

Fellowship of Joy in Peace (Part 2)

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[0:00] Philippians chapter 4, and I'm going to read once again the text that I read last week.

! Verses 2-9. Philippians chapter 4, 2-9. Paul writes, I implore Iodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

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.

Philippians chapter 5, 3-9.

Understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 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.

[1:45] The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Amen. Tremendous passage of Scripture. Now, if you were here last week, you're going to remember that contained in this passage of Scripture, these few verses, verses 2-9, there is a promise.

A promise. And it is a promise of peace given to whom? To all true followers of Christ.

A promise of peace given to us as born-again followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Paul's full statement of this promise doesn't appear until we get way on down into the text, which may seem a little bit odd.

But it just highlights the fact that his emphasis is not necessarily the promise, though we would think it would be. His emphasis is what he says before he states the promise.

[2:55] And we'll get into that here in a little bit. But again, the full promise is stated for us in verse 7, and here it is, And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

There's the statement of the promise. Very clear. And then, of course, Paul makes another reference to the promise. Says something a little bit different about it.

Although the promise is the same. He says this in verse 9, And the God of peace will be with you. These are promises. Or really references to the one and same promise.

Now, last Sunday we considered what this peace really is and why we should want it. And then this morning we're going to consider how we can have it.

Alright, so first we looked at the promise and now we're going to consider how to get it. How to get it. Because if you were here last week, you will remember that I pointed out that there is the promise. There are also the precepts.

[4:04] A precept is just simply a rule of behavior or a law of behavior. We could even call them commands. Alright, so there's the promise and then there are the precepts.

And I'm sorry to tell you, but you can't just have the promise without first obeying the precepts. Paul wrote in verse 7, if I might remind you of this.

He said, And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds. And then he said in verse 9, And the God of peace will be with you.

And so you see, it's really very clear. In each case, the promise of peace is the consequence or the result, we might even say the reward of something else.

And that something else is a series of precepts or again rules of behavior. And they come to us in the form of exhortation. Alright?

[5:00] And this is what we're going to see this morning. And so Paul is essentially saying, Do these things. The things that he gives us here in verses 2 through 6.

And verse 7, The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And then further he says, In addition to these things, Do these things also.

And he gives these things to us in verses 8 through 9. And the peace of God will be with you. And so the Bible is very clear here. If you want to enjoy the promise, then you must obey the precepts. Now, let's be honest about something here at the outset. We really, by our very nature, we want the promises without obeying the precepts.

Let's just be honest about that. We want the promise. We don't necessarily want to obey the precepts. We want then, in this case, we want peace.

[6:05] We want that peace without doing the hard things that God requires in order to have the peace. And in the broader picture, just thinking of mankind as a whole.

This is part of our problem. Peace, you know, has always been an elusive thing to man. It really has. And in our world today, we're looking for peace.

Man is looking for peace. The world is looking for peace. We want peace. But we do not want to do what God prescribes, God requires, in order to have it.

I was reading this past week some quotes from a leader of the UN. In fact, it was back in 1965 at the peak of the Vietnam War.

And then Secretary General of the UN, U Thant, you might remember him, he addressed the leaders of the world, dignitaries, ambassadors, statesmen.

[7:03] He addressed them at a conference on, quote, world peace. And Thant asked the following questions, and I think they're very telling. He asked, first of all, what element is lacking so that with all our skill and all our knowledge, we still find ourselves in the dark valley of discord and enmity?

It's a good question. He further asked, what is it that inhibits us from going forward together to enjoy the fruits of human endeavor and to reap the harvest of human experience?

What hinders us in that? And then he asked this question, and it really all comes down to this. What is it that for all our professed ideals, our hopes, and our skills, peace on earth is still a distant objective seen only dimly through the storms and turmoils of our present difficulty?

What's keeping us from having peace? You can almost feel his frustration. And now fast forward here to 2012 and nothing has changed, really.

And the world is still looking for peace, or at least many of them are, however they may define peace. And so it seems, no matter where you look in our world, even in our own country, there is anything but peace in the world.

