

## Philippians 10-08-27b

We resume our study now in Philippians chapter 4, verse 2. Paul, having given the introduction we've covered in the first session tonight, says, "I implore you, Odia, and I implore Syntyche "to be of the same mind in the Lord. "And I urge you also, true companion, "help these women who labored with me in the gospel "with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers "whose names are in the book of life." So this is the subject we're gonna talk about here for the next few minutes. Paul has been talking in general terms.

He has offered a couple of individuals by name, Timothy and Epaphroditus, in the earlier portion of the letter. But now he names these two ladies by name and where he was complimentary of Timothy and Epaphroditus, here we can tell that Odia and Syntyche are having some sort of conflict. They are not of the same mind.

Thus, Paul implores them to be of the same mind. And this same mind idea has been the underlying theme of much of what we have studied up to this point. To be of the same mind, and this is ta'auta fronain.

It's fronain ta'auta. It's the very same one mind that we saw earlier in the letter. He says, here's an example of a specific situation in the church, in your group, that these truths apply to.

And this is always Paul's way. He will generally give a lot of truth, a lot of theological explanation in the earlier part of a letter, and then it will turn a corner into application, exhortation and application. Well, this is a pretty direct application.

And being mentioned by name, you get the idea that this must have been a very significant division. We don't know the nature of it. These ladies are not mentioned elsewhere.

They're not in Acts. There's been some speculation. You remember Lydia, the Seller of Purple and the whole thing in Acts that we covered and reviewed when we started the letter.

And many people think that, and I think I mentioned this back then, that Lydia was not actually her name, that she's the Lydian. She is a woman of Lydia, the Seller of Purple, and that her name wasn't actually given in Acts. And that she could possibly be one of these two women.

Euodia could possibly be the Lydian. It's pure speculation. There's not a shred of suggestion anywhere that she is one of these ladies.

But you've got three people mentioned here, and you say, well, it would be kind of nice if we could sort of figure out the situation because Paul is giving an application of what he's been talking about in the first three chapters. And we don't really know much about it. We're just kind of getting in on the tail end of the conversation here.

Paul knows what he's talking about. Everybody else at the time knew, but we don't. And we're

kind of having to, you know how this is, you get there after the first 15 minutes of a movie and you're kind of playing catch up all the rest of the way.

So have we seen this guy before? Why is he acting like, you know, if you don't get there at the beginning, there's inevitably some loss in following the plot. This is why I ask for silence and concentration from the very first scene of a movie. I seldom get it, but I ask for it.

You know, this is true in a theater. There's still people filing in because they're late and they're waving their popcorn in your face and somebody behind hadn't finished their cell phone conversation yet. And, you know, a well-told story begins with the very first word of the very first paragraph on the very first page.

In fact, there is a competition each year to write the best first line of a short story. It's a first line competition. Who's got the most engaging interest capturing first line? And the better the book, the more talented the author, the better the movie maker or whatever, the more you are going to find that there is significant information in small details at the beginning.

And if you are something of a puzzle solver and you like to kind of figure out what's going on and not be lost in the weeds for most of the story, pay attention at the beginning. It matters. It's there for a reason.

It's not just filler while they run the credits. In fact, many times you can figure out a lot of what's going to happen in the movie if you pay attention to what's going on behind the credits. It's a little game that they play.

They say, you know, I'm going to throw these clues out and people are going to miss them because they're sitting around saying, why is this seat wet? And hey, can I sit next to him? And, you know, pay attention. Well, we don't know what the beginning of this conversation was. And in a way it generalizes this to be potentially broader for us.

We're not going to say, oh, well this just applies if you've got two women fighting over who's going to host the next Bible class. Euodia says, I want to have it at my house. And Syntyche says, no, I want to have it at mine.

Or they could be arguing about I've hosted too much. I don't want to host it anymore. It's your turn.

How come I'm always having to host church? You know, I've always got the cleanup and, you know, I don't have any servants. I have to do this stuff with my, look at my fingers worn down to the bone. I don't know what they were.

I can use this illustration because we never have this problem here. We have wonderful, gracious people who are always happy to host. And I'm very grateful for that.

But I don't know what this was about. Nobody does, but believe me, that hasn't stopped the speculation down through the centuries. And the early church, I mean, Chrysostom had a theory.

