

The Disaster Of Division

Philippians 4:1-3

Pastor John Miller

We're going to actually read Philippians 4:1-7 and look at verses 1-3, which is really one topic, and then we'll finish it up next week. Follow with me beginning in verse 1. Paul says, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. 2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing," literally it's don't worry about anything, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep," it's a military term which means to guard or garrison, "your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Many of us are familiar with Psalm 133:1 where the psalmist says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Amen? The sad thing is the church isn't always expressing the unity that we have in Christ. Someone said, "To dwell above with the saints in love; oh that will be glory. But to live below with the saints I know, brother, that's another story." So many times we're not really getting along in the body of Christ, well this passage is so good for that subject because it points out the reasons why division is disastrous. In Philippians 4:1-3, Paul is dealing with the disaster of division. He wanted them to dwell together in unity. The reason I read verses 1-7 is because this whole section is a call to the believers in Philippi to rejoice, to love each other, to walk together in unity and harmony, and to serve the Lord together. This whole section, we're going to look at the second half next week, is about loving the Lord, loving one another, working together in unity, and serving the Lord together.

Let's look at verse 2, and we'll come back to verses 1 and 3. Paul says, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." The fact that Paul calls out these two women in the church and specifically says, "Look, I want you to be of the same mind in the Lord, I want you to love each other, I want you to get along together, I want you to work together in harmony," indicates that the division was pretty great and everyone in the church knew about it, so Paul wrote about it in this letter. We know a couple of things. First, we know that they were women. In Acts 16, it's interesting, when the church at Philippi was born, Paul, Silas, and Timothy went down to Philippi and there by the riverside met a women named Lydia. The Bible says the Lord opened her heart, she trusted Christ and became the first convert on the continent of Europe, and the church was born in her house. There was a small group, no doubt, of just women worshipping there by the river because wherever there were ten male Jews, they would actually build a synagogue. Where there were not ten Jewish men, they would just worship by the riverside because the water was there to use for the ceremonial rites.

It seems as though these women could be a part of maybe the group that was there with Lydia. Some feel that maybe one of these two women is a reference to Lydia. There's no real reason to believe that. That's just kind of a crazy theory or hypothesis, but they think maybe they were meeting in one of their homes, as well as Lydia's home, and there was some kind of contention or issue that was going on between them. They weren't arguing, debating, and fighting because they were women, men fight and argue and divide in the church just as readily as women do.

Their names are interesting. The first is Euodias, which means sweet fragrance; the other name is Syntyche, which means fortunate. Whether these are proper names or just nicknames, we don't really know, but we're going to see some things about them that are interesting. They were fellow laborers with Paul serving the Lord, but division came and started this strife among themselves. That's something that Paul says cannot exist in the church. They were believers, it's clear. Thirdly, they were members of the church in Philippi and labored with Paul in the gospel, verse 3. They were co-laborers, serving the Lord with Paul.

If there's anything the devil wants to do, and this may seem kind of like, "Well, who cares about these two women who weren't getting along in the church." If there's anything the devil wants to do, he wants to divide Christians. It's like divide and conquer is his philosophy. If he can't attack us directly from the outside, he'll come on the inside. Satan is a sly old fox. If he can't get in through the front door, he'll get in through the back door; if he can't through the back door, he'll come in through the window; if he can't get in the window, he'll come in the chimney, kind of like Santa Claus does, not that he's the devil, but anyway. Satan comes in from all these different angles into the church. He sows tares among the wheat. When a church is walking in love, in unity, in harmony, and they're linking arms together serving the Lord and getting out the gospel, the devil will do all he can to bring division into a church. We all individually have a responsibility to guard ourselves against division in the church, that we should love each other, forgive each other, and work together for the sake of the gospel. It's so very, very important.

What we don't know is what they were divided over in verse 2. Evidently, they weren't getting along. Paul doesn't specifically mention what the problem was. It doesn't seem to be a doctrinal issue or else Paul would've dealt with it theologically, biblically, or doctrinally would have straightened them out. It's more likely a personal preference. This is so common in the church today—people not dividing over essential doctrines which the Bible actually tells us, "... that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints." There are some issues that we cannot have unity on when we're actually denying basic historic orthodox Christian teaching, so there needs to be sometimes a division, but when it comes to what color the carpet is or how long the worship service lasts, or who plays the organ, or who gets to sing the solo, or who gets to do the evangelism, or whatever happens that people divide over.