[8:36] And that, by the way, is going to continue to be the experience of our world until Jesus comes. Because you see, there will never ever be world peace until King Jesus is sitting on His throne.

And that will happen one day when Jesus comes and establishes His kingdom here on this planet and reigns and rules for a thousand years. But until then, there is going to continue to be unrest, enmity, wars, strife, no peace.

But, until Jesus comes, there is peace to be found. And there is a promise of peace given to born-again children of God, born-again followers of Christ.

And again, it only comes through Jesus. Only comes from Him. Jesus Himself said, in John chapter 14, verse 27, and this, by the way, was just shortly before Jesus would be leaving this world by way of the cross and resurrection, but He said to His disciples, He said, My peace I give to you.

Isn't that a wonderful promise? I give My peace to you. And He emphasized My peace because then He said, Not as the world gives, do I give to you.

[9:56] It's not the peace the world has to offer or the world is striving and grasping for or the world somehow might promise in theory only. It is His peace, God's peace that He gives to us and therefore He can say, Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Alright, so there is then first the promise of peace, which is, as I defined it last week, an unshakable tranquility, a kind of inner tranquility that cannot be thwarted, cannot be removed, cannot be violated.

It is, if we could put it in other terms, an unconquerable kind of confidence. A confidence in what? That God's precepts, His laws are flawless, His Word is flawless.

A confidence that God's power toward us is infinite and absolute. A confidence that God's provision for us is perfect.

It's all sufficient. That's peace. It is an abiding calm, an inner calm, even amid the storms of life.

[11:24] The promise of peace. Now again, let's bring us back down to earth. You cannot have the promise of peace without obeying the precepts for peace.

And that's our focus this morning. And so let's look at the precepts for peace that Paul gives us here in the text. A precept, again, is a rule of behavior, a law of behavior.

We could call them commands. And Paul gives us no fewer than six precepts for peace. Six precepts. Now we're going to look at three of them this morning.

These are so practical. These are so important for us to incorporate into our lives.

Precepts for peace. Here's precept number one. Be reconciled. That's precept number one.

[12:21] Be reconciled. That is, reconciled to your brothers and sisters. Be at peace with your brothers and sisters. This is a precept. Be reconciled.

Look again at verses 2 and 3 and let's just kind of walk through this. Paul said, I implore. That might be a foreign word to most of us.

We could use the word urge. I urge or I plead with Iodia and I implore or plead with Syntyche. And these, by the way, were a couple of women in the church.

I implore you to be of the same mind in the Lord. That is, the implication is, they were at odds with one another. They were having some kind of tiff, some kind of argument.

They were at enmity with one another. And so he mentions them, Iodia and Syntyche. I implore you, be of one mind in the Lord. Now, before I go any further, let me ask you something.

[13:18] How long do you think I'd survive as your pastor if a couple of women in the church were having a little tiff and I decided to deal with it from the pulpit and I mention them by name? How long do you think I'd survive here as your pastor?

And it's even worse than that. Here Paul is putting it on the pages of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is inspired him to write their very names in the letter. And so here they are immortalized in Scripture. And, you know, how demoralizing that would be. I'm sure they were mortified. Here are their names mentioned in Scripture. But let's look on at what he says.

He says, I implore Iodia and I implore Syntyche to do what? To be of the same mind in the Lord. Now, we don't know what the problem was.

Paul doesn't tell us. We don't know the substance of the disagreement between these two women. Paul just does not tell us, but it doesn't matter. Because, you see, Paul's only interested in them getting it worked out.

[14:25] Paul's only interested in there being a reconciliation between these two women in the church. But Paul goes a step further. He says, I urge you also, true companion.

Now, who is that? Well, he doesn't tell us. Many scholars think it was Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus was the one delivering the letter. It could be a personal word to him.

Though it's public, it's part of the letter. But it really doesn't matter. We don't know who it was, but that doesn't matter. And so he's urging his true companion, his co-worker in the faith, he's urging him to do something.

