

## Philippians 10-09-03a

This is Friday, the 3rd of September, 2010. We continue our study in the book of Philippians. We're at chapter four, verse four, and we'll open our study this evening with a word of prayer.

Father, it is a very comforting thought and a great encouragement to recognize that we live the life that you have called us to entirely by your grace and in your power. It doesn't depend on us or our strength or our talents. It is entirely a work of your mercy and compassion on us in providing for us everything that we need to lay hold of righteousness by faith and to prepare ourselves for the eternal future through facing the challenges and opportunities that you give to us each day in this life.

We thank you that we are not left to try to figure these things out on our own, but you have given us an enormous treasury of truth in your word. We're grateful for the opportunity to study it together with believers who share recognition for its importance and who have an enthusiasm for getting into your word and understanding what it means and how it applies to our lives. We pray that you will bless us as we study this portion.

May each of us find in it the truth that will directly enhance our perception and our ability to fulfill all of your purposes for us in the time that remains in this life. We pray it in Jesus name, amen. Well, Paul has come to the final section of his letter here.

He, as you remember, has been emphasizing the idea of unity, of being of the same mind. And it's not just any old unity. It is being united in the same attitude and the same kind of thinking and the same recognitions of truth that the Lord Jesus exhibited that Paul himself reflects as an example and certain other individuals that he has named in the letter also reflect.

Timothy, Epaphroditus, Clement, Euodia and Syntyche in their earlier days of being fellow workers and laborers in the gospel. And as you see in the 16th chapter of the book of Romans, these were not accidental references. Paul says, I've given you a lot of theological truth and I've given you some examples in the Lord Jesus.

But if you want to see the outworking of this, if you want to see what this looks like in a real human life, here are some names, here are some people that you can bring to mind. Well, of course, it doesn't help us nearly as much as it did the Philippians or the Romans and people who knew these individuals that are so named. So what does it mean to us when we see Clement and Timothy and Epaphroditus named as great examples? It tells us that in our pursuit of pleasing God and living the actual life that we're supposed to be living, those who are asking and seeking and knocking are going to find encouragement in the one another arena.

This is the first principle I would offer you tonight is if you are someone hungry for growth, hungry for the truth, you really want your life to count in God's plan and purpose. We know where the truth is. It's in the word of God.

We know that God is gonna provide good teaching. We know that he's provided his spirit that gives us the power to understand that truth and to live in its light. But sometimes it is just hard to figure out, well, how do I answer that so what question for me? I went through a whole hour and a half study, two sessions in Isaiah, and I see Hezekiah and I see shadows moving and I see poultices of figs and all that, but what about me? I've got to go out and live my life.

So how do I get this done in the real world? Well, one of the great benefits, one of many great benefits in forsaking not the assembly of yourselves together is that in that assembly, and it may be a group, it often is a group, but sometimes it's going to be somebody else. It will be somebody you run across at work or somebody you run across at school or somebody in your family or somebody in some natural occurrence of fellowship that is going to reflect the outworking of these principles in practical life. Might even be somebody you observe from afar.

It might be a prominent Christian that you don't know directly, but you observe it. You might see someone at a greater distance and depending on the nature of that truth, God puts practical examples, not only in the word, but also in our experience. And this might be kind of a new thought, but you see this over and over again in the scripture.

When Paul says, follow the example, find those who so walk and associate with them, bad company corrupts good morals. And the flip side of that is good company, it reinforces good morals, good spiritual behavior. There are benefits of fellowship.

If you look, you will find that God provides. And it doesn't mean that there's going to be somebody who's your role model or your mentor, or you're going to become an acolyte or a disciple or something of this person and slavishly follow their every move. But when we are struggling to understand, when we are anxious to implement the truth of God in our lives, God will not only give us scriptural examples, he will give us practical examples.

More so, I think, than ever before in our age, because everybody worldwide is drawn together by the information technology that is available to us. And even people that are at a distance are suddenly not so far away. It still blows my mind, and maybe my mind is easily blown, but I can be driving in the middle of rural Oklahoma without a cloud or a house or any sign of civilization in sight other than the highway before me, and I can have a little plastic box up to my ear, and I'm talking to somebody in another state.