I heard of one church in Texas—this is a true story—had a major division over an issue that when they were having a church dinner, one of the elders was served a smaller portion of ham than a young boy in the congregation. They got all bent out of shape and all freaked out and it

caused the division. The church had to split. They had to sell the church property, and the devil is laughing because of the division he brings.

It's amazing to me. Over the years, and I've been pastor a long time, I see some of the petty, foolish, silly, non-essential, non-important issues that people get all upset about. Sometimes people find out they can't do at a church what they wanna do and get mad and go to another church. Somebody called them "nomads," if someone says, "No," they get mad and go to another church. I call them steeple chasers. They go from church to church to church to church. Generally, as a principle, you can't run from your problems. If you're just running from a personality conflict and somebody doesn't treat you quite right and you get all pushed out of shape, you're never going to find a perfect church, right? And you know the saying, right? If you ever do find a perfect church, don't join it because if you do it won't be perfect anymore.

You can't really run from your problems, and it's those difficulties that cause us to grow into the likeness of Christ. If you run from your conflicts, you'll never learn to conquer them, you'll never learn to grow through them, you'll never learn to forgive, to be restored, and to get along with other people. You'll just be taking your problems with you, and when you go to another church and have another problem, what do you do? Go to another church, and then another church, and another church, and another church. I'm not saying you shouldn't leave a church for doctrinal reasons, or maybe that the Lord calls you for other reasons, but don't break up fellowship over petty, non-essential, unimportant issues that so often Satan gets us fighting and quibbling over in the church today.

What we have in this passage is Paul gives us the reasons division is disastrous. I want to take kind of a different angle to look at these verses. If you're taking notes, there are three things that I want to say that show us the reason division in the church is disastrous. First, division is disastrous because it is contrary to the Apostle Paul's mind and heart. Paul expresses in verse 1 his love for the believers in Philippi and describes them quite graphically as brothers in Christ and his love for them, so division is contrary to the heart of Paul. Remember Paul said, "Let this mind," or attitude, "be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2. It was contrary to that humble mind, to that servant's heart, and the love that we should have one for another.

Go back with me to verse 1. Paul says, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so," here's the command, "stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." He starts with "Therefore," and this "therefore" gives us the logical result of both the explanation of salvation and the warning about the Judaizers found back in Philippians 3. Now, as I often do, I like to get a running start on the text, so back up to verse 17 and you'll see the "Therefore" connection, beginning in Philippians 3:17. "Brethren, be followers together of me," he starts talking to the brethren, Philippians 4:1, and is still addressing the brethren in Philippians 3:17 and says, "be followers together of me," which was mimic me, imitate me, "and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." Those that they were to "mark" and not to follow their example were the false teachers known as Judaizers. Paul is saying, "You know my lifestyle, follow me."

In verse 18, Paul says, “(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation,” and we looked at all these verses last Wednesday night, which means our citizenship, “is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body,” bodies of humiliation, “that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Basically, when he starts Philippians 4:1, there’s no chapter-verse breaks in the original. He’s saying, “In light of the fact that there’s false teachers, ‘whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things,’ you’re to follow the true teachers of the Word. Follow me. Don’t be deceived and don’t be led astray,” so I’m exhorting you to stand fast, to work together in unity, to love one another, and let’s get out the gospel and not be divided. It really flows from chapter 3 right into chapter 4.

Notice Paul’s attitude, Philippians 4:1, or affection toward the believers in Philippi. Anybody that studies the book of Philippians knows that Paul had a very dear, close, loving relationship with the believers in Philippi. It’s my theory, and many other Bible students as well, that the church at Philippi was nearer and dearer to the heart of Paul than any other churches that he was a part of founding. It doesn’t mean he didn’t love the other ones, but he has a special place in his heart for the believers in Philippi. It’s interesting that of all the churches that Paul was instrumental in starting or founding, only the church at Philippi financially supported him and only they were allowed by Paul to send him money to support him in ministry. That’s a unique relationship.