He's urging him to help these women. Help them out with this disagreement. To help them in reconciling their differences. And then Paul tells us something about these two women.

Two things, really. He said they, first of all, labored with me in the gospel. And so these two women were co-laborers with Paul.

[15:28] And he mentions also Clement here by name. And then kind of an overall kind of reference to some other fellow. He calls them fellow workers in the church. So he lumps Yodia and Synechi with these other co-workers in the faith.

So these are very important women in the church. That is, they're very important to the cause of Christ in the church. And then he mentions this.

Whose names are in the book of life. And so he's not talking about a couple of ladies in the church who were unbelievers. Troublemakers in that sense. Who were bringing maybe some heresy in the church or attempting to do so.

Or maybe some ladies who were out to undermine the work of the church. The work of the gospel. That's not the case. He praises them. They're laborers with me in the gospel.

And their names are written in the book of life. Alright, now putting all that together, let's consider several important things about reconciliation.

[16:31] Now I think we can glean from this portion of the text. In the first place, we ought to understand, and it's implied here, that reconciliation is a common need in the church.

And if we don't get that implied here just in this text, we know that the Bible in the New Testament deals with this issue a number of times. And so it therefore must be a very common thing in the church.

For there to be people in the church who are at odds with one another. Butting heads over some issue. Or maybe in disagreement over some important point. Or whatever it may be. Or maybe an insignificant point.

But the point I want to make is that reconciliation is a common need within the church. Sad but true. Someone has said, To dwell above with saints we love, oh, that will be glory.

But to dwell below with saints we know, well, that's another story. And isn't that true? Sad but true. Christians are notorious for not getting along with one another.

[17 : 35] And I would say that that is especially true of Baptists. I can say that. I've been a Baptist all my life. And we just have fights all the time, don't we? Well, you have problems.

In fact, I heard a story about six men who were marooned on a deserted island. Two of them were Jews. Two were Catholics. And two were Baptists. And right off the bat, the two Jews got together. And they founded what they called Temple Emmanuel. Well, the two Catholics got together. And they established Church of the Holy Name. But the two Baptists did not get together.

And they founded two separate churches. And then they squabbled over who could use the name First Baptist Church. Now, we laugh at that. And that's a fictitious story.

But it's all too true. You know, we just don't always get along with one another. And so there are factions sometimes.

[18 : 29] So it's a very common thing. Common need within the church. But let me quickly go to a second thing about reconciliation. Reconciliation, secondly, is hard work.

And that's why we resist it quite often. That's why the work doesn't always get done. Because it's hard work. Number one, it requires humility.

It requires dying to self. And the flesh does not like that. And so it takes hard work. It's not something that will ever happen automatically.

It's not something that is just a natural progress in the body of Christ. It takes hard work. A deliberate work. It takes humility.

It also takes honesty at any cost. Being honest with self. Honest with others. No matter how bad it may make us look. It takes honesty.

[19 : 28] Humility. It requires eating a little crow sometimes. And we don't like to do that. Do you? It requires hard work.

It requires, if nothing else, stepping out of our comfort zone. Now that's more than just a cliché. We like to be in our comfort zone. We don't like to take the initiative and go to someone and deal with some issue that's unpleasant.

Or we think may be unpleasant. Or, you know, we don't like disagreement. We don't like to take the initiative and face that head on.

It takes hard work. It requires forgiveness. Unconditional forgiveness, which is not something that comes natural with us. And so it's hard work.

All right. So let's consider reconciliation as important as it is. It is a common thing, a common need in the church. It requires hard work. And then third, reconciliation is first the responsibility of those directly involved in the conflict.

[20 : 37] And no one else. Now this is important to get. It seems that when you have a tiff with someone, you're more apt, we are more apt to go to others about it than we are to the one we have the tiff with.

But reconciliation must first be the responsibility of those and only those directly involved in the conflict. Jesus gave us some instructions about this, by the way.

In fact, two different places in the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 18 and verse 15, Jesus gives these instructions. He says, If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won the person back. But the key word there is privately. You don't go to someone else and tell them what so-and-so did to you.

