

Chapter 9: Peace

Philippians 4:2–9

This world is many things, but it is not peaceful. When we turn on the news, we hear of constant wars, rumors of war, crime, and fear. When we go to work, we find ourselves surrounded by office politics, conflict, gossip, drama, and power plays. When we head home, we enter into short tempers, arguments, and long-developing dysfunctions in our families. But even when we can find solitude, we discover to our horror that our own hearts are filled to the brim with anxiety, bitterness, rage, and terror. No matter where we go in this world, we cannot find peace.

What, though, should we expect? Is it realistic to expect peace on this side of the Fall? Or, is the drumbeat of peace reserved for naive idealists who do not fully understand the depth of the brokenness of this world? As much as we crave peace, do we need to relegate our hope for peace to the coming reign of the Prince of Peace?

In fact, peace is possible. Although Paul has only used the word “peace” once so far in this letter in his standard greeting (“Grace to you and *peace* from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”; Phil. 1:2), he now turns his attention to peace as the *fruit* and *goal* of everything that he has taught the Philippians in this letter. Their unity, their joy, and their ability to endure suffering depends on their experience of the peace of God that will surpass all understanding.

Peace with Others (Phil. 4:2–3)

To begin, consider everything that Paul has discussed so far in his letter to the Philippians—everything from an update about his legal standing to the Christ hymn to theological reflections on justification, sanctification, and glorification. With all this content, it is surprising, to see such an individualized appeal as Paul writes in Philippians 4:2: “I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.” We are told nothing about the nature or severity of their dispute, but the fact that Paul addresses these two women by name suggests that their argument was longstanding and serious, especially when we factor in how long it would have taken for the news of their argument to reach Paul, plus the length of time it would have taken for Paul’s letter containing this admonition to return back to Philippi.

So, just as in Philippians 3:19–30, where Paul described in detail the comings and goings of Timothy and Epaphroditus, this discussion of the situations of specific people seems to be almost underneath the dignity of this letter on a first reading. But unlike in the case of Timothy and Epaphroditus, Paul does not write about these quarreling women to commend them, but to admonish them. The whole section feels incredibly awkward, even as we read these words almost two thousand years after they were written. Why, then, does Paul wade into this dispute?

The Need to Intervene

First, we gain important context for understanding Paul’s intentions when we remember everything that Paul has written about his passion for seeing the gospel advance (Phil. 1:12–18) and for unity in the body (Phil. 1:27–2:5). Paul explains that Euodia and Syntyche “have labored side by side with me in the gospel” (Phil. 4:3), and division among gospel workers can undermine the advancement of the gospel. It is even possible that Paul has written so much in this letter regarding the need for unity in the church specifically to provide a theological backdrop for what he needs to say to Euodia and Syntyche.¹

At the very least, Paul demonstrates with these words that Christian unity is more than a theoretical concept, and that it applies to real situations involving real people. As Frank Thielman writes, “Here he shows that the heady concept of Christian unity must be worked out on the ground, one quarrel at a time.”² We should not for a moment think that Paul is being heavy-handed to make a point or that he is exploiting these women for the purpose of setting an example. Rather, he is treating a serious issue with the seriousness that this issue deserves.

Pastoral Sensitivity

Second, Paul provides an example in these verses of how to deal with conflicts in a gentle, pastorally sensitive way. He rejects the fool’s choice between, on the one hand, venting every frustration he has felt about their situation or, on the other hand, passively ignoring the situation altogether in the hopes that it will go away.³ Rather, he demonstrates here the proper way to appeal to fellow believers who are struggling to get along.⁴

To start, Paul writes only a single verse to these women, with another verse to ask others in the congregation to come to their aid. Although Paul judges that he cannot avoid addressing this issue altogether, he also does not extend the embarrassment his words would cause as they were read to the church at Philippi. He says what he needs to say, and then he moves on. His words are even-handed and gentle. The ESV perfectly captures the redundant way that Paul repeats the word “I entreat” in relation to each of the women, so that it does not seem that Paul is favoring one or the other.⁵ Paul’s mentioning these women by name is an extraordinary measure, so he does all that he can to soften the blow as he pleads for their repentance and agreement in the Lord.⁶

