

Philippians, Chapter Four, Lesson One

LIVING IN HARMONY Philippians 4:1-7

STIMULATE

** As we began our study together last week, we noted the single most effective method of teaching; that which also proved to have the longest lasting impact upon those who are taught. Do you recall that method of teaching?

It was "Teaching by Example".

** Who were the three individuals from Scripture that we saw to be great examples for us to pattern our own lives after?

The apostle Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

** Hopefully we have been aware of the godly pattern we have observed in the lives of others around us; either from Scripture or from the lives of brothers and sisters in Christ who share their hearts and ministry with us.

We need to be "**Repeating the Pattern**" of godliness; not only because it is the way we should live, but also as a pattern setter for others. cf. 1Corinthians 11:1

MOTIVATE

** Over the next three weeks together for us in our study of God's Word, the apostle Paul will close out his letter to the Philippians and will be instructing us on three specific areas in the life of a Christian. We are going to be blessed as we learn from Paul about:

LIVING IN HARMONY - Philippians 4:1-7

LEARNING TO BE CONTENT - Philippians 4:8-13

LOVING TO SHARE - Philippians 4:14-23

As we strive to represent Christ in this world, what area of our corporate lives is Satan most likely to attack?

Our unity - he exists to cause division!

** Today we want to learn what to do when division enters the Body of Christ. Are there any steps we can take to preserve the unity of the Spirit? How can we continue to be "**Living in Harmony**" to the glory of God? Please open your Bible to Philippians 4:1-7 as we prepare our hearts to learn from His Word.

Read Passage (V.1-3) (V.4-7)

Opening Prayer

Living in Harmony

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** We have become quite familiar with Paul's writing style and we know that he is about to connect a command with a previous statement of fact. How do we know that?

Because he frequently connects the two with the word "therefore". Paul repeatedly uses this form of instruction, giving us God's stated truth and then following it up with the best application.

** Here in verse one, what is the basic command put forth by the apostle?

"...stand firm in the Lord..."

** Is that a new thought of Paul's to the Philippians?

No, see Philippians 1:27 cf. 1Corinthians 16:13-14, Galatians 5:1

** In our present situation, what statement of fact is Paul connecting to this command with the use of the word "therefore"?

From chapter 3, verse 18 - "for many walk...that are enemies of the cross of Christ..." There is a tremendous need for Christians to stand firm, one in the faith, against those who would rise up against the truth of the gospel.

** Do you recall the four types of bad examples lived out by the "many" in chapter 3, verse 19, which we should avoid?

- 1) Actions which lead to destruction!
- 2) Feeding our lust - worshipping it!
- 3) Boasting and/or approving of sin!
- 4) Setting our minds on earthly behavior patterns!

"Living in Harmony" only honors the Lord when that harmony reflects His righteousness and glory!

** Back to Paul's command in verse one of our text, does he just blast away at the Philippians without any regard for their mutual relationship?

No - not at all! Paul brackets this command with the term "my beloved". He wants them to remember how much he cares for them and to respond in obedience to the loving exhortation that their relationship allowed.

** What further steps, still here in verse one, does Paul take to insure that the Philippians know they are loved?

- 1) "...whom I long to see..."
- 2) "...my joy and my crown..." cf. 1Thessalonians 2:19-20

V. 2 ** As we move now into the next verse, we will meet two ladies who are following some of the bad examples that were exhibited by those who were called "the enemies of the cross of Christ". Look closely at verse two and tell me what was wrong. What were these two ladies lacking?

Harmony! They had become divided.

** Do we know what the issue was which led to their division?

No we do not - which makes a very important point. It does not matter what may cause division in the Body of Christ, we must overcome it if we wish to honor the Lord by "Living in Harmony".

** Do you suppose that anyone else living in Philippi might have had this problem?

Most certainly! cf. Philippians 2:1-2 Because we are still sinners, Christians are very open to the self-centered type of thinking which only leads to division within the Body.

** Before we leave verse two, where is the only place possible that can bring about true harmony between two human beings?

It can only be found "in the Lord". As our hearts are tuned to His, they will be tuned to each other as we pray together, serve together, worship together and live together "in the Lord".