I'm talking to somebody 200 miles behind me in Texas. And the conversation is in real time. There's no delay.

It's not going by carrier pigeon. Pony Express is not carrying messages back and forth. I hear their voice.

They hear mine in real time. There's no wires. There's no visible, it's a little plastic box, and out of it comes somebody's voice, hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles away.

I forget who the guy is. He's a famous guy that said, any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. And to me, it's just magic.

In any age other than the last 50 years, that would have been considered just absolutely, well, maybe the last 100 years, totally miraculous. You might've gotten burned at the stake. Some voice coming out of a little box talking to you.

It's a demon, burn him. Throw him in the drink with rocks on him. If he floats, he's okay.

If he sinks, he's a witch. But it's incredible that the ability that God has given us in these latter days to communicate worldwide. I can talk to Dr. Eddie almost, I could talk to him in real time if I wanted to, but I think we do better in writing because I can compose sentences that are easier for him to understand, and he can take his time composing responses.

By the way, got a great newsletter from Dr. Eddie that I'll have available for viewing on Sunday. It's a great 10-page full of color pictures and the latest news from Indonesia. But it's miraculous that we can do these things.

And because of that, I think that in our age in particular, some of these examples don't necessarily have to be in the flesh, pros in the sense of face-to-face. Maybe it's somebody that we have a slightly more distant fellowship with. Here's the point.

Do not underestimate and do not overlook. Watch my prefixes. Don't underestimate and don't overlook what God gives us by way of resources.

We think, well, it's the word and the spirit, and that's all I need. There is a lot of provision that comes through fellowship. There's a lot of provision that comes through fellow believers.

So when you look at this passage, and you look at chapter four, and look at the preceding chapters, and Paul mentions individuals by name, and he says, there's nobody like Timothy who is same-souled with me. There's nobody like Epaphroditus who nearly died ministering on your behalf to my needs. There's nobody like Clement, my yoke fellow in the gospel.

You, Odia and Syntyche, come back to where you used to be. Remember when we all worked together in the gospel. These are appeals to personal experience of real people.

And it makes a difference. Don't forget to be grateful for fellowship. Don't forget to be grateful for the believers that God brings to our periphery to be encouraged, to be edified.

Somebody, you may think, well, you know, that guy or that gal is no great shakes, but nearly all of us have something where we're pretty strong. There are people who are very strong in prayer. There are people who are very strong in faith.

The bigger the catastrophe you throw at them, the calmer they get. It's like, oh, house burned

down? Well, okay, let's, you know, you remember the name of the insurance company? They're just dead calm. The bigger the crisis, the more calm they get.

And those same people, it's usually the little tiny things they'll just completely throw them off the rails. Put a pebble on the rails and their train is down in the ditch. They put a train coming the other way, they're just fine.

You know, they just hit the switch, divert to the side track and nothing's wrong. But there are people who are great in a crisis. There are people who are great at steadiness and consistency.

When you think about them and you realize, you know, that person is never late. That person, when they say they're gonna do something, I can't think of a time when they didn't do it. And there are people who are great at, they just seem to magically appear when there's a need.

They have some kind of a weird instinct, which is probably a gift of the Holy Spirit. But when the chips are down or they just, out of nowhere, they seem to be there. They seem to call, they seem to know.

They just kind of have a sense and they're there and they seem to know the right thing to do. They just, well, you know, sometimes you just need somebody to talk to and they just remain mysteriously quiet. Other times, you know, you're all frazzled and you can't get stuff done.

Out of nowhere, here comes a meal or here comes an encouraging card or whatever it may be. And there's people that are just gifted in that way. Well, they may not be gifted in these other areas, but there's one thing where they kind of stand out and they serve as an example.

And God puts those people in our periphery to show us what we can be in Christ. So I don't want to miss this aspect of Paul's letter. When he mentions people by name, it's all the same.

