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Philippians 4:1-3

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- Good morning! Happy Super Bowl Sunday!
- Who's rooting for the Chiefs? Eagles? Who is completely apathetic and is just planning on skipping it entirely?
- Well, in honor of the big game, I thought WE would play a game. I call it Name the Team. It goes like this, I'm going to name a player and you tell me if he plays for the Chiefs or the Eagles. So I call out a name and you say Chiefs or Eagles. If you say Cowboys or Texans or Rangers, you're gonna get it wrong. These aren't trick questions. And kids, this is one of those rare times where "Jesus" isn't the right answer so don't yell that out.
- We'll start easy. Patrick Mahomes. Even if you aren't a big football fan, you probably know who he is. You don't win 3 Super Bowls in your first 5 seasons as QB without people knowing your name. Plus, he's from northeast Texas.
- What about Saquon Barkley? Hated Eagles.
- Travis Kelce. Again, even if you know nothing of football, you probably know him because he's the paramour of what famous celebrity? Taylor Swift
- Now, let's get a bit deeper in the more obscure.
- Hollywood Brown (C)
- Creed Humphrey (C)
- Reed Blankenship (E)
- Parris Campbell (E)
- Nick Gates (E)
- Carson Wentz (C) – tricky because used to be on E
- Jody Fortson (C)
- Jack Driscoll (E)
- Anyone get them all correct?
- For the vast majority of us, we have no idea who they are. Even if we root for a team, its hard to keep up....especially when GMs do crazy stuff like trade their 25 year old elite superstar with no warning...not that I'm bitter or anything.
- Of the 53 man roster of the Cowboys, I'd be doing good to get 20.
- So many of the players who play an integral role in an average NFL game are relatively unknown to the average fan and yet they're essential to the health of the team.
- And that's what we see in our text today. We'll read names like Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement who must have been really well known to the Philippians and yet we have no real clue who they are today.
- But we learn something about the nature of the church and the central theme of Philippians by studying what Paul writes about these names. We'll see that as we start on Philippians 4 today.
- So let's pray and then we'll dive in together.

- Self, others, me.

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. (Philippians 4:1)

- Before we start, let's recap a bit.
- That's always important, but especially in a passage that begins with therefore.
- As we've talked about, Philippi is a church facing some problems. Nearly 20 weeks into Philippians and I just thought of an acronym for the problems. FAD. F-A-D. There is false teaching, adversity and division. Those are most likely interrelated, but we aren't sure of all of the specifics, we just know that there's trouble a brewin. It doesn't appear to be as crazy as Galatia or Corinth, which seem to be dumpster fires, but Paul is concerned about Philippi so he writes this from prison.
- And the main theme of the book is the need for humility. Christ is upheld as the paragon of humility that we're to imitate.
- As we've seen, humility relates to the false teaching which exalted human works and to the division which was based on pride. Humility is the adhesive that holds two sinners together, whether in marriage, the church body, or any other relationship. Pride is like that non-nutritive varnish that Clark Griswold puts on his sled in Christmas Vacation.
- And again, Christ is the perfect embodiment of humility. The son of God, eternally co-equal with the Father, worthy of worship and glory, nonetheless condescended, emptied Himself of privilege, became man, and suffered and died for us. No matter how many times I say that, we don't grasp its full significance. Christ's condescension for us and our salvation is a glory that is inexhaustible in implication and application.
- And that's the example that we should model when Paul tells us to consider others more significant than ourselves and look not to our own interests. That has application in every single relationship of your life. Your marriage, your kids, your parents, your neighbors, coworkers, the guy trying to merge into your lane. Though we will never fully arrive at that degree of humility, we should nonetheless aim in that direction.
- Paul doesn't say to be a pushover, there are certainly things to fight over and divide over and to resist and reject, but there should be a general disposition of showing deference and giving preference to the needs of others.
- And so we've beaten the drumbeat of humility in every single passage over the past few months because Paul keeps coming back to this. In fact, we'll see it again this weekend.
- Chapter 2 of Philippians was concerned to show us this example of Christ and to give us a few examples of men who also modeled this ethic, namely Paul himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.
- Then ch 3 shifted a bit to talk about the false teaching that was infecting or at least threatening to infect the church. We identified that as the heresy of Judaizers who believed that in order to be saved, one must not only trust in Christ, but also made adhere to all of the Mosaic Law.
- So Paul deals with that in ch 3 & then gives his own spiritual resume & shows us that all of that is worthless because Christ is everything. So Paul forgets his accomplishments & advancements & failures & presses on to know Christ & to attain the ultimate reward of resurrection.

