it's a singular but it's a collective noun involving the whole church.

That's a possibility.

“Stand firm.”

How are you going to do that?

Got to help each other.

You must be a conflict resolver, a peacemaker, cultivating harmony all the time, cultivating harmony.

Harmony in the fellowship of love, which produces an environment of stability, of mutual support. If you don't do that, if you are one who leaves a trail of conflict.

"These women who have shared my struggle in the gospel."

What does that mean?

They were part of that original Philippian group that went through the difficulty.

Where did Paul end up in Philippi after preaching the Gospel?

In jail.

Not only in jail but in dungeon.

What happened one night when he was in dungeon?

He was singing in there.

Remember Paul and Silas were singing, having a great time singing hymns to God.

In the middle of the night, an earthquake came and let them loose, and as a result, the jailer and his entire family got saved. Lot of other got saved and the church was born!

It may well have been that these two dear women were there and a part of that early beginning of the tremendous spiritual

struggle in Philippi to get that church off the ground. That was a great price to pay in the lives of people who were faithful to see that church begun.

So, these two were unique women.

Sometimes the best people, the good people, the faithful people – can become agents of the enemy in inducing conflict.

We must guard against that. The enemy would twist and pervert any one of us who believes he has some good noble cause to become the agent of discord if we're not sensitive.

Paul says, *"I want you to help these women who have shared my struggle"*

They have diligently struggled in getting the gospel out.

V3, *help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also*

Clement was another of the leaders in the church at Philippi, except that we don't know any more about him.

V 3, *and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.*

Paul doesn't want to leave anybody out!

Paul says that their names are written in the book of life.

- They are on the team.
- They are believers.
- They are faithful servants.
- They are workers.

Not the only ones, but their names are in the book of life, that's the implication here, their names are in the book of life.

The book of life is the register where God keeps the names of the redeemed.

Daniel 12:1, *“At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.*

Malachi 3:16-17, *Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, And the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the Lord And who meditate on His name. ¹⁷“They shall be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare themAs a man spares his own son who serves him.”*

In the New Testament, you have numerous references to the book of life. That's where God wrote down in eternity past the names of all His elect.

Paul says that we have all been working together, struggling, striving, tried to be used by God to build the church.

Now suddenly, these two women have just gotten into discord that threatens the stability of the whole thing.

Paul loves them all.

God loves them all.

So, they ought to love each other.

There's got to be harmony. There needs to be a warm, genuine, loving unity, and that creates an environment of stability.

The church becomes so unstable when there is discord in a church. They start falling and tumbling, attitudes become bad, negative spirits, bitterness's, lack of forgiveness grows, hostility comes into play.

There's a tremendous vulnerability, personally and individually, when there's collective discord.

So, to be spiritually stable means that I must pursue peace, be a peacemaker.

Matthew 5:9, *Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*

Do you want to pursue loving harmony in the church?

Do you want to be somebody who helps people resolve their conflict because that's how you create a spiritually stable environment?

One word to sum it up for us:

Love!

Be a lover.

We are to be agents of love, to build that stabilizing bond of love in the church. If you want to be spiritually stable, then pursue love in all your relationships.

Pursue peace and harmony and unity!

Joy:

V 4 , *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

Second principle of spiritual stability is Joy.

Joy in the spirit is a tremendous force in your own spiritual balance.

We tend to be victimized by our circumstances. We have our highs and our lows, and we fluctuate.

It is a command!

Rejoice in the Lord.

Somebody would say, how in the world can you command somebody to rejoice?

It says, "Rejoice in the Lord."

- I can't rejoice in my circumstances all the time.
- I can't rejoice in the way things are going in this world.
- I don't like the way things are going in this world.
- I don't rejoice over my own immense spiritual accomplishments.
- I don't have any except by the grace of God, and all I ever see in my life is my failures.
- I don't rejoice in that.
- If I'm going to rejoice in something, it isn't going to be me.

Do you rejoice in people?

I am sure you have been very disappointed by a lot of people. Because people will come and go.

Do you rejoice in success?

No, because success comes and goes too.

Rejoice in the Lord because He doesn't come and go.

- ✓ He stays.
- ✓ He never wavers.
- ✓ He never changes.

If you believe in Him and your faith is strong, and you will know who He is then it doesn't matter what your circumstances are.

Spiritual stability is directly tied to how you think about God.

You show me a person who is stable in the midst of any situation and I will show you a person who is perfectly tuned in to an understanding of God that surpasses any circumstances. He knows God is beyond all of that.

People who are struggling with all of their little problems in this life and are always running around looking for a quick fix somewhere – a book, a seminar, a tape, a counsellor, a psychiatrist, or whatever it is to get the quick fix .

The early church even rejoiced when they suffered because they said they were so happy.

Acts 5:41, *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

What a privilege!

This continual, habitual joy should mark us. Rejoice in the Lord always, and repeat it, rejoice in the Lord.

Romans 14:17, *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

What do you have to rejoice about?

Because who God is!

That He is sovereign over everything.
God is in charge of every circumstance.

The single greatest truth I know about God, as a Christian, is His sovereignty. He is in charge of everything. Nothing happens out of His control.

Furthermore, God controls it all for my good.

Psalm 139,

God knows your sitting down, your rising up,
He knows the words you speak before you speak them,
He knows the way you are going to walk, and
He holds every part of your life in absolute and total control.

When you realize that God is loving that God is wise, that God has an infinite understanding of every vicissitude, every aspect of life, it's a whole different approach to understand that.

Not only everything in my life is controlled by God. God saved me and made me His own child and promised me to give me an inheritance in Jesus Christ.

- ✓ I am His child,
- ✓ I belong to Him.

I rejoice because Jesus Christ is coming someday to take me to be with Himself. He is right now there preparing a place for me that where He is, I may come.

I rejoice in that!

Furthermore, I rejoice because my God is able to supply all my needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus.

I rejoice because God is using my life so that other people can hear the gospel and be saved.

God is using my life so that other Christians can be encouraged to love God more and serve Him more faithfully.

I rejoice because I enjoy instant access to God.

Do you know that anytime I want to, I can talk to God and He listens?

The God of the universe listens to everything I have to say, even if it's a long conversation.

Why I have joy?

Because death is gain.

The more you understand your God and the stronger your faith in Him and His inviolable plan, the greater the depth of your joy. The deeper your joy, the more untouchable it is.

Spiritual stability is the product of a person whose life is filled with the love of Christ shed abroad by the Spirit within him, and spiritual stability belongs to the person who is so deeply in understanding of the character of God.