If Paul were here today, he would mention some of you by name. And there's a reason for it. God puts people in our periphery because his spirit is in us.

And the more same-souled, the more like-minded we are, the more often God is going to be able to use us to be a blessing to others and use others to be a blessing to us. And it is within the realm of that common ground that he talks about. This is why he beseeches and implores Euodia and Syntyche.

Euodia, by the way, her name means just what you would think it would mean. Pleasing aroma, fair scent, perfume. Essence of flower blossoms.

It means in Greek, it's much more elegant than in English. If you say good odor, that doesn't really catch it. That would be the literal translation.

But it means you catch a whiff of something that's just really beautiful. And that's what her name

means, Euodia. And Syntyche, it means something that is perfectly timed, something that fits just right.

It's sometimes translated well-met. It's just, here's a circumstance that just came along just at the right time, just synchronized, it just came just at the right, it's just perfect, it's just a perfect fit. It's like just a meshing and a blend, and wow, that just hit the spot.

And you have these two ladies and their names suggest and imply how great they are when they're at their best and how all of that gets marred by conflict and by strife and by schism and disaffection. And more than anything else, when you look at this, you see Paul talking about the need for unity. We saw this back in chapter two.

You remember chapter two, verses two and three? Fulfill my joy. Paul says, you know, I'm here in prison. I know you're worried about me.

I'm chained up and you've got great concern. You sent Epaphroditus to check on me and to help me. But he said, you know what you could do to really fulfill my joy? You know how you could really boost my spirits and make me happy? Be of like mind, be of one mind.

That's what he says in chapter two, verse two. It's one of the first things he says. Fulfill my joy by being like-minded.

Have the same love. Be of one accord, of one mind. He says in verse three, in the next verse, he says, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, in lowliness of mind.

Let each esteem others better than himself. The key to harmony is not getting uppity. The key to harmony is not getting arrogant, not seeking your own.

I've got to win this argument. I've got to get my way. I've got to see things done the way I see fit.

Some of us know more about this than others. The way to maintain harmony and to have peace is to not, you know, love does not seek its own. Remember 1 Corinthians 13, it doesn't seek its own.

There is a balance. You can't compromise with just anything. You can't allow just anything to pass.

You know, there are parents who take this so far that they never discipline their children. And well, but I don't, you know, we were having such a good time and then little Johnny threw his ice cream in his sister's face. Well, I don't know.

Well, look, that's wrong. Little Johnny knows better than that. He's been told four previous occasions.

If you ever do that again, you know, it's whooping time. And he just thought everybody's laughing

and having a good time. And he threw his ice cream in his sister's face.

Well, guess what? Party's over. Little Johnny's going, you know, in the room and it's drop trow and, you know, three to five licks. It's time for foolishness to be driven from the heart of the child.

And I don't care if it interrupts harmony. There, you know, you don't compromise. But one of the greatest principles I ever heard, pastor that many of us listened to years ago, distilled into a very pungent and pithy saying, we are to be inflexible about essentials.

There are certain things about which we do not flex. As Christians, it's the deity of Christ. Somebody that says Jesus was just a man, sorry, I'm not harmonizing with you on anything.

Somebody who says, well, you know, I really love that golden rule and turn the other cheek and all that. But, you know, the whole idea of God being judgmental and that he would actually, you know, have eternal damnation of some sort. I just can't.

Well, I'm sorry. I am inflexible about the essentials of the faith. Christ died according to the scriptures.

He was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Anybody that says he's a myth or he's a wonderful idea, I'm parting ways with you right now. And I am inflexible about that.

I'm not gonna work with you in some sort of ecumenical, you know, soup kitchen effort or something. No, you are not a Christian and you defame and spit on the Lord of glory when you take away his deity and you take away the glory of his humanity and the glory of his work as the second person of the Trinity and the son of God. And no, I will not brook that any more than somebody that called my wife some defamatory name.

And I'd say, well, I can overlook that because, you know, we're friends and coworkers here. And I, you know, the fact that you call my wife some horrible name, no, you call my wife a horrible name. I'm, you know, we'll be down there explaining it to the judge because we, you know, fisticuffs ensued.