- Then last week Paul again encouraged the church toward humility and warned of the dangers of those who walk as enemies of the gospel and he contrasted our heavenly hope with the disposition of his opponents whose minds were set on earthly things.
- And he ended with this in vss. 20-21.
 - *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.* (Philippians 3:20-21)
- That brings us to the beginning of chapter 4, though practically speaking, verse 1 should end chapter 3 rather than begin a new chapter.
- Remember that the words of Scripture are inspired, but the chapter and verse divisions are not. Our modern chapter and verse divisions don't show up in history until the middle Ages.
- The reason I mention this is because the therefore links vs. 1 with the end of chapter 3 and the important thing to recognize is that, as we said last week, eschatology encourages ethics.
- In other words, what God will do in the future, almost always implies some present behavior on our part. As we saw last week, this shows up often in Scripture.
- In a sense, our motivation for faithfulness is grounded in past, present, and future. We should obey Christ because of what He has done, what He is doing, but also what He has promised to already do.
- So what does he say for us to do? We'll get to that.
- First, I want to make sure you notice this list of terms of endearment that Paul uses. My joy and crown, brothers, beloved, those whom I love and long for. While most of these show up elsewhere in Paul's writings, nowhere else do you see them all together.
- As we've mentioned before, Paul has a particular soft spot for Philippi and it seems to show here.
- And he's not just flattering them. He's not just buttering them up. As Calvin says, the endearing names arise not from flattery but from sincere love. He's not being hypocritical, he means what he writes, but at the same time, he's being intentional.
- I read a book a couple of years ago called Practicing Affirmation by Sam Crabtree and he mentions that affirmation or encouragement are like making deposits and criticisms and corrections are like making withdrawals.
- Sometimes you gotta make withdrawals. But doing so without a proper balance leads to a lot of pain, like an overdrawn account. Many of you have experienced that in your marriage or with your parents or kids or in your job. Many of you have been on the receiving end of a lot of criticism without nearly enough encouragement.
- Well, that's what I think of when I read verse 1. It is no surprise that vs. 2 will feature a public rebuke. Before he gets to the criticism, he first makes a deposit. He offers some love, some affirmation, some encouragement.
- And then he gives this command. Stand firm thus in the Lord.
- The thus shows us how to stand firm. We stand firm in this way. In what way? By imitating Paul as he imitates Christ. By forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, by constantly seeking more of Christ.
- In that way, stand firm.
- Now, this is a command we've already seen in Philippians. Look back at 1:27

- *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel* (Philippians 1:27)
- There we talked about how this is military imagery of soldiers standing firm in the midst of battle. It reminds me of that scene in Braveheart where Mel Gibson shouts out hold, hold as the English cavalry approaches.
- Hold the line. Don't give up. Don't give in. Don't quit.
- There will be temptations to do just that. But stand firm.
- And do so in light of the fact of the promises of God's future grace. Considering the fact of your assurance. The assurance that God will complete what He has begun, that He will transform our lowly body to be like His, that we will receive the reward of resurrection, therefore stand firm.
- Don't give in to pride or the false teaching or the division. Don't give in to despair.
- Stand firm. That word in Greek is steko, like stake yourself in place. Tether yourself to the truths of God's word. Anchor and root yourself in the assurances of God's word.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 2.

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. (Philippians 4:2)

- A few months ago, I posted a blog called On Public Rebuke. In it, I mentioned the fact that some sins aren't private affairs and need to be dealt with publicly. I talked about how the public nature of a person or the sin itself help us to understand how wide that circle needs to be.
- For instance, if a normal member of the church cheats on their spouse, but there is immediate repentance, that wouldn't be public. But if they bring their mistress to church, that would be. And I, as a public officer of the church, should have no expectation of privacy for my sins. Now, obviously that doesn't mean that I publicly confess every single sin, but any egregious, serious, or unrepentant sin would need to be public.
- Now, I mention all of that because here we have Paul very publicly rebuking these two women. Not only were their names read openly in Philippi, but in thousands of churches throughout the past 2000 years.
- Given the principles in Scripture, we can infer that either they were very public figures, perhaps elder wives or owners of houses in which the church met. Either they were public figures or their dispute was really well known.
- By the way, we have no idea what their dispute entailed. We don't know why they were disagreeing. We just know that they were. This might be related to the larger division that Paul was concerned about or it might just be a small example of a larger problem. We don't know.
- But notice what Paul does. He entreats. He encourages. He pleads.
- And, though he offers a rebuke, I think we can also imply that Paul must have thought pretty highly of their character in general in order to write what he does.

