

# Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023 10 am

## Godly agreement

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Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer

Hymn MP 7 All creatures of our God and king

Scripture Psalm 1 (page 543)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk

Chorus MP 38 As we are gathered Jesus is here

Notices Picnic lunch, Monday cleaning

Prayer and share time

Communion preparation

Communion

Reading Philippians 4:1-4 (Page 1180)

Hymn MP 1334 My hope is built on nothing less (NLBC version)

Sermon Sweet fellowship

Hymn CH 679 Be with me Lord where'er I go

Closing Prayer

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## Prayer and Exordium

- A cut, tear or any opening in the skin might well look minor, but if not seen to, if not addressed and just left, can develop into a major infection and in extreme cases amputations and even death.

The body of Christ can too be wounded. Two members of the body who can't get along is like a festering wound. It must be treated. Failure to do so will lead to serious and maybe permanent damage to the body.

Paul is addressing an issue that was causing this in the church at Philippi.

**2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. x2**

Here two women of prominence in the Philippian Church are at odds.

Paul wants to see this wound healed, he wants the body to be healthy. So first he points it out, then he does his best to remedy it. TFL "See it, say it, sorted"

## What is the disagreement about?

The problem is that we don't know what this failure to agree – this disagreement -- was. Is it an issue with the church? Doesn't look like it as it is towards each other although it could be a different view of how the church should be doing something. It may have been growing friction between two energetic Christian women trying to serve the Lord.

We are told it is a disagreement **in the Lord**, they are failing to agree **in the Lord**. So is it theological? Have they disobeyed the lord's command and one has taken the other to court? Or has something been said? Are they not speaking? Is it a personality clash that has meant they have let their baser nature take charge - and they are making it known they aren't getting on.

We don't know what the problem was. Actually, we don't need to know.

- ✚ Usually the issue is not the issue - the relationship breakdown is the issue.

For believers to be at odds, out of fellowship with each other is serious. We do not need to agree on everything, indeed we won't! But we must agree **in the Lord**—That is important. x2. The true element of Christian union; for those "**in the Lord**" by faith to be at variance, is an utter inconsistency. How can a body not get on?

- You may be thinking: "That's me! My body doesn't get on". As you get older, the arms and legs aren't moving the way the brain wants them to!

It is called synchronised - To work properly all the parts must function together.

## Notice that it is public

How serious was it? Enough for Paul to speak out publicly.

If we had a visiting speaker this morning, he probably wouldn't be speaking about disagreements. If he did he would be speaking in general terms. He certainly wouldn't be naming people, even if knew of a falling out in the church and knew the names of the two involved.

When I preach I use examples from things that have happened here in the church – But I don't use names. But Paul does. He says: **I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.** Paul did.

■ Perhaps I should. Just as an example don't worry x2 mention:.....

What changes? Does naming make it authentic? Make it real, relevant, urgent?

Doesn't Paul in naming names imply that this had become general knowledge within the church. Paul is not telling people about something for the first time. In fact so prominent that it would have been strange for him not to refer to it.

Nearly two thousand years and we are still hearing about this fall-out by **Euodia** and **Syntyche**. Should it be left? An example for our instruction.

■ Gravestone epitaph a loving woman, a kind mother an adoring grandmother - but she never could get on with Jane!

What would that say to all the people who walked past! For years!

Here is open antagonism. The Lord sees secret antagonism - but this was open and raw. Here's an open wound.

✚ All disagreements grieve the Lord, Public disagreements especially grieve the Lord - and they destroy the witness of the church.

They affect everyone. Paul had been told of divisions in the church at Corinth. .. that **some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.**" 1Co 1:10,11. And **jealousy** 1 Cor 3:3 (**divisions among you.** 1Co 11:18)

If you're not getting on with someone – don't think it doesn't matter, don't just leave it. That is the way the world works. The world constantly has its disagreements, - and they make for good, or should I say bad news. It always will, it's the mark of Adam - and in Adam one man is still set against another.

✚ Not in Christ. The mark that we have Jesus is that we love each other. x2

Disagreements tear the body apart, they break the harmony of the Spirit and are contrary to the uniting power of Jesus.

Breakdowns between people need healing. No-one would fail to apply the necessary medicine to a wound, you would do everything possible to effect a cure. To leave a wound in the body open and raw can become fatal.

So too with people. Deal with it. Don't walk away. Don't leave it.

