# *Conflict - PH78-02 Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:1-3*

Open your Bibles to Philippians 4:1-3 as we continue our study about women serving without competing. As you all know, we live in an era which can be described as the era of the angelic warfare where Satan and his demons are constantly seeking to destroy the spiritual usefulness of God's people. The more spiritually productive any single individual believer is, the higher priority target he is for Satan's neutralizing work. The Bible actually tells us in 1 Peter 5:8 that Satan is to be viewed as a roaring lion who is stalking his prey, seeking to pounce upon the believer who lets his guard down, and who fails to be prepared and to maintain the protection that he needs during the time of the angelic conflict.

Casualties, of course, in combat are inevitable. Casualties in the angelic conflict are a sad but regular occurrence. This happens among the Lord's soldiers as much as it happens in any regular military operation in the natural realm. But casualties in both cases mean that somebody is out of operation. Again, we must warn you that none of us is exempt from this danger. No matter how gifted you may be spiritually; no matter how dedicated you may be; and, no matter how experienced you may be in the Lord's work, unless you use the Christian soldier's armor, you expose yourself to Satan. Unless you use the techniques of the Christian life, such as the confession of known sins, you expose yourself to becoming a casualty. Unless you practice recovering, forgetting and moving on, you will become a casualty in the Christian life.

Spiritual failures always stem from violations of spiritual principles. They are due to bad tactics; to carelessness; to overconfidence; and, worst of all, to underestimating our enemy, the devil. But spiritual failures are due to violations of spiritual principles. Why do Christians violate spiritual principles? Well, some of them do it because they lack the knowledge of those principles to begin with. Therefore, they don't have a chance. Others violate them because they have fallen into spiritual reversionism in their own souls. They don't face up to the fact that they have backslidden in the things of God.

Some violate these principles because of indifference to the fact that they are guilty of personal sins. They are negative to the fact that God the Holy Spirit is speaking to them concerning something they're doing. So they try to rationalize and justify their own evil. Some Christians violate these principles because they refuse to put themselves under the teaching authority of a pastor-teacher, so they reject the divine viewpoint of the communicator. Some people break these principles because they have developed spiritual hardness upon their soul (calluses upon the soul), and because their soul is dominated by emotion rather than by their minds filled with the Word of God. There are many reasons for violating the divine principles, but the results are disaster. Whatever the reason, a casualty in the Christian life means you are out of operation.

We've been studying the Philippian church which was a splendid church, but even in a church such as this, a church which is, on the whole, in a good spiritual state, we have indicated at the beginning of Philippians 4, a couple of spiritual casualties that existed in the angelic conflict, which shows us that even in a good local church, casualties occur. In Philippi, it was specifically two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who were such casualties in the conflict. The result of there being casualties of the angelic conflict led them into competition and into conflict with one another.

So the apostle Paul, in the opening of Philippians 4, is taking steps to correct this conflict between these two women, and to resolve the fight. He proceeds to tell them how to do it. Paul's directives here are very instructive because, sooner or later, Christians do have occasion to fall out with one another. Christians have occasion to be tempted to compete with one another. Christians have occasion to be tempted to have hard feelings toward one another, and to say things to one another that they shouldn't say. So inside the local church and outside the local church, whether it's in your circle of your business or social activities, or within your home itself, a husband and wife can have a falling out spiritually. There is a way to take action to correct it. So this is a very valuable area of Scripture.

## Conflict

So the apostle Paul says, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed, for my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Stand in super grace condition." Verse 2: "I beseech Euodia and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." These two have been called upon to have the same mental attitude. Paul addresses each of them separately because they're equally at fault. They're equally responsible to make correction. Part of the problem, when people fall out in whatever relationship in life, is the fact that one person always thinks that the problem is with the other person – that one individual is perfectly innocent, and if it wasn't for the other person, there wouldn't be any problem. This is a thought that's directly out of hell itself. It's a demonic concept, and it's false. So Paul, in the Greek, puts the names of these ladies with the word "beseech." "Euodia, I appeal to you. Syntyche, I appeal to you." So they are both confronted and treated equally.

