

## RECONCILIATION

### I. Philippians 4:1-3

A. Last Sunday I talked about how great it would be to know "*the rest of the story*" regarding Jesus' earthly encounters. Whether some of those folks were a part of the original 120 or those who were saved on the day of Pentecost or sometime following, we don't know. Yet one Day we'll get to know all about it firsthand...

B. Today we'll hear Paul address some folks by name who we know little about. They include a pair of church ladies named Euodia (E-od-ee-ah) and Syntyche (syn-ti-kee) and to a lesser degree an unnamed brother we'll call *Yokefellow*. They're all members of the Church in Philippi which some think was Paul's favorite church. Unlike his stern letters to the churches in Corinth or Galatia, the Apostle oozes with loving superlatives when addressing this church. He uses the word *joy* or *rejoice* some 16 times. They've supported him through thick and thin. The bond between them is deep and wide. You'll hear his kindness even in his passionate admonition...

C. The Church in Philippi had a wild start! A business woman named Lydia became Paul & Silas' first convert. Then Paul delivers a demonized fortune teller gal which causes a riot. She may've been their second church member. But that unfortunate riot got Paul & Silas thrown in jail. Then, while singing praises behind bars at midnight, an earthquake ensues, their chains fall off, and just as the jailer begins to commit suicide, Paul assures him no one's escaped. The jailer and his family become their next converts. (No church-planting books I've ever read recommend this plan of action.) So a few years have now passed and Paul writes this beloved family of believers...

D. Philippians 4:1-3 (ESV) **Just 3 Verses:** *1 Therefore, my brothers (and sisters), whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. (Do you get the idea Paul loves these folks?!) 2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion (i.e. Yokefellow), 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.*

E. 19 years ago, Janet and I attended the funeral of a former pastor of ours who died in a tragic plane crash. The funeral was in a large church in Mount Sterling, KY and the place was packed. Many folks from our old church in Lexington were also in attendance. Just before the service was about to start, two ladies, who'd been something like pillars at old Lexington Covenant, got into a verbal tiff about seating options in our pew. While it was quite intense, it was a bit humorous for me despite the solemn moment. (Our late friend Dan sure would have thought so.) That said, whatever was going on with Euodia and Syntyche was a far more serious situation!

F. These two women seem to be "mature" believers. They had labored with Paul for the sake of the Gospel. (This wasn't a potluck quarrel over who made the best lime jello/carrot dish.) Their quarrel makes the cannon, after all! For 2,000 years and counting the only record we have of these two gals is of their feud!

G. But Paul's loving admonition is beautiful. He affirms both ladies. His tone is gracious. He never says, "*Who has bewitched you!*" like he did the Galatians. He doesn't say, "*Purge the evil person from among you!*" like he did the Corinthians. Without taking sides, Paul encourages them both to take God's side, to "*agree in the Lord.*" He appeals to an unnamed brother, *true companion*, (sometimes translated formally as *Syzgus (Yokefellow)*) a third party to help these ladies reconcile. Couched with the rest of this letter we might easily dismiss the matter but the truth is it must have threatened to divide this beautiful church family. Aren't you glad stuff like that never happens anymore!

H. I've always said, it's possible to be absolutely right and yet absolutely wrong-all at the same time. One person may exegete the Scriptures correctly on a given matter, launch into a debate arrogantly, defend his '*correct*' position viciously, denounce his opponent disdainfully, and expose his immaturity royally. (Story: College roommate disgust with Christians arguing theology in the Otterbein cafe.)

I. History doesn't tell us whatever happened to Euodia and Syntyche. I suspect they're best friends in heaven. But this isn't the only fierce feud recorded in the NT. Paul and Barnabas had one too. The disagreement took place right before their second missionary journey. What was the source of this quarrel? A young man named John Mark, Barnabas' nephew. He had accompanied Paul & Barnabas on their first missionary journey but ended up deserting them. Preparing for their next mission venture, Barnabas wanted to give Mark another try. Paul was adamantly against it. They split. Barnabas & Mark take the Gospel to Cyprus and Paul chooses Silas to go with him. (Romans 8:28 is worth memorizing...)

