

A Peacemaker's Joy and Graciousness (Phil 4:3-5)

Please turn in God's Word to Phil 4 and this morning we continue in what's one of the most practical and applicable chapters to so many issues so many of us are facing or will face soon: tensions, attitude struggles, our desires to be happy, satisfied, or freed of anxiety or worry. It has some of the Bible's most powerful promises on surpassing peace, doing all things through Him who strengthens us and who will supply all our needs. This is a chapter that can change your life from the inside out, guarding hearts and minds. First in v. 3-5 in the Lord it helps us resolve conflicts, rejoice, and react graciously.

Phil 4:3 *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.* ⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* ⁵ *Let your reasonableness* [ESV footnote says 'or gentleness'] *be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand...*

If you weren't here for part 1 on conflict resolution and the gospel in v. 1-3, you can get the CD or listen online. The notes of both will also be online and you may want them for future reference. I can't review all of it, but the context of v. 2-3 is 2 sisters in Christ needing godly help to agree in Christ. A disagreement had evidently become disunity and discord and so v. 3 asks a loyal companion to be a peacemaker to help them. And as we saw, God's Word calls all of us to be peacemakers, to pursue peace with all people, to be true friends by helping our companions in conflict for the gospel's sake.

Review gospel-based conflict resolution wisdom:

- Express love in the Lord (4:1)
- Exhort agreement in the Lord (v. 2)
- Extend help needed to restore (v. 3)
- **Examine your heart before the Lord (v. 3-5). Are you?**
 - 1. Reconciling as a peacemaker (v. 3)**
 - 2. Rejoicing in the Lord (v. 4)**
 - 3. Reacting graciously (v. 5)**

These are commands in v. 3-5 God inspired for the church so let's consider our own heart attitudes and actions. 2 Cor 5 says believers are ministers of reconciliation. Are we helping like v. 3 commands or are we hindering the unity of believers? Are we laboring like v. 3 says to be side-by-side together for the gospel? Are we asking for help when we can't reconcile, whether by a godly wise friend, older mature believer, WM counseling ladies, leaders? But let's remember God's Word asks all God's children to be peacemakers.

1st duty: Reconciling as a peacemaker. v. 3 in the original text highlights togetherness of fellow believers. The Greek prefix *su/sy* is used 4x in v. 3:

- '*companion*' is *syzygus*, a 'yokefellow, i.e., workers pulling yoke together'
- '*help*' has the same prefix, 'help lay hold of, pull together like tug-of-war'
- '*labored side by side*' (*syn-athleo* is a fellow athlete striving on same team)
- '*my fellow workers*' (Grk *synergos* we get synergy from, working together)

4x in one verse we have that prefix that comes into English in words like:

- synthesize (combining different parts into one connected unified whole)
- synchronized swimming (swimmers all doing the same thing beautifully)
- symmetry (similar parts together facing each other or joined at the center)
- sympathy (*pathos*/feeling what a fellow man feels, being with him in pain)
- symphony (*phone*/sounds/parts that come together with fellow musicians)

If that's disrupted in a serious way, if you're called to make peace in a major disagreement or estranged parties, PeaceMakers ministry suggests PAUSE:

P - Prepare (v. 6-7, pray before, after, during, prayerfully study, research)

A - Affirm Relationships (v. 1 '*my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm...in the Lord, my beloved.*' Have I affirmed that?)

U - Understand interests (v. 3, 2:3 '*...look also to the interests of others.*')

S - Search for solutions (v. 3 implies a 3rd party is sometimes help in that)

E - Evaluate objectively and reasonably (v. 5 '*let your reasonableness be known to everyone...*' I'll explain later this is more than reasonableness or gentleness in other translations, it's a graciousness centered on Christ's)

Sometimes I just need to pause, just be still and know that He is God and I am not. Ps 46 says '*He makes wars cease...*' and He says to those in uproar '*Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted...The LORD of hosts is with us...*' (NAS). That's where Phil 4:5 ends, the Lord is near; He is with us. *He* is God, let *Him* be exalted. See [PeaceMaker Pledge handout¹](#)

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. [f.n. end of Phil 4:2 '*...agree in the Lord.*' Phil 2:14: '*Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...*']. We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ [Phil 4:20 *To our God and Father be glory....*'; Phil 3:10 says we know Christ and grow to be more like Christ through our struggling].

