

## THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“A Fly in the Ointment”

Philippians 4:1-3

### Consider

1. Scripture records a wonderful visit of our Lord to Bethany (Jn 12:1). There, Martha served (v. 2), Lazarus sat at the table (v. 2) with the Lord, and Mary was at Jesus’ feet (v. 3).

2. What Mary did for our Lord is plainly stated (v. 3). The costly spikenard was used to anoint His feet. Then the Word affirms that “the house was filled with the odor of the ointment” (v. 3). Blessed experience!

3. Although the Spirit instructed Paul to write many encouraging thoughts to the Philippians, he was also inspired to warn the believers (3:18, 19). Antinomianism had to be shown for what it was worth -- nothing. Conversely, those whose conversation is in heaven: a. Look for Christ’s return (3:20). b. Wait for Christ’s grace (v. 21). c. Believe Christ’s power (v. 21).

4. All this is indeed great -- But, there is a problem at Philippi. There is a fly in the ointment. There is trouble among some church members. It is now addressed. Give diligence to God’s Prescription for the resolution of the conflict.

1. The GROUND of it v. 1

The first word of the chapter “wherefore” ( ) could be translated “consequently,” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55 for similar use). An influence of the data provided (3:20, 21). Hence, the chapter division really should run over to the verses of our text (v. 1-3).

2. The APPROACH to it v. 1

Filial and affectionate addresses are expressed here. Read them:

a. “My brethren” ( )

There is real feeling in this phrase. There is nothing cold or meaningless. Paul expressed identity to the same family for they had one Father. But there is more. This is the same approach given to blind Paul by Annanias when he met the erstwhile persecutor (Acts 9:17). Probably from that point the term became a sacred word for Paul, at least one invested with sincere meaning.

b. “Dearly beloved” ( )

What an expression of love rooted in a verb of choiced love. It shows a loved object. Note two doses of the word.

c. “Longed For” ( )

The intensive prefixed preposition shows Paul’s longing to see the Philippians face to face.

d. “Joy” ( ). “Crown” ( ).

“Joy” may be a matter for the present, but it is surely to be in the future (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19, 20). The “crown” is not one of royalty or dignity, but of victory given at the end of a contest (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

Note: To resolve conflict/friction, there must be respect, loving endearing thoughts of one another.

3. The APPEAL of it vv. 1, 2

a. Counselees involved

The present imperative plural verb “stand fast” is critical ( ). Consistently must prevail (present tense). There cannot be any on again off again stuff. This is a direct command (imperative). This is a must situation. The plural points to both parties. No room

for unilateral resolution. The verb obviously says: do it or die with it unresolved!

b. Counselor involved

By Spirit inspiration, Paul speaks to the “flies” in the ointment. Twice he uses the same verb ( ). Since the verb is used to address each of the counselees, it is clear both were at fault and needed the exhortation. There may be a subtle suggestion here that no one is ever without some blame in any considered conflict/problem.

4. The PERSONNEL of it vv. 2, 3

Item: Most conflicts/problems are multi-faceted. It is unusual to find something in isolation or apart from several people. Look right here in our text:

a. Euodias and Syntyche

All attempts to identify these women (feminine nouns) are utterly futile. Nothing is really known about them except what is here. Apparently they were of high profile in the church and enjoyed some self-esteem which led them to mutual conflict.

b. Yokefellow

Many versions render the Greek here as a “yokefellow” or “companion.” By this means the word is intended as an ordinary generic term. This unnamed person apparently stood in a particular relation to the apostle and his ministry. The qualification “true,” or “genuine/sincere” reflects his character. Because other specific names are given, some believe “yokefellow” is a proper name -- Syzygus. Inasmuch as the letter is addressed to the church, it would be proper to request assistance from a notable in the Assembly. He was a genuine friend to Paul.

5. The METHOD of it vv. 2, 3

a. Think v. 2

This is the sense of “be of the . . . mind.” Here is understanding and implies rationality. Conflicts often become volatile and emotional. Here is an admonition to use one’s brains. Moreover disputing parties are to have “same” ( ) thinking. All of this must be “in the Lord” for His authority is the key to harmony. Now that’s something for people who are at odds! They must get hold of the nature of their differences and bring about harmony and unanimity.

b. Help

1) Specifically

Outside assistance is not to be decried (Prov. 11:14) so long as they are the quality and spirituality described here. Carnal counselors only confuse. The middle voice of the verb ( ) and its imperatival mode show the women are commanded to take an active part in restoring harmony. Counselors do not effect change without the offending parties doing something (Luke 5:7). A reason is offered for helping these women -- they had striven together ( ), only here in the N. T.) with Paul in the Gospel (cf. Acts 16:13). Thus, even active Gospel-workers get into trouble. Horrors.

2) Additionally

a. Clement -- another unidentified laborer in the Gospel.

b. Other Fellow-Laborers. The word “other” is “the rest” ( ). They were special as “my” connotes.

Note: It is vivid and dramatic that all who are mentioned, including the offending women, are written in the “Book of Life” (cf. Ex. 32:31, 33; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 21:27).

Keep in Mind The fly in the ointment at Philippi is regrettably too frequently found in churches, homes, missions, and ordinary believers. There are ways of resolution. One of these is pointedly seen here. Take your need to this text today. You will marvel at God’s power to deliver. Amen.