Notice as Paul describes them in five different terms, and it kind of speaks to us about the importance of loving one another. He calls them “my brethren,” “dearly beloved,” “longed for,” “my joy and crown,” and says it again, “my dearly beloved.” If we talked like this with one another today, we would probably freak out. We say, “Hi, how you doing,” or “Hey, bro,” or “Hi, sister in the Lord.” We don’t say, “My beloved,” but the term is very, very, very wonderful.

Let’s go back over these in their order. First he says, “Therefore, my brethren.” Paul was their spiritual father, yet they were also brothers in the Lord. Paul was an apostle—think about this—he had apostolic authority, yet he was also one of the brethren with the believers. It’s interesting when you are called to spiritual leadership in the church, specifically pastoral leadership in the church, you are called a pastor, which is latin for shepherd, but you’re an undershepherd, Christ is the Chief Shepherd. Even though you’re a shepherd and you are to lead the flock, you are also a sheep. A pastor is unique in that he is both a shepherd and a sheep.

Whether you realize this or not, pastors have sheep needs—we need love, encouragement, fellowship, brothers and sisters. We need to understand that we’re part of the body of Christ. I like to see myself as not just your pastor, but your brother in Christ. Someone the other day actually greeted me, “Brother, John, I hope that’s okay.” That’s okay. I’m a brother, that’s true. You don’t have to say, “Pastor, John.” Sometimes people think my first name is Pastor and my

last name is John. I thank God for the fellowship, the love, and the encouragement of the believers here at this church and the fact that we're family and that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. You are my brothers and sisters, and we're all part of the family of God.

It also conveys the idea that they as believers were truly saved. They were brethren. If a person comes to church, yet he hasn't been born again, he's not really truly a Christian, he's not truly a part of the family of God, so they're not really a brother or a sister. You know, even in non-Christian circles you hear the word "bro" or "brother" quite often, and we do have the brotherhood of man, but that's not taught in the Bible. What's taught in the Bible is the family of God. Only those who have been regenerated or born again or true Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. If you're not a true Christian, then you're not really a brother or sister in Christ. The concept is very wonderful to think that we're truly brothers and sisters in Christ and are a part of the family of God and that God is our Father, right? When Jesus gave us that pattern for prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, "Our Father," our Abba, "which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name," and the fact that there are no personal pronouns in the Lord's prayer, we're all part of one family and need to pray for one another.

Secondly, Paul described them as "dearly beloved." I mentioned this before, but I love it, it has a double meaning. It means, I love you and God loves you. When you refer to a Christian brother or sister as beloved, it reminds them that I love you and God loves them. That's why I really believe that it would be a wonderful thing if we could get over our cultural hangups and not freak out and could actually refer to one another as "beloved," that we would remind that we're to love each other and that we are loved by God. I know that people might kind of freak out on that concept, but I think it's biblical and wonderful—"beloved," loved by God, loved by me, loving one another. It's so very important.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Paul says, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." It's something that God teaches us by the work of the Spirit in our hearts that we should actually love one another and, by the way, I'll come back to this, but this is the birthmark of the believer. The birthmark of the believer is love. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," not that you have bumper stickers or a Christian haircut or you wear certain clothing or you go to a certain church or you belong to a certain organization, but you actually love one another.

Thirdly, Paul says, "...and longed for," that's awesome. All the way back in Philippians 1:8, Paul says, "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you," this is Paul talking about the believers in Philippi. It's amazing to me the love and the bond that can be found in the body of Christ. Some of you know that you have family members that aren't believers, that aren't born again, and that you feel a closer bond and relationship with brothers or sisters in Christ than you do your own biological family because of the relationship you have in Christ. Paul says, "I long for you." This section in this chapter also should elevate in our minds the importance of Christian fellowship. We should be part of a fellowship, a body of Christ, and interacting with other believers. "I long for you."

In Philippians 2:26, Paul was speaking about Epaphroditus who had brought the offering from Philippi to Rome where Paul was under house arrest. He got sick and found out that the believers in Philippi knew he was sick and they were worried about him. He started worrying about them worrying about him, so he says, "He longed after you all and was full of heaviness." How much we should long after one another and be wanting to be together.

