

# PHILIPPIANS: REPLACING SELFISH AMBITION WITH GODLY ACHIEVEMENT

## Part XI: God's Call To A Reasonably Fitting Behavior

(Philippians 4:1-5)

### I. Introduction

- A. As we have often noted in this lesson series, the Philippian believers lived in a culture marked by selfish ambition and strife, what tempted them to relate to one another in a sinfully selfish way, cf. Philippians 4:2.
- B. The Apostle Paul thus directed his readers toward a selfless manner of living especially in Philippians 2:1-30.
- C. However, selflessness does **not** mean *yielding to error*, for believers must earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3), so Paul directed his readers to function with reasonably fitting behavior in all they did in Philippians 4:1-5:

### II. God's Call To A Reasonably Fitting Behavior, Philippians 4:1-5.

- A. Having spent much of the epistle of Philippians directing his readers toward a selfless life, Paul came to the point in his letter where he would address the significant disagreement the two ladies Euodias and Syntyche experienced that evidently had affected the whole body of believers at Philippi, Philippians 4:2.
- B. However, these women had **correctly** "laboured with" (KJV), better "contended along with" (*sunathleo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 791) Paul for the gospel (Philippians 4:3b) -- they had properly withstood attacks against the Gospel Paul had preached in an arena of **spiritual conflict!**
- C. Since righteously having to contend for the faith, if mixed with a background of selfish ambition, can readily lead one to augment his native disposition to be self-centered, Paul carefully balanced his directives with the believers at Philippi, directing them to practice a **reasonably fitting behavior** in all their conduct, Phil. 4:1-5:
  1. Paul affirmed his love for his readers as those whom he loved and longed for, his joy and crown of victory he would win from the Lord for having discipled them, Phil. 4:1a; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 663.
  2. He then urged them as his beloved disciples to stand firm in the Lord, Philippians 4:1b ESV.
  3. However, Euodias and Syntyche were in such conflict with each other that it created a problem in the church, Paul in his epistle asked both ladies to be of "like mind" (*auto phronein*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 689; Theol. Dict. of the N. T., v. IX, p. 233) or "keep the same goal" (Ibid.) in the Lord, Philippians 4:2.
  4. This request would strain these ladies, for they both had labored with Paul to "contend with" him (*sunathleo*, cf. "II, b" above) against foes of the Gospel, so they were readily disposed with their self-centered natural heritage as augmented by having contended with Paul for the Gospel to continue to contend quite heatedly for whatever difference they had between them! (Philippians 4:3b)
  5. Accordingly, Paul also entreated some unnamed "yokefellow" (Philippians 4:3a) to help these ladies heed his call to be like minded and keep the same goal, ladies who had contended with him along with Clement and the rest of Paul's fellow workers, whose names were in the book of life, Philippians 4:3c.
  6. Knowing that his entreaty would require difficult actions by all involved, efforts not viewed as easy or enjoyable, Paul twice urged all of his readers at Philippi to rejoice in the Lord, Philippians 4:4.
  7. All of these widely varying directives of rightly contending for the faith, of combating a heritage of selfish ambition to settle petty differences among themselves and of constantly rejoicing in the Lord needed a fitting summary directive, one Paul's readers could have as a main focus, so Paul gave it in Philippians 4:5:
    - a. Paul directed that his readers let their "moderation" (KJV), better "reasonably fitting behavior" (*epieikeia*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 292; Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. II, p. 588-590) be known to all men, Philippians 4:5a. Whether it was getting along with one another, as in the case of Euodias and Syntyche, whether it was helping other believers unite as Paul was urging his yokefellow at Philippi or whether it involved contending for the Gospel against unsaved apostates, the believer was to utilize reasonably fitting behavior for each situation involved.
    - b. This summary behavior was to be used in view of the fact that the Lord was near, in view of the rapture of the Church when every believer would give an account of himself for behaving in every situation he had faced in a manner God saw as fitting to the situation, Philippians 4:5b; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.

***Lesson:*** Paul taught his Philippian readers to practice a variety of actions, be they contenting for the faith, rejoicing in the Lord, getting along with each other or helping other believers get along with each other, actions that strained against the sinful selfish ambition of their natural heritage. Thus, in summary, he called them to a form of behavior that reasonably fit each situation they faced in view of their final accountability to the Lord.

**Application:** *May we rely on the Holy Spirit for behavior control to do all we are called to do, regardless how diverse the various circumstances involved, with that form of behavior that reasonably fits each situation.*