He is appealing to them on a very definite basis. Let's not miss that. He says, "I appeal to you for harmony in the Lord." This means securing the mental attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine viewpoint judgments of God himself. It means securing the mind of Christ through the Word of God. The first step in resolving differences between Christians is for both of them to turn to the Word of God. Usually when Christians have a falling out, the first thing they do is turn to someone else, which is just about the dumbest thing you can do. They turn to someone who is one of their relatives or they turn to someone who's one of their friends. They just turn to someone else instead of turning to the first place which is the Word of God. No matter who you are, or what your situation is, or what conflict you're engaged in, never forget that no counselor; no relative; no friend; and, no advisor of any kind can resolve the problem for you. Only the people who are involved can solve the problem.

So Paul is trying to make it clear to these two women that, while he is going to set in motion some other things to help them settle their problem, he wants to make the first point clear to them that only they can settle the problems. So if you've got a problem with people, and you look to someone outside yourself as being the solution for that problem, you'll never solve it. The only way is to understand that it is the individuals involved who can resolve the difference, and they alone.

## The Word

I know there are a lot of counselors that like to give you the humbug impression that if you will just sit down and talk it over with them, and explain to them what your feelings are, and what your thinking is, that they will be able to resolve the problems for you. People get rich doing that. But they don't help you. By and large, only you can help yourself. How are you going to help yourself? You're going to help yourself by turning to the only source of help in human relationships, and that is doctrine. You're going to turn, first of all, to the Word of God so that you can have a solution that is indeed a genuine and a true solution.

Notice that the apostle Paul did not tell these ladies that they should get together and get it all out into the open. He didn't tell them, "Ladies, get together and talk it over." That is about the worst thing you can do. Yet this is what generally Christians and people are advised to do. When people get it all out into the open and talk it over with one another, what almost inevitably happens is that it hardens each of them in their resentments, and that it creates a whole new set of conflicts that did not exist before. They review all their grievances, and they strike at each other with all their indignation, and they wax warm on their conflict more than they did before, because they made the mistake of discussing it with one another and talking it over.

You notice that he's not telling them to get together in such a way as to give each of them the opportunity to pound each other with their views all over again. That's what caused the problem in the first place. Nor is he telling them to go to each other and to ask for forgiveness, and to cry a little. He didn't say, as I once heard a seminary professor on the radio advise one woman, "To go to another woman, to let her hair down, and to cry a little together." We have these idiots who are teaching young ministers to go out and to foul up the lives of people with this kind of emotional guff. Paul is not telling these ladies to get together and to plead with each other for forgiveness, and to cry together.

## Forgive and Forget

You cannot rise above your conflicts with people by mulling over the conflict. You cannot rise above your conflicts by reviewing old bitterness. When you review old bitterness, and you mull over old conflicts, you've already violated the scriptural principle of forgive and forget. The Bible says, no matter what anybody does to you, the first thing you do is you forgive him, and then you forget. If one party in the conflict refuses to follow this biblical principle, then you will never resolve difficulties. As long as there is no ground of forgiving and then forgetting, you cannot resolve conflicts.

If you have forgiven and you have forgotten, you can't be reviewing. You can't be talking it over. You can't be getting it all out into the open. You don't even remember it. You've already forgotten it. There's no point to discuss. It's a matter that has been forgiven. Consequently, the decks have been cleared, and the air has been cleared, and you have a basis for now proceeding to develop a spiritual maturity of relationship to remove the point of friction. That's the thing you're trying to do – to remove the point of friction. In other words, what I'm telling you is that the past cannot be undone by apologizing for it; by expressing your regret for it; by promising to do better; nor, by promising never to do it again. Rehashing is dangerous business.

Instead, what Paul is telling these two women to do is to spiritually grow out of their running battle. He's telling them that there's only one way they're going to grow up. That's what he's saying, Girls grow up. The only way you're going to do that is in the Lord." That means by going back to the basics of the Word of God. In the military service, in the Air Corps, when they find an airman who begins to be dangerous in his flying, and who begins to be sloppy in his performance with an aircraft, they don't rehash it; talk it over with him; and, give him a lot of speeches. Instead, they send him back to basic school. They send him back to learn the fundamentals again.

