

Introduction: It is all but impossible to find love in the media. Newscasts, social media, encounters in the streets: all of these give the overwhelming impression that we are people with irreconcilable divisions. Is there any way out? *** Yes. But the answer is the One Person that most of America has kicked out of the public square: Jesus Christ, The Savior and King. What He did on earth two thousand years ago is THE Good News that everyone needs to hear – and see! *** But sadly, most of the American church is too weak in God’s LOVE and/or Truth in The Holy Spirit to be adequate witnesses to THE Good News. It is mostly sufficient in witnessing to the necessity of faith IN Jesus; but, it is weaker in living its life totally surrendered to Him. And, worse, it does NOT always demonstrate sacrificial love by being willing to die for each other (even those in different denominations) that Jesus gave as His New Commandment in the Upper Room at His Last Passover meal. (*John 13*) This meal pointed to the Sacrament of Communion, which is participation with Him IN His life-giving, life-changing sacrifice. *** Unlike many American church leaders, the apostle Paul, who planted the church in Philippi – along with Silas and Luke (*Acts 16:11-40*), commanded his brothers to live their lives together while also striving together in THE Good News. *** After commanding them to have the mind of Christ, who became humbly obedient to God to death on The Cross (*2:5-11*), and using Timothy, Epaphroditus and himself as examples of those willing to suffer for others out of love, the apostle Paul waxes poetic in his love for them before he commands them to stand firm IN the Lord. Then he goes on to exhort two specific women, who were his co-workers, to have the same mind; and, he also asks an anonymous genuine yoke-fellow to aid these women to the same right thinking. *** There is much here that challenges us to change how we are living our lives. So, let’s look at every phrase and pray The Holy Spirit convicts us where we are falling short of God’s desire for our lives, and gives to us the power and love to change our hearts, minds, desires and actions.

I. So, my beloved, stand firm in the Lord. (*Verse 1*)

A. So, my brethren: beloved and desired. (*Verses 1a-b*)

1. Therefore my brothers: (*Verse 1a*)

Brothers: Paul is addressing the saints in the church at Philippi (*1:1*) as his brothers IN Christ Jesus. He addresses all of them this way three other times in the letter. (*3:1, 13; 4:8*)

2. Beloved and desired. (*Verse 1b*)

Strong affection: His first word to his brothers expresses his love to them as the same kind of self giving LOVE God has for people. In this way, he shows himself a true disciple of Jesus, who spoke to Peter and the rest of His disciples in the Upper Room ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’ (*John 13:34-35*)

B. Stand firm IN the Lord, beloved. (*Verses 1c-d*)

1. My joy and crown. (*Verse 1c*)

Second coming: Jesus will give crowns to His disciples when He comes again. (*1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2:8-10*) Earlier Paul said because his brothers in Philippi were holding out the Word of Life he would glory IN The Day of Christ (*2:16*).

2. So, you all must stand firm IN the Lord – beloved! (*Verse 1d*)

Stand firm: This sentence beautifully illustrates BOTH the deep friendship AND the exhortations of the letter to this point. Paul repeats the main command given earlier: ‘so that ... I may hear of you that you are standing firm in One Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of The Gospel’ (*1:27*); ‘Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith’ (*1 Corinthians 16:13*); ‘Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls’ (*Romans 14:4*). So, all saints must stand firm: IN the faith, IN the Lord, IN One Spirit TO God the Master – The Trinity.

IN Lord: No person has the strength in himself or herself to obey this command. It is only for those who are IN the Lord, by faith IN His Gospel.

Beloved: Paul began this address to his brothers with beloved. And, he ends it with beloved!

II. Two women must be like-minded; and, a yoke-fellow is asked to help them, with all whose names are in the Book of Life. (*Verses 2-3*)

A. Euodia and Syntyche are urged to have the same mind. (*Verse 2*)

1. I am entreating Euodia. (*Verse 2a*)

Fragrant: Her name is literally ‘good smell’ – fragrant.

2. And, I am entreating Syntyche. (*Verse 2b*)

Fate: Her name is literally ‘with fate’. One commentator called her ‘Lucky’.

3. The same to think IN the Lord. (*Verse 2c*)

Think same: Paul now applies his earlier command to the whole church ‘make my joy complete by being of the same mind’ (*2:2*) specifically to these two women.

IN Lord: By saying they must have this same mind IN the Lord, he is referring to what he said before he described Christ Jesus dying on The Cross in humble obedience: ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus’ (*2:5 KJV, 6-8*). Again, no one doing work in THE Good News of Jesus can succeed unless he or she is IN the Lord!

B. Paul asks his yoke-fellow to help these women who strove together with him in The Gospel. (*Verse 3*)

1. Yes, I am also asking thee: (*Verse 3a*)

Thee: Paul now addresses a specific individual in the congregation of the saints in Philippi.