Everybody had a theory about who these people were and what they were up to. And there's not just two, there's three. Did you catch the third person in this address? I implore you, Euodia, and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

And I urge you also, true companion with no name, help these women who labored with me in the gospel and with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life. These women are the subject of Paul's concern, his fatherly care, if you will. He wants them to be reconciled.

He wants them to come together and be part of the team. Don't be dividing and going your separate ways here. And he says, one of the reasons for this is these women labored with me in the gospel.

And what does this tell us? Whatever the current conflict is, is not really important. Paul doesn't even dignify it by explaining it. He says, look, these women are not contentious by nature.

They're not immature and obstreperous as a rule. These are women who I know are solid believers. They're in the midst of kind of a temporary spat right now, but they labored with me in the gospel.

I know these women, I care about these women. And it's unfortunate that despite their history and their maturity and their growth, that they are currently at odds. And he says, I implore you, get over this and get back to what I know you can be, like-minded.

You've been like-minded in the past. You all worked together with me and with Clement and with others whose names are in the book of life. And this is no time to be in conflict over some inconsequential thing.

That's the upshot of it. But interestingly, he appeals to a third party here, somebody whom we only know as Nosy Suzuges. It must have been like a Japanese member of the congregation.

Nosy Suzuges is the third party here. And they actually think that some people trying to unravel this puzzle, think that maybe this was a proper name, that Suzuges was kind of like a Theophilus. Is that a description or is it a name? Theophilus, lover of God, friend of God.

Is that just a honorific? Is it a title of respect, kind of a general... And same thing here, true yoke fellow, true companion. Suzuges literally means co-worker. And Nosy or Nasy actually here has the idea of truth or genuineness.

So what's going on here? I implore parakalo, as I mentioned before, this is the ministry the Holy Spirit typically accomplishes in us, which is to bring malfunction to our attention and help us use

what God has provided to us in the truth of His word to stop malfunctioning and start functioning properly. And so Paul, is this sort of a conviction? Is this bringing something out into the open? These ladies certainly can't be pretending like they're friends and stabbing each other in the back in their own circle of acquaintances after Paul openly says, you all need to get over this. It's out, it's been mentioned, it's in the air, it's the elephant in the room.

Somebody's gonna have to do something about it. So he says, I implore parakalo, you odia and parakalo suntaki. And notice Paul is very diplomatic about this.

If he uses one instance of the verb, parakalo, parakaleo, then whoever gets mentioned first, maybe that's the person he's imploring more forcefully. So it's even, it's even Steven. I implore you odia and I implore suntaki.

I implore you equally. Each of you get your own verb to implore. I'm not taking sides, Paul says.

And Paul doesn't try to solve their problem. He doesn't say, you know, you odia suntaki is right. You really are kind of a crabby old gal and I wish you'd get over it.

He doesn't say, you know, suntaki, you odia really is doing the right thing here and you're just all messed up. You notice whenever there are two women at odds, Jesus himself was very careful. You remember Mary and Martha? And that's ground you have to walk very circumspectly.

And the Lord Jesus did it and Paul does it here. I implore you odia and I implore suntaki to be of the same mind in the Lord. You don't have to wear the same dresses and, you know, walk hand in hand to the agora, but in the Lord, be of the same mind.

When it comes to church, when it comes to fellowship, when it comes to things related to spiritual truth, you need to be like-minded. You can have different favorite colors and different recipes for biscuits or whatever, but when it comes to in the Lord, you need to be together on this. Go back to the way you were when you were a coworker in the gospel.

Now, it's nice to talk about this and look at some gals that lived two millennia ago, but it's important for us as well. And I'm happy to say, I don't know of any rifts, schisms, conflicts, or other unhappinesses between anybody within the sound of my voice, but it happens from time to time. It can happen in households.

It can happen in fellowships. It can happen in friendships. People get crossways.

People inadvertently offend or hurt other people. It happens. We're human.

We mess up. I've certainly done my share, and I inadvertently am a party of a conflict. I'm one side of a mess up, and probably more often than not, the guilty party.

But it's a question of what do you do? Paul has just got through saying, you want to know how to

stand fast in the Lord? Do you want to know how to stick and be eagerly waiting for His return and be ready for it when it comes? I've just given it to you. And everything we've covered in these first three chapters plays into that, feeds into that, informs us of how to stand fast in the Lord. Now that he has established that foundation, he says, okay, let's get down to cases.