[That book *The PeaceMaker* I'd recommend for further study] Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to responding to conflict according to the following principles.

1. Glorify God: Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do [or the past like Phil 3:13, forgetting the things that are behind and striving forward to what God calls us to], we will rejoice in the Lord [4:4] and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude [attitude and spirit of Phil 4:5]

Depending on His power we also see in v. 13: '*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*' You can look back at 1:9 we see how to depend on God's love and wisdom, to glorify God and bring Him praise: 1:9 '*it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment ...* [look at end of v. 11] *... to the glory and praise of God.*'

2. Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye: Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.

Last time we saw how Phil 4:2 addresses both parties equally as responsible to come to agreement in the Lord. The verb '*agree*' is a mindset or attitude changed to live in harmony with and humbly with. It's the same root word in 2:5 where we're called to have the same mind or attitude as Christ, who '*emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant...he humbled himself ...*' **3:15** '*Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise [NIV 'think differently on some point'], God will reveal that also to you.*' We think different but God can help me see what I'm blind to

Sande gives self-examination questions to help see the log, to ask where we have given in to 'fear...anxiety, resentment, bitterness, anger...?...Is there something I desire so much that I am willing to disappoint or hurt others in order to have it...turning desires into idols...? Before talking to others about their wrongs, with God's help I will examine myself by asking: Am I guilty of reckless words, falsehood, gossip, slander, or any other worthless talk? Have I tried to control others?...Have I...fulfilled all of my responsibilities? ...Have I treated others as I would want to be treated?...Am I...motivated by...the flesh, pride...fear of others, or wanting good things too much?...

[As I see the log I'll repent] change my attitudes and behavior by praying for God's help, delighting myself in the Lord so that I can overcome my personal idols, studying the Bible, and practicing godly character.'²

3. Gently Restore: Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them.

[The book fills that out more: 'I will...make charitable judgments by believing the best about others (1 Cor 13:7) until I have facts to prove otherwise...When I learn that someone has something against me, I will go to that person to talk... When I am estranged from someone else, I will ask God to help me discern the most effective way to approach him to confess my sins ...When I need to show others their fault, with God's help I will ...Speak the truth in love...Talk from beside people, not from above them, as a fellow sinner who needs forgiveness and grace as much as they do...Listen responsibly by waiting patiently while others speak, concentrating on what they say, clarifying their comments through appropriate questions, reflecting their feelings and concerns with paraphrased responses, and agreeing with them whenever possible...ask for feedback...breathe grace...]'³

When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner. [That's Phil 4:2-3. It would work best if one of the parties said to the other 'let's seek help from one or more spiritually mature advisors who can help us see things more objectively.' If conflict in the church doesn't resolve on lower levels, church leaders can be asked. If the estranged party is at another biblical church they could ask their pastor v. 3]

4. Go and Be Reconciled: Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences. By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know his infinite love.

That's where v. 5 is important, our reasonableness is to be evident to all for the sake of the gospel in v. 3. In Acts 6 when there was dissension between 2 parties in the church, the servant-leaders later known as deacons resolved it with buy-in from the people, and the end result was the gospel advanced and even Jewish priests were being saved like never before. Seeing the love of the Lord reconciling and unifying Christians will draw the non-Christian. We need to think beyond relationally to missionally, our mission or witness.

Listen to Christ's great high priestly prayer and passion for believers, Jn 17: *'that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me... that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know...'* And He added *'... so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.'* (v. 21-23, 13 NAS). That prayer started with God's glory, and there's no higher motive for unity than to glorify God and to enjoy Him, for full joy in Him that others see. As we rejoice in God in all things it overflows to others for the joy of all people

That takes us to our 2nd point and 2nd calling: Be rejoicing in the Lord
Phil 4:4: *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*

There's joy for us as we follow the principles Paul has been laying out. Sin is a kill-joy, but as we kill sin in us, there's joy for us in the Lord. There's no joy in the little preferences and petty issues and personal offenses we see as so big, but there is joy in the Lord as we make much of Him and see Him as so much bigger and better than self. Believers in conflict, stop resenting and start rejoicing in the Lord who talked about looking at important things like love and mercy instead of straining out gnats. We can nitpick others but if you've ever had to pick nits out of hair, you know it's a very joyless task! Look to God's big love with one heart one voice, O church of Christ rejoice