When you have conflicts between Christian and Christian, or between family members or whatever, you have to go back to the basics of human relationships and the spiritual principles of the Word of God. You have to review those and get yourself functioning on that. Once two people are functioning on the principles of the Word of God, there's no more problem. The past is forgotten. The old things are done with, and rehashing couldn't bore you more. Paul is telling these two ladies to forget the past and to move on.

His solution in the original Greek we showed you was an imperative. It was a command. The command was, "Stand fast in the Word of God," meaning gain a spiritual maturity structure. Only immature Christians squabble, and only immature people squabble in any realm, whether you're a Christian or not. Paul's solution not only includes an imperative, a command, but it also includes (as in the Greek we saw last time) an infinitive. An infinitive gives us purpose. It tells us what the apostle's purpose was. The infinitive tells us his purpose was stability in divine viewpoint attitudes.

Only a Christian, with the Word of God in his mind, can have the frame of reference to be able to be stable spiritually, so as not to squabble. If you're going to be a stable person in your mind, it takes the Word of God to give you that kind of stability. When you have that kind of stability, you'll have it with everybody – in the family; out of the family; in business; out of business; in church; out of church; in social life; and, out of social life. When you have spiritual stability because of doctrine, because you have a spiritual maturity structure, if you're a super grace Christian, you're not going to be squabbling.

## Live and Let Live

People around you will squabble, and they'll try to involve you in their squabbles and involve you in their problems. In fact, they'll get even madder by the fact that they discover that they can't make you part of their problem, and that you won't become involved in their conflicts. But that means that you will be a source of stability for them, and a source of encouragement. You'll be a signpost to telling them the same thing that Paul is saying, "Go back to the Word." Get yourself back in your thinking with God's principles. So Paul's solution is to live as unto the Lord, and let live. That's the principle. Live as onto the Lord, and let live. God is our judge.

So that's what he means in verse 2, "Euodia, I beseech you. I appeal to you. Syntyche, I appeal to you that you have the same mind in the Lord, and that you have the same mental attitude and divine viewpoint in the Lord Jesus Christ. There's only one way you're going to get that, and that is by returning to the Word of God and the principles that you once used to function on, but which now you have abandoned. In your reversion, ladies, you have fallen from a place that you once stood in spiritual stability."

Verse 3 begins with the word "And," which usually in Greek is "kai," but that is not the word which we find here. Instead, it's a word that sounds a little like it. It's the word "nai." It is the word for "yea" or "indeed" or "even so." It is used here to confirm a previous assertion. He uses this word at this point to stress the truth of what he has told these ladies on how to get together by getting back to doctrine. The admonition to Euodia and Syntyche to be united in Jesus Christ is what he's referring to. The word here introduces also the fact that Paul is going to give them some help in getting back together, and he's going to give them some help in the form of an agent who will assist them in resolving their conflict.

## Paul is Asking

So he says, "Yea, indeed. Not only is it true what I have said. Each of you are responsible for this problem. Each of you need to go back to the Word of God to resolve this problem." But he says also, "I entreat." And he uses the word "erotao" in the Greek. "Erotao" is a word for asking when the petitioner is on a ground of equality or familiarity. Here is a person who is asking, and he is asking another person, a recipient here, who is on equal ground. They are both on equal ground, like a king to a king, or one person to another person who share some equal status in life. In the Luke 14:32, for example, we have one king speaking to another king. The Bible uses this word "erotao" for equals addressing equals.

There is another word in the bible for asking, which is "aiteo." "Aiteo" also means "to ask," but it is the asking when the person is an inferior who is asking a recipient who is a superior – a person, when he is asking, is asking someone who is above him for something. Men, for example, when they ask things of God, use the word "aiteo." Matthew 7:7 gives you an example of that. In Matthew 7:9-10, we have the example of a child asking a parent. A child is a subordinate, asking the superior, his parent. In Acts 12:20, we have a subject asking something of his king – again, an inferior asking of a superior. "Aiteo" is also used in Luke 23:23 where the Jewish priests and the Jewish people are asking a superior, the governor Pilate. In Acts 3:2, we have a beggar (an inferior) asking a passerby for an offering – a superior person. We also have these used in many places in the Bible in this way.