Additionally, he does not expose any secrets or assign blame, or even try to sort out the issues behind their dispute. Rather, he writes in a way that seems to ignore the content of their disagreement altogether, choosing rather to focus on the main thing: their agreement in the Lord. Paul previously used the phrase “to agree” (lit., “to think the same thing”) back in Philippians 2:2: “... complete my joy by *being of the same mind*...,” a vivid phrase that extends beyond formal agreement to the point of “having identical feelings and attitudes toward each other, a total harmony of life.”⁷ In this way, he pulls this particular dispute into the larger context of the letter, which both helps the women to avoid feeling that they have been singled out, but that also provides a concrete example of what it would look like to apply what Paul has written into everyday life.

The chief exhortation, however, is not merely that the women agree, but that they agree “in the Lord.” This phrase functions to strengthen Paul’s appeal in multiple directions. First, because both women are “in the Lord,” then they ought to have the same mind—the self-sacrificial mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). The Son existed in the form of God, but he did not consider equality with God as a thing

to be grasped, so he willingly emptied himself by taking the form of a servant for people who had sinned against him. Regardless of who is right and who is wrong, Euodia and Syntyche should have that same mind in them. Second, if they are “in the Lord,” then they will want to do whatever it will take to avoid bringing disrepute on the Lord for the sake of the advancement of the gospel. Third, because they are “in the Lord,” they will recognize that it is the Lord himself who judges them.⁸ In this way, Paul appeals to them not on the basis of his own authority, but the Lord’s.

Enlisting Help

Finally, Paul does not seek to solve this problem alone. Furthermore, he does not even admonish these women to tackle this problem alone. Instead, Paul asks his “true companion” (lit., “yokefellow”) to help: “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” (Phil. 4:3). To whom is Paul speaking here?

Commentators have speculated many ideas to try to identify this “yokefellow.” Paul never uses this term anywhere else, but the word describes a co-worker in the gospel as though this person were an ox yoked together with Paul to plow the fields for the harvest of the gospel. In any other context, we would think immediately of Paul’s faithful protégé Timothy, but Paul has already stated that he would not be sending Timothy to them for a little while (Phil. 3:19–24), so it cannot be him.⁹ Gordon Fee offers an elaborate and plausible argument in support of Luke, but there is no way to validate his theory.¹⁰ Many others have suggested that the word “yokefellow” might not be a description of this person, but an actual name *Syzygus* since, as William Hendriksen contends, “A similar pun occurs in Philem. 11: ‘Onesimus (Useful) who once was useless to you but now is useful to you and to me.’”¹¹ This argument is also speculative, however, since there is no record of anyone else in the ancient world named “Syzygus.”¹² Still others read this as an appeal to the church at Philippi as a whole,¹³ or even perhaps as a general challenge to individual members to become Paul’s true yokefellows by entering into this situation for the sake of gospel unity.¹⁴

Instead, it seems better to avoid speculation altogether by focusing not on what we *don’t* know (that is, the identity of the “true yokefellow”), but on what we *do* know: that Paul asks for help. Although he is an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, he does not try to handle this conflict on his own, micromanaging the details of these women’s reconciliation or throwing his apostolic weight around to force a resolution. Instead, Paul wisely recognizes that this situation will require the involvement of other people with many different roles and gifts, likely including the elders and deacons at the church (cf. Phil. 1:1), but also including “the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil. 4:3). In the same way, we need the humility to ask appropriately for help in conflict resolution (cf. Matt. 18:15–20), whether for our own conflicts, or those of others. If Paul was humble enough to ask for help, what keeps us from doing so?

