

**BROKEN CHAINS**  
**The Philippians Series #11**  
**Philippians 4:2-3**

**(ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY)**

**RELATIONSHIPS MATTER**

America is a throw-away society. Think for a few moments about all the products you can buy that are not intended to last. The disposable razor blade is one that comes to mind. A cheap plastic handle with just a tiny trace of metal. Once the blade becomes dull (and that doesn't take long) you simply throw away the razor and take the next one out of the package. Then there is fast food. You go through the drive-thru and in a matter of minutes you are eating a meal without ever getting out of your car. The wrappers and the bag the meal came in are thrown away without a second thought. Then there are the thrift stores. I am grateful that my wife and daughters love to shop at thrift stores. It is amazing to see some of the nice items that people have only worn once or twice before getting rid of them.

There are some things that are designed to last for just a short time before being thrown away. RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT ONE OF THEM. It is a sad fact that most of us (all of us?) can look into our past and find a broken relationship that we chose to leave un-mended. Before going any further I want to acknowledge that there are times, through no fault of your own, that a relationship is broken and the other person is unwilling to work together to bring about reconciliation. What I have in mind are those relationships we have allowed to die without first doing everything possible to fix. The thought of treating relationships like something which can be thrown away is completely foreign to the Bible.

The church in Philippi had a situation that needed to be addressed by Paul. Two women, Euodia and Syntyche, had experienced some kind of falling out and their differences remained unresolved. The reason Paul identified the women in a public letter is because their sin was publicly known and others were being affected by it. This was similar to the time Paul rebuked Peter in public as described in Galatians 2:11-14. In that passage we learn that Peter had been hypocritical regarding his association with Gentile Christians. Not only did Peter's hypocrisy wound the Gentiles, his bad example influenced Jewish Christians. Paul's rebuke of Peter was public because Peter's sin was public. We can safely conclude that Paul's rebuke of Euodia and Syntyche was public because their sin was public (in the sense that it was known throughout the church).

There is a gentle tone in Paul's words, but it is still the voice of command. Euodia and Syntyche's unwillingness to set aside their differences was wrong, and Paul, the Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, commanded them to agree in the Lord. Here is a good way to paraphrase Paul's words in 4:2.

I call on Euodia, and I call on Syntyche to put the Lord Jesus Christ first in their dispute. You know what the Lord requires by way of mercy, forgiveness, humility and love. You don't have to see eye to eye on everything, but where you do have differences and disagreement you must nevertheless agree to act in a way which honors Jesus Christ. He is more important than your disagreement.

The text does not specify what the issue between these two women was, but obviously the people in the Philippian church already knew about it. We do know that Euodia and Syntyche were valued ministry partners with Paul (see 4:3). The words of v.3 indicate that these women had served with commitment and distinction and that they had been greatly used by God. What a shame that they had allowed some type of disagreement to come between them. Had one or both of them had their feelings hurt? Had jealousy or resentment infected their hearts? Was there a disagreement over how something in the church should be done? Whatever it was, they should have fixed it without needing to be admonished by Paul. But then, are any of us completely innocent in this area?

Now is a good time to be reminded that our title for the Philippians series is **BROKEN CHAINS!** For a Christian to experience **BROKEN CHAINS**, his or her relationships must be in order. This is very important, so read the next several paragraphs with extra care! One relationship that every Christian has is a relationship with the Holy Spirit. For every Christian who over-emphasizes the Holy Spirit (a real danger in charismatic or Pentecostal circles) we can find another Christian who under-emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit (a real danger in non-charismatic, non-Pentecostal circles). Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11) from the moment they are saved. To be in right relationship with the Holy Spirit requires that our own spirit be one of yieldedness to God: *"Not my will Father, but Your will be done"*. A yielded spirit is one which wants to obey God and live a life marked by gratitude and the desire to glorify Him.

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul lists the fruit of the Holy Spirit. These are traits the Holy Spirit produces and develops within the life of the Christian who is yielded to God as just described. Among the fruit is joy. So then, is joy something the Holy Spirit gives? If the answer is yes, doesn't that contradict what this commentary has been teaching about joy being a perspective, a choice we make to see things from a biblical point of view? No, there is no contradiction. What we are saying here is that it is a joint effort of our will cooperating with the Holy Spirit that brings about the joy that leads to **BROKEN CHAINS**.

Just as our relationship with the Holy Spirit is important, so are our relationships with other Christians. As a matter of fact, there is an interconnectedness between our human relationships and our relationship with God. In Ephesians 4:30 we are told, *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God”*. Now take a look at the surrounding verses (Ephesians 4:29-32). The focus is relationships between Christians. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we fail to build healthy relationships or restore damaged relationships with fellow Christians.

We cannot simultaneously do that which grieves the Holy Spirit and still be given the joy that the Holy Spirit gives. If we want true joy we must obey what the Scriptures teach about restoring relationships with other Christians.

The great confessional psalms of David pertaining to his terrible sin with Bathsheba against Uriah and David’s army (Psalm 32, 51) both speak of a loss of joy and an internal struggle that could only be settled by David confessing his sin. The first thing we forfeit when we choose a path of sin is the joy of the Lord.

It is interesting to notice that Paul’s admonition to Euodia and Syntyche immediately precedes the great promises of Philippians 4. It was as though Paul was saying, “I can’t delve into God’s promises to you until we take care of the unfinished business between Euodia and Syntyche.

We meet a key person in 4:3 who Paul calls “loyal yokefellow”. It is possible that this was actually the person’s name (Zusugus), but either way it is descriptive of a person Paul knew he could count on to help Euodia and Syntyche agree in the Lord. We see in verse 3 a duty that belongs to every Christian. When we have direct knowledge of a Christian(s) facing conflict like Euodia and Syntyche, God expects us to help that Christian(s) work through the biblical process of restoration.

We often shirk this duty because we don’t want to get involved in someone else’s conflict. Obviously we should not get involved with the attitude of a busybody. But relationships matter to God and they must matter to us. God has said *“Blessed is the peacemaker”*. We dare not minimize the importance of the local church as a body of believers who are joined together. Every part of the body matters, and conflict between believers which is not addressed is a cancer in the body. This is serious business. Relationships matter to God and they should matter to us. And when our relationships are conforming to God’s Word we are on the path to joy, and true joy leads to **BROKEN CHAINS**.

## DIGGING DEEPER

1. What does it mean to disagree in an agreeable spirit? Why is this so hard to do?

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2. Think of a damaged or broken relationship with a Christian from your past. What could you have done about it that would have been more biblical than how you actually handled it?

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3. Read Matthew 5:23-24. What does this tell us about serving the Lord when we have “unfinished business” with another Christian?

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4. Read I Corinthians 12:12-26. What does this passage teach us about Christian relationships?

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5. On what basis could you tell Euodia or Syntyche that they would be unable to fully experience **BROKEN CHAINS** as long as they were un-reconciled?

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