

Talking of cups

Reading: Philippians 4.1-9

It was the cups that did it. She said they were to be baby blue, and I said – hang on a minute matey – all church cups are green, dark minty green. And ours should be just the same.

Well you should have seen her face – I have never seen a scowl like it. She slammed the door, and I haven't seen or heard from her since. That was 6months ago. Blue cups ... I ask you.

I've joined a new bookgroup. We've settled on a time and place but not on the book yet. Actually I'm rather chuffed that I'm in it – all the important society women will be there, pam – the poet, Toyin – she's a magistrate, Michelle – she built that gorgeous new temple to Isis down the road, Elizabeth – well she's in charge of Philippi holdings and what she can't get built, won't get built. She's even been commissioned to build a whole new city, she's going to install lots of roundabouts.

And then there's Barbara – well she sounds sweet enough, but you wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of her. Apparently, she's got 10 men working for her involved in security, it's all very hush hush. You see in our corner of the Mediterranean women are free as birds, we're equals to men, I know it's not the same everywhere in the world but here at least we can do as we please.

The newspapers say it's all down to the influencers – the Macedonian princesses, and I guess they are right, if you see someone like you succeeding then you're more likely to think you can do it too.

Do you know my name means success – more or less, pleasant journey that sort of thing. Euodia. It's not what SHE calls me. Syntyche calls me Euodia but she always adds 'even when she's wrong - she's right'. It's not exactly snappy, but it's stuck.

And when I think of all that work we did alongside Paul! Before the great cup debate, we used to preach, lead services, set up new missions, we built a foodbank, everything for the Lord.

We worked together along with the men, we rolled our sleeves up and got stuck in. it was like we were out fishing and when the nets were full the call to pull was to everyone, everyone included us women did the work of the Lord of the gospel together.

Paul has written. It's not good. Well what I mean is that the letter itself is amazing. But there's just a little bit at the end where he name-drops me and Syntyche. You might not think that's a big deal, but from Paul it's a big deal. One he doesn't name drop, so he's obviously happy with the way we worked with him, he valued what we did.

He also said I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche – see he doesn't

just lump us together like a pair of fish wives, he treats us equally. Only that's not all he said, he also said we needed to agree with each other. I haven't called her yet. And I don't want to.

I went to church last week – you know the big one Lydia founded. a couple of the women came up to me and said they agreed with me blue cups would be a disaster and they were thinking of starting a petition, they thought they could get their housegroups on board and the worship group were always up for a scrap.

It was then that I realised just how wrong I had been. You see it's one thing for leaders to disagree but another thing when that disagreement splits a church. And I could see as silly as the cup thing was, it was gathering ground.

I would like to confirm that it wasn't just about cups with Syntyche, I'd not agreed with her about a whole host of things. We didn't agree about a preaching series last year, what worship songs to pick where a contentious issue every week, and lately we had disagreed about who to give the clothing donations to. The cups were the final straw.

But I realised that my indifference to her opinions had made me bitter, my grumpiness had burrowed away in my heart and set up camp. I'd stopped walking the narrow way, stopped walking the path of obedience to

Christ and my loathing of anything she said had sapped my very soul. I hadn't slept in months, my hair had turned even more grey, any anytime I saw her chariot at the spa, I started to sweat. I