Peace with Others

Although Paul does not use the word “peace” in these two verses, he identifies a threat to the peace of the church. Two gospel workers are fighting, dividing the church and hindering further progress of the gospel. If the gospel of Jesus Christ is to advance, then Christians must seek peace in their own relationships no matter what the cost, whether that means personally reconciling with someone from whom we are estranged, or helping others to do so. Gospel unity is messy, but it is

worth the price as we seek to help people reconcile and restore relationships. Remember the words of Jesus: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9).

After all, seeking peace with others is much of what it means to live our lives worthy of our gospel citizenship. Through peace, we stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side (Phil. 1:27), being of the same mind, having the same love, and being in full accord and of one mind (Phil. 2:2), doing nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility counting others better than ourselves and looking to others’ interests (Phil. 2:3–4). Christ himself set the example of seeking peace no matter the personal cost (Phil. 2:5–11), and God calls us to take up Christ’s same mindset by pursuing peace among fellow believers.¹⁵

Peace for Ourselves (Phil. 4:4–7)

Next, Paul shifts his attention from the personal strife of Euodia and Syntyche to address the entire Philippians church in regard to their *attitudes* and their *anxieties*. Where Paul spoke in the previous passage of peace *between* individual believers, Paul now speaks of peace *for* individual believers in the church. In other words, Paul addresses two issues: (1) Should believers ever be anxious about anything? and (2) What should believers do when they *are* anxious about something?

The Believer’s Attitude

In Philippians 4:4–5, Paul explains that the believer’s general attitude is a disposition of *rejoicing* and *reasonableness*. So, he writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). Paul touches on the themes of joy and rejoicing frequently in this letter (Phil. 1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17–18, 28–29; 3:1; 4:1), whether writing about his own joy, or about the joy that he desires for the Philippians. So that we do not miss his emphasis, he instructs us twice to rejoice. The future tense of the “again *I will say*” does not suggest that Paul will tell them to rejoice again at some uncertain point down the road, but that he (now) decidedly and resolutely instructs them once again to rejoice.¹⁶

Then, Paul urges the Philippians to “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5). This word “reasonableness” captures a rich range of meaning that no single English word can convey. William Hendriksen offers the long list of words to try to get at what the full meaning of this Greek word by looking at it from multiple angles: “big-heartedness... forbearance, yieldedness, geniality, kindness, gentleness, sweet reasonableness, considerateness, charitableness, mildness, magnanimity, generosity.”¹⁷ In the wider context of this letter, Moisés Silva argues that this word reflects “an attitude of contentment with one’s state, even when one has not been treated justly....In other words, Paul expects believers to be guided by a frame of mind that does not put priority on personal rights.”¹⁸ Therefore, this word reflects the attitude of Christ himself, who emptied himself by taking the form of a servant and humbling himself in obedience to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:6–8). Paul may even be implying that the disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche stemmed from an injustice that was not met with “reasonableness,” but with an insistence on one’s rights. Again, though, there is no way to know for sure.

Thankfully, Paul also gives the reason *why* Christians can afford to rejoice in the midst of deep hardship, and to be reasonable in the midst of injustice: “The Lord is at hand.” In the eyes of the world, it makes no sense for us to rejoice when we are persecuted, or to behave reasonably when we

are cheated. And yet, we are able to do so because the return of Christ is imminent, so that our confidence in his coming lets us overlook instances where we are slighted in this life.¹⁹ Christ willingly humbled himself all the way to death on the cross in spite of his innocence, and because he did, the Father highly exalted him. The only way that we can similarly embrace the cruciform life that Christ calls us to is by remembering that our suffering in this life is temporary, for *the Lord is at hand*.

The Believer's Anxieties

Nevertheless, there will be times when believers do not feel able to rejoice, or when they will face circumstances that they cannot face with reasonableness. Paul does not in the least suggest that Christians are able to live with unwavering confidence, but neither does he suggest that we ought to wallow endlessly in our anxieties and doubts. Instead, Paul writes, “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6–7). While Paul acknowledges that we *will* face deeply troubling problems, he also identifies an outlet for dealing with those problems: prayer.