Notice Paul also says, "...my joy..." in verse one as well. Paul was in prison. Circumstances were not good and problems were for sure happening in the church at Philippi, yet he says, "you are my joy." He's about ready to tell these two women to kind of get it together and they weren't really doing things that would excite him, yet he says, "You're my joy." He found joy in people and others in the body of Christ. He didn't find joy in necessarily what they do, but who they are. He had a humble mind and a humble heart, taking us back to Philippians 2:1-4. This indicates that Paul was a humble servant that found joy in others. Remember Philippians 2:1, he says, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies," tender mercies and compassion, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind," or humility of mind, "let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things," or interests, "of others." Way back in Philippians 2, as he went on to describe the mind of Christ, he said, "Don't look at your own things, your own concerns, but look on the things of others," consider others more important than yourselves. Don't be self-centered or self-focused. Have a humble mind and give yourselves to others and find joy in others. How important that is.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, Paul says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Do you find joy in people? Really, the greatest joys that we can experience are found not only in the Lord but in other people that we fellowship with.

Then, lastly, Paul says, "...and crown," there in verse 1. Paul had joy presently, and he would have a crown in the future. The word "crown" is not the Greek word diadem, which is a kingly crown, but it's the word stephanos where we get our word "Stephen" from. There's two Greek words commonly translated "crown" in the New Testament: diadem, which is a crown for a king; and stephanos, which is a crown for a Greek athlete who would run in the Greek games and would get a laurel wreath, just a round pile of leaves that they would put on his head. That would be his stephanos, his crown, and it would wither eventually. It was his reward. Paul says, "...my joy and crown," how marvelous that is. He found joy and would one day get a crown.

When we as believers get to Heaven, we're going to get crowns. They are rewards. There are crowns for the faithful pastor, the faithful servant of the Lord, the great service that we do for God that we will be rewarded for, but we'll cast our crowns before His feet. Remember, love is the mark of the Christian, so in verse 1, if you wanted to give it one point, it would be love the brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. The Bible says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." I've met people that say, "Well, I'm a Christian,

but I don't go to church. I don't go to church because I don't like Christians." "You're a Christian that doesn't like Christians?" "Yeah, because they're creepy. I don't want to be around other Christians." How can you be a Christian and not want to be around Christians? How can you be a Christian and not want to be around other believers in Christ?

I remember when I got saved a long time ago, I won't tell you when, and I went to church, no one was my age. No one was anywhere near my age or looked like me, but I loved the fellowship, and it was a blessing. I knew that I was truly born again because I liked being around those people that I never could stand being around before I was saved. It was like, "Man, I must've really become a true Christian. I've really been born again because I like hanging out with these people," even though they were all a lot older and a lot different than I. They were brothers and sisters in Christ, and they opened their hearts and welcomed me in.

Write down John 13:34-35 where it says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." He says your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples, "By this shall all men know the ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Division is contrary to that heart of love that God would give us, and the Scriptures indicate that not only do we love all people, but we love especially the family of God, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Notice after this description in verse 1, Paul tells them what their defense is, he says "...so stand fast in the Lord," so your defense against false teachers, carried over from Philippians 3, your defense against Satan bringing division is that you stand fast in the Lord. The word "stand fast" means to stand and not be moved. The Scripture says we stand in the Lord, it says we're walking in the Lord, and it says that we're running a race that is set before us so we're rejoicing in the Lord, verse 4. At this point in the text we're standing firm and not moved, so we stand in the Lord and not in denominational distinctives. We stand in the Lord.

Let me give you my second point, jump down to verse 3, division is disastrous because it is contrary to the nature of the church. First, it's contrary to the nature of love—the heart of Paul, a servant's heart, and the church—and it's contrary to the nature of the church itself. Look at verse 3. He says, "And I intreat," it's interesting that in verse 2 he says, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche," but then changes the word now to "I intreat." The word "beseech," used twice in verse 2 for both Euodias and Syntyche indicates that they were both in error and needed to be corrected. It also indicates that this is a word of admonition from a superior to an inferior, Paul the Apostle now speaking to them, "I beseech you," but then when he speaks in verse 3, he's speaking to another individual and calls him "yokefellow."

We don't know who "yokefellow" is, maybe when we get to Heaven we'll meet somebody and he'll say, "I was in the Bible. Did you read about me?" "No. Who were you?" "I was the yokefellow in Philippians 4. Paul forgot to put my name in there. He just called me a yokefellow." Paul actually uses the word "intreat" which actually means an equal asking another equal in a petition—you're asking someone else to do something, but you see yourself as their

equal so it's more gracious and more kind. I'm not beseeching you, I'm "intreating" you, and says, "true yokefellow," perhaps I'll come back to that concept. This is evidently an individual, and he uses a word picture here. It's a marvelous word picture of a yoke, that your yokefellow, that term is described of being in the same yoke, and the yoke concept is a binding device that puts two oxen together that would plow in the field.