J. But this rift doesn't have the last word. Somewhere along the line there's reconciliation. By the time Paul writes Colossians, both Barnabas and Mark are with Paul and he commends Mark whom he's sending there to minister. Then when Paul is in the Mamertine Prison in Rome preparing to die, in his last letter to Timothy he requests that Mark be sent to him to aid with the ministry. Peter, in his first letter, refers to Mark as his "*son.*" (He may've led John Mark to Christ.) Mark went on to pen the first Gospel and due to his close ties to Peter, it's believed Peter may've narrated his eyewitness accounts of Jesus to Mark. Tradition also indicates Mark died as a martyr for his faith, perhaps in Alexandria, Egypt. Reconciliation wins the day--glory to God!

K. I want to close us out with some more Scriptures. Why? So we're never ready to count anybody out. Reconciliation is never put forth as a nice suggestion nor an impossibility. It's certainly not worth maintaining a separation due to seating at a funeral. "*Agreeing in the Lord*" is for us all. You see folks, we were all borne enemies to God and yet He sent His Son to die on a cross to free us from the sin that separated us. But He not only sent His Son to free us, He adopted us as His own sons & daughters. In terms of reconciliation, that truly is the high watermark! That's Mt. Everest! And it took other-worldly love to pull that off...

L. So, let's go home today with the Words of God to take this all deeper still...

1) **Romans 12:9-11** (VOICE) says: *9 Love others well, and don't hide behind a mask; love authentically. Despise evil; pursue what is good as if your life depends on it. 10 Live in true devotion to one another, loving each other as sisters and brothers. Be first to honor*

others by putting them first. **11** Do not slack in your faithfulness and hard work. Let your spirit be on fire, bubbling up and boiling over, as you serve the Lord.

**2) Ephesians 4:1-3 (NLT) echoes: 1** Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. **2** Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3** Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

**3) Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV) echoes louder still: 12** Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**4) 1 Corinthians 13:7 (AMP) from the 'love chapter.'** This is our exclamation mark: **7** Love bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times], endures all things [without weakening].

\* Close with Prayer...

## [Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

### [Philippians 4:1-3 \(ESV\)](#)

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### **Bonus Rations for Further Nourishment**

**Corrie ten Boom: A Message on Forgiveness (In Her Own Words)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hH9nwFb87u4>

**Eight Ways Paul Encourages Eodia & Syntyche - John Piper**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W9oicB81Lw>

**What is the Difference Between Forgiveness and Reconciliation - Mark Driscoll**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDvaqfJ39Co>

**Discerning the Carnival Mirror of Conflict - Erik Raymond**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/discerning-the-carnival-mirror-of-conflict/>

### **2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (AMP)**

**14** For the love of Christ controls and compels us, because we have concluded this, that One died for all, therefore all died; **15** and He died for all, so that all those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and was raised for their sake. **16** So from now on we regard no one from a human point of view [according to worldly standards and values]. Though we have known Christ from a human point of view, now we no longer know Him in this way. **17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life]. **18** But all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ [making us acceptable to Him] and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [so that by our example we might bring others to Him], **19** that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them [but canceling them]. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation [that is, restoration to favor with God]. **20** So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us; we [as Christ's representatives] plead with you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. **21** He made Christ who knew no sin to [judicially] be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be

made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness].

### **Ephesians 4:17-32 (ESV)**

**17** Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. **18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. **19** They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. **20** But that is not the way you learned Christ! — **21** assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, **22** to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. **25** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **26** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and give no opportunity to the devil. **28** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **29** Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

### **Quote by Rod Mays**

"Reconciliation can be a painful process. God understands this. It took the life of His Son to reconcile sinful man to Himself. He has not called His people to sacrifice their children in order to appease an earthly enemy. He has called us to sacrifice our pride in order to model His message of reconciliation to others. He has called us to live peaceably with all men. When that fails, He calls us to love unselfishly, from a heart that has been reconciled to God. He calls us to remember that we are new creations, with new affections and new behavior, and that we were first loved when we were enemies."

