**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

 ***Harmony***

**Philippians 4:1-3**

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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**Harmony**

Paul presents the constant value of harmony and unity in the Christian life throughout his letter writing. To have unity, there must be harmony. He encourages congregations to be in harmony, one spirit, one mind bringing unity to their lives under God. Not unity for the sake of unity sacrificing morality and truth but unity under God and His plan for our lives. God designed humanity to be in harmony with Him in order to secure life and eternal life. All other calls for unity under any other name or authority only brings death and destruction to people. God speaks to us, as Jesus, telling us that our unity with Him is made possible by His indwelling Holy Spirit in this is way. . .

16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

 19 "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.

 20 "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you **(John 14:16-20).**

From these experiences, with God’s Spirit active in our lives, we can determine with whom we can be in harmony and those with whom we should not be in harmony.

**A House Divided**

It is almost impossible to grow-up in Western civilization without hearing “a house divided will fall” or “a house divided will not stand”. These are words from Jesus in the New Testament.

And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand **(Matthew 12:25).**

Here is another occasion that Jesus called upon Old Testament Scripture to illustrate His point of unity.

**Psalm 133:1** A Song of Ascents, of David.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!

**Let us read our biblical text for today.**

A note before we read these three verses. Scholars do not know who Euodia and Syntyche are nor their issue of disharmony. And, in verse three, there is reference to someone whom Paul obviously knew but they also are not known. There is only speculation.

**Philippians 4**

1 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in **harmony** in the Lord.

3 Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

**Strong’s** 5426 φρονέω (phroneo): to have understanding, to think

Usage: adopt a view, concern, feel, have attitude, intent on purpose,

live in harmony, mind, set their minds, set your mind,

setting your mind, think, views.

 Harmony. . . unity of spirit . . . we are all in this together.

So, with whom are we Christians to be in harmony and unity? The short answer is. . . Believers. But does that answer need qualifying? The fallen world has placed the label ‘Christian’ on anything they want without qualification.

Believers are those who have surrendered to the Lord enabling our lives to be guided by His indwelling Holy Spirit. . . and . . . with this surrender, we have accepted the Incarnation of God, as Jesus Christ, who went to the Cross to pay the price for the sins of the world to be raised on the third day witnessing His victory over sin and death for forty days on earth, leading to His ascension to one day return to judge the quick and the dead. . . and so says the Apostle Paul to his young apprentice, Timothy.

**2 Timothy 4:1-4** (KJV)

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

 With the above stated, it needs to be clarified that Believers do not only affix themselves to agreement statements. James 2:19 tells us that the demons believe but shudder. They shudder because they do not follow the Lord’s commands and seek to destroy those that do. Believers not only agree but have the fruits of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives (Galatians 5:22,23). It is of note that the next verse qualifies Believers. . . Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit **(Galatians 5:24-25)**.

**God Holds Believers Accountable for What we Know and Teach.**

 We have the advantage of knowing these facts from growing-up in Western culture and from reading the Bible. So, the context of all of Paul’s letters and the New Testament contains this historical panoramic knowledge stated above.

In addition to this declaration, God’s Apostle Paul writes in Romans that God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse **(Romans 1:19-20)**.

It is true, that there has to be a somewhat detailed qualification to define Christianity that I have given here. God tells us to be accurate in teaching His Word.

**2 Timothy 2:15**

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

**Speaking of “Harmony & Unity”**

I fully understand that these sermons I preach represent all the members of the Fellowship. I could not be a member of a church if I did not agree, for the most part, with what was being preached. And I would not expect you too either. I believe it was Ronald Reagan who said something to the effect *“that the person who agrees with you 80 percent of the time is a friend and an ally - not a 20 percent traitor*”. I have remembered this since I was a young man and have often applied it to my relationships.

 However, for my part, God’s called preachers cannot not be 20 % in error when they preach. In fact, I see God’s called prophets had to be 100 percent accurate all the time. There is not any room for error. We obviously, being human, misquote and misspell things from time-to-time and may not be understood in the correct context, but given time to clarify. . . the outcome must be consistent with God’s Word.