## Disagreements

The word 'agree' is the word [5426](#) '*phronéō*' and means a *personal opinion fleshing itself out in action*. It combines the *visceral* and *cognitive* aspects:

✚ Visceral - Relating to the deep inwards feelings, Cognitive – the intellect.

In other words it is not just about an academic topic. It's emotive. It's charged. Strong feelings have surfaced with the result that the person has ended up 'hot under the collar' Just what the devil loves to do, - play on our emotions.

■ When this happens the actually point is swallowed up in the heat of it.

Let us remember a basic principle here. The Lord reaches us – and speaks to us through our minds x2 – not our feelings. The devil comes to us, attacks us through our emotions. That is his point of entry. - don't succumb to it.

The way God strengthens His people for the batterings and storms and upsets of life that we all go through - is by the entrance of his Word.

This is his way to help you and make you strong in your troubles - through the lodging of His word in your heart. And for that three things must happen:

You must read it, you must memorise it / internalise it, and you must meditate on it. You can't meditate on a passage if you do not have it first in your mind - and it won't find its way there if you haven't read it.

Food does you good by being ingested. First it must be eaten, swallowed and then it churns around inside. So the word of God in our minds.

■ If I can mix metaphors think of a washing machine, a tumble dryer

I know memorising a passage is difficult! Do it verse by verse, through the day keep putting new verses in your memory and then mull them over. Don't let large chunks of the day go by without God's word in your mind. Don't dwell on the problem. Do not ignore what he says and run off for props everywhere else. Like shoring up a falling wall

The Lord has told us to do. Psalm 1 speaks of a living stream making Christians strong, - It is found through meditating on God's word. There is a verse for every situation you will ever find yourself in. Then it will be as if Jesus is constantly whispering in your ear. You will be strong. x2. Not to do

so is to remain weak, weak and vulnerable, knocked around and buffeted by life's storms.

### *OK - How is the problem cured?*

The Lord has told us how. The normal means of resolving problems between believers is found in Matt 18. Make sure you know it - and do it. Sadly in my experience Jesus' teaching here is largely ignored. Don't come and tell me, or go and tell someone else – go to the person – x2.

■ Barry Sheane the Motorcycle Champion of the 70's died of throat cancer in March 2003. ABC Network Australia described 'a defiant Sheene' who said "I listen to what the medical profession tell me, but ultimately it's my decision, it's my life and it's up to me the way I spend it."

✚ He died because he refused to follow medical advice and relied on 'natural remedies' in other words he tried to effect a cure 'his way'.

All who profess Jesus as Lord are to do as He says. That is to approach the other person and seek forgiveness – and offer forgiveness. Don't just wait hoping your feelings will improve toward them – obey the command to love that person.

Which of these two women is the offended? And which one is doing the offending? It doesn't say for it is the responsibility of both whether you are offended or the offender.

**“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,” Mt 5:23 YOU go to them and sort it out**  
**“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”” Mr 11:25**

Do what Jesus says and he will give you the power to love that person. Hasn't Jesus put His love in your heart? If so you can love the unlovely - as he has loved you. If he has then we can, and we must.

Do you find no love in your heart? Can you say Christ has poured his love in your heart? If not turn to Him and the [cross](#) and confess that hardness that sin.

But this is a public dispute – and therefore there's a public response.

There's the principle, - for the warning of all.

So Paul says: **I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche** Notice Paul urges them both, literally it says **Euodia I exhort, Syntyche I exhort** as if he would admonish each separately, he is impartial.

3 **Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow,** Who is this 'loyal yokefellow' ?

Many suggestions have been made: was it Epaphroditus, the carrier and the amanuensis? There have been other unlikely suggestions which I won't bore you with, but could it actually be a person called 'Syzygus' a real name. (see the Bible footnote). It is only used here – and in a passage with three other names mentioned. Looks likely to me.

So we can say: 3 **Yes, and I ask you, loyal Syzygus, help these women** x2

He is publicly calling **Syzygus** to help, so we must employ good help that there be no breaking of fellowship. As one part of the Body hurts – so we are all hurt – and all have a responsibility to seek a cure. It is all our problem.

And.. **“If you are not part of the answer ... then you are part of the problem!”**

**Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** Eph 4:3

It is the responsibility of every Christian to be at peace with each other, as we demonstrated with communion earlier. Notice Paul in writing this letter is address the whole church along with the **overseers and deacons** 1:1

We must watch over each other for good – just as any normal family does. We are told: **See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.** Heb 12:15 Let us all do that.