What's the connection between the conflict in v. 3 and the command in v. 4? Conflict can steal our joy in the Lord. If our relationship with the Lord has conflict, we need to confess our sin and pray *'restore to me the joy of your salvation'* (Ps 51:12). That principles applies to other relationships. Jesus said *'Blessed are the peacemakers,'* literally supremely happy are the peacemakers, and the Beatitudes include being merciful and meek (similar language to Phil 4:5). The joy of the Lord in v. 4 is our strength to do v. 3. Our Lord Jesus endured the greatest conflict ever with unreasonable sinners on a cross *'for the joy set before Him.'* And He sets that joy before us in Him

We can also see v. 4 connected to v. 1 where Paul called them his ‘*joy*.’ It’s the bookends or bread that holds this sandwich together, joy in the Lord. It’s also connected to the end of v. 3 where it says believers’ ‘*names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*’ The Lord Jesus said ‘*rejoice that your names are written in heaven,*’ Lk 10:20. That’s always true for believers in the Lord, so we can always rejoice in the Lord.

Many treat v. 4 like a standalone or subject change from v. 3 but I think the flow of v. 4-7 still has conflict in view. We need to rejoice in what we have in common in the Lord in conflict, and be reasonable in v. 5 and we need prayer in v. 6 and peace in v. 7, etc. Rejoicing in the Lord ‘*always*’ includes in conflict, and it’s important in context. Sande: ‘What on earth is there to rejoice about when you are involved in a dispute? If you open your eyes and think about God’s lavish goodness to you, here is the kind of joyful worship you could offer to him, even in the midst of the worst conflict.’⁴

Oh Lord, you are so amazingly good to me! You sent your only Son to die for my sins, including those I have committed in this conflict. Because of Jesus I am forgiven, and my name is written in the Book of Life! You do not treat me as I deserve, but you are patient, kind, gentle, and forgiving with me. Please help me to do the same to others.

In your great mercy, you are also kind to my opponent. Although [this believer] has wronged me repeatedly, you hold out your forgiveness ... as you do to me. Even if [we] never reconcile in this life, which I still hope we will, you have already done the work to reconcile us forever in heaven. This conflict is so insignificant compared to the wonderful hope we have in you!

This conflict is so small compared to the many other things you are watching over at this moment, yet you still want to walk beside me as I seek to resolve it. Why would you stoop down to pay such attention to me? It is too wonderful for me to understand. You are extravagant in your gifts to me. You offer me the comfort of your Spirit, the wisdom of your Word, and the support of your church. Forgive me for neglecting these powerful treasures until now, and help me to use them to please and honor you.

I rejoice that these same resources are available to my opponent. Please enable us to draw on them together so that we see our own sins, remember the gospel, find common ground in the light of your truth, come to one mind with you and each other, and restore peace and unity between us.

Finally, Lord, I rejoice that this conflict has not happened by accident. You are sovereign and good, so I know that you are working through this situation for your glory and my good. No matter what my opponent does, you are working to conform me to the likeness of your Son. Please help me to cooperate with you in every possible way and give you glory for what you have done and are doing’ [good illustration/application of *rejoice in the Lord always*]

Go to Phil 1 and keep in mind the conflict he's concerned about throughout: **1:4** *'always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy.'* In v. 17 he mentions men who *'proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.'*¹⁸ *What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice...* These are the ones Paul says in v. 30 he's in conflict with, but in Christ he could rejoice. Even as some said of him unkind or untrue things, even as he's sitting in prison unjustly, Paul is rejoicing in the Lord always. Even as he thinks of Euidia and Synteche he's not praying 'ugh, those women can't get along, typical!' No, every prayer is with joy in the Lord who began a good work in them and will finish it, v. 6. And notice in v. 18 to rejoice is a *choice*, focused on Christ, not the conflict.