- Rod Mays, *"The Necessity of Reconciliation,"* Ligonier Ministries. To read more, go to:

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/necessity-reconciliation>

### **Quote by Ed Stetzer**

"It is only when we truly love others, whether they are our brothers and sisters in Christ or our unsaved neighbors, that we can endure through conflict without walking away or giving in to the outrage. If the Christlike response to the age of outrage lies in our ability to disagree in love, a crucial first step is our commitment to forbear with others, whether with Christians who may not be as mature as we are, or with the lost who are captive to an incomplete and distorted worldview. This kind of love can forbear with others only because it remains transfixed upon the mission of building the Kingdom of God."

### **Quote by Tim Keller**

"God's grace and forgiveness, while free to the recipient, are always costly for the giver. From the earliest parts of the Bible, it was understood that God could not forgive without sacrifice. No one who is seriously wronged can 'just forgive' the perpetrator. But when you forgive, that means you absorb the loss and the debt. You bear it yourself. All forgiveness, then, is costly."

#### **Quote by Hannah More**

"Forgiveness is the economy of the heart. Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits."

#### **Quote by C.S. Lewis**

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."

#### **Corrie ten Boom on Forgiveness**

Excerpt from, *The Hiding Place*.

It was in a church in Munich that I saw him, a balding heavysset man in a gray overcoat, a brown felt hat clutched between his hands. People were filing out of the basement room where I had just spoken, moving along the rows of wooden chairs to the door at the rear. It was 1947 and I had come from Holland to defeated Germany with the message that God forgives. It was the truth they needed most to hear in that bitter, bombed-out land, and I gave them my favorite mental picture. Maybe because the sea is never far from a Hollander's mind, I liked to think that that's where forgiven sins were thrown. "When we confess our sins," I said, "God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever."

The solemn faces stared back at me, not quite daring to believe. There were never questions after a talk in Germany in 1947. People stood up in silence, in silence collected their wraps, in silence left the room. And that's when I saw him, working his way forward against the others. One moment I saw the overcoat and the brown hat; the next, a blue uniform and a visored cap with its skull and crossbones. It came back with a rush: the huge room with its harsh overhead lights, the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor, the shame of walking naked past this man. I could see my sister's frail form ahead of me, ribs sharp beneath the parchment skin. Betsie, how thin you were!

Betsie and I had been arrested for concealing Jews in our home during the Nazi occupation of Holland; this man had been a guard at Ravensbrück concentration camp where we were sent. Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out: "A fine message, fräulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!" And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course—how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women? But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. It was the first time since my release that I had been face to face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze.

“You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk,” he was saying. “I was a guard in there.” No, he did not remember me. “But since that time,” he went on, “I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fräulein”—again the hand came out—“will you forgive me?”

And I stood there—I whose sins had every day to be forgiven—and could not. Betsie had died in that place—could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking?

It could not have been many seconds that he stood there, hand held out, but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do. For I had to do it—I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. “If you do not forgive men their trespasses,” Jesus says, “neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able also to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that.

And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.

“Jesus, help me!” I prayed silently. “I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.” And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. “I forgive you, brother!” I cried. “With all my heart!” For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely as I did then.

And having thus learned to forgive in this hardest of situations, I never again had difficulty in forgiving: I wish I could say it! I wish I could say that merciful and charitable thoughts just naturally flowed from me from then on. But they didn’t. If there’s one thing I’ve learned at 80 years of age, it’s that I can’t store up good feelings and behavior—but only draw them fresh from God each day. Maybe I’m glad it’s that way. For every time I go to Him, He teaches me something else.

I recall the time, some 15 years ago, when some Christian friends whom I loved and trusted did something which hurt me. You would have thought that, having forgiven the Nazi guard, this would have been child’s play. It wasn’t. For weeks I seethed inside. But at last I asked God again to work His miracle in me. And again it happened: first the

cold-blooded decision, then the flood of joy and peace. I had forgiven my friends; I was restored to my Father.

Then, why was I suddenly awake in the middle of the night, hashing over the whole affair again? My friends! I thought. People I loved! If it had been strangers, I wouldn't have minded so. I sat up and switched on the light. "Father, I thought it was all forgiven! Please help me do it!"