Jesus never uses the word "aiteo" when He requests something of God the Father. It would be wrong for Jesus to approach the Father and say, "Father, I ask," and say, "Aiteo." Jesus always says, "Father, I 'erotao,'" because Jesus is God and the Father is God. They are on equal level. It is fantastic how carefully God the Holy Spirit separates these words in the New Testament, so that when we have a word like "erotao," which is what we have here in Philippians, it is the apostle Paul who is addressing someone who is on equal level with him, and somebody that he is very familiar with. He shows that he is going to address a certain person that he knows very well; a person who is a close friend; one that he is very familiar with; and, one that he is on equal terms with. So he uses this word "erotao." It is in the present tense. This is his stated continual purpose. It's active. It is Paul's request. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

He says, "I ask you." "The" is the Greek word "se," a personal pronoun. Some third party in the Philippians church is now going to be addressed. He's going to be appointed by Paul as his agent to help these gals stop squabbling and get together in the church at Philippi. He says, "I entreat you also," and the word "also" is the Greek word "kai," which indicates, "In addition to the appeal that I have made to Euodia and Syntyche to handle their problem," making it clear to them that they alone can resolve it. Until they get themselves back into the Lord (that is, into God's divine viewpoint), they're not going to resolve it. He is saying, "But I have indicated to them the direction that they should go. Get in the Word." Get your own soul straightened out, and you will find that your problems with the other person will melt away.

If you don't think that's so, you find yourself someone that you have conflicts with, and you get yourself straightened out, and if that person gets himself straightened out, you're going to find that the problems are going to resolve themselves. That's the only way they will resolve themselves, really.

"But," Paul says, I've got two ladies. God's order is for men to lead in spiritual matters. This matter now affects the local life of that church in Philippi – one of the assemblies (one of the homes) in which these gals were related. It's affecting the community of believers in Philippi. Therefore, I'm bringing a man (a qualified man – a spiritual man – a spiritual leader) into the picture to help resolve the problem, because it must be resolved. So he says, "Also." That's the meaning of this "kai." I'm adding to what I laid upon them. I am now adding also something else. Our translation has "True yokefellow." The word true is "gnesios." The word "gnesios" means "genuine."

## Suzygus

Paul is doing a little play on words here. He often does that in the Bible, you perhaps have already noticed. And the play on words is the next word in Greek which is the word "suzugos." The word "suzugos" is translated in our King James Version as "yokefellow," because that's what "yokefellow" means. But we have already learned that names do have meanings. For example, in this very passage we've been studying, we have had the word "stephanos," from which we indicated that we get our English name "Stephen." That means that the English name Stephen has a meaning. It goes back to its Greek original. "Stephanos" meant a victory crown. So the name Stephen means victory crown. You can get a baby book. Those of you who have babies; you need to find a name; buy a book; and, it has a list of names. You'll notice that it gives the name and then it tells you what the name means. Names have come from words that had meaning.

That's what we're dealing here with: "suzugos." "Suzugos" is actually a person's name, and it does mean "yokefellow." But for some reason, the translators did not translate it as "suzugos." Instead of giving "Gus" his name, they called him "Yokefellow" by what he meant. This would be like approaching somebody who had the name Stephen and saying, "Hail, Victory Crown," instead of calling him by his name, "Stephen," which happens to mean "victory crown."

So here, a totally different picture comes out as we realize that this is a name. One of the reasons they didn't translate this as "suzugos" is because they have not been able to find this name used any place in classical Greek. Many of the other names that we find in the Bible are used elsewhere in classical Greek. However, that obviously is no argument against it. It doesn't mean that just because a name doesn't happen to be recorded anyplace else, that it did not exist. So what we have here is best really taken as a man's proper name.

So instead of "yokefellow," we would put "Suzygus." Paul is addressing a man who is a super grace spiritual maturity type. He is living in Philippi. He is known to the Christians there. His name actually means "yokefellow," or more specifically, perhaps "joiner together," when you translate it. What Paul is doing is making a play on words. He's got two women here who are in conflict with one another, and they're refusing to have anything to do with one another. Paul says, "You've got to get together." So what he does is he brings along here a man, "the joiner together" to bring these women together. Paul is saying, "I want you, Suzygus, genuine 'joiner together,' to assist these two women to overcome the problem between them. I want you to act as a spiritual authority involved in a spiritual matter as my representative.

