

# Unity in a Relationally-Conflicted World

## Intro

Phil 4:1-3

**Fanged sheep, demonic deacons & other obstacles to utopia** (ecclesiastical realism)

- ▶ How many conflicts have you been in this past year?
- ▶ Do you get along well with people? Why?
- ▶ Have you ever thought about the impact that your relationships have on the attractiveness and credibility of the gospel?

## Challenges in Philippi

**Philippian believers are *fearful***

- Founder in jail
- Leader on deathbed

**... *suffering***

- Poverty conditions increasing
- Tremors of persecution
- Heretics getting louder

🔴 When the heat is on, the heart is exposed. The heat is on Philippi, sinful attitudes are emerging and relationships are fraying at the edges.

**... *fighting***

- Rivalries, tension, selfish ambition
- Hesitancy to initiate reconciliation

## Paul's Response to the Conflict

### ***An appeal from a heart of affection***

- He loves them and feels the affection of Christ for them (1:8; 4:1).
- To the degree that we are increasing in our love for God and growing in our appreciation and understanding of the gospel we will increasingly reflect His heart for others.

### ***An appeal for the sake of the gospel***

- A gospel-centered perspective on relational conflict both convicts us of sinful attitudes we have toward others *and* it rescues us from the vortex of introspection or the shallow ideals of religious moralism.
- Experiencing Christ's power through the gospel changes our speech patterns, ways of dealing with differences of opinion, handling criticism, etc.

### ***An appeal in the light of eternity***

- Can we sort this out now in light of what is coming?

## What About Us?

- This passage, accenting unity as it does, is not an apology for Paul's name-calling in chapter 2 ("dogs!").
- Without growth in humility, those who are prone to relational friction will go on building and burning relationship after relationship.

**One of the greatest benefits of resolving conflicts biblically is that outreach and evangelism are enhanced. Conflict is inevitable in a fallen world; Christian and unbeliever alike struggle with disputes and broken relationships. So when the unsaved see Christians admitting their failures and forgiving and reconciling with one another, even after intense disputes, they cannot help but take notice. The more our relationships reflect the amazing love and mercy of God, the more people will want to know about the power that is working in us to maintain peace and unity.**

-Ken Sande, *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Fall 2003, p.28

## How do I apply this?

### Where Paul goes next...

- Getting proactive about dealing with anxiety, worry and fear which are not *unrelated* to the way we 'do relationships'.
- Cultivating the practice of prayer, supplication, and attitude of thanksgiving
- Taking our thoughts captive – meditating on “these things”
  - All of which lead to experiencing God’s peace

### Related issues Paul has addressed...

- Trust in God’s faithfulness
- Faith in Christ, Who is our Righteousness
- Non-passive approach to sanctification
- Opposition is normal, not surprising
- Realism vs. idealism

### Quick exhortations:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
-