When we feel anxious, Paul calls us to pray, casting our anxieties on the Lord who cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7), and taking everything to him in prayer and supplication. Additionally, Paul instructs us to pray “with thanksgiving.” In our English translation, we might think that Paul is simply listing a third category of prayer alongside “prayer and supplication,” but, in fact, we are supposed to read the phrase “with thanksgiving” with what follows: “*with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known to God.”²⁰ Just as our general disposition ought to be one of rejoicing and reasonableness, so should we offer our requests to God *with thanksgiving*, which is “an explicit acknowledgment of creatureliness and dependence, a recognition that everything comes as gift, the verbalization before God of his goodness and generosity.”²¹ Prayer is not a shopping list of our demands, and thanksgiving is not a meaningless, perfunctory response. Rather, by balancing prayer with thanksgiving, we acknowledge that we live our lives before the face of God, as unworthy, yet beloved, beneficiaries of his grace.

From this perspective, we take our anxieties to God not only to seek direct help for our problems, but also to remind ourselves about the nature of our relationship to him. Where we struggle to rejoice and to display reasonableness, God reminds us through prayer, with thanksgiving, about the ultimate realities of this world—that he, the Lord, is at hand. Through prayer, with thanksgiving, God works not only to address the surface-level causes of our anxieties, but also the deeper roots of those anxieties: our lack of faith. Through prayer, with thanksgiving, God restores us to a right relationship and orientation to *him*, and through our renewed relationship and re-orientation God gives us his peace that surpasses all understanding to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Vividly, Paul portrays peace standing guard over us as a garrison of soldiers, keeping us safe from the onslaught of our anxieties.²²

Peace for Ourselves

Even when we do not experience interpersonal conflict, our lives are filled with dangers, snares, and anxieties. The peace of God, then, lays a foundation for living our lives with joy, free from the need to protect our own interests, and reassured through ongoing prayer with thanksgiving. This is

the peace that has allowed Paul to rejoice even in prison, under the threat of death, with rival preachers all around (Phil. 1:12–18), and it is the peace that gave Christ the confidence to humble himself in obedience even to death on a cross (Phil. 2:6–8). It is the peace that stems from the righteousness that God imputes to us through faith in Christ (Phil. 3:9), and that anticipates our future glorification (Phil. 3:20–21). It is a peace that allows us to face divisions of unity (Phil. 4:2–3), and a peace that calms the troubled waters of our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

Peace in the World (Phil. 4:8–9)

In Philippians 4:8, Paul writes, “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” (Phil. 4:8). To understand the point Paul is making, it is helpful to notice the imperative he gives: “think about these things.” In the next verse, he will give a similar list, but with an imperative to “practice these things” (Phil. 4:9), so that Paul closes this section by laying out what the Philippians ought to *think* and to *practice*.

Whatever is...

Because the list of virtues that Paul lists in Philippians 4:8 are all similar to one another, it helps to study each word individually before trying to pull together an overall picture of what Paul is doing in this passage.

True: Although Paul often uses the word “truth” as pertaining simply to that which is “in accordance with fact,”²³ or in reference specifically to the truthfulness of the gospel message,²⁴ here the word has a meaning more in line with the sense of “upright.”²⁵

Honorable: This word evokes “special respect” with regard to “characteristics, states of being, and things, honorable, worthy, venerable, holy, above reproach.”²⁶ In this case, the “special respect” is due to someone not primarily in relation to their position alone (as in the case of American judges, whom we address as “Your Honor” regardless of how honorable or dishonorable an individual judge might be), but in relation to “honorable conduct.”²⁷

Just: Although our words “just” and “righteousness” don’t look at all alike in English, the connection between the two is very clear in Greek, where “just” is *dikaia* and “righteousness” is *dikaiosunē*. We should not forget the immediate context of the righteousness (*dikaiosunē*) that depends on faith that Paul had spoken about in Philippians 3:9, and here the idea of “just” would measure up to “certain requirements of justice [to be] right, fair, equitable.”²⁸ Of course, Paul is speaking about *God’s* requirements of justice.