You two ladies, did you hear what I've just been talking about in the earlier part of the letter? Well, remember that? Let this mind be in you. Be of one heart, one mind, one purpose, one Lord, one faith, one gospel, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, as he says over in Ephesians. All right, let's get down to cases.

You ladies have got a conflict. Drop it. He doesn't solve it.

He doesn't adjudicate it. He doesn't judge it. He says, drop it.

Be of the same mind in the Lord. Get on common ground in the Lord. You got a question about the Lord? Got a question about the plan of God? You got a question about what it means to love one another? You got a question about, you know, the sincere milk of the word, about laying on hands or baptisms or any of the other doctrines of the faith? You got any question about what ought to be done in the church? Should we be taking care of widows and orphans? Should we, you know, are you at odds over the reimbursements for the snacks? What is it? Get together, figure it out.

One of you put the interests of the others ahead of your own. Both of you put each other's interests ahead of your own and figure it out. Paul doesn't tell him what to do specifically.

He tells him what to do in the Lord. Figure it out. You're grown up women.

You've been partners with me in the gospel. I don't need to tell you the specific answer. Unify.

Get that froneo, sum froneo. So, and then this is the interesting part. When you get to verse three, he says, and I urge you, Nessie Suzuki.

I think I said Nossie earlier, but it's an Ada. Nessie Suzuki, true companion, genuine yoke fellow, help these women. So lumbano.

Soon means with, lumbano means to give. So what do you have here? Help, help these women. Now this is something you can't get from being by yourself.

These women have a problem. Paul says, okay, two of you, we're gonna lock you in a room, duke it out, arm wrestle, flip a coin, draw straws. He says, you can be helped.

And he appeals to his yoke fellow, his true companion, and says, help these women, facilitate. Now you could call this counseling. There are people who would love to call this counseling, and I give you my permission, call it whatever you want to.

There is a role of mediation. There is a role of conciliation. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Blessed are the conciliators. Blessed are the intermediaries, the enzymes, the catalysts that enable healthy things to take place. I don't think you need a lot of Freud or Skinner or Jung for this.

This is a spiritual gift. This is a function within a congregation. If there has been a misunderstanding, if there are wounded feelings, if there is a miscommunication or a wall has come down and there's a total refusal to communicate or lack of communication, somebody can bridge that gap.

Somebody can help. Sue Lombano, who is qualified to help? Not necessarily the well-meaning, not necessarily the anxious to see it all end. Paul says, my true yoke fellow.

And there have been all, you cannot believe. I mean, this is like a lot of other things in Bible. Whenever something's sort of unclear, it's all over the map.

The solutions are as varied as the commentators. There are people who said, you know what? This isn't really Eodia and Syntyche, which are both feminine. This is Eodia and Syntychos.

It's a man and a woman. This is a marital spat. And it's a marriage counseling issue because they found some guys that had this name.

Well, I'm sorry, but there's too much grammar that would have to change here. There are feminine pronouns with the antecedents. It doesn't work.

Some people think that Eodia or Syntyche is Lydia and that she got crossways with some other gal in town. Just because we happen to know the name of one other lady in Philippi doesn't mean that, well, I know her name, so they must be the same. There's this human tendency when you, if you pick up three things out of a room full of 100, well, the three things have to be related in some way.

You go to an archeological dig and you dig up this and you dig up that. Well, they must fit together in some way. There's a mention of a book in ancient literature and you dig up a book in the same town.

Well, this must be the book that was mentioned in the ancient literature. I mean, how many hundreds of that? I saw this, by the way, in biblical archeology review. Not necessarily.

Knowledge of two things. If you are talking to somebody and they had a horrible pain in their knee and it turned out that they had a torn umptifrats ligament, well, I've got a pain in my knee. I must have a torn umptifrats ligament.

You just can't immediately make those connections. Just because they're both women doesn't

mean they are the same woman. It's a natural human reaction.

And trust me, two out of every five explanations of this passage try to shoehorn some known person into the mix. Well, you don't have to shoehorn anybody and I can solve it from the scripture just like we solve everything else. And you can tell me by now, what is, where do we get the clues to figure out puzzles like this? Who is the yoke fellow? Where would we look for the answer? It's one word, starts with con and ends with text, right? It's in the context.

I urge you singular. By the way, another one of the solutions, the U singular here is the entire Philippian church. I urge you Philippian church in the singular, true yoke fellow church, help these women.