- I mean, think about it. Think about how many people would actually stick around at a church if the pastor stood on stage and called them out. That takes some guts. That takes some standing firm as we just read.
- So I think Paul is counting on, what one commentator called thick cushions of love and trust to absorb the impact of the rebuke. In other words, it seems like Paul must have considered them mature enough to be able to handle this atypical admonition.
- In the next verse we'll see that he considers them fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.
- So who were they?
- Well, we have no idea. Not for lack of trying.
 - There are all kinds of theories. Some scholars said that rather than Syntyche which is a feminine name it should be Synteches which was masculine and furthermore, this person speculated that this was the name of the Philippian jailer from Acts.
 - Some scholars came up with the fanciful idea that these weren't two individuals, but were symbols for Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians so this is like an allegory.
 - Someone else said that one of these women was Lydia from Acts.
 - But the real answer is that we have no clue and unless there is some major archaeological find from the first century, we'll probably never have a clue and to be honest, we don't need to know.
- All we need to know is that there were two individuals having some sort of dispute and Paul publicly tells them to cut it off.
- To be more precise, he tells them to agree in the Lord. Well, actually, he says to adopt the same mind. The verb he uses here that's translated agree is the same as when he says to be of the same mind and have this mind of Christ in chapter 2 and let those who are mature think this way and setting the mind in chapter 3. So he's been humming this same tune for a while.
- He tells them to agree in the Lord. To live and think, in particular of their conflict, in a way that is fitting and proper under the Lordship of Christ.
- As we've talked about over and over, unity within the body is so essential to the way of Christ. Don't get me wrong, there are things to fight over, there are things to divide over, they are things to argue over. But that is not the default.
- The goal should always be unity.
- We should make every effort to live at peace. If we must fight and argue, it should be for the sake of truth and gospel and not for the sake of our own preference.
- Now, before we move on, why does Paul call them out publicly? Well, not knowing the nature of their discord, it's kinda hard to say, but it stands to reason that whatever its precise nature, the conflict threatened to upset the unity of the church as a whole.
- Perhaps others were being drawn in & asked to take sides. Whatever the reason, Paul basically applies the logic of chap 2. Consider others more significant. Look not to your own interests, but the interests of others. Have this mind of Christ. Lay down your preference & settle the dispute.
- In other words, this particular conflict presents a prime context for applying humility for the sake of unity.

- So how do we apply this today?
- Well, in the midst of a dispute, ask yourself:
 - Why am I fighting? Is it for the sake of truth and Christ or for the sake of my own preference or reputation?
 - Furthermore, is this worth it? We've probably all had times that we fought over things that we later realized were rather insignificant. The more significant, the more willing you should be to keep the fires of conflict burning.
 - Next, what are the consequences? Are others being tempted to enter the fray? Is this threatening to divide the church or family?
 - Lastly, I would say that the default should be to just make peace. Seek a lot of counsel from your spouse, one of the elders, or a trusted friend and make it your goal to say that unless they think that this is worth fighting over that you'll let go. You'll overlook the offense as Proverbs says.
 - In other words, I think we oftentimes operate on the inverse of wisdom. We go to counsel and tell them to prove that this isn't worth fighting over, but I actually think the burden of proof is on you to prove that it is.
 - The burden of proof is always on the one who is arguing for the exception rather than the rule. If you can meet the burden, so be it. But if not, lay down your pride and make peace.
- One more quick thing, another implication of this text is that we bear a responsibility to make peace even when we might not be involved. Again, trying to discern when it is appropriate to involve yourself in the conflict of two others, can be tricky and takes a lot of wisdom, but nonetheless, we see biblical warrant for the idea that sometimes you should step in to help adjudicate a dispute as Paul does here and as he'll request in vs. 3.
- Let's look at that.

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. (Philippians 4:3)

- Yet again, we have all kinds of unanswered questions about this verse.
- Who is this true companion? Who is Clement?
- And yet again, there is no shortage of speculation. Let's talk about the true companion. In Greek, companion is syzygus which could also be translated as yokefellow.
 - Those who thought that the two women weren't women at all, but rather symbols of Jewish and Gentile believers taught that the true companion was Peter, who was charged with mediating between the two ethnic factions to bring them together.
 - Others thought that rather than translate the word Syzygus, that Syzygus was the proper name of an individual. Unfortunately, scholars have never found that word used as a proper name so that's a pure guess.
 - Others think this is the husband or brother of one of these women or the chief elder of the church.
 - Still others think that Paul is referring to the entire church as a unit, a single individual, who shares the burden of responsibility here.

