

## **THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS**

### **III. Philippians: Nurture In Living In Preoccupation With Christ**

#### **N. Nurture In Applying A Godly Ambition To Live In Peace With Each Other (Philippians 4:1-4 with 3:7-15)**

##### **I. Introduction**

- A. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, his readers were concerned about his imprisonment for the faith as noted by Paul's words in Philippians 1:12-13 that encouraged his readers in view of his imprisonment.
- B. Paul thus intended to nurture them, but in doing so, faced an added problem -- a lack of harmony in the body.
- C. He addressed this problem, teaching its solution in Philippians 4:1-4 with 3:7-15, and we view it for insight:

##### **II. Nurture In Applying A Godly Ambition To Live In Peace With Each Other, Phil. 4:1-4 with 3:7-15.**

- A. The word rendered "Therefore" in Philippians 4:1 indicates Paul's admonition in what follows "applies what he wrote in chapter 3 about sanctification and glorification" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 663), and what follows in verses 2-4 are admonitions relative to a problem concerning two ladies, Euodias and Syntyche, who were not living in peace with one another, and their disharmony was producing unrest in the Church, *Ibid.*!
- B. Accordingly, we first note Paul's Philippians 4:1-4 admonitions on living in peace with each other in the body:
  - 1. Paul admonished both Euodias and Syntyche to "be of the same mind" (KJV) or "agree with each other" (NIV) or "agree" (ESV) in the Lord, Phil. 4:2. Just what was behind their disharmony, though not here explained, is hinted at in Paul's earlier Philippians 2:2-4 instructions, meaning each lady was focusing on her own interests and agenda versus the concerns and needs of the other respective lady!
  - 2. Along with this admonition to these ladies, Paul urged an apparently unnamed ministry companion stationed at Philippi to help these women solve their disharmony, for they had been valuable laborers with Paul in the Gospel ministry along with Clement and Paul's other fellow laborers, Philippians 4:3. Such "help" would include gently, respectfully reminding these dedicated former co-workers of God's minister of their need to consider the concerns of the other respective lady rather than focus on their own interests!
  - 3. Also, Paul urged all involved, the ladies and the rest of the Church, always to rejoice in the Lord, Phil. 4:4.
- C. Such admonitions as introduced by Paul's word rendered "therefore" in Philippians 4:1 are then the product of the godly ambition exemplified by Paul in Philippians 3:7-15 in the preceding context (as follows):
  - 1. Paul had introduced his admonitions on this disharmony problem at Philippi by calling the whole body, his beloved fellow brethren in Christ at Philippi, to stand firm in the Lord, Philippians 4:1 ESV, NIV.
  - 2. Such standing firm is explained in Philippians 3:7-15 about a godly ambition versus an ungodly one as exemplified in Paul's own personal walk (as follows):
    - a. Paul had learned to consider as refuse all he humanly had once valued in his human heritage (Phil. 3:4-6, 7) that he might know Christ by faith, to be found in Him with Christ's imputed righteousness given unto him by God's grace as opposed to self-centered, self-exalting, meritorious human works, Philippians 3:8-9.
    - b. This viewpoint spilled over into Paul's life and ministry as a believer, causing him to long to enter into the dying and rising experiences of life and ministry typical of Christ's death and resurrection in his dying to the world and selfish ambition only to rise in doing God's will in His grace and power, Phil. 3:10-14.
  - 3. Thus, Euodias and Syntyche were to view what they saw was important to themselves in this earthly life as essentially of no value that they might devote themselves to what was truly worthwhile -- to meeting the needs of the other party rather than focusing on their selfish interests. Paul's unnamed co-worker whom he admonished to help these women was thus to help them see how they had slipped into a mindset of self-centered, selfish ambition that brought them into sharp conflict with one another, that they were to put aside, to "die" to such self-centered ambitions and "rise" in meeting the needs of the other sister in Christ!
- D. Galatians 5:16-23 explains that the power to live this way comes as the believer relies on the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, these women along with the whole Church were to rely on the Holy Spirit to live in God's will to minister to others versus their own agendas, thus exchanging unedifying disharmony for constant joy!

***Lesson:*** Paul taught believers to "die" in abandoning their selfish interests to do the will of God in "rising" to meet the needs of fellow believers by depending on the Holy Spirit, thus exchanging disharmony for constant joy.

***Application:*** May we believers like Paul (and Jesus) "die" to self by exchanging the pursuit our own interests and "rise" in selflessly meeting the needs of others in the power of the Holy Spirit, thus exchanging unedifying disharmony that harms not only us, but the rest of the body, for edifying, constant great joy in the Lord.