The whole church, let's have a big intervention. That's how Dr. Crystal would say it, intervention. We're gonna get the whole church together.

We're gonna put these women in the middle and we're gonna get this thing solved. Okay, yoke fellow church, form a ring, put them in the middle, you know, let the games begin. No, the yoke fellow is in the passage.

How do I know this? Go up to chapter two, verse 25. Philippians, I trust one of these days to be able to send Timothy to you because I don't have anybody like him. He'll sincerely care for your state.

Everybody else seeks their own. He has proven character. I hope to send him at once.

I trust the Lord that I myself shall come shortly. Yet I considered it necessary to send to you now, carrying this letter and standing up in front of you and reading it to you, Epaphroditus. He is my brother, my fellow worker, my fellow soldier, my suzigi.

How many different ways can you say he's my yoke fellow? Who's reading this letter? Who delivered the letter? Now think about this. Paul is wherever he is when he writes this. We're not sure where, you remember that.

But he says, all right, Epaphroditus, I know you long to be back. You were sick unto death. These people are worried about you.

You need to go be a comfort to them. They'll be a comfort to you. You can carry my heart and my message and my letter to them.

He sends him. So on some happy day in Philippi, they look down the road. Here comes Epaphroditus.

Oh joy, give him a meal. Give him something to drink. Call the people in the church.

Let's have a meeting. Let's hear. He says he's got a letter from Paul.

It electrifies everybody in the church. They assemble immediately. It's sun is going down.

They lay out a few pieces of bread and food and they get everybody together at Euodia's house. And Syntyche's over there steaming in the corner saying, how come it wasn't in my house? You know, it was my turn. Jesus says, well, it's closer.

And he came here first. And I don't understand why I can't have it at my house. You know, why can't I have the honor of, you know, hosting the, whatever it is.

And so she's over there steaming and they're at a house. Who's going to read the letter? Tell me. This letter has been carried all the way across from wherever Paul is.

Who's going to read the thing? Who's going to express verbally what Paul has put down in writing in this letter? Epaphroditus, of course. Epaphroditus is going to say, oh, I'm just too choked up. Syntyche, you read it.

She's not going to do that. He's, that's his whole purpose in coming. He has come to be Paul's proxy.

He's Paul's Angelus. You know, God can't be here. So he sends the angel of the Lord who speaks in his name.

So much so that people think he is the Lord. Even today, theologians think the angel of the Lord is the pre-incarnate Christ. It's sad, but true.

And now it says he's an angel. What does angel mean? Angel, it means angel. It doesn't mean the Lord.

If it was the Lord, it would say the Lord. The angel of the Lord is not the Lord. If I haven't made this clear before, the angel of the Lord is not Jesus Christ, pre-incarnate.

Read Hebrews. Read the first half of the first chapter of Hebrews. And if that doesn't straighten it out, come see me.

Okay, so Epaphroditus is standing up reading the letter and he says, I implore you, Euodia and Syntyche, be of one mind in the Lord and you, oh, a little flush over Epaphroditus' face. He's talking to me, Yokefellow, the Yokefellow that I mentioned back in verse 25 and following, my brother, my fellow worker, my fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need almost at the cost of his life. That's my true Yokefellow.

And he says, you know, now that Epaphroditus is there, he will have some extra energy to bring to this reconciliation. He's a new factor in the equation, right? This thing has been simmering for a while, so much so that Paul has heard about it. He had sent Epaphroditus back to be a benefit

and be a blessing.

And Epaphroditus may be able to bring a fresh perspective and some fresh insight, fresh word of the Lord, because he's so close to the apostle Paul. Next best thing to Paul or Timothy is Epaphroditus, who's eventually going to be the pastor. Good opportunity for him to exercise those skills.

So that's what he does. This, I am reasonably confident, the Yokefellow is Epaphroditus. What does this say? There is a place for an elder to intervene intervene when there is a conflict in the Lord, in the Lord, keep in mind, the problem is they are not of one mind in the Lord.

It's not the elder's place to go say, you know, I really think you're spending too much here and not enough there. I really think your life habits need changing. I really think you're, you know, I noticed that your marriage seems troubled.

Let me come in and help you. No, this is in the Lord. This has to do with church life, fellowship life.

And I will say this from my heart. There are lots of kinds of assistance that believers can render to one another when asked, but the only unasked for assistance that whatever you want to call them, elders, deacons, pastors, the spiritual leadership in a church should ever offer to people in the church. If it's not solicited, if it's not asked for, if it isn't sought out, the only business I ever have in saying anything to any of you is something that directly affects our assembly, our times of fellowship.