2. Genuine yoke-fellow, thou must help these (women). (*Verse 3b*)

Who he might be: Epaphroditus was identified as the yoke-fellow by church father Marius Victorinus (c. 355AD). In 1868, commentator J. B. Lightfoot agreed. But, Epaphroditus would carry the letter to Philippi from Rome.

When the letter was read in Philippi, the yoke-fellow was already there. A more likely yoke-fellow is Luke.

The 'we' passages in *Acts* have Luke present at the founding of the church (c. 51AD, *Acts 16:11-15*). After Paul leaves, Luke uses 'they' for Paul's team (*Acts 17:1*). Later, as Paul's team went through Macedonia, Luke wrote they waited for 'us' in Troas (c. 55AD, *Acts 20:1-6*). It is reasonable Luke spent these four years building up the church in Philippi. Finally, Luke had been with Paul in his early 'prison letters' (c. 61AD, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*).

But, this letter was written a year later (c. 62AD), giving time for Luke to return to Philippi.

Application: Jesus commanded His disciples to take His yoke upon them. (*Matthew 11:28-30*) This unnamed man was such a disciple. What about us? Will we take Jesus' yoke upon ourselves?

3. Who have striven together with me in The Gospel. (*Verse 3c*)

Fellow (Co-)workers: Euodia and Syntyche were two of thirty-two named co-workers who struggled and suffered with Paul to spread The Gospel (Good News) of Jesus. They were faithful co-workers with Paul in his labors for Jesus Christ, and he loved them.

Gospel: What is The Gospel? Jesus said those who are (spiritually) 'dead' can hear His voice and cross over from death to life. (*John 5:24-25*) Paul wrote that all people begin life dead in transgressions and sins. (*Ephesians 3:1-3*) This is 'Bad News': Our default 'human condition' is judgment from God. But Jesus died once on The Cross to take away sins now and bring (final) salvation when He appears the second time. (*Hebrews 9:16-28*) Put another way: If we die to our sins with Christ on The Cross we are freed from sin to have His new life as a gift. (*Romans 6:1-14*)

The greatest of all miracles is when a dead spirit comes to life IN Jesus, is forgiven by The Father through faith IN Jesus, and receives The Holy Spirit. This Good News IS worth sharing with everyone.

After receiving forgiveness and life by faith, people are compelled to share this gift of reconciliation with God, and receiving His righteousness, with others. (*2 Corinthians 5:11-21*) Sharing of The Gospel (Good News) is never done alone. Jesus sent His disciples out two-by-two. (*Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1*) Paul, Silas and Timothy were a team of three in Berea and Corinth. (*Acts 17-18; 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1:1*) Euodia and Syntyche were also a Gospel team from the saints in Philippi.

Saints stand firm, working together with the same mind

4. Also with Clement. (*Verse 3d*)

Clement: Although unlikely, this may be the Clement who was bishop in Rome from 88AD until 99AD when he died. He would have been 27 years old when this letter was written, twenty-six years before he was bishop.

5. And the rest of my fellow workers. (*Verse 3e*)

Rest of fellow workers: Part of Gospel ministry to those outside the church is to help those inside the church to stand firm and obey Jesus' New Command to love each other sacrificially, maintaining unity as a witness to Him to outsiders. (*John 17*)

Saints stand firm, working together with the same mind

6. Whose names are in the Book of Life. (*Verse 3f*)

Book of Life: The first mention of God having a book with names is when Moses interceded with Yahweh on Mt. Sinai to forgive the sin of His people or blot his name out of 'the book which you have written'. (*Exodus 32:31-35*) When David suffered greatly from those scorning him for his zeal for God's House, he prayed 'May they be blotted from the Book of Life'. (*Psalms 68*, especially *verse 28*) The 'beast' will be given power over those whose names are not in the Book of Life (*Revelation 13:8*); all whose names are not in the Book of Life will marvel over the 'beast' (*17:8*); finally, anyone (whose name) is not found in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (*20:15*). The 'new Jerusalem' is for 'only those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life'. (*Revelation 21*, especially *verse 27*) People who give their lives fully to doing Gospel work IN The Lord Jesus Christ have their names written in the Book of Life!

Gospel workers are in the Book of Life

Putting it together: God's beloved adopted children must stand firm in Gospel witness; and, they must show genuine unity in front of a hostile, increasingly pagan world. This requires every saint to submit personal ambitions and goals so as to join with others in the church to work together by faith in sacrificial giving to others as Jesus Christ has sacrificially given to them; and, to share The Gospel with those they know.

Saints stand firm, working together with the same mind

Conclusion: The apostle Paul commands his beloved brothers to stand firm IN the Lord. Then he entreats two women who are fellow workers in The Gospel to think the same IN the Lord, while also requesting a genuine yoke-fellow to help these women who have striven together with him – all of whose names are in the Book of Life.

Saints stand firm, working together with the same mind