Pure: The word “pure” is originally “a cultic word” relating to ritual sacrifices and purifications,²⁹ but “the earlier ritual meaning no longer plays a significant role in the NT...for the word group is used to express the moral purity demanded in the behavior of Christians.”³⁰

Lovely: This word for “lovely” is only used here in the New Testament, and it literally means “toward love.” The dictionary defines this as pertaining to causing pleasure or delight, pleasing, agreeable, lovely, amiable.³¹

Commendable: Like “lovely,” this word is also used only here in the New Testament, and we might roughly translate it as “good fame” or “good report.” The dictionary offers the definition of “praiseworthy, commendable.”³²

Excellence: This word refers to “uncommon character worthy of praise, excellence of character, exceptional civic virtue,”³³ and it is used here “to speak of human virtue...a general term for good and correct behavior in Christians.”³⁴

Worthy of praise: We should start by recalling that Paul used this word earlier in this same letter to speak of the praises that belong to God: “...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and *praise* of God” (Phil. 1:11). This word, then, has two different, but related, definitions. In Philippians 1:11, the word referred to “the act of expressing admiration or approval, praise, approval, recognition,” while here the word refers instead to “a thing worthy of praise.”³⁵

In all, these virtues offer a comprehensive picture of the good that we should seek out in life. So, where exactly do we find such virtues, and, more pressingly, what are we to do about the fact that we typically find virtue mixed with at least some degree of brokenness?

Think About These Things

To work through these questions, we must remember that Paul writes this list to convey a very clear call to action, that we should *think* about these things. Paul does not, however, mean that we can “think about these things” with disinterested, dispassionate, or surface-level thinking, but that we should “reckon” or “take into account” these virtues in our lives.³⁶ Whenever we come across genuine good, Paul is instructing us to stop, evaluate it, contemplate it, and consider the implications of that good thing. In the larger context of this letter, we have to wonder how much thinking about these things has with cultivating the mind that was in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5).

Paul is even encouraging us to look for virtue even when it is surrounded by sin. So, perhaps we might observe a commendable act performed by an unbelieving neighbor, or a just decision by an unjust ruler, or some facet of truth captured in the art of a pagan, or some measure of excellence in the work of a rival, or something worthy of praise buried on the twelfth page of a newspaper filled with doom and gloom. Paul does this by the way he shifts his language from “whatever is...” to “if there is any...” partway through his list of virtues. By doing this, Paul is not simply *summarizing* the earlier virtues he has listed, but *qualifying* what he has written. That is, he is acknowledging that we won’t ever find perfect examples of virtue, so we should instead strive to find *any* excellence or *anything* worthy of praise.³⁷

Given the significant amount of content in this letter about the nature of Christian suffering, and about the necessity and goodness of rejoicing in the midst of suffering, Paul’s instructions here make sense. In a church surrounded by so much suffering, it would be natural for the believers at Philippi to allow themselves to be consumed with anxiety, worrying and fretting about the outcome of their situations. But, instead, Paul tells these believers to devote their minds to virtuous things, and especially to seek out virtue—even when virtue is only a single, small island in a sea of fallen sinfulness. As Frank Thielman wisely writes:

Perhaps Paul knows that since the Philippians are being persecuted by the society around them, they will be tempted to reject everything outside the church as indelibly tainted with evil. If so, then this list, with its admonition to look for virtue (*arete*; NIV “excellent”) in the wider world, reminds the Philippians that, although society sometimes seems hostile and evil, it is still part of God’s world and contains much good that the believer can affirm.³⁸

We do not seek out virtue in this world because we are naive or in denial about its brokenness. Rather, we know from the start that virtue exists only by the grace of God, either by his common grace to the whole world, or by his special grace to the redeemed. The existence of virtue, then, acts as a signpost to remind us of the reality of the good reign and rule of the Lord Christ Jesus. Furthermore, these virtues remind us that the Lord is at hand, so that Christ not only upholds all things, but that he is also coming soon to bring about the final redemption of all things.