2:2 *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*³ *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves...*

2:17 *Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.*¹⁸ *Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me* [to rejoice is a choice, but that's not to say it doesn't include feelings like gladness or emotional delight, Ps 37:4]

3:1 *Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.* [Paul writes from prison to the church in Philippi] **4:4** *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.* One of his brothers in Philippi hearing this letter could remember the night he was saved by Paul's example of putting that principle in practice. In Acts 16 there was conflict between Paul and the pagans. A mob stripped and beat Paul and Silas with rods. After many brutal blows they put them in stocks in a cell so they could barely move hands or feet. But at midnight Paul says to Silas something like 'I think a feel a psalm comin' on!' Maybe they sang Ps 119: *'At midnight I rise to praise you...* (v. 62). Or Silas might have said "I call the next one for our hymn sing, Ps 68: *'he leads forth the prisoners with singing...rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful. Sing to God...*" (v. 7, 3-4 NIV). Or Ps 142:7: *'Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name!'* I suspect Ps 97:12 was on the playlist: *Rejoice in the LORD...*

There was prison praisin goin on! It brought the house down! The prisoners had listened to their rejoicing and later the jailer asked *'what must I do to be saved?'* Answer *'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.'* The man believed and rejoiced with his family and now they're sitting in church hearing Phil 4:4 read. They knew rejoicing in the Lord always can draw sinners to the Lord.

Gospel peacemaking is reconciling, rejoicing, and **#3. Reacting graciously**

⁵ *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;*

The word of the Lord lets us know this also isn't just for the good of the 2 believers in conflict, it's for our gospel witness to a watching world in need of grace. Our gracious reactions must '*be known to everyone.*' Graciousness may be the best translation, others have 'gentleness' or 'forbearing spirit' or 'yieldingness' or scholars say it's 'having consideration for one another... not insisting on one's rights...rigid exactitude...not being contentious nor self-seeking, refraining from retaliation.'⁵ Hendriksen has 'big-heartedness ...charitableness...sweet reasonableness.'⁶ It's a rare word, just 4 other uses

- Timothy and Titus: 'gentle' next to not quarreling (1 Tim 3:3, Titus 3:2)
- James 3:17 has 'gentle' next to '*peaceable...reasonable, full of mercy...*'
- In the Greek OT it's God '*forgiving*' or being '*ready to forgive*' (Ps 86:5)
- Or a similar word in Prov 15:1: '*a gentle answer turns away wrath*' (NAS)

Greek sources have 'lenient, tolerant, accommodating, generous, kind,' etc. Everyone should know believers as that type of person? Is it known of you? Ladies, '*a gentle and quiet spirit ...in God's sight is very precious...beauty*' (1 Pet 3:4). Men, manliness isn't harshness, Paul wrote he was '*gentle ...as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children*' (1 Thess 2:7 NKJV). Parents can learn from the Lord's example in with His children in Hosea 11:4 '*I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love...*' Mothers of little young ones can take comfort in the Lord of Isa 40:11 '*like a shepherd He... carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young*' (NIV)

The end of Phil 4:5 says this Lord is near. That may mean His near coming, like James 5: '*...the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain brethren, against one another...the Judge is...right at the door...confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another...*' (v. 8-9, 16 NAS). The Lord will judge soon, we don't have to. He's near with mercy to the merciful (Mt 5). We don't have to settle all differences in this life, He'll settle them and on the day He comes, we'll see how inconsequential our disagreements were. He may come at any time or we may come to Him in death at any time, but either way life is too short for us to waste time keeping records of wrongs. Don't write names in your little black book, rejoice your names are in the Lamb's book! He's near, soon this life will be past, and He'll make right all wrongs, including forgiving your wrongs you can't see right now. We can afford to respond graciously because Jesus already paid it all for all our sins

‘Behold your King...gentle and mounted on a donkey...’ (Mt 21:5 NAS). He made His gracious responses known to all as He went to a cross to reconcile sinners and make peace between us and God, to all who turn from sin to say
 Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, Hear my humble cry;
 While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.⁷

Heb 5:2 says Jesus *‘is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray’* (NIV). And as people oppose us, we’re called to also respond graciously *‘with gentleness, correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance...’* (2 Tim 2:25 NAS). Some of you need to repent. Jesus says *‘come to me...learn from me, for I am gentle’*

¹ Ken Sande, *The PeaceMaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd edition, p. 259-61. Also available at <http://peacemaker.net/project/peacemakers-pledge/>

² Sande, Appendix A, “The PeaceMaker’s Checklist.”

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84-85.

⁵ J. Harold Greenlee, *Exegetical Summary of Philippians*, SIL, 1992.

⁶ William Hendriksen, *Philippians*, p. 193.

⁷ Fanny Crosby, “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior.”