



This week we are thinking about the Christian's privilege of the blessing of peace with God; but with particular reference to how, as Christians, we can agree to disagree in our political discussions. **Read Philipians Ch. 4: 2 – 9.**

1. Euodia and Syntyches' Disagreement. Verses 2-3

- This reference seems to sit in an odd place: immediately after teaching of the blessings and responsibilities of our confidence in Christ and before rejoicing in the blessing of peace with God. **(Q. 1.)**
- We don't know what the dispute was about but we can identify with having diametrically opposite political views with people who we know love the Lord Jesus just as much as we do. Paul's strategy:
 - Paul pleads with them to 'agree in the Lord' even if they can't agree about the issue.
 - He emphasizes their good points: they have both worked with him for the gospel's sake.
 - He asks his 'loyal yokefellow'* to take the initiative and help the women to discuss with a Christ-like attitude, emptying themselves for the spiritual benefit of the other. **Philips. 2:5-7**

2. Approaching each other in political disagreement.

- **Rejoice in the Lord! Verse 4**
 - Not when the other person has been defeated by my rhetoric and comes to agree with me!
 - Victory lapping c. Brexit is unbecoming: Rejoice in our hope of resurrection, our life in the Spirit.
 - Jesus reminded the 72 disciples not to rejoice the miracles they had seen, but to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, **Luke 10:17-20**. This is Kingdom ministry, rejoice in the Lord
 - Jesus is King! There's no room for despair, for losing hope, for tossing to and fro in political anguish. Christians should be contending for the gospel together. Rejoice! It's a command.
- **Gentleness. Verse 5**
 - A Christian's gentleness in speech and action should be evident to all.
 - There is a time to be direct and straight-forward, to stand firm with some hard truths, but we can never sanctify calling someone a jerk (UK: stupid/ignorant), a fascist or an elitist.
 - If gentleness is your default position in conversation; when you do have to get firm, people realise you are being serious. Remember, the Lord is near – He is the avenger, not us.
- **Prayer and Petition. Verses 6 - 7**
 - Pray together – bring your requests to God, never mind your differences, don't struggle alone.
 - Petition God – we approach the heavenly throne with boldness, as God's children. It will be much more satisfactory than petitioning an MP. God won't ignore you, he notices what we do.
 - Pray with thanksgiving: shining like a city on a hill, flavouring our interaction with salt and light
 - The news can feel like a cheese grater rubbing our souls, when we pray the indescribable peace of God guards and protects our hearts and minds. We may still disagree but our peace is upheld
- **Guard your Minds. Verses 8 – 10**
 - We can be manipulated and panicked by lies created by people with over-active imaginations: instead think positively about the true, principled, admirable and gracious things around us.
 - Even if we disagree with a fellow Christian, we are both New Creations for Christ. **2 Cor. 5:17**. So discuss humbly and the God of Peace will be with you: the Church will illuminate the nation.

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Question for Discussion:

- 1. Why do you think Paul put verses 2 and 3 where he did?**
- 2. How do we sit lightly to our political convictions and simultaneously maintain our Christian principles?**
- 3. Do we engage gently in political discussion listening to others, or do we confront, hoping to dominate?**
- 4. Do we find listening to the press and the media leaves us feeling our souls have been 'grated'?**
- 5. When do we experience the Peace of God transcending all understanding, guarding our hearts and minds? (Verse 7). Look at Isaiah 26: 3-4 and Psalm 133 for Old Testament encouragements.**

* Might be someone whose name is like his nature e.g. Barnabas, 'son of encouragement'.