

Why Christians Quarrel - Philippians 4:2-5 – February 24th, 2019

- The text before us today is very interesting and this for a number of reasons, chief of which is that it deals with church conflict.
- Namely, that of a quarrel between two sisters in Christ that Paul cared deeply about because they worked along side of him.
- It seems something had happened between them and it was causing some serious problems within the church there in Philippi.

- Before we get into this, it might be good to first point out a couple of observations, which will be germane to our understanding.
- First, it's interesting to note that we're not told specifically what the conflict was about, such that, God deemed it fit to omit it.
- The reason I point this out is because this is one of those places where God is generic, if you will, so we will fill in the blanks.

- The second observation I would like to point out is that of Paul not only speaking to the conflict, but how to resolve the conflict.
- It's for this reason that I would like to first address why it is that Christians fight with one another and how to resolve the conflict.
- Please know that this does not only apply to conflict in the church, it applies to conflict in marriage, parenting the workplace etc.

1. We give the devil a foothold

Ephesians 4:26–27 - 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

- The reason I'm starting off with this is because the enemy of our soul doesn't want us to know how subtle and insidious he is.
- By that I mean Satan will seek to get Christians to do his job for him and get Christians arguing and fighting one with another.
- This because, what Satan cannot do to the Christian from without, he can get Christians to do from within if he gets a foothold.

2. We are given over to jealousy

James 4:1–3 - 1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the main causes of conflict in the life of a Christian, this is at the top of the list.
- The reason being is that once Satan is able to get a foothold, he plants seeds of jealousy in the hearts and minds of Christians.
- Sadly, many a church split has come at the hands of a Christian being jealous of another Christian who had what they wanted.

3. We are easily hurt in our pride

Proverbs 12:16 - Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.

- One of the things the Lord has been ministering to me over the years is how pride makes us hypersensitive to what others say.
- In other words, when I think more highly of myself than I ought, it's just a matter of time before someone will offend my pride.
- Conversely, when I humble myself not thinking more highly of myself but instead value others above myself, I'm not offended.
- This brings us to the aforementioned question of how we as Christians can resolve conflict with others in church, home or work.
- You'll forgive what could arguably be seen as an oversimplification, but here are two effective ways that we can resolve conflict.
- While the first way is applicable to both Christians and non-Christians, the second way has specific application to the Christian.

1. Let your gentleness be evident

- I don't know if it's possible to overstate just how important it is to be gentle in our approach to others when resolving the conflict.
- Notice that the Apostle Paul, in verse five of our text, exhorts the Christians in Philippi to let their gentleness be evident to all.
- What he's saying is that being soft and gentle has the propensity to dissipate the anger, whereas harshness stirs it up more.

Proverbs 15:1 - A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 25:15 - Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.

2 Timothy 2:23–26 - 23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

2. Know the Lord's return is near

- I'm personally of the belief that what Paul says at the end of verse five about the “Lord is near” is that the Lord's return is near.
- There are two reasons for this, the first of which is what he said in prior verses by contrasting being earthly or heavenly minded.
- I would suggest our heavenly-minded awareness of Christ's soon return makes us rejoice in the Lord and gentle toward others.

Charles Spurgeon - “...as a cure for disagreements, the apostle says, ‘Rejoice in the Lord always.’ People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offense or to take offense. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things, that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles, which naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord.”