 I mean, which 20 percent of the Gospel message can be misquoted out-of-context and misunderstood while maintaining the core fundamental of God’s teachings? The reality is. . .that not one foundational teaching that I quoted earlier can be misquoted/altered or it is not Christianity.

The severe historical problem we have. . .is for the name of Jesus to be slapped on top of whatever someone wants to believe to justify their lifestyle and actions. So, there is the Christian label on numerous beliefs. The sad reality is. . .that many people cannot tell the difference. Anybody can say they are Christian. I mean, we see Vladimir Putin allowing the Church in Russia to hold services under his régime. Obviously, Putin is using the Church for his own political advancement manipulating its leadership. To put forth his Christian standing, the world has even seen Putin in church services since he has evilly invaded Ukraine. He just uses the Church as a façade to entice people into believing that his actions are approved by God.

In America, we do not have to look far to see political leaders do the same thing as Putin. In fact, Putin’s counterpart. . .who parades around as the American Commander in Chief does the same thing as Putin by attending a Christian Church and holding himself to be a Christian while leading the Democrat party to pursue and orchestrate abortion-on-demand and the grooming of kindergarteners to be sexual victims. Their efforts are to manipulate the masses. It was Karl Marx who said that *religion was the opiate of the masses.* And in the hands of Putin and his kind, Marx is correct. Those of us who are real Christians see these charlatans for who they really are. We are not in harmony nor unity with these leaders.

 **So, with whom should we be in Harmony?**

 Those that Love God and neighbor and follow His Commands.

**John 14:15** "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

**John 14:21** "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

Yes, it is that last part that sticks. . . follow His Commands. This excludes amoral people who are **C**hristian **I**n **N**ame **O**nly “CINO”. You know. . . like people who are called RINO (Republican In Name Only) by political observers. These CINOs do not follow the Lord’s commands. These are the ones who wear the Christian label but believe, support, approve and pursue abortion-on-demand, and any intimate relationship a person wants to have destroying God’s design for family. We are not in harmony nor unity with them. Paul gives a warning and instruction to bring judgement to the Believers in Corinth.

**1 Corinthians 5:9-13**

9 I wrote you in my letter **not to associate** with immoral people;

10 I did not at all mean with the **immoral people** of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.

11 But actually, I wrote to you **not to associate with any so-called brother** if he is an **immoral person,** or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.

12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church**?**

13 But those who are outside, **God judges**. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

 From this Scripture in Corinthians, we can see the accurate context of Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:1. Many people only quote the first verse.

**Matthew 7:1-5**

1 "Do not judge so that you will not be judged.

 2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

 3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?

 5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

In Matthew, Jesus is talking to Jews who are legalistic in their application of the Law of Moses. Verse 2 clarifies that judgements can be made but expect God to judge you by the same measure you judge. Jesus calls on us to be judged by our faith not our deeds (Revelation 20:11- 15) to make us righteous to God. Remember, Abel was approved to God by his faith (Hebrews 11:1-42). We judge to restore a person to the fellowship, and God is faithful to forgive a confessing and repentant Believer (1 John 1:9). This judgement keeps us in harmony and unity with each other.

**Galatians 6:1** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

**Believers In Harmony with Believers – Know Them by Their Fruit**

 **A Jewish Religious Lawyer seeking to see if Jesus was in harmony with him asked Jesus. . . how to live forever?**

 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

 37 And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment.

 39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." **(Matthew 22:36-40)** [ Know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:16, 6:44)]

**The New Testament provides us statements of faith that we can be in harmony with what establishes our unity. All of these Scriptures listed below restate and reinforce the foundational elements of Christianity.**

**1 Corinthians 15:1** Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

**John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

**Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For by grace, you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

**Hebrews 11:1-4**  1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

 4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

**1 John 4:1-3** 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

**1 John 4:8-10**  8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**1 John 4:15-21** 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

19 We love, because He first loved us.

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. **AMEN**