We do not compromise inflexibility on essentials, but flexibility on non-essentials. We are inflexible about the essentials. We are flexible on non-essentials.

But it's kind of like that other thing. You know, Lord, give me the serenity of serenity prayer. Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

Well, it's the same thing with flexible and inflexible. What is essential and what is non-essential? We need wisdom to know the difference. This is what we pray for.

This is why we study the word of God. Where is the wisdom to know the difference? Well, Paul

says here, I urge you true companion. This is Epaphroditus, if you're asking me.

The carrier of the letter, the reader of the letter, the deliverer of the message, he is as close as Paul can get to being there in person. He is Paul's angel. He is Paul's messenger.

And Paul says, by the way, true companion, you, now that you're on the scene, you help these women get back into that unity. And once again, think about it. Paul says, now that Epaphroditus is there, he, Epaphroditus, a believer in person, in the flesh, face-to-face, by name, can help these women apply the truth of the word of God that Paul has just communicated to them.

A believer can help in the application of the word of God, a believer who is present, a believer with whom they have fellowship. You can call that counseling if you want to. I would not.

I would call it fellowship. I would call it benefits of assembly. We gain, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

When we, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst, Jesus said. So if two or three are gathered, there's actually three or four because the Lord Jesus is there. There's actually four or five because the Holy Spirit is there.

And if you love God's word and you have his word and keep it, God the Father is there. You've got all three members of the Trinity involved in that fellowship when you have believers of like mind who have unity of mind in the truth. So this is a powerful asset.

People talk about, you know, write to my radio ministry and get this resource. You don't need to write off and get a resource. We have a resource right here.

Paul says, look, look around you. Look at the believers in your periphery. That's your resource.

The Holy Spirit works in and through them. Remember what it says in Ephesians, how the whole body fitly joined together and nourished by that which every joint supplies. The different parts of the body nourish and strengthen and benefit each other.

There's a reason for our fellowship. It's not just there happen to be people in the room when I hear Bible class. Fellowship is important.

Assembly is important. Getting with believers of like mind and having discussions. And it doesn't matter what you talk about.

It doesn't have to be high and holy. Let's exegete this verse. But it's sharing a viewpoint.

It's sharing a value, sharing a perspective, sharing of priorities and goals, sharing of understanding, just encouragement that there is family. You know, how much do you have to talk about being a family to be a family? You're together. You have things in common.

You're like-minded. You grew up in the same house. When you're siblings and brothers and sisters and parents and children, you're all in it together.

And blood is thicker than water. And this is why the Bible over and over again says, brethren, Adelphoi, you are family. Treat each other like family.

Value your family. One of the saddest things that's happened in this country is that families have scattered to the winds. Families used to be nuclear.

Families used to be peripheral. There'd be the father and the mother and then the children would grow up and live nearby. And of course, some of us still have that privilege and it's great, but it's a really sad thing when you just get scattered to the winds and your family is fragmented.

And not only is it fragmented by geography, but often fragmented by philosophy, fragmented by politics, fragmented by spiritual life or lack thereof. And sometimes it's necessary. I'm not casting aspersions.

Sometimes it happens and it's not our fault, but it's sad. What a wonderful thing it is. What a blessing it is when you have family.

And if you don't have DNA, genealogical, genetic family, you've got family of God. You've got brothers and sisters in Christ. And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

There is iron that sharpens iron better than any family relationship ever could. And that's our circle of brothers and sisters in Christ. And Paul says over and over again, not just in this book, it's everywhere.

You think about Romans 12, 16 through 18, be of the same mind toward one another. Romans 12, 16 through 18, be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.

Do not be wise in your own opinion. This is another way of saying don't be a mule. Don't be a contrary individual.

Don't get so obsessed with getting your way and making your point that you garbage up more important things. Relax, flex, recognize the non-essentials and be flexible. I heard Chuck Swindoll tonight after the program where our sermon spot runs, Chuck Swindoll's on from 6 to 6.30 on KCBI.