Practically, one of the greatest ways to increase our ability to recognize virtue in the world is to stop filling our minds with so much fodder for anxiety. Toward that end, we may need to turn off the endless cable news and to log out of social media sites. We need to keep in mind that media platforms make money by capturing your attention, and they often do this by deliberately engaging (that is, *manipulating*) your deepest emotional anxieties for their own profit. Refuse, then, to give them that opportunity. Instead, spend time with real people in your actual circles of influence (church, school, work, neighborhood), rather than interacting with mere caricatures of them through gossip or what you read about them in the paper. We need to cultivate neighborliness in order to be refreshed by seeing the work that God is doing in the lives of actual people around us.

Practice These Things

More than a list of virtues to think upon, Paul also provides a list of what we ought to do: “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9). Through this shorter list, Paul tells the believers in Philippi to put into practice everything from his entire teaching ministry and conduct of life.³⁹ While we should fill our minds with virtue, the Christian life is not purely about thinking. More than that, Christianity shapes the entirety of our lives as God conforms us to the cruciform pattern that Paul followed and that Jesus Christ established.

Additionally, this command comes with a promise: “...and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9). Previously, Paul had written that they could experience the “peace of God” through prayer (Phil. 4:7), but here he promises that believers will experience the personal presence of the “God of peace” himself.⁴⁰ In the midst of the deepest suffering, God himself will comfort his people with peace. God does not impersonally dispatch peace to us from heaven, but he visits us by his Spirit to bring comfort to our anxiety and suffering.

Seek Peace

Philippians 4:2–9 covers a wide range of material and concerns, from personal squabbles to prayer to paying attention to the influence of God’s common grace in the world. And yet, Paul gravitates twice to the concept of *peace* in this passage, first in Philippians 4:7 (“...and the peace of God...”), and then in Philippians 4:9 (“...and the God of peace...”). When, when we reflect back on the first section, we realize that the problem between Euodia and Syntyche was a lack of peace in their relationship with one another. The overall theme of this passage, then, teaches us to seek peace in our relationships, peace in our own hearts, and peace in our engagement with the world. Christians ought to be people who seek peace.

When, then, is it so hard to seek peace with those whom we have offended? Why then do we worry so much about our lives? Why do we look upon this world with such disdain? Do we not

know that the Lord is still in his holy temple (Ps. 11)? Do we not believe that God will provide for us even more so than he provides for the lilies and the birds (Matt. 6:25–34)? Do we doubt the truthfulness of our Lord when he claimed to now possess *all* authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18)? Do we question whether the Lord is truly at hand (Phil. 3:5)?

In the confidence we have because of the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, freely given for us, let us boldly seek to make peace in our relationships. Let us cast our cares on the Lord, because he cares for us. And let us look upon this world not as a serious threat, but as a theatre where God will display his glory even over those powers of darkness who have most sought to depose him. Not only has the Lord Jesus Christ received all authority in heaven and earth, so that at his name every knee bows and every tongue confesses his lordship, but he will undoubtedly return to usher in his perfect reign of peace forever.

Brothers and sisters, think about these things, and put them into practice.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are personal disputes so difficult to navigate? What does Paul teach us from his handling of the situation between Euodia and Syntyche? Do you have a dispute with another person where you need to learn to agree in the Lord? Are you aware of any other disputes where you are in a position to help arguing people to agree in the Lord?
2. Is it reasonable for Paul to instruct us to “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” (Phil. 4:4)? Why is constant rejoicing in the Lord so important in the Christian life? What keeps you from rejoicing? What strategies might help remind you to rejoice in the Lord always?
3. In light of the anxieties that we will inevitably face, what does Paul teach us about prayer? Why does Paul emphasize making our requests known to God *with thanksgiving* (Phil. 2:6)? How does Paul see the promise of the peace of God attached to our prayers?
4. On what kinds of things does Paul exhort us to direct our attention in Philippians 4:8? Where does most of your attention end up going? What might you need to change in your habits and lifestyle to redirect your attention to things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable? How, then, might you “practice these things” (Phil. 4:9)?