But the next night I woke up again. They'd talked so sweetly too! Never a hint of what they were planning. "Father!" I cried in alarm. "Help me!"

His help came in the form of a kindly Lutheran pastor to whom I confessed my failure after two sleepless weeks. "Up in that church tower," he said, nodding out the window, "is a bell which is rung by pulling on a rope. But you know what? After the sexton lets go of the rope, the bell keeps on swinging. First ding then dong. Slower and slower until there's a final dong and it stops. "I believe the same thing is true of forgiveness. When we forgive someone, we take our hand off the rope. But if we've been tugging at our grievances for a long time, we mustn't be surprised if the old angry thoughts keep coming for a while. They're just the ding-dongs of the old bell slowing down."

And so it proved to be. There were a few more midnight reverberations, a couple of dings when the subject came up in my conversation. But the force—which was my willingness in the matter—had gone out of them. They came less and less often and at last stopped altogether. And so I discovered another secret of forgiveness: that we can trust God not only above our emotions, but also above our thoughts.

And still He had more to teach me, even in this single episode. Because many years later, in 1970, an American with whom I had shared the ding-dong principle came to visit me in Holland and met the people involved. "Aren't those the friends who let you down?" he asked as they left my apartment. "Yes," I said a little smugly. "You can see it's all forgiven." "By you, yes," he said. "But what about them? Have they accepted your forgiveness?" "They say there's nothing to forgive! They deny it ever happened. But I can prove it!" I went eagerly to my desk. "I have it in black and white! I saved all their letters and I can show you where—" "Corrie!" My friend slipped his arm through mine and gently closed the drawer. "Aren't you the one whose sins are at the bottom of the sea? And are the sins of your friends etched in black and white?"

For an anguishing moment I could not find my voice. "Lord Jesus," I whispered at last, "who takes all my sins away, forgive me for preserving all these years the evidence against others! Give me grace to burn all the blacks and whites as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to Your glory."

I did not go to sleep that night until I had gone through my desk and pulled out those letters—curling now with age—and fed them all into my little coal-burning grate. As the flames leaped and glowed, so did my heart. "Forgive us our trespasses," Jesus taught us to pray, "as we forgive those who trespass against us." In the ashes of those letters I

was seeing yet another facet of His mercy. What more He would teach me about forgiveness in the days ahead I didn't know, but tonight's was good news enough.

When we bring our sins to Jesus, He not only forgives them, He makes them as if they had never been.

- Corrie ten Boom, excerpt from, *The Hiding Place*. Posted in Guidepost Magazine, on Jul 24, 2014. To read the article online, go to: <https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/positive-living/guideposts-classics-corrie-ten-boom-on-forgiveness>

## **John Mark Comes Full Circle (See Below)**

Pastor Steve Bush

### **Acts 13:13 (AMPC)**

**13** Now Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John [Mark] separated himself from them and went back to Jerusalem...

### **Acts 15:36-41 (NLT)**

**36** After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing." **37** Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. **38** But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. **39** Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. **40** Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord's gracious care. **41** Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there.

### **Colossians 4:10 (AMPC)**

**10** Aristarchus my fellow prisoner wishes to be remembered to you, as does Mark the relative of Barnabas. You received instructions concerning him; if he comes to you give him a [hearty] welcome.

### **2 Timothy 4:9-11 (AMPC)**

**9** Make every effort to come to me soon. **10** For Demas has deserted me for love of this present world and has gone to Thessalonica; Crescens [has gone] to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. **11** Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very helpful to me for the ministry.

### **Pastor's Note**

John Mark ended up serving both Peter and Paul faithfully. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter refers to Mark as his "son," an endearing term for this younger brother whom he may have personally led to Christ. Most scholars believe Mark was present in Rome when Peter was executed for his faith. Prior to Peter's death, it's believed Peter narrated his eyewitness accounts with Jesus to Mark who compiled and translated them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, giving the church the first gospel account. Tradition indicates that John Mark died as a martyr--perhaps in Alexandria, Egypt.