Now, if Paul had been in Philippi, he would have handled the matter himself. Since he is not, he calls upon someone to act as his agent. So he calls upon Suzygus to "help." The word in the Greek is "sullambano." "Sullambano" means "to assist." It comes from the word "sun," which is a preposition which means "with," and it comes from this word "lambano" which means "receive." So "to receive with" or "to take part with" is the idea. It means to team up with someone else in what they're doing. It is present tense. He is to team up with these women to help them. It is middle. It connotes giving help to others who are in the process of doing something. This is like in Luke 5:7, where have this word used in this middle form to help the others go catch the fish. It's an imperative. It's a command. The apostle is acting under his authority here. He founded this church. He is the supreme authority over this church. There are local pastors over many house churches that are meeting. But Paul, as the authority has the right to appoint a spiritual agent to resolve this problem. So it's imperative. It's a command.

"Those women who," refers to Euodia and Syntyche. "Who" is kind of significant. In the Greek, it is "hostis." "Hostis" means "whoever." It's what we call an indefinite relative pronoun, but it means "who are such as." It's quality. He wants to point out that these were a certain kind of women. That's what the "word" means. It doesn't just mean identifying these particular women, but it means the fact that they were a certain kind of women that he is referring to. What kind were they? Who were such a kind, "As labored with me." The word in Greek is "sunathleo." The first part "sun" means "with," and the second part "athleo" means to contend. So this word means "to contend with" or "to contend along with another person." This is a word which the Greeks used about describing a person who was in a fight (in a battle). It would describe what a soldier was doing. He was "sunathleo" in battle. He was fighting along with somebody else.

Euodia and Syntyche were in the angelic conflict with the apostle Paul. These women in the past had apparently been super grace ladies in their capacity spiritually. They had served with Paul, obviously, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, they probably were close friends to one another as part of the team in the Lord's service. Reversionism had come in, and apparently they were both equally guilty, because that's how Paul addresses them, and reversionism had broken up their close comradeship. Now, instead of fighting Satan in the angelic conflict, they're fighting one another.

## Move On

That's a problem in the Christian life. There are casualties. When old comrades become casualties of the angelic conflict, or when old comrades seek to desert the work, you have to move on. When a soldier falls in battle, the rest of the troops have to move on. Someone has to stop to take care of the casualties, but the battle moves forward. So while we are to be ready to give spiritual aid, and to restore those in combat status, we are also to move on. We are to be on guard, perhaps all the more, when we see people falling around us, or people deserting the battle. We are to be on guard all the more that this should not happen to ourselves.

## Temptation

So Galatians 6:1 says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." This verse is a very significant verse, and it has some restrictions in it that I hope you have not missed. It, says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault (if there be among you a spiritual casualty in the angelic warfare), you who are spiritual, restore him." In other words, Paul recognizes that he cannot ask some spiritual numskull to help these ladies back together. He can't ask some character that may be a fine personality in the church at Philippi that has a marvelous mouthful-of-teeth smile, and that is so cordial and stands at the door and greets everybody that comes in on Sunday morning, but who doesn't have too much on the ball in spiritual discernment. He can't put a man like that at the availability of these ladies to help them get together. Paul knows that it takes a spiritually mature man to do the job.

So obviously, Suzygus is a super grace Christian also. That's why the apostle Paul can appoint him. So I would suggest that you don't try to give spiritual first aid to some spiritual casualty unless you yourself are a super grace Christian. People who don't understand how to give first aid in the physical realm can do an awful lot of damage to a person. You have to know something before you can help a person, and really given him first aid that's going to do him some good. Somebody who doesn't know how to handle a tourniquet can stop the bleeding of a person by putting a cord around an arm or a leg and tightening it up. But also, by forgetting to loosen it periodically and to permit the blood to flow, it can cause the limb to die, and have gangrene set in. So it's your first aid that caused a greater problem than the original wound. You have to know how to handle the first aid before you apply it.

