



"Finding Peace In Personal Disputes" (Philippians 4:2-7)

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THE CONFLICT

- * Happens in a very "spiritual" church; this is one of the most "spiritual" churches Paul addresses in his ministry...
- * Involves two prominent women in the church, and yet two very different women. Euodia means "prosperous journey." She was probably a woman of social standing in the church. She was one who had "arrived" in life. She may have had a little bit of an "air" about her. Syntyche means "pleasant acquaintance," "happy chance," or "good luck." She was probably not of the same pedigree socially as Euodia, but she was well liked by most everyone (except for the friends of Euodia of course!). These are women who had struggled alongside the apostle Paul in ministry...perhaps they were women who accompanied Lydia to the place of prayer by the river (Acts 16:13ff)...Sometimes the most faithful people can become agents of the enemy in inducing conflict.
- * What was the issue? We are not told. It doesn't seem to be a doctrinal issue, but rather a personal issue. It could have been anything...examples?
- * Conflict is common in life
 - Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel; Abraham and Lot (see Gen.13:7-12); Abraham and his wife Sarai (Gen.16:1-5); Jacob and Esau (Gen.25:21, 24-26); Joseph & his brothers (Gen.37ff); Num.12:1 Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite; The apostles (Mark 9:33-34; 10:35-41; Luke 22: 24 Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest; Acts 6, the numerical growth of the church brought conflict; Paul & Barnabas (Acts 15:36ff).
- * Ever experience personal conflict in life? * If you are not having conflict with people, then I have some suggestions. Come out of your cave; get married; have kids; get plugged in to the life of the church - like Euodia & Syntyche did!
- * Kevin & the galahs...
- * My conflict with my stepfather

* Conflict with my wife (almost always my fault)

THE CONSEQUENCES

1. Loss of joy (rejoicing)

- As long as I resisted my friend Kevin in regard to a stupid bird, I could not rejoice in the Lord. As long as I maintained an attitude against my stepfather...Until I settled the conflict with my wife, I could not rejoice in the Lord.

2. Loss of peace

- You can have peace with God and not the peace of God...

3. Anxiety

- Heart (emotional turmoil), head (loss of focus)...

4. Loss of testimony

- Let your "gentleness" be evident to all.

5. Potential church division

- Especially because these two women were prominent church members, there was a greater chance of people taking sides, and if not dealt with properly, their differences could do great damage to the unity of this church fellowship.

THE CURE

1. Assist reconciliation by not taking sides

* "Syzygus" = a yoke or crossbar tied to the end of a pole and having collars or loops at each end by which two oxen were put to the plough. It suggests persons who knew how to pull well in harness together.

2. Agree with one another "in the Lord"

* To accept one another despite our differences

* Luke 9: 49 "Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." 50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you."

* See Rom.14:1-8, 19-21

3. Overcome anxiousness through prayer

* The Lord is near, waiting to help you in this matter. He wants to grant you peace in the midst of the conflict. He will guard your heart (emotions) and your head (mind). He will restore your joy.

* Prayer is not always the first thing we do in a conflict. Even godly people sometimes fail here...see II Kings 18:1-6a, 13-16. This was a big mistake. Hezekiah sacrificed the treasures of the temple instead of seeking the Lord's help. See 18:17-22. We see here a second mistake Hezekiah made. He seeks help from Egypt. If you have any doubt that this too was a mistake, just look at Isa.30:1-2; 31:1; 30:15. Hezekiah initially failed, but eventually made the right decision. See 19:5-6, 20. Finally, he sought the Lord in prayer. Sennacherib had sent an intimidating letter to Hezekiah (19:10-13). And guess what Hezekiah did with the letter? See 19:14-19 ---- then 19:32-35.

* Now don't misunderstand. When having a dispute/conflict with a fellow believer, we are not looking for the Lord to lay them out like he did the Assyrian army. The point is that in any conflict, no matter how great or small, whether with an individual or an army, God want us to rest in Him, to trust Him. So what does this mean practically speaking? Well, if I make prayer my first option in a conflict, I'm not going to respond "in the flesh." I'm not going to retaliate. But once again, some great saints of the past have failed when facing personal conflict...

* David and Nabal (I Sam.25; note chapters 24 & 26, David's humility before Saul)...

* Prov.25: 21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.

* Rom.12: 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

* Stephen - They saw his face as the face of an angel; He asked heaven to forgive those that were stoning him! Jesus, Father forgive them...

* Acts 5: 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

4. Be willing to accept less than you're due

* Let you **gentleness** be evident to all...The word suggests being satisfied with less than one's due.

* David humbled himself, received less than he was due, and **God** judged Nabal...

* Abraham could have said to Lot, "The Lord gave the land to me" (See Gen.12:6-7). Instead, he (by faith) was willing to accept less than what he was due in his conflict with Lot. And what did God say to him right after this?

* Gen.13: 14 The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.

THE CAUSE OF THE CONFLICT?

* What was ***the issue***? It is interesting that God does not tell us. Because, no matter what Euodia and Syntyche were disputing about, to settle the matter would require going beyond the surface issue. It would require going to the root source of their discord.

* See James 4:1-11a

* It takes two people to fight.

* John 10: 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

* I Peter 2: 23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

CONCLUSION

* Read five points of "How To Stop A Fight"

* Whether your conflict involves just one person or a whole army, God wants to grant you peace, even in the midst of the conflict. He wants to restore your joy. He wants to guard your heart and your mind. Won't you let Him? Won't you humble yourself...and pray?