- But once again, we don't really need to know who this is so much as what is asked of him or them.
- Paul says to help these women. Yet again, we see the idea of the bearing some level of corporate responsibility. Modern American evangelicalism has so atomized and individualized the faith that even in churches you'll often experience a you do you, I do me sort of mind your own business mentality.
- In fact, we had someone who left the church because the elders stepped in to adjudicate a conflict between members, even though those members both asked for our help. This other member thought we should have just stayed out of it.
- That's a far cry from the biblical picture which says to bear one another's burdens, to encourage each other, to correct each other, to love one another, to exhort one another, to admonish one another, to help one another, etc.
- We are members of the same body, the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of you, if one member suffers, the whole body suffers, and so forth.
- When you take into account all that the Bible says about the corporate body and our corporate identity and responsibility, it is really hard to argue for a private individualized atomized faith.
- Again, notice Paul's command. Help these women. Even if they don't want your help, the nature of their conflict demands it. In other words, my responsibility toward you isn't dependent on your willingness.
- Think about Matthew 18 which talks about approaching a brother in sin. The whole flow of the text presumes that you sometimes have to correct and rebuke those who don't want correction and rebuke.
- At the end of the day, your responsibility to God supersedes the feelings of your neighbor. Where there is conflict or sin, as you have opportunity, you have responsibility to seek to make peace.
- Oftentimes we say that we don't want to engage because we don't want to meddle, when really we're just afraid. Afraid of confrontation or the potential costs. Afraid of what others might think. Afraid of the response. What do all of those have in common? They're all self-centered, self-protective, self-interested. In other words, they're evidences of pride, not the sacrificial love and humility that Paul's been commending.
- There's a lot more wisdom and nuance surrounding that topic. If you're confused, please reach out, but for now I just want you to see that Paul doesn't presuppose our modern notions of a privatized and individualized faith. That would be completely antithetical to his understanding of the church body. In short, his understanding of the church demands that we think about and feel and act upon a mutual reciprocal obligation to each other.
- Even the verb that he chooses that we translate help is interesting. Its most common usage is in contexts where people are grabbing or seizing someone or something. So the idea is to take hold together with. The idea is like someone trying to push a car and so you help them by putting your hands on the bumper and start pushing with them. Or someone is trying to pull an ox out of a pit and you grab ahold and start pulling. The conceptual idea is that you help by working with them, joining hands in the work together.

- Now notice what he writes next. He speaks about these women again and says that they have labored side by side with Paul. Again, as we mentioned earlier, this correction of these women is not because Paul thinks that they're just immature and ungodly busybodies. Notice there is a recognition of respect in Paul's words. They are co-laborers.
- As are Clement and a number of others and all of them are named in the book of life.
- The idea of a book of life comes from the OT. For example:
 - *But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.* (Exodus 32:32)
 - *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.* (Psalm 69:28)
- But this is actually the only NT reference to the book of life besides a couple of uses in Revelation. For example:
 - *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:15)
- As you can see, it refers to a register of God's covenant people. Just like Philippi and other cities would have had civic registers of all their citizens, so the heavenly commonwealth has a roster or roll. Remember last week, our citizenship is in heaven.
- In other words, to have your name in the book of life means to be a member of the commonwealth of heaven, to be a participant in the new covenant founded upon the life, death, resurrection, and future return of king Jesus.
- Those who are citizens of the kingdom are called to live like it. Become what you are. Embrace your identity as a member of the commonwealth of heaven. Imitate your King in humility, in service, in sacrifice, and in confronting others, in making peace, in getting outside of your own little world of self-interest and preference and engaging others for their good and the glory of God.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- If you are a visitor this week, we invite you to partake of communion with us if you've trusted Christ, been obedient to His command to be baptized and are not walking in unrepentant sin.
- As we prepare our hearts to partake, I want to read about the institution of the Lord's supper from Mark's gospel.
- *And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."* (Mark 14:22–25)
- Notice that final line. Notice the eschatological dimension. I won't drink this wine again UNTIL the kingdom!
- We see a fulfillment of that in what Revelation 19 calls the wedding supper of the Lamb.

- We've often talked about the multi-faceted nature of communion. As 21st century Americans, we want to simplify and reduce things down to the lowest common denominator, but good theology is, like good wine, rich and robust.
- There is a complexity to it.
- So when it comes to communion, we've often noted a paradox.
- It calls us to look inward as we examine our own hearts and repent of our sins, but it doesn't terminate there. It also causes us to look outward to the provision of grace and the reality of forgiveness.
- And there is an upward dimension in that we consider our communion with God, but also a social dimension in that this meal also symbolizes our communion with each other.
- In addition, there is a past orientation. As often as we partake it we proclaim his death, that which has already been accomplished. But there is also a future orientation, an eschatological perspective to this meal. As we just read, the meal points beyond itself to a future meal and future grace, to the consummation of the kingdom.
- And as we've seen the past couple of weeks in Philippians, it is future grace that provides fuel for present faithfulness.
- So with that in mind, let's take a second and consider our sin and God's forgiveness. Let's consider our communion with God and each other. And let's look backward to Christ's death and forward to His return.
- Let me give you a few seconds to think and pray and then we'll partake.
- As we read...this is the body of Christ....and this is the blood of the new covenant for the forgiveness of sins.