And there are an awful lot of Christians who have the arrogance and the audacity to think that they are qualified to pass judgment and to be assisting somebody who's got a spiritual problem, who don't know anything about how to give spiritual first aid themselves. So this is a very significant caution. Paul, who wrote Galatians, was practicing what he preached when he was appointing Suzygus. He also was telling him, "Take care, Suzygus, while you get to these ladies, that you do not be pontifical and say, 'My dear women, why is it that you cannot live up to your heritage? How is it that you have fallen like this? Why can't you be all that all of us used to so love to see in you? How we enjoyed seeing you work in the Lord. Your camaraderie was an inspiration to us all. Why can you not just go on? I'm so disappointed in you. I never expected this of you. How terrible.'" You can really carry on and wax warm.

Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is saying, "Now, super grace Christian, when you're binding up the wounds of the casualty, don't ever forget that that blood could be your blood next time, and that that wound could be coming from you next time. You are just as capable of sustaining the same wound as this person does. So in the spirit of meekness, restore this person, but consider yourself also, lest you be tempted."

The apostle Paul knows one of the principles of temptation is that some of the finest Christians are simply that because they never had a good chance to be tempted to do something evil. Euodia and Syntyche are out of line. They have broken down. They have destroyed fellowship. They're ruining the fellowship of other people. Some people are so weak in the church that they're probably taking sides with them. They're falling into the same trap of becoming part of their problem.

Paul says, "Now, Suzygus, you straighten out the matter in the local church. That's why I'm appointing you. Only Euodia and Syntyche can solve the problem between themselves, but you resolve it as far as the local church is concerned, and as far as the Christian community is concerned. Paul is not going to appoint some clown who's going to go in there and become part of the problem, or take some arrogant attitude rather than recognizing in humility his own old sin nature; its own propensity to evil; and, its own possibility of also having its own spiritual wounds. The main thing in combat, as Christians, is for us to take our casualties without bogging down in the operation. We have to take our desertions without bogging down. We have to take our wounds, and keep moving.

So the apostle Paul says to Suzygus, "Restore these ladies who labored with me. They were the kind that they actually worked with me." What had they worked with the apostle Paul in? In the "euaggelion," in the gospel. These ladies assisted Paul in the work of evangelism. How? The Bible doesn't tell us. No doubt, they helped him in many different ways: financially, perhaps; in domestic ways; in secretarial ways; or, in tearing through certain projects. The services of these women made the missionary efforts of the apostle Paul possible. The services of these women made the missionary efforts of the apostle Paul more effective.

So Paul says to Suzygus that, "These women labored with me in the gospel," and not only with Paul, but there were other people that they labored with. That's the sad part about this battle between these two women, because it wasn't just the two of them and Paul. There were more people involved who had been part of this working team. He says, "Also with Clement." His name in the Greek is "Klemes," another fellow worker on the team with Euodia and Syntyche. "And with Klemes also and with my other fellow laborers." The word "other" is "loipos." "Loipos" means "the rest" or "the remaining." It refers to additional workers.

Now Paul says that, "I had the rest of these people who were to me my fellow workers." The Greek word is "sunergos". "Sun" means "with," and "ergos" means "work." He is saying, "My fellow workers – the people who work with me." There was Euodia; there was Syntyche; and there was Clement. Then Paul says, "There are so many others – too many for me to name here." But he says, "They are named someplace. They are recorded." Who were these people? He identifies them for us in a general way when he says, "Whose names are in the book of life." The "book" is "biblos." The "biblos" is from which we get our word "Bible." The "biblos" is the record in Heaven – the book of life ("zoe"). This is referring here to eternal life – the quality of being born again.

So what do we have here? When Euodia and Syntyche veered off into carnality and into reversionism, their former associates did not become part of their problem. Their former associates took their casualties with these two women, and they moved on. The apostle Paul says, I want you to restore these women because they were once part of a team that was doing great things for the Lord. They were once a very valuable contributing part of the team. He mentions Clement and then all the rest because the people at Philippi would know many who are involved. Paul says, "I can't name them all to you here, but their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. They're all born again people, and they're all going to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and be rewarded, and they're going to be rewarded handsomely for what they did."