Notes

1. Thielman, *Philippians*, 216.
2. Thielman, *Philippians*, 222.
3. In my judgment, every Christian leader should read the remarkable book, *Crucial Conversations*, which lays out a practical, step-by-step process for avoiding this kind of “fool’s choice” by handling complicated, high-stakes, and emotionally explosive issues with effectiveness. (Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when the Stakes are High* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012).)

4. For the following section, I am indebted to the insights of R. C. H. Lenski, who writes: “Paul teaches us a bit of practical theology by the way in which he handles this case. He applies brief, gentle admonition to the women themselves, and he asks one of the esteemed members in the congregation to lend aid. Paul does not address the women directly, which means that he treats their case objectively. Paul does not scold them, either jointly or separately. Paul avoids negative, don’ts.’ ‘Mind the same thing in the Lord!’ is the proper admonition. Are they not both ‘in the Lord’? Do they not both intend to mind whatever they mind in the Lord’? Then, surely, they both should equally mind ‘the same thing,’ i.e., have the same thing in their thoughts and in their efforts. It is so simple, so natural, and should be so easy.” (Lenski, *The Interpretation of Philippians*, 866.)

5. Hendriksen, *Philippians*, 190–91.

6. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 389–92.

7. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 178.

8. “...[‘in the Lord’] probably means that they are to agree as those who have a common bond in the Lord, though it might signify ‘in submission to the Lord’, that is, by obeying him (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5).” (O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 478.)

9. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 394.

10. “If we are correct in identifying ‘true yokefellow’ as one of Paul’s intimate companions in itinerant ministry, then it cannot refer to Timothy, who is coming at a time later than this letter. Of the others who are available, the most likely candidate is Luke. Two things make this plausible, if one also considers Luke as the most like person to be identified with the ‘we-passages’ in Acts. First, the ‘we’ narrative takes Luke to Philippi in Acts 16, where it leaves off until Paul’s return to Philippi some four to six years later in 20:1–5. The author of Acts, whether Luke or not, surely intends his readers to infer that he had spent these intervening years in Philippi. If so, then as one of Paul’s most trusted companions, he had given oversight to that work for some years in the past.

Second, if our view of the date and place of this letter is correct, then Luke had recently been with Paul during the earlier period of this same imprisonment when Paul wrote the letters to Colossae and Philemon (Col 4:14; Phlm 23). The letter to Philippi, however, which appears to have been written toward the end of that imprisonment (see on 2:24 above), is especially noticeable for its lack of the names of any of Paul’s companions. All of this makes perfectly good sense if Luke had at some earlier point left for Philippi—and was perhaps the catalyst of their recent revival or material support (4:10). None of this can be proved, of course. Nonetheless, it fits all the available historical data, and the epithet ‘true yokefellow’ would be especially fitting of Luke, especially in light of the affectionate language of Col 4:14. At the same time the reason for addressing one person among them in the second singular is also resolved.” (Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 394–95.)

11. Hendriksen, *Philippians*, 191.

12. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 393, footnote 44.

13. “But the simplest and perhaps the best answer is to say that Paul sees the entire Philippian church as a unit, as a single individual, who shares with him the burden of his apostolic work, and he so addresses them. He sees the Philippian church yoked together with him as two oxen teamed up to accomplish an important task (Houlden). Notice Paul’s subtle, though nonetheless powerful, stress with the preposition σύν (‘with’) within the space of two verses (vv 2–3). Thus he asks (ἑρωτᾷν) them to cooperate with him now by resisting division and by effectively working to restore harmony.” (Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 180.)

