

Euodia's Contention

So then, in this way, my dearly loved brothers, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. - Philippians 4:1-5 HCSB



¹These two women were leaders in the Philippian church. They attended the worship services and faithfully performed their ministry duties. However, they sat on opposite sides of the room and tried to not even see each other. When forced into conversation, they were icily polite. The tension between them could be cut with a knife and it was beginning to cause strain in this fragile young church.

Women in Macedonia were treated much more equally than almost anywhere else in the known world at the time. They worked, kept their earnings, could buy and sell property and their opinions were valued, so Paul did not speak condescendingly to these two strong women. Besides, he considered them his reward in ministry²; he used the Greek word “stephanos.” *Stephanos* was not the crown given to a king³, but a crown of achievement given to an athlete. Paul urged them, rather than simply commanded them, to have an “attitude adjustment.”

Notice what basis of agreement Paul recommended. He urged them to agree “in the Lord.” The man who had had a serious debate with Barnabas over John Mark and split over it⁴, was no hypocrite. He was not about to tell them to overlook their consciences or doctrinal differences. Yet spiritual unity was vital to the continued health of the Philippian church.

He told them to “*phroneo*” which means to exercise their minds, to think. What were they to think about? First, the two ladies needed to remember that their primary loyalty should not be to their own views but to their Lord. Second, they should recall their first passionate love of spreading the Gospel and consider how they could reignite those flames. Third, they were to keep in mind that they were both in the book of life. They were no longer strangers; they were family. Fourth, they needed to obey Hashem’s longstanding command to do everything joyfully. Fifth, graciousness should be the natural reaction of both, since they had been forgiven of a huge debt of sin.⁵ Lastly, the proximity of our Lord’s return should always be kept in their minds.⁶ Woe to the servant who disregards that truth and as a result, abuses his fellow servants!⁷

Keeping these eternal elements in mind should help us maintain the proper perspective on earthly, temporal divisions. We must not allow ourselves to stiffen up and dig our heels in over issues that, in the grand scheme of things, are not that critical. Christ’s church is simply too important.

¹ “Contention”; oil on linen by Roswita Szyzka

² 1 Thessalonians 2:19

³ which was “diadema”

⁴ Acts 15:39

⁵ Matthew 18:23-35

⁶ Matthew 24:42-44; 25:13; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:34-36

⁷ Matthew 24:45-51; 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8