We know about a yoke of oxen, you take two oxen and put this wooden collar around their necks, you "yoke" them together, hook them to a plow, and the two of them together plow the field. What a beautiful picture that is of the believers in the church serving the Lord together, yoked together like oxen. We're yokefellows, both pulling equally our weight, working together for the sake of the gospel. He says, "...help those women," most likely in context, Euodias and Syntyche, mentioned in verse 2, "which laboured with me in the gospel." These two women had been used by God to get the gospel out with Paul. They had labored. That word "labored" means to labor to the point of being weary and tired, wearisome toil, "with me in the gospel," which is our job to get out the gospel, and they worked together "with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers," he throws in a bunch of other "fellowlabourers," "whose names are in the book of life," which is a fascinating reference to this book we call the "book of life."

Paul is calling on fellow Christians to help bring reconciliation and unity between these two women. Again, this is why I say we all have a responsibility. If there's a rift or an issue between people, we should try to reach out to one another and encourage them to forgive and to restore and to get along with one another. In Paul's words, we see what the church would be like were it true to its nature and calling.

I want to break down verse 3 for us because it gives us a picture of what the church should be all about and what we should be doing. First of all, notice in verse 3, the church should be marked by a mutual helpfulness. Notice he says, "...help those women which laboured with me in the gospel." Of course, as a pastor, this has always been my prayer that we work together. When I was a little boy in Sunday school, again, one of the things I hated was that you had to join hands with other people, and as a little boy I'd have to join hands with a little girl and sing When we all pull together, remember that song? Nobody remembers that song? When we all pull together, How happy we'll be! For your work is my work, and our work is God's work; (and we'd clap) If we all pull together, How happy we'll be! That's what we used to sing in Sunday school. You're looking at me like, "That's a weird song." Anybody sing that song? Okay. All the old people admit it.

Now, as a pastor, I realize how valuable and important that is! Let's pull together! We're in this together! We're brothers and sisters. We have one Father in Heaven. We have one purpose, one goal—to get out the gospel. When your work is my work, and our work is God's work and we all pull together, how happy we'll be! Not worrying about who gets the credit or who gets the glory or who gets the recognition, but that God gets the glory, God gets the recognition, and the gospel goes out. We all work together.

Paul says, "...help those women." The word "help" literally means take hold along with. It

literally means to take hold along with, so you grab ahold of what someone's working on and you help them, you work with them. You might say, "Well, that's not my job," or "It's not my calling," or "It's not my position." It doesn't matter. Roll up your sleeves and help each other. I'm always talking to our staff here at the church saying, "It may not be your job description or you may not be on the time clock or whatever, but if there's a need in the church, meet the needs. Roll up your sleeves. Serve others. Give yourself." Don't say, "Well, it's not my job; somebody else will do it," but help one another. Grab hold of that work together, and serve the Lord together. What a marvelous thing that is. There are so many ministries that need people to grab a hold of and work and help.

In Galatians 6, I'm reading from the New Living Translation, Paul says, "Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. 2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. 3 If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important." Roll up your sleeves and bear one another's burdens.

Remember the man Barnabas in the book of Acts? When Saul of Tarsus, the man who was persecuting the church, was converted, he was truly born again and wanted to go to church. He went to church (he had been there to arrest and throw them in prison) and they were freaking out. They were afraid of him. They all went running. Paul shows up at church, everyone sees him, screams, and runs. He's the only one there. This guy named Barnabas actually reached out to Saul, who is now a believer who became Paul, brought him to church and introduced him to the believers and said, "Look, he's saved. He's born again. He's not going to throw you in prison. He's okay." He brought Paul into the church. What if there had not been a Barnabas and the church had never received Paul?

Again, I exhort you, reach out to others. Reach out and bring them into fellowship, bring them into friendship. Reach out and introduce them to others. "Hey, have you met so-and-so?" "Hey, would you like to come over?" "Hey, would you like to eat with us?" Reach out and be a Barnabas. We need more Barnabases in the church who will reach out and help each other. By the way, the name "Barnabas" is son of consolation. It's not Barney, it's Barnabas, son of encouragement. What a great name.