Or so-and-so said about you. Or how so-and-so sinned and so forth and so forth. You don't go to anybody else. You go privately to the one that has sinned against you for this purpose to win them back.

[21:53] Win them back. And then He says something very similar in Matthew chapter 5 and verses 23 and 24. But in this case, the initiator of the reconciliation is reversed.

In the other passage, it is the one who's been offended that goes to the offender to seek reconciliation. But in this passage in Matthew 5, it's the opposite.

It's the offender that goes to the offender. And Jesus says, so if you are standing before the altar in the temple offering a sacrifice to God and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, someone has offended you, someone has sinned against them.

And you suddenly remember that. Then He says, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. And really, this is a picture of worship. Leave it there.

Stop right there what you're doing. And go and be reconciled to that person. Not go and tell someone else about it.

[23:01] But go to that person and be reconciled. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. Then come and worship me. You see, He gets it on both sides. And the point is, whether you are the offender and you take the initiative, or whether you are the offended and you take the initiative, it goes both ways.

We both have the responsibility. Offended or offender. We have the responsibility to make it right. And so you don't have a way out. You can't say, well, they offended me. And so they're going to have to come to me.

No, no, no. Now, Jesus says it works both ways. You're the offended or you're the offender. You're to go. Take the initiative. Takes hard work. Yes. It puts you in a place that's uncomfortable for you. But you must do it all for the purpose of being reconciled. Being reconciled. Let me give you also a few other instructions. Whether you are the offender or you are the offended, remember these three guidelines.

Before you go to the other person, now listen very carefully, before you go to the other person, make sure you know what the real problem is.

[24:19] That is, identify the true source of the conflict. Sometimes we've got to strip away all those other things, you know, that we may be thinking other things that really are irrelevant to the whole issue.

We don't go to the other person and unload all of the things we have a problem with. We identify the real source of the conflict. So before you go, make sure you know that.

And then second, before you go, remind yourself of the goal. And what is the goal? It's not to give them what for.

It's not to make them feel bad about their sin. It's not to rake them over the coals because you want to see them squirm and suffer a little bit as you have suffered.

What is the goal? Reconciliation. Reconciliation. And then a third thing. When you go, when you go, do so in a spirit of gentleness and graciousness and humility.

[25:34] In fact, Paul's going to deal with that issue a little bit later in our text. All right, so. Reconciliation. It is a common need in the church.

It is hard work. It is first the responsibility of those directly involved in the conflict and no one else.

But then fourth, and this is important to note, and we get this from the text as well.

Reconciliation sometimes, sometimes requires the help of some other mature Christian. Sometimes it requires that.

I think that was the case here. And why Paul wrote what he wrote. And why he wrote it the way he wrote it. Apparently, the disagreement between these two women in the church, whatever it was, and we don't know what it was, apparently though, it had progressed to a level where they needed some outside help.

And so I think if Paul had been there, he would have dealt with it. But since he was in prison at the time and was unable to go and take care of this issue and go to these two women and bring these two women together, and because of that, then he asked someone else to step in and do it.

[26:48] I think, again, it was Epaphroditus. He needed some other mature believer in the church to go and help these ladies get things right between them.

You see, here's the point. This is sometimes needed in the church. If God's people will not follow the guidelines given by Jesus in Matthew 5 and 18, then a mature believer needs to step in, needs to take the initiative and step in and help.

And so this puts some of us on notice, not just a pastor, but others who might be privy to the conflict. And maybe they've been watching this and it's starting to fester and starting to broaden out beyond the original two who are in conflict with one another and seeing that it's not going to be resolved, take the initiative as a mature believer and help.

Help these people reconcile. And then that leads us to, I think, a fifth point about reconciliation. And that is that reconciliation is necessary for the church to accomplish her mission.

I think this is implied by something Paul said here. I think that's why he mentioned that these two women were co-laborers with him and he mentions Clement.

[28:15] They also mentioned some others who were workers toward accomplishing the mission. He mentions them because he knows and he wants them to know that when we are at odds with another believer in the church, it causes disunity and it hinders the progress of the gospel, hinders the progress of the mission to which the church has been called.

