

## Philippians 4:2–3: An Alternative View Of The Euodia-Syntyche Debate

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Philippians 4:2–3: “I encourage Euodia, and I encourage Syntyche to [pursue] the same mindset in [the] Lord.<sup>3</sup> Yes, I also ask you, true comrade, to come alongside and help these women, who labored alongside me in the [work of] the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-laborers, whose names are in [the] Book of Life.”<sup>1</sup>

In Phil 4:2–3, Paul exhorts two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to “pursue the same mindset in the Lord.” Unfortunately, he does not offer enough detail to confirm the exact nature of this request. An overview of interpretations shows a range of opinions. Davorin Peterlin takes an extreme view that the entire letter is focused on disunity and quarrelling in Philippi. From Phil 1:1 on, Paul is directly addressing a church “immersed in inter-church squabbles.”<sup>2</sup> Peterlin fails to take seriously the tone of joy and friendship found throughout.<sup>3</sup> John Reumann calls Peterlin’s approach “overkill,”<sup>4</sup> and instead offers the more cautious interpretation that there was some sort of dispute, but that interpretations should not make “‘The Euodia-Syntyche affair’ *the* issue toward which the entire letter is leading.”<sup>5</sup> Moisés Silva calls 4:2 an “express and unquestionable rebuke” and believes this is a quarrel between two leading women that threatens the entire community.<sup>6</sup> Another view is that the quarrel is instead between Paul and these two women, and Paul is urging them to come to his side.<sup>7</sup>

This article offers an alternative interpretation, contending that Euodia and Syntyche, leaders of the church in Philippi, are being encouraged to pursue the vision of unity that Paul expounds throughout the letter and an unnamed “true comrade” (4:3) is asked to aid these leaders toward that end. Paul addresses them, not because of an existing quarrel, but because the unity mindset i...

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