

Working Together Side by Side

Thomas Robinson, *Lives Shaped by Jesus 10*, February 17, 2013

Philippians 3:20 – 4:7

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, LORD Jesus Messiah,
²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state to be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

^{4:1} Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the LORD, my beloved.

² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to think that ‘same thing’ in the LORD.

³ Yes, I ask you also, true/genuine companion (yoke-mate), help these women, who have contended/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.

⁴ Celebrate with joy in the LORD always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your reasonableness/gentleness be known to all people. The Lord is nearby: ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding (every mind), will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Messiah Jesus.

Philippians 2:1-8

¹ So if there is any encouragement in the Messiah, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any deep feeling and compassion, ² **fill up my joy** that you **think the same thing**, having **the same love, together in soul** and **thinking the one thing**.

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty glory, but with **humility of thought** consider others even more valuable than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵ **Think this** among yourselves, which also means in Messiah Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not consider that equality with God a thing to be exploited, ⁷ rather he emptied himself, by taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in human shape, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ...

Philippians 1:27

²⁷ Only let your **life as citizens** of a community be **worthy of the good news of the Messiah**, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm in one Spirit**, with **one soul contending/laboring side by side** for **the faith of the gospel**.

Matthew 6:31-33

³¹ Therefore **do not be anxious**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles/nations seek after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them all**. ³³ But **seek first the kingdom of God** and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

New Identity, New Citizenship, New Solid Foundation

We begin at the climax of the great journey of transformation the Paul describes in Phil 3. Paul has talked about his own heritage, his realization that his hold on it kept him from God's Messiah, his renunciation of it to gain the Messiah, learning to think about his life, death, and resurrection (2:6-11), being grasped by the Messiah, and the always ongoing quest toward God's call. This sets the believer's life in a vast realm of reality.

When Romans in Philippi were in trouble they had assurance: *'Our citizenship is in Rome from which we await a deliverer, Lord Nero Caesar, whose army legions will defend us by the same power with which he subdues the whole empire.'* Paul doesn't deny that reality, but sets it within a far greater reality that sets a limit on the worst human power can do. The ultimate power (citizenship, allegiance) is Jesus' life-giving power of resurrection.

Paul turns to the beloved Philippians: In this way that I've described, you can stand firm, with a solid foundation, no matter what happens.' This story of God's astonishing grace is the only thing with the power. Often we praise God's grace but don't really trust it. We substitute our fulfillment of legal standards/ moral codes, our doctrinal purity, our own rigorism or perfectionism that we can control. Only deep transformation matters.

Euodia, Syntyche, and the Yoke-mate

Paul applies what he has said to a particular situation known to the readers – a reminder that we are reading one side of a two-sided dialogue. Something has occurred between two women in the congregation; Euodia (Ms. Goodtrip) and Syntyche (Ms. Goodluck). Both are part of Paul's mission team proclaiming the Gospel. We don't know their stories or their problem. Perhaps they're at odds over a mission plan (like Paul & Barnabas).

Paul urges them to "think the same thing" (cf. 2:2, 5) – not just to agree with each other and get along, but for both of them to be stamped by the pattern of Jesus. They may still have differing opinions about some course of action, but both will serve the Gospel.

Paul addresses "You (sing.), *genuine yoke-mate, help them.*" Strange in a letter to the whole church. Perhaps an individual on Paul's team. Perhaps a way of addressing "each one of you Philippians who count yourself my yoke-mate." Paul calls for mutual support, helping all who are workers for the Gospel – in the Book of Life (Lk 10:20; Rev 20:12). We get a glimpse into the rich texture behind the scenes of the life of a church in Paul's mission.

Joy without Anxiety

As Paul nears the end of the letter, he articulates the kind of life that flows from "thinking the one thing" of Jesus – a life stamped by Jesus' cross and resurrection.

He begins with celebration – Joy both in the heart and in the community because it is "in the Lord." Real joy, no matter what the circumstances. Joy that flourishes in hard times because then it learns and tests the power and hope of resurrection life.

When outsiders, 'all people,' look at Christians, what they should see is not belligerence or defensiveness, but reasonableness/gentleness – concern for others, willingness to listen and serve. Not careless, mushy thought, but the clear stamp of Jesus' self-giving love.

Just as Jesus taught, anxiety can be overcome/disempowered as we learn and grow in confidence in God, as known in Jesus, and actively give our concerns and needs to Him.

The result is the experience of peace. Not just a personal peace of mind, but a gift of peace from God (righteousness, belonging, confident hope, faithful love, life-transforming power) that reaches far beyond our mind and gives our hearts a safe place to flourish.