And so this is important. There's a famous quote from Lord Nelson of the British Royal Navy who once came on deck of his ship and he noticed two of his officers quarreling between one another. And he immediately grabbed each one by the collar, whirled them about, and pointed to the enemy ships. He said, Gentlemen, there are your enemies.

And that's what we need to realize in the church. The enemy is on the outside. He's not inside. And the enemy is the prince of darkness and he would like nothing better than to cause or to divide God's people into quarreling factions because he knows that it hinders the work of the church, the work of the gospel.

And not only that, by the way, but one cannot minister the gospel of peace while we are at odds with one another or at war with one another. But the consequence of reconciliation, when that happens, when that is accomplished within the body of Christ, the result of it is peace.

[29:55] Peace not only for those involved in the conflict, but peace in the church as well. And the peace of God, he says in verse 7, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

So precept number one, be reconciled. Precept number two, be rejoicing. Be always rejoicing.

Verse 4. Paul said, verse 4, this famous passage, one of those beloved passages in this letter to the Philippians. Verse 4.

Rejoice in the Lord. How often? Always. And, as if to say, in case you didn't get it, I will say it again. Rejoice.

Rejoice. Now, this is a clear command. And he's commanding God's people to rejoice. And when we obey that command, then it is attached to verse 7, and the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds through Christ.

[31:02] Alright, so, rejoice. Rejoice. Adrian Rogers, one of my, you know, favorite preachers of yesteryear. Adrian Rogers is with Jesus today. I've heard him say this, the average Christian all too often leaves the impression that the Christian life is something to be endured rather than enjoyed.

How true. And he would say that there are too many Christians walking around like a man with his arm in a bright red sling. Just hoping someone will ask him about it.

Just hoping someone will ask him to tell about it. Because, you know, he really likes to talk about how bad his arm is. Only with the believer, the bright red sling is the look of jaundice on the face. You know what I'm talking about? A kind of look on the face that screams, ask me about it. Go ahead, ask me.

So that I can tell you how bad things are. Because I really enjoy talking about how bad life is. rejoice. But Paul says, rejoice in the Lord.

[32:18] Always. And again, I'll say it. Rejoice. But you might be thinking, but pastor, I don't always feel like rejoicing. Well, this is what we need to understand.

Rejoicing is not first prompted by a feeling. This is where we get it all wrong. We put too much importance in emotions and feelings.

Now, we are emotional beings. God has created us that way. And certainly, I would never deny that feeling or emotions are part of this. They enter into this. It would be very difficult to describe any kind of rejoicing without also describing a feeling or some kind of expression of emotion.

but rejoicing is not first and foremost an emotion or a point of feeling. You don't always feel like rejoicing. But rejoicing is rather an expression of true joy.

A joy that every believer should have and does have because joy is the fruit of the Spirit. And so rejoicing is an expression of the joy and I can say with all definite conviction, joy is not an emotion. [33:40] I know we think it is. And again, emotions are expressed as a result of it. But joy is not an emotion. It is not an emotion.

Joy is a conviction. It is a better, maybe better termed as a confidence. An abiding confidence in the heart and in the mind.

And that's why this joy is not attached to any circumstances. It is not current circumstances. It certainly is attached to a circumstance, a spiritual eternal circumstance and that is our salvation. But joy is not attached to any kind of happenstance. And so joy is not happiness. Joy is a confidence. confidence. A confidence in what? A confidence that no matter what, no matter what, God is always in control.

That's the joy of the Lord. Joy is a confidence that, come what may, all things are for the ultimate good of the believer.

[34:56] joy is a confidence that, do you have that kind of joy? It's there. You might be suppressing it. You might not allow it to blossom in your life, but it's there because it comes with the Holy Spirit.

Better find it. Better release it. Joy is a confidence that no matter what, all things are working for the good of the believer. It is a confidence that circumstances, no matter what they may be, can never change any of that.