14. “On the basis of our limited information, the most reasonable interpretation is that the appellative is in effect Paul’s way of inviting the various members of the church to prove themselves loyal partners in the work of the gospel. (On Paul’s use of the second person singular to address the recipients of the letter, cf. Rom. 2:1, 17; 8:2 [v.1.]; 9:20; 11:17ff.; 1 Cor. 14:17; 15:36; Gal. 6:1. Most of these instances, however, are negative in tone.) (Silva, *Philippians*, 193.)

15. Gordon Fee argues compellingly that the two appeals in Philippians 4:1 (“stand firm thus in the Lord”)

and 4:2 (“agree in the Lord”) together wrap up the themes of Philippians 3:1–21 (standing firm/pressing on), and then also his exhortations from 1:27–2:18 (unity in the church), respectively—all within the context of contending “for the gospel in Philippi in the face of opposition.” (Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 385–87.)

16. “The future is volitive: he will decidedly say this again.” (Lenski, *The Interpretation of Philippians*, 875.)

17. Hendriksen, *Philippians*, 193.

18. Silva, *Philippians*, 194–95.

19. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 408.

20. “μετὰ εὐχαριστίας: This prepositional phrase is to be construed, not with what precedes (by prayer with thanksgiving), but with what follows (present your requests with thanksgiving; cf. Meyer). If so, notice that this phrase begins a new clause and occupies an emphatic position.” (Silva, *Philippians*, 199.)

21. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 409–10.

22. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 184–85.

23. “ἀληθής,” *BDAG*, 43.

24. “ἀλήθεια,” *NIDNTTE*, vol. 1, 222–41.

25. Rudolf Bultmann, “ἀληθής,” *TDNT*, vol. I, 248.

26. “σεμνός,” *BDAG*, 919.

27. “σεμνός,” *NIDNTTE*, vol. 4, 283.

28. This particular definition pertains to the use of the word “δίκαια” in this context in the neuter. (“δίκαιος,” *BDAG*, 247.)

29. “ἀγνός,” *BDAG*, 13.

30. “ἀγνός,” *NIDNTTE*, vol. 1, 138.

31. “προσφιλής,” *BDAG*, 886.

32. “εὐφημος,” *BDAG*, 414.

33. “ἀρετή,” *BDAG*, 130.

34. “ἀρετή,” in *NIDNTTE*, vol. 1, 390.

35. “ἔπαινος,” *BDAG*, 357.

36. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 415–16.

37. “*Contra* the majority of interpreters, who repeatedly speak of these clauses as “summarizing” the former six words. Paul’s actual language and grammar seem quite opposed to such an idea. The indefinite τις (whether subject = “if anything has”; or adjective = “if there is any”) rules out the meaning “since” for the εἴ, as many would have it (e.g., Hawthorne, O’Brien, whose grammatical explanations and translations quite ignore the τις; to say “if, as is the case, there is *any* excellence” [O’Brien, 506, but without the “any”] as a way of summarizing the preceding clauses makes very little sense). The twin clauses are thus the protases of simple first class conditions (see Burton, *Moods*, 102–3), which in this sentence (in simplified form) say, “If there is anything morally excellent [to them], consider whatever things are....” Finally, had Paul intended these two words to be of a kind with the former six, the shift from ὅσα to εἴ τις is inexplicable, even on rhetorical grounds. In Paul’s grammar, the two words “moral excellence” and “praiseworthy” do not “summarize” the preceding virtues, they *qualify* them. Otherwise grammar would seem to be for naught (the appeal of BDF §372.1 counts for little because of the τις).” (Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 416, footnote 13.)

38. Thielman, *Philippians*, 220–21.

39. Thielman, *Philippians*, 221.

40. “This expression, “the God of peace” (ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης) means either that God is the source and origin of peace, or himself characterized by peace, or both at once. It is an advance in thought over the promise provided in v 7. There it was said that God’s peace would be with them; now it is said that God himself, who gives peace, or who is himself peace, will be with them...” (Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 190.)