And one of the things he said is he was on the phone with a close friend and his voice was raised and he was getting real irate. And he was telling this person how the cow eat the cabbage and his wife was clear at the other end of the house. And after he hung up, she came in and she said, honey, can I offer you a thought? And he said, sure.

And he sat down on the top step of the stairs and she said, well, let it go. And he said, it was one of those wisdom spears that went right through my chest and he turned around sideways. You could tell when he was talking and he said, do you see this thing sticking out of my bag? He said, that's the wisdom spear my wife threw at me, which went right through.

And believe me, I know what he's talking about. There's a time when we just forget what's going on. We lose our perspective and let it go.

It's not worth what we're making out of it. And it's a hard lesson for some of us that are built a certain way. It's very difficult lesson to learn, but this is what the scripture calls us to, be of the same mind toward one another.

And all of us, some of us need mercy as much as we need to give mercy. Do not set your mind on high things, associate with the humble, do not be wise in your own opinion. If you wanna be wise in an opinion, be wise in the mind of Christ, be wise in the truth of scripture, be wise in what Paul is telling us here.

If you wanna put out some wisdom, put out the wisdom of God, speak the truth to one another in love. He goes on to say in verse 17, "Repay no one evil for evil." And we think, oh, well, you know, somebody crashes into my car, I'm not gonna go crash into their car. Think in more practical terms.

You say something and you either verterntly or inadvertently hurt someone's feelings, and they come back with a little cutting remark. Well, you know, we've all got an arsenal of those. Oh, you want a cutting remark? I've got a cutting remark for you.

And we wanna give as good as we get. Repay no one. You see how quickly these things would die if somebody made an unkind or cutting or insensitive or thoughtless or hasty remark.

Sometimes you make these things, it's like words come back. And, you know, they just come from the instinctive, unregenerate part of our nature, before we stop and realize what a long-eared, braying animal we're being. And, but if, whether we are the giver or the receiver, if it stops at that point and it doesn't accelerate, it doesn't, what did they used to say about warfare? It escalate, it doesn't escalate.

Because a soft answer turns away wrath. Did you really mean that? Was that really what you were wanting to say? Do not repay evil for evil. We can exercise this skill just in conversation.

You know, just take a breath. Just stop and think. The man who can bridle the tongue, James said, he's got his whole body figured out.

He's brought his entire self into submission. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, and it's not always possible, but if it is possible, as much as depends on you. There's two qualifiers there.

When Paul says, live peaceably with all men, he says, if it's possible, and as much as it depends on you, live peaceably. If it's not possible and somebody else is intent upon making war with you, that's a different thing. But if it's possible, and to the extent that it depends on you, let there be peace.

That's Romans 12, 16 through 18. He picks up that theme again in Romans 15, five. First Corinthians 1.10, I plead with you, brethren, Paul says, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, when Paul wants to make a really, really important point like he does in Romans 12, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God. You know, he invokes something high and something holy. Here he says, I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing.

In other words, be harmonious in your conversation. He doesn't mean you all have to parrot the same sentences and phrases. That there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Now, how can that be? Well, I'll give you two suggestions. One, keep your group small. Can you imagine having everybody like-minded in a 3,000 member congregation? Everybody's gonna have the same understanding, gonna speak the same thing, gonna have the same mind, be perfectly joined together with the same judgment.

This is most easily accomplished in small groups. New Testament churches are small groups. It is much easier to maintain the unity, the spirit and the bond of peace in a small group than it is in an auditorium full of people.

You pretty much have to get into some kind of group hypnosis if you're gonna have several thousand people all of like-mind and having the same judgment. So, well, and there's a practical application of this. Think about it.

Let's say that you accept my proposition here that unity is maintained by staying small. Well, what if you are out of harmony with your small group? Find a group with which you can harmonize. Don't split your current group.

If you really believe that there is an essential that the pastor has missed and his slavish doting followers have all drunk the Kool-Aid and they don't see it either, leave. Leave. Find another small group.