So Paul says, "It saddens me to think that Euodia and Syntyche, who were such important members of the team, should now be in a place where they are now in reversionism; where they're losing the chance at their crowns; and, where they're denying themselves further rewards. What they have earned, they will keep, but they're losing out on what more could have been theirs? They're losing out. So Paul says, "Suzygus, you are indeed a genuine 'joiner together'. See what you can do to get these two women together. They should get together. They've been a great contribution to the Lord. It's a shame for them to be in conflict. When they are in conflict, the work of the Lord is hindered." So he puts it in the hands of Suzygus.

## Summary points

1. Suzygus is a man qualified to act as an agent for Paul in resolving this female conflict. Suzygus is going to use spiritual authority which is delegated to him by the apostle Paul.
2. What we have in the case of Euodia and Syntyche is fighting carnality. When you have two carnal women who are combating each other, it takes some spiritual authority from a man to help resolve the combat. In local church life, that descends upon the local leadership.
3. The reason you have a pastor-teacher in a local church is to see that spiritual authority is exercised in times of conflict according to doctrinal principles. He is the one who ultimately has to call the plays for the team in situations like this.
4. In the absence of the apostle here, or in the absence of a pastor-teacher in a local church, another man has to be appointed as agent to resolve the problem. But he has to be a person with the spiritual capacity to do the job.
5. This agent has to be prepared ahead of time to be able to be used in times of crises. It takes years of preparation. This is a reason for learning doctrine and becoming a super grace Christian. This is true of all of us in every realm of Christian service. God does not use people who have not previously been prepared. The Lord does not bring us to a place where suddenly he opens a ministry to us that we are incapable of moving into and performing. He only opens up to us that which we have been preparing ourselves to perform. Paul didn't tell Suzygus to go home; start studying doctrine; listening to tapes; and, learning the Words so that he could help these women. He said, "Because you have been doing this (because you are the man that you are), I can call upon you and put this delicate matter into your hands.
6. It is only a super grace Christian, we see, who has the objectivity necessary to resolve problems. That's the problem for people. They can't resolve their difficulties because they don't have objectivity. When you go to other people to get information, you fall into the trap of their subjectivity. Unless they are really mature Christians who can give you a non-involved objective analysis, they can't give you very much help. If they are objective people, the analysis they're going to give to you is the Word of God. They're going to bring you back to the Word itself. They're going to tell you to do exactly what Paul told these women to do – get yourselves together in the Lord.

## The Role of Women in the New Testament Church

Now, this brings up the very fascinating subject of exactly what was the role of women in the New Testament church, because this little incident indicates to us something that we know is true today. Here at the very beginning, at the dawn of the New Testament church, women were either a fantastic asset and contribution to the local church ministry, or they were a source of great misery to the local church ministry, and they were a great hindrance. It is amazing how nothing has changed. It's that way today. Women in the local church ministry are a godsend. They are the main line of sustaining the Lord's work, or else they become a source of great hindrance to the Lord's work.

So it's important to look in the Bible to see exactly what the Word of God has to say concerning the role of women. What was their relationship to Jesus Christ? What role did they play in His ministry; in the ministry of the early church; in the ministry of the apostles; and, so on? So we're going to look at that next time.

But women are zealous, and they can be very efficient. Because they are structured by God temperamentally to function more from an emotional frame of reference, they react to things emotionally. Therefore, women workers in the church can be very great helpers, or they can be very dangerous. Unless they have the stabilizing effect of a spiritual man in the leadership, their emotional reactions can cause a great deal of injury to the work of the church. Women need to be quiet; modest; longsuffering; not trying to make their point too hard; and, to avoid trying to be in a position where they are man-to-man in their service for the Lord. Euodia and Syntyche were playing the man-to-man game, and they were completely neutralized by Satan. They were two great gals who were no longer useful in the Lord's work. We must indeed praise God for the women who will stand by the Lord's work long after men have sought their ease. I can testify to you personally that many times, women have stood by the work and carried it forward in the local church ministry when men have long since sought their ease and weren't on the scene doing the job that needed to be done.

So we thank God for women like what Euodia and Syntyche once were. We grieve for what they became. We'll learn more about what they should have been next time. So there are four crowns. I hope that you will pursue the crowns that are available to you, because pursuing them will enable you to enter into what Paul is talking about in Philippians – maximum happiness here on this earth.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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