I have a responsibility before the Lord to ensure that our study of the word of God is done decently and in good order. Your life outside of our meetings, unless you're related to me and living under my roof, is none of my business. And in some cases, people have been related to me and living under my roof, and it's still none of my business.

Other than my wife and my children, your life is none of my business unless you ask. If you want me to offer an opinion, if you want me to try to illuminate some specific thing from the word of God, happy to do it. But you have to ask.

You could be arterially bleeding on your front lawn. It's really none of my business unless you ask. God often doesn't intrude in our lives unless we ask.

Ye have not because ye ask not. And it's not my place, it's not my function, it's not my responsibility to get into your business. If you would like, and preferably this would be something that can be illuminated through the word of God, don't ask me for investment advice, don't ask me for dating advice, don't ask me for anything that can't be elucidated or explained or illuminated from the word of God.

So you see what I'm saying. Epaphroditus is going to help these women become of one mind in

the Lord. How's he going to do that? He's going to remind them, he's going to expand on these ideas that Paul has already covered.

Heavenly citizenship, interest of others, the mind of Christ, the heavenly nature of our earthly training. What are we aiming for? Where are we headed? Encouraging them, reminding them, putting these things in perspective in the Lord. So that's the exhortation that Paul gives these ladies.

And it's a specific, and by mentioning it, it's held up as an example for the entire church. He could have put a separate note in the bag, in the satchel that Epaphroditus carried. Oh, Epaphroditus, when you get there, see this one here? I got one for you, Odia.

I got one for Syntyche. If you just please hand these to them, they can read it in the privacy of their own home. No, Paul makes an issue out of it before the group.

Why? Why? Wouldn't it be better to handle this privately? Wouldn't it be better to keep their names off the eternal radar screen of the word of God? These ladies are graven in the word of God for eternity as having had a conflict. Why would Paul do that? Why would God the Holy Spirit inspire him to do that? Why would God the Father plan for him to do that? By name, because, and at first blush, why is it an issue in front of the Philippian church, the entire church? Because their conflict affects the church. The church already knows about it.

People are already being, as they would say, negatively impacted by it. It's already causing problems for the whole group. And Paul says, look, let's lance this boil.

Let's get this out in the open as a group. It's a group problem. It needs to be solved in a group fashion.

I have sent you some additional leadership in the form of Epaphroditus to help, but this is bigger than the two of you. And it's a reminder of some of the things we talked about earlier. When we have personal issues, personal sin, personal failures that impinge on and involve one or more believers in our periphery, we have a bursting radius.

We have a negative effect on more than just ourselves. The things that we do, the decisions that we make affect more than just us. We might say, this is the way I want it.

And we might even technically be right, but what is the effect on others? These ladies are in a contest with one another and it's affecting the whole group. And so Paul says, look, group, these two ladies need to solve their problem. Epaphroditus, get in there and help.

And why? He knows these ladies are capable of recovering because he knows them. They were partners with him in the gospel in the past, along with Clement and along with others whose names are written in the book of life. And he says, don't spoil your past accomplishments.

In another place, I think in Galatians, Paul says, you were running well, who tripped you? You're Mary Decker, you're running for the gold. Who did the Zola Budd on you and knocked you off the track and kept you from your life's goal that you've been training for, for 10 or 12 years. Who tripped you up is what it literally says.

You were running well, who tripped you? Don't spoil your race. And this appeal to the past. He says, remember the great partnership we had when we were all working together for the gospel.

Remember those great days with Clement and with others whose names are in the book of life. And this is a subtle, but very effective reminder that this stuff is all written in heaven. Not just the partnership in the gospel, but your present conflict is also going in the book, not the book of life.

The book of life is where the productive, where the crowns are assigned, where the robes of righteousness are assigned, where the treasures laid up in heaven by faith are recorded. That's the book of life. The book of life is the book of fruit, the book of production.

But look at this group dynamic. And this is my closing thought tonight. We are more than just ourselves as believers.

You know, the old thing, no man is an island. It's true. I was thinking about this and two completely separate areas of my brain converged, two different lines of thought crossed, which can produce something great or it can be like a giant train wreck.