If at some point you decide, you know, Sam, I love you, man, but you have just gone beyond the pale. I can't take this anymore. I encourage you, find a group where you can be of like-mind.

People in other groups, if they get heartburn with their pastor or with the teaching, and now that's one thing, if I am truly screwed up and the whole group says, Sam, we as a group would just like you to know, you know, come back. Come back home, come back down to earth. You know, switch to decaf, get yourself back, you know, you're better than this.

You really messed that up. I mean, think about it. That's a valid thing, but don't split a group.

Groups should be small and they should be harmonious. If you find yourself in a small group and you are out of harmony, get out of that group. Go find a group where you can be of like-mind.

If the group is wrong, so be it. Find a group that you think is right. If you're wrong, so be it.

Go find a group that's wrong like you are and be harmonious. Paul doesn't say, I plead with you, brethren, find a small group that's got all of the doctrines exactly figured out. He says, be in a group that is harmonious.

Speak the same thing. Whatever you do, don't let Christianity be spoken of as that horribly divisive, rancorous, arguing and fighting and throwing their fellow members under the bus faith. If you're gonna be wrong, be wrong as a group.

All get together and be wrong. Be wrong happy, be wrong harmonious, be wrong lovingly. And honestly, and I'm talking now about some time in the past, but when I was associated with really exegetical, isagogical, categorical churches, there was a lot more rancor and bitterness and divisiveness and undercutting and backtalking and backstabbing and gossip and maligning and judging than there was in charismatic groups that I was acquainted with, where I thought, man, these charismatic people believe in speaking in tongues and all that, but they were happy and they were all of like mind and they were joyous and they weren't hurting anybody.

You wanna fall out of your pew and roll on the floor, you're not hurting anybody. It's not very smart. It's not very edifying, but if everybody in the room is together on it and they come out with their arms around each other's shoulders and they're encouraging and ministering to one another and at other phases when they're not speaking in tongues, they're taking care of one another and they're praying for one another and they're amening their pastor and they're enthusiastic about their faith.

They're better than the doctrinally correct people that are all fighting and judging and maligning and leaving their notebooks laying on the chair. Harmony counts for a lot in God's book. And it is better to have a morsel on the rooftop where there is peace than have a banquet down below where there's strife and division.

Read the Proverbs, a morsel. And you can think of that as spiritual truth. So I am pointing these things out to emphasize that when Paul talks about unity here, he's not just trying to think up something that sounds good in church.

It's really, really important. Read what the Bible says about unity. You will be surprised to discover that unity is emphasized over doctrinal purity.

But it is. Do I believe in doctrinal purity, that we should strive for it and do it? Do I believe in it and seek for it and reach for it? Absolutely, but not at the expense of unity. Think about it.

What did Paul tell the Corinthians? We know that it's right to eat whatever we want. But if it causes my believing brother to stumble, I'll stop doing what I know is right because it's not worth it to cause my brother to stumble. I would rather be unified with my brother in his ignorance and avoid meat that's been offered to idols because that maintains unity.

I'm not gonna say, look, let me tell you about the actual doctrinal truth that's involved here and my advanced understanding of the freedom we have in Christ. He says, no, I will leave that out to maintain like-mindedness and speaking the same thing with my brother. I just won't go there.

I will deny myself a privilege that is my absolute right for my brother. And that's the emphasis that scripture places on this one-mindedness. I beseech you, I urge you.

I plead with you, Paul says, that there be no divisions. You know, he starts out Corinthians. I hear there are wars and divisions among you.

What's the matter with you? Ephesians four, one through eight. I therefore the prisoner of the Lord. Now remember, we've already had this in Romans.

We've already had it in Colossians. Now we have it in Ephesians four, one through eight. I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called with lowliness and gentleness.

It's pretty hard to get in a big Donnybrook, knock down, drag out fight if you're lowly and humble. You can't really, you know, it just gets boring for the other side. They can be wanting to bring out the nukes and launch the, you know, third world war.