V. 3 ** Were these two ladies some kind of spiritual losers that only caused problems and had been of no help?

Far from it! - They had "shared [Paul's] struggle in the cause of the gospel". They had been very effectual in their labors together for Christ.

** At the beginning of this verse, is Paul referring to anyone in particular as he asks for help in reconciling these ladies?

Yes. The term for "true comrade" is *suzugos* and means literally "a yokefellow". Paul is referring to one of the overseers there in Philippi to which he addressed this letter back in Philippians 1:1. This individual would be faithful to fulfill this calling understanding what the Lord had said in Matthew 5:9 - "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God".

** To give a greater depth to the description of service which had been offered by Euodia and Syntyche, what does Paul do in verse three?

He says that they had worked along side of "Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers..."

** How are these ladies and these workers described?

"...whose names are in the book of life." cf. Revelation 20:15 and Luke 10:20

They have been united with all of the redeemed, they had true unity in the Lord, but their sin was preventing them from experiencing its joy.

V. 4 ** That introduces us to the solution for division in the Body. Paul is now going to give us his four step plan for "**Living in Harmony**". What is the first step given to us here in verse four?

1) Rejoice in the Lord always! The genuine joy of Christ defuses any and all conflict, when all members of His body are willing to shift their focus to Christ.

V. 5 ** How about the second step?

2) Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. *epieikes* lit. "equitable or yielding". The first person who should experience our forbearing spirit is the one with which we are at odds.

** You might be thinking, "Oh great - I have to be the one, but from where will I get this patience?"

It is already residing within us! cf. Galatians 5:22

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience** . . ." makrothumia lit. long suffering

** Stuck right in the middle of these four steps, Paul places a motivational reminder, what is it?

"The Lord is near" - rather than referring to the soon coming of our Lord, Paul is here referring to the close proximity of our Lord. cf. Psalm 119:151

V. 6 ** Ok - We rejoice always, we are patient with all, now what is the third step which allows us to be "**Living in Harmony**"?

3) "Be anxious for nothing..."

** How does anxiety cause division in the Body?

If I am preoccupied with worry over something that someone else has said or done which might cause division, I have allowed my focus to become blurred and it will limit my own effectiveness in showing love to those very same brothers or sisters.

** Still here in verse six, what is the fourth and final step?

4) Pray for one another!

** What qualifier does the middle of this verse add to our prayers?

"...with thanksgiving..."

** Given the context, for whom do you suppose we should express thankfulness?

For the very people we are having problems with!

You can imagine how quickly both Euodia and Syntyche began "**Living in Harmony**" as they applied Paul's instruction here and began thanking God for each other!

** There are three different terms used in this verse for prayer, do you see them?

Prayer - This term carries the idea of worship.

Supplication - Is a crying out for help.

Requests - This calls for us to be specific.

V. 7 ** If we will be faithful to follow these four steps as we strive to be "**Living in Harmony**" with each other, what will be the result?

"...the peace of God...shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God's peace will insure that we are "**Living in Harmony**"!

** When we experience this marvelous peace, will we be able to explain it to the unsaved around us?

No - it "surpasses all comprehension"... it is a miracle for which we praise God.

** According to this verse, who are the only people who experience this peace?

Those who are "in Christ Jesus". cf. Philippians 3:14

EXTRICATE

** We have learned together the importance of following the right example and of being a good example ourselves. What was the problem in our passage today that had sprung out of following bad examples?

Euodia and Syntyche experienced the lack of harmony and there was division in the Body of Christ.

DELINEATE

** What were the four steps we need to take so that we can continue "**Living in Harmony**"?

1) Rejoice always 2) Be patient 3) Do not be anxious 4) Pray for one another

EVALUATE

** When I am feeling tension or disunity with another believer, which of these am I least likely to do?

That is going to depend upon your situation and the relationship you have with your brother or sister in the Lord. But no matter what, we must be faithful to do all that we can to restore the damaged relationship. cf Romans 12:18

ACTIVATE

** Lord, help us to be more like You. Willing to die for each other if need be, to show our love and commitment to be "Living in Harmony".

Closing Prayer