You know, it just depends. But I've been thinking for a long time. I'm trying to intellectually solve the puzzle of evolution of how somebody can really believe it as a scientist, knowing what they know and so on.

And the mathematics of it don't add up to me. And I've been going down this road. And one of many problems and bear with me, I'm going somewhere with this soon, is altruism.

You know what altruism is? Richard Dawkins, way back in the seventies, he is claimed to fame. His first big blockbuster book was called The Selfish Gene. And genes want to survive.

They want to live. They want to propagate. They want to perpetuate.

And so they, you know, this is when a gene mutates, then you have natural selection and it survives into the subsequent generations. The selfish gene. Well, this is great and it explains, you know, a lot of things as far as it goes.

But what about these little prairie dogs? When danger approaches, prairie dog pokes his head up and chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp. Well, he's going to be the first guy to get eaten. But he's warning the other prairie dogs.

They can all jump down the hole while he's up there. Cheep, cheep, cheep, cheep. And there are

many examples in nature, so much so that Darwin himself in *The Origin of Species* says, when I observed this, I realized that it is a serious flaw in my theory, perhaps fatal.

I cannot explain altruistic behavior in animals where they sacrifice themselves for the group. They give the alarm. You've got workers that groom the queen and feed her and enable all this stuff.

What about them? They can't even reproduce. How do you get workers who selflessly groom another member of the thing and then die? You've got this in bees and ants and so on, wasps and things. And you've got this altruism.

An animal selflessly sacrifices itself on behalf of something bigger than itself, on behalf of the herd or the group or the hive or whatever it is. Well, evolution was helpless to explain this. And it was a huge, don't pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.

I am the mighty Oz. This is the mighty evolution. And in the back room, they were saying, what are we gonna do about this altruism thing? We can't figure it out.

The whole thing of natural selection is survival of the fittest. You're not fit if you sit there and cry out and get eaten. So how do we explain this? And so they finally, in the 1965 or so, a guy named Wilson.

No, not a guy named Wilson. Some other guy. Wilson's later.

But this guy came up with a thing and he said, you know what it is? It's kin selection. Because if the gopher or the prairie dog cheaps, he's most likely to save his relatives. And they probably have the same gene he's got.

So even though he dies, they must have, they're related. And it's called kin selection. By selflessly sacrificing himself, his kin will survive.

And so if you've got kin that have a self-sacrifice or your genes are gonna, and so these communities that have self-sacrificing people, it's called kin selection. It's also called another kind of inclusive selection or whatever. But I don't wanna get into the gory details.

But they're frantically trying to explain altruism. And what's especially interesting to me is that day before yesterday, 25th August, there was a study published in *Nature*, I believe. And this is part of what I lost when my machine rebooted because I had it up to read you a few excerpts.

They have just published a study by three guys, one of whom is the Wilson heretofore mentioned. And they have done an extensive study in a mathematical model and everything else. And they figured out, you know what? Kin selection doesn't work.

It's not the answer. It doesn't work. This is huge.

This is an earth shattering, you know, they're kind of back to square one on altruism now because

these guys ran the model. They said the math doesn't work. You don't get any survival benefit from kin selection.

You don't, you know, there's too distant. I won't go into the math, but it doesn't work. And this is published in that this is a peer reviewed, you know, this is the big stuff here.

If I find the article, I'll give it to you on Sunday. But here's the point. Here's the point.

Altruism benefits, you know, the group. And they recognize this in nature. And they say, this is an amazing thing that selflessness benefits the group and enables it to survive.

And a defender who will sacrifice himself, slowing down the attacker so that the rest of them can get away, this is a benefit. And of course they can't explain it. Well, and what I liked about the kin selection thing was, you know, it's your offspring and it's your close relatives.

In fact, there was a guy who famously quipped many years ago. He said, I would gladly die for two brothers or eight first cousins. Because if you do the math, the two brothers would each have 50% of your DNA.

And so if you die for two brothers, ostensibly both halves of your DNA would survive. And if you do the math, you know, your first cousins are one eighth related to you. So the guy said, I would happily die for two brothers or eight first cousins.

And then he said, you know, actually I would only die for two identical twin brothers or, you know, more than two of my offspring. Because you gotta get, you don't want it to just be a wash. You don't want it to be just a trade out.

You want to have more of your genes than what you started with. But if you think about it in the spiritual realm, and this is in fact my closing thought and where I've been heading. What are we constantly encouraged to think about our fellow believers? What does Paul say here? I encourage you brethren, my joy and crown, my beloved brothers, Adelphoi, Agapetoi, my beloved, you are my family in the Lord.