But if you are humble and if you are lowly and you don't return evil for evil, pretty soon I, the person trying to start this big fighting, I'm gonna start feeling pretty foolish because I'm doing all the yelling and I'm doing all the provocation. And I suddenly think, oh boy, I am the person in the wrong here. Lowliness and gentleness with long suffering.

And these are not things that come naturally to us. We are not naturally lowly. We are not naturally gentle.

When our pride has been pricked, when our ego has been jabbed or assaulted or trampled on, long suffering doesn't come to us by nature, bearing with one another in love. Lowliness, gentleness, long suffering, bearing with one another in love. Where does this love come from? How do you love somebody that is acting unlovely? Well, Romans 5.5, love of God is shed

abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We have to be actively cultivating a supernatural love. And we have to be looking at that person through God's eyes and not through our own. Through our own eyes, we'd be throwing small breakable objects at them.

Through God's eyes, we recognize this is a fellow believer who is struggling and failing at the moment in a test. And this doesn't do anybody any good. It's not about me.

It's about bigger things. I do not want to egg on somebody and further their failure. It's my hope that we unify, that we outdo the world, the flesh, and the devil together.

Why would I want to, here's a believer that's stumbling and I'm just going to push them so that they fall completely down. If we could be objective, and it's one of the hardest things in the world, but if we could be objective, we would find a way to bind up a wound, not make it worse. And if a fellow believer is struggling with their temper or struggling with their impatience or struggling with their insecurity or struggling with their fear and they're lashing out or they're yelling or they're coming apart, they're coming unglued, their rivets are rattling out, they're vibrating, they're reacting, they're emoting, that is no time to jump on our high horse and start aggravating the situation.

Lowliness, gentleness, long suffering, bearing with one another in love. Love says, this is my fellow believer. This is my, in some cases, my spouse, my child, my parent.

I need to be a defuser of the situation, not a Molotov cocktail thrower. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. Notice it says endeavoring.

We're not always going to succeed. We'll lose our perspective and become a part of the problem or despite our best efforts, the other person just, there is no bringing them back. We're trying to save them from the fire, hating the garment spotted by the flesh and it doesn't work.

Well, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. This is Ephesians four. There is one body and one spirit.

There is one hope of your calling. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of us all, who is above all and through all and in you all. This is the heavenly perspective.

Step back. It's not an argument. It's a test for a believer or two believers.

It's not a family crisis. It's an incursion of Satan, a satanic viewpoint. Don't participate.

Don't give in. Don't turn it into what it's trying to be. Endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit, capital S, and the bond of peace.

Jesus Christ is our righteousness, our peace and our sanctification. Hang on to it. Try to keep it.

Rise above the pettiness. Any rank unbeliever, any uninformed, immature baby believer can argue, fight and spread rancor and bile and spew it all over the walls. Anybody can do that.

Who is it that can be lowly and gentle and humble and defuse an argument, defuse a crisis, defuse a situation where somebody is going off half-cocked and endeavor to keep the unity, the spirit and the bond of peace. It takes a mature believer. That's what we are supposed to be, right? Very few of us are not well acquainted with the scripture and don't have hundreds and hundreds of hours of Bible study and meditation and experience.

We're better than this. We ought to know better than this. We ought to do better than this.

If any, you want the immature believer to be the one that is going to suddenly be gentle and lowly and humble and pull you, the mature believer, back from the brink of nuclear holocaust? It's the other way around. The elders are supposed to look after the younger. The fathers are supposed to look out for the sons.

The older women are supposed to school the younger. And we know better and we need to start acting like it and living like it. This is Paul's calling.

You have been called in one hope of your calling. What is the hope of our calling? It's a nice term. One hope of your calling.

What is the hope of our calling? Whatever it is, it's one thing. What is it? Well, you kind of have to break it down. We know what hope is.

Hope is an expectation, you know, from faith. What is our calling? What is our calling? Why did God save us? Our calling is the purpose for which we were saved. Romans 8, 28, all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.

Our calling is directly tied to God's purpose. Why did God save us? Well, what's our memory verse say? That he might present it to himself a glorious church without spot, without wrinkle, without blemish, any such thing, that it should be holy. Holiness, righteousness, not driven by our fallen nature, transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we know what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is.