Never. Even the worst circumstance you could imagine in your mind, it cannot change any of that. Now, to be sure, there are times to be sad.

Appropriate times to be sad. There are times to be weeping. There are appropriate times to be grieving. There's no doubt about that.

There are times to be concerned. Ecclesiastes 3, 4, to everything there is a season. A time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance, though I don't know how.

[36:16] That's my wife. But now listen, these seasons, these seasons, they come and they go. And you will get over these seasons.

You may not think you will, but you will. You'll get over these seasons. But Paul is saying don't ever get over the joy of the Lord. Don't ever get over that. You know, sometimes we see new believers come to faith and they're so excited and bubbly about Jesus and about their newfound faith in Him and so forth.

And we, quote, more mature Christians, end quote, will find ourselves sometimes thinking, maybe even saying, well, you know, they'll get over that one of these days.

They'll come back down to earth one of these days and sadly, because of us, they usually do. But Paul is saying don't ever get over it. Don't ever get over it.

Don't ever get over the joy of the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I will say to you, rejoice. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

[37:32] The precept, the promise. Precept number three and the final one for us here this morning.

Precept one, be reconciled. Precept two, be rejoicing. And precept three, be reasonable. Here it is. Paul's saying, be reasonable.

Verse five, interesting verse of Scripture. In the New King James, it's worded this way, let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

King James Version renders it moderation, which is a little confusing. The NASB, I think, has a pretty good gentle spirit.

Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. The ESV, reasonableness. reasonableness.

[38:33] And that really is a very literal translation of this. Others have said maybe the word should be graciousness, and that's part of it too. Paul is saying to the believer, be reasonable.

And that is, you know, everyone who knows you, everyone who sees you, works with you, has any kind of relationship or acquaintance with you, this is what they think of you, you know, he's or she easy to get along with.

They're reasonable people. Now, what does this mean? Well, it is, maybe we could define it by considering the opposite of it.

Oftentimes, that's the best way to understand what the Bible is saying, if we could consider what is the opposite of this. And the opposite of this is self-seeking or self-promoting or self-interested, selfishness.

Come up with a lot of other terms for it. But it is a selfishness in the sense of always claiming your rights.

[39:46] Well, that's very American too, isn't it? It's kind of, it's just woven in the fabric of what it means to be an American. I know my rights and I deserve to have them.

There's probably not another nation on this earth where the people generally have this feeling, I have my rights and it's my right to have them.

And so this is the opposite of what Paul is talking about here. Now, he's speaking to believers and he's saying you need to be reasonable, not always claiming your rights, not always just having to have your way.

You know what I'm talking about? Abraham Lincoln, when he was a lawyer in Springfield, Illinois, I love this story, a wealthy man asked him to take a lawsuit or asked him to take a lawsuit against a poor man that owed him two dollars and fifty cents.

a paltry sum. And at first, Abraham Lincoln wanted to refuse the case, but on second thought he agreed, but only if the wealthy man would pay him ten dollars up front.

[41:09] And the man quickly agreed and gave him the money, ten dollars. And so Abraham Lincoln went to the poor man and offered him five dollars if he would settle out of court.

Settle the deal. You know, the debt. And the man agreed. Of course. And so Abraham Lincoln got five dollars and the poor man got two dollars and fifty cents and the rich man had his two dollar fifty cent debt settled at the cost of ten dollars.

But he got his rights. Right? You know, we just are so, it's so typical of us to want to have our rights no matter what it costs.

And Paul is saying personal rights are not important. Rather, you need to be gracious. You need to be reasonable. And sometimes believers are the hardest kind of people to get along with.

Huh? I know no one in here is like that. Amen. Who said that? Sometimes believers can be just downright unreasonable.

[42:27] Hard to get along with. And you've known people and I've known people like this who go from job to job, marriage to marriage, friend to friend, church to church, all because someone has, quote, wronged them.

End quote. And all because, you know, I'm right and they're wrong. And I have the right to be right. And I know my rights and I'm going to have my way. Now, verse 5 speaks to that mentality. That's the idea here. And it speaks to this kind of thinking that I have my rights, I will have my way, I will do things my way, it's all about me.