You are my brothers and sisters in the Lord. And the human race is one of those species that everybody has recognized from time immemorial has this unique altruistic behavior. Most animals don't.

It's generally only in the insect realm. The only mammals outside of humans that do this are two species of rat, the mole rat and some other obscure rat has altruistic behavior. Well, they will sacrifice themselves and for the group and different than a bird saying, come over here and eat me so you don't get my eggs.

That's direct kin. They can explain that because that's survival of your offspring. But to die for the group to whom you might not even be related, truly altruistic behavior in the animal kingdom,

talking about mammals and so on, it's humans.

It's basically us. And so they've tried to figure out what it is. And spiritually speaking, there is a truth in that.

Looking for the interests of others is extraordinary. It's not the usual way. People typically look out for number one.

I want what's right for me. I read some articles about how someone has calculated the benefit charity-wise of what small churches do in communities. And it's huge dollar-wise.

I'll try to give you those figures on Sunday as well. But the looking out for the interests of others is a unique feature of the church. Atheists don't get together and figure out how they can help unless they are actually trying to emulate or outdo churches.

It's a rare thing. I heard Bill Gates and a couple of other rich guys wanted to get together and do some charity. But why are they doing that? Because in our society, there is so much charity that is done by churches and organizations.

Much of the effective stuff that gets done is done by Christians in the name of Christ because it is a Christian value. It is a Christian family value. And we look out for our own and we look out to the world.

And it's a great privilege. And within our group, we want to be watching for those opportunities. Things that are challenges are also opportunities.

Somebody in our group is challenged, it's an opportunity. It's an opportunity for them. It's an opportunity for us.

True Yoke fellow, help. Israel was told, you see the widows, you see the orphans, help. What is the condemnation of the rich man in Luke with regard to Lazarus? He sat at your gate with sores and you didn't help him.

The only help he got was the dogs licking him and you were rich. We have an opportunity. Don't think of it as a grudge.

Don't think of it as a, oh, I got to find a way. The opportunities will arise. The opportunities will be there.

God, the Holy Spirit orchestrates these things. We have to be ready. We want to be just as ready to help as we are to see the return of the Lord.

It's a privilege. Our fellow believers are our family. We are all heavenly citizens.

We are all members of the body of Christ. What a great privilege to have the opportunity to help

and to be of one mind. When we find ourselves at cross purposes, get unified.

If we see others that are at cross purposes, let's help them get unified. Pray, if nothing else. Watch for opportunities.

That's what Paul is talking about. You want to know what the upshot, what the application of all these things is in the first three chapters? I implore you, Paul says. I parakaleo you just like the Holy Spirit.

Get this done. Figure it out. I'm not going to give you the specifics.

You get the specifics. You've got the spirit. You've got the word.

You figure it out, but be united. Help each other. Let's get on the same page and move in the same direction as a group.

This is the fellowship of believers. This is the Philippian church Paul is talking to. And by extension, we are the church that the Holy Spirit is talking to through this portion of the word of God.

And trust me when I say I'm not addressing any, I have no specific situation in mind. I don't know that there are any specific situations, but we're at this passage for a reason. And I suspect that because we're here, if there isn't a situation now, there will be.

And there may be situations that you know about that I don't. I'm just saying, here's where we are. And this is what it says.

And what a great passage of scripture because all of us benefit. All of us are more and more ready to stick, to stand fast and wait for the return of the Lord Jesus. And for him to be proud of us, to be pleased at what he sees, that we are thinking the way he thinks.

And we've got the priorities that he's got. And we weren't living like the selfish gene. We weren't living like the selfish atheist.

We weren't living like the secular materialist too much in this world. We recognized our heavenly citizenship and we live like it. And we care about one another because we're all headed for that same destination.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for its preservation, for those faithful and often nameless people down through the centuries who gave themselves and their lives so that we could possess your word in our language, our own copy.

We can study it freely. We can gather together and celebrate it and analyze it and seek to better our understanding. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will enable us through all of these great potentials to be of like mind with the Lord Jesus and with one another so that we can fulfill these

exhortations and we can prepare ourselves for the time when we will enter into glory in the glorious body that is prepared for us and into which we are transformed by that power that raised and transformed the Lord Jesus himself.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.