That's our calling. It's Romans 12, one and two. Don't be conformed to the world.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Present yourself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. This is your reasonable service.

This is your calling. So what does that mean? Sounds very grand. I'm gonna carry myself up and lay myself on the altar and I'm gonna good and acceptable will of God.

What does it mean? It means in conversations, when arguments are starting, when conflicts are arising, when challenges are being met, when policies are being set, when circumstances are being addressed, when we're just getting through the day and we're making plans and we're doing what we do and we're doing our job or we're doing our school or whatever it may be, when we are interacting with one another, what does it mean? Be holy. Let your conversation be holy. Let your words be full of grace, seasoned with salt.

Speak the truth in love and so on. This is not a far off hill that we climb somewhere and offer ourselves like Abraham brought Isaac. This is a daily calling.

We are in the routine, mundane, minute by minute episodes of the day, we are called to be holy. You're called, there's one hope of our calling. All of us are called to the same thing.

You see me failing, my impatience gets the better of me. I fail to employ and apply what I know. You should be sad, not angry.

Here's a fellow believer. We have the same calling. All of us are supposed to be holy and without blemish.

All of us are supposed to be without spot and without wrinkle. All of us are supposed to be seizing righteousness by faith and this is not happening. Sam is falling.

I need to pray for him. I need to encourage him. I need to try to find a way to keep him from diving head first into the abyss of sin and evil and failure.

And I should do the same for you. Be of like mind. Endeavor to keep the unity, the spirit and the bond of peace.

We are all called with one hope. All of us are called to exactly the same thing. We have different strengths and weaknesses but we're together.

We're in this together. We're a family. Don't lose the unity.

Don't undervalue the examples of believers who have figured these things out. If I have a problem with impatience, guess what? There's gonna be somebody in my periphery that has got the patience of Job and it's an encouragement and I can see the practical outworking of what I know I'm supposed to be doing. I've learned the truth from the word of God.

I'm just having trouble figuring out how to apply it. Here's somebody and look at what they do. Here's a practical, visible example in a fellow believer that God can put in front of me to show me patience, to teach me how it's done.

I can see somebody, I can hear somebody playing a great guitar lick but it is so much better to have somebody right in front of me doing the fingering on the fretboard. Show me how you did

that. Can you slow that down? Can I watch that? Oh, now I can make that same sound because I've got somebody right there.

These Mel Bay books and videos and stuff, don't cut it. When I got somebody in front of me that can do it and I watch them do it, I'm 10 times more likely to be able to do it myself. This is why Paul names names.

This is why he says, follow my example. Look for these worthy believers. Look for it.

It's a part of our unity, the spirit and bond of peace that we are supposed to maintain. Don't drive people away. Draw them closer.

They have a blessing for you. You all have a blessing for me. All of us have a blessing for one another.

This is what the Holy Spirit does. Don't undervalue fellowship. Don't undervalue.

We have the word and we have the spirit and we have each other. And I think that third element has been largely overlooked, especially in some of the strong teaching tradition backgrounds that a lot of us have. And we think, you know, I can just come and listen and leave.

I remember I went to a pastor's conference one time with a pastor that we all know well and way off in Conway, Arkansas and a bunch of guys in dark suits and black ties and sunglasses came in and sat and left. Each day that this pastor was speaking, it looked like CIA came in and listened and left. Didn't talk to anybody.

I greeted one of them. How are you doing? Nothing. Came in, got the doctrine, left.

And that was when I really started thinking, you know, I need to rethink my involvement in this tradition because that is just not right. And this is what this leads to if you follow it to its logical conclusion. I am a rock.

I am an Island. Rock feels no pain. Island never cries.

Listen, we need each other. God puts us in groups. He gives us brothers and sisters.

And what a great privilege it is. We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up here and see what he means when he says, let your gentleness be known to all men.

The Lord is at hand. Why does he juxtapose those two ideas? We'll figure that out when we come back. We'll be right back.