Secondly, notice that the church possesses a single task. It's marked by a mutual helpfulness—it should be—and the church should possess a single task, "...which laboured with me in the gospel," and then he uses the word, "...my fellowlabourers." The number one job for us as a church is getting out the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the job, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." You may not be an evangelist, you may not be Billy Graham, you may not know the Bible that well, but our job—if we pray, we serve, we give, whatever your job is in the church, all members working together in unity, fellowlabourers—is to get out the gospel—that's the job of the church—so that we see people come to know Christ and are born again.

Thirdly, verse 3, the church is a place of fundamental oneness. The body of Christ is one. There are no vestigial organs in the body, we all need one another; but notice the statement in verse 3, which is amazing to me that it pops up in this situation, "...whose names are in the book of life." Wow! Isn't that fascinating that Paul's talking about these two women that don't seem to get along together, yet their names are both in the book of life. Now, the "book of life" is a book that, of course, when you become a Christian, your name is placed in the "book of life" and you become a child of God. It's used in Luke 10:20 when the disciples had gone out on their preaching mission and came back all excited and rejoicing and said, "Lord, even the demons were subject to us!" Jesus said, "Well, that's wonderful, 'but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.'" That's what we're to be rejoicing in, my name is written in the "book of life."

In Revelation 3:5, the Lord says to the church at Sardis, "He that overcometh...I will not blot out his name out of the book of life," it's a promise that you will not be blotted out. In Revelation 20:15, at the great white throne judgment, it says, "...and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life," and the book of the Lamb, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," burning with brimstone, which "is the second death." Only saved individuals are found in that "book of life," so we have a oneness together in the church.

Read Ephesians 2 and 4. The theme of the book of Ephesians is the body of Christ, that the one wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is broken down and we are one in Christ. The very nature of the church...and when we think about the church, you have to understand it comes in two categories: the local church, which is what this church is, an individual body of believers; and then it comes into the universal church, which are Christians anywhere in the world found in different churches in different denominations. We're all born-again members of the family of God, we're all children of God, and God is our Father. We need to keep that in the back of our minds. The church is not just this small little group that meets here at Revival, but it's the universal church—people from different denominations and persuasions—that have all been born again. That's why I emphasized earlier the brethren part is that you have to be born of the Spirit to be a brother or sister in Christ, God becomes your Father, and the church is way bigger than this group right here. We're part of a large family of God, and we have brothers and sisters all around the world; which, by the way, we should remember them and pray for them. We should be praying globally for the church, the body of Christ. Their names, and our names, are written down in this book we call the "book of life."

Let me wrap up this study. There are three ways to maintain unity that I want to point out. The first is we "...stand fast in the Lord," verse 1. Keep your eyes on the Lord. Secondly, verse 2, "...be of the same mind in the Lord." We humbly keep our minds on Christ and humbly serve one another. Thirdly, we serve the Lord together. We're "fellowlabourers" in the Lord and in the gospel. So we "...stand fast in the Lord," verse 1; we are "...of the same mind," our outlook, attitude, "in the Lord," a humble mind that considers others more important than ourselves; thirdly, we serve together as "fellowlabourers," "yokefellows" in the gospel. You might even add, verse 4, we "rejoice in the Lord;" and verse 5, we look for the Lord who is coming soon. To have

joy and to have peace in our lives and in the church, it comes through love, verse 1, in the family of God and through unity in the body of Christ, and through cooperative service—getting out the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what Paul wants us to do.

Lehman Strauss says, "It is our business to safeguard our Lord's interests by not allowing differences between brethren to deepen in the strife and separation. The churches need more yokefellows, Christians who pull well in a double harness," I love that. You know, whenever they would put oxen together, the oxen had to learn to pull together. You couldn't have one pulling harder than the other. You can't have one dragging its feet and the other ox pulling it. You've got two oxen in the yoke, they both need to pull equally. You need to pull together.

Let's be yokefellows. Let's love one another. Let's serve one another. Let's edify one another. Let's build up one another. Let's forgive one another. Let's not let the devil come in and divide us but unite us as we work together for the glory of God in getting out the gospel. Amen? Let's pray.