That's what this is dealing with here. Now, I think that is likely the problem that Paul was addressing between these two women in the church.

We don't really know. But he was probably addressing a self-centeredness and unwillingness to yield on a position. And apparently it was not an important position, it was not some doctrinal issue, some core doctrinal issue.

[43:41] No, God is never requiring us to yield about that. But some peripheral issue, who knows what it was, but neither one was willing to yield and there was an unwillingness then on the part of these two women to give up a personal viewpoint in order to have peace.

I think that was the issue. And Paul is saying be reasonable. Be easy to get along with. Stop being so stubborn about always winning an argument just for the sake of it.

Stop focusing on personal rights. But you say, Pastor, I know I'm right. I know they're wrong. Well, what if you are right?

So what? Now, be honest. Have you ever had a disagreement, say, with your spouse? I shouldn't have paused there.

Have you had a disagreement over some fact? Have you? Some point of fact. It's not important. Usually a very trivial matter.

[44:53] Some point of fact. And you're arguing about it and going back and forth and back and forth. I'm right. No, you're wrong. I'm right. No, I'm right. You're wrong. And I'll prove it.

And so you Google it. Come on, you've done this. You Google it and then you come back and say, Ha! I was right. And then you don't talk to one another for the rest of the evening.

So what have you gained? Let me ask you something. Can you let someone think they're right when you know they're wrong?

Uh-huh. Can you just let it go? Can you let someone else do it even though you know they're doing it wrong and you would do it much better?

Can you just let it go? Can you yield on a position, a position on something that really in the broader picture is not important?

[46:09] Can you do that? See, this is Paul's exhortation to us. It's a precept for peace. A very clear one. He's saying, Stop being self-centered, self-serving, self-seeking.

Be reasonable. Be reasonable. And why should we? Why should we? Well, Paul gives us a really good reason why. It's really very interesting.

Verse 5, he says, The Lord is at hand. You say, I don't see how that goes together. Well, think of it this way.

There you are and you are out of sorts with someone. Maybe it's your boss. Or maybe it's a co-worker. And you're saying, maybe you should stop meddling, pastor.

Maybe it's just a friend. Maybe it's your spouse. And you're out of sorts with someone. You have this big disagreement. Some point of disagreement. And you're thinking, He's not treating me right.

[47:21] Or you're thinking, She disagrees with my point of view. And I'm right. Or whatever it may be. With whomever or whatever the issue is.

And so there you are. The two of you. At odds with one another. Maybe a big thing. Maybe a little thing. But you are butting heads.

And so you're face to face glaring at one another. Expressing hurtful looks. Hateful words.

And suddenly, Jesus appears. He comes back. He's back just like He said He would. And at that very moment, immediately, you realize how petty and insignificant it all was.

How unimportant. How stupid. How silly. And what you thought was just paramount in your life, that is you getting your way, you being right and everybody knowing it and proving it, all of a sudden that doesn't even matter.

[48:30] It doesn't even matter. Because Jesus is back. And not only that, it's even worse. Now, you're face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ and you have realized now just how unlike Jesus you've been.

I think that's Paul's point. And so all of your self-seeking ways, self-serving ways, that just kind of fades away.

And this is Paul's point. That we would... Here's what he prescribes. That we would conduct ourselves in our relationships with other people as Jesus, as if Jesus was going to appear at any moment.

Personal rights then become so unimportant when you know Jesus may return at any moment.

Personal offenses, those who offended you, and you're all bent out of shape over it, suddenly, that doesn't even matter.

It doesn't even matter when you know that Jesus may step back into our world at any moment. We can afford to be reasonable with people.

[49:59] We can afford to be gracious even when we know we're right and they are wrong.

Because all of the issues of this life, all of those things we bite about and scratch for and gnaw at one another over and all these thoughts we have toward one another about this or that or that thing, all of those things just fade away when Jesus returns.

And when we finally get this, we finally get this, then Paul says the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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