### *Gospel workers*

**Help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel,**

Some have found evidence to show the superior position occupied by women in Macedonia. With monuments erected in honour of women by public bodies and woman's names occurring among the winners in the horse-races

So there seems to be in Philippi a prominence of active of women in the church, even from the first convert Lydia, women as gospel workers.

**along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers,** Clement. a fellow labourer with Paul is only mentioned here and we are not sure who he is. Church historians put him down as Clement an early church Apostolic father and the Bishop of Rome. There are two epistles ascribed to Clement, and which in the Codex Alexandrinus follows Revelation. 1<sup>st</sup> genuine, 2<sup>nd</sup> doubtful.

So we have **Euodia, Syntyche, Syzygus, Clement,** and others, described as **the rest of my fellow-workers,** they were the workers in the church at Philippi.

✚ **Who are the Gospel workers here at KNBC? Who are they? Is that you?**

- Some churches have a board in the foyer with nice pictures of the pastor, elders, treasurer, deacons. We could do that. But who are the gospel workers here? x2

Some are working and not free during the day, others are retired and free, will you **contend at my side in the cause of the gospel** when I go out? Will you come too? Are you willing? Or will you be ‘not available’ x2 You could ask and pray It begs the question - how are you fulfilling the Lord’s great commission that you should **go and make disciples**? Are you doing your part?

Crossway passing the baton on – Tony’s death on the day Peter is inducted

Means of Grace chain (on bulletin) broken link - service - it only takes one.

#### 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

The word ‘**Rejoice**’ appears 8 times in this letter and people often consider it the mark of the letter. But were they a rejoicing church? If so why did Paul keep telling them to do it? Was it because they weren’t – did a heaviness prevail? The church was certainly thrown by Paul being in prison and this revealed wrong thinking that needed to be corrected about how the Lord works.

Here now we see disagreements between believers, but there were also other problems too. There was **selfish ambition** and vanity, a lack of love with **each one looking after his own interests** which Paul says twice, Phil 2:3,21. The result was a dark cloud hanging over them, the Joy had gone, the rejoicing had gone.

In 1981 while arriving in central Paris terrible noises started to come from the van engine. My response was to turn up the stereo. But I couldn’t drown it out. It was terminal and I spent a week on the side of the road while I arranged it to be brought back home. I then hitch-hiked back to Britain.

Now what we don’t do is just turn the volume up and pretend all is fine, no the rejoicing comes from obeying the instruction. Broken fellowship is serious, it gives the devil a foothold and hinders progress, the gospel becomes ineffective.

- ✚ What it needs is the wound healing and the body made whole again.
- ✚ As they say “A healthy body is a happy body”
- How is the KNBC body? Should we ask a doctor to come and have a look at it? Us?
- Oaktree called in someone to assess the church’s health – and what medicine needs to be applied.

Should we do the same to see if all the arms and legs are function properly. The Lord says each part should be doing its work. How about the vital signs? How is our heartbeat?, how genuine and adoring is our worship? Do we have a burning desire to love and serve the Lord together with each other?

How’s the blood pressure? Can’t find the pulse, is it there?

Doctor Jesus said to the church at Sardis that it looked like it was alive - when actually it was dead! Then he goes on to say you have a few active people there.

- ✚ What would he say about us as the body of Christ here?

See v17 which says: **take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.**

Paul does note 3 or 4 names - but omits others. Then he says ‘well you may not be mentioned here - but you are not forgotten, your work is not overlooked, you are in a much more important register!’

*So yes lastly - the ‘Book of life’*

**whose names are in the book of life.** You can be anonymous in my letter since your names are inscribed in the **book of Life.**’

Don’t worry about the praise of men – your father sees what you do, He will reward you!

This **book of Life** appears in Scripture at intervals, almost from the beginning to the very end. The figure is originally drawn from the registers of the tribes of Israel. In the NT we read in Hebrews, ‘**Ye are come unto the city of the living God . . . and to the church of the first-born - whose names are written in heaven.**’ And yes as we see in 3:20 ‘**Our citizenship is in Heaven.**

- ✚ Philippi was a Roman colony and as such a bit of Rome so that the citizens of Philippi had their names inscribed on the registers of the tribes of Rome.

We as Christians belong to another polity to that of the world around. So let us be glad that it is not temporal Rome - or Birmingham - but the eternal heaven that we belong.’

At the end in revelation we are told that none can enter into Heaven ‘**save those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.**’

Is your name there? Can you say yes, Yes, hallelujah!

So let us agree in the Lord. **Therefore, my brothers, v4:1 you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!**

Read Psalm 133 together

END