

---

# Conflict and the God of Peace

## Philippians 4:1-9

**Introduction** What is *Handling Life* all about?

Conflict is discordant noise that accompanies a great deal of life...

- Conflict at the Convention  
The pseudo peace of Mrs. Clinton supporting Obama...
- Conflict in the home  
The struggles over differences and difficulties behind closed doors...
- Conflict in the church  
The arguments over message, means and ministry that divides people and threatens partnerships...

There was conflict in the early church as well, even in the best of churches like Philippi...

### **Their Deep Relationships** **(v.1)**

<sup>17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

#### **As Christians -Brothers and beloved**

Fundamental to how Paul understands all relationships – they exist in Christ and connected by spiritual realities...

#### **As Treasured - Loved and longed for**

He loved them in a way that he longed to see them and be with them...

#### **As Esteemed - Joy and Crown**

He valued them and esteemed them as his joy and crown...

### **Their Difficult Interactions** **(v.2-3)**

<sup>2</sup> I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> 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.

## **The Problem Threatening their Partnership**

Disagreement between the two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche.

It was not a disagreement where one of them was wrong...

## **The People Helping with Resolution**

True companions (and maybe a person by that name) were to get involved as helpers to resolve the conflict...

## **The Past Highlighting their Ministry**

Their conflict threatened not just the peace of the church but also the partnership in serving God. They had a long history of serving together...

## **The Principle Shaping the Exhortation**

Once again, Paul calls them to resolve conflict because they are Christians. Their names are written in the book of life. They must be reconciled because God has placed them both in the body...

## **Their Distinguishing Responsibilities (v.4-7)**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

These are to be the marks, what is to characterize them while working through conflict and resolution.

### **To be a Joyful People (v.4)**

A deep, settled inner joy is a grace that is needed while moving toward reconciliation. No grudging, "well if I have to..."

### **To be a Reasonable People (v.5)**

In the midst of conflict, a sweet reasonableness, a willingness to be entreated, to hear the other side and see their perspective is important...

### **To be a Prayerful People (v.6)**

Conflict stirs anxiety...

Worry is the imagining of futures that might unfold...

Prayer commits our agenda and our future to a sovereign God who has providentially allowed the conflict to happen. In prayer we recognize His purpose to expose issues of the character and conduct.

### **To be a Secure People (v.7)**

This idea of peace ties together these paragraphs...

Peace will defend our inner person, our hearts and minds, our motivations and our thoughts...

**Key:** God's peace will guard our hearts and minds...

## Their Determining Conformity (v.8-9)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Now, this verse is often used as a “purity filter.” That is a useful and practical application. In its primary context this text is focused on how we are to think and act while working through conflict. The particular elements are chosen because of how we tend to go wrong. But then, in God’s wisdom, these also have a much broader application in other situations and struggles.

I have chosen two words that capture what I think is going on here:

**Determining** – Paul focuses on what actually organizes and orients us, that is, what we think and whom we model ourselves after...

**Conformity** – Paul sees them as needing to conform their thinking and doing to the principles of the Word and the pattern of Biblical leaders...

## In How they are Thinking (v.8)

This list of things that guide and guard their thinking are critical to being pleasing to God in the midst of conflict:

True	We tend to think untrue things about others so that we interact with them based on lies, untruths and misperceptions...
Honorable	We tend to think dishonorably about others so that we look down on them...
Just	We tend to think unjustly, unrighteously about others so that we treat them unjustly...
Pure	We tend to think evilly about others so that we do are not pure in our motives or responses to others...
Lovely	We tend to focus on the ugly, the unlovely aspects of the other person so that we are unkind to them...
Good report	We tend to accept bad reports, slander and gossip about others we are in conflict with...
Excellence	We tend to focus on where a person is struggling, deficient or inadequate rather than focusing on how God has enabled them...
Praise worthy	We tend to highlight the bad about another and damage our relationships instead of focusing on what is good about them...

**From Whom they have Learned****(v.9a)**

They have a mentor in Paul who has been engaged in much conflict over his ministry. He has set an example in his character, conduct and teaching that they are to copy in their own lives...

**Upon Whom they are Depending****(v.9b)**

Isn't God always with us? In what sense then does Paul say this. If we think like this and pattern ourselves after people like this, then the God of peace is with us? While there are lots of ways to take this, I think that Paul is assuring them of God among them *to bring the peace by His presence*. God can and will be present in the midst of conflict while we are working on resolution if we are guided and governed this way.

**Key:** The God of peace will be with you (all)

Conflict is used by God to expose our hearts, the way we think and what we really want... **Conclusion**

God holds us accountable for the way we think, speak and act while we are in the midst of conflict. His Word clearly requires that we respond in certain ways by changing our hearts...

Preserving our partnership because of our true union in Christ is foundational to working at conflict resolution. Otherwise will be become either peace-fakers ("it is OK, its doesn't matter, etc") or we will be peace-breakers in all the ways that verse 9 indicate.

While we may disagree, we may not do so in a disagreeable way. Peace must guide and guard our conflict...

Will you carefully examine your life? Are you characterized by being a joyful, reasonable, prayerful person whose inner life is guarded by the peace of God? If not, then repent and begin to choose those attributes.

Will you carefully reflect on your thinking? How do you think about others with whom you are struggling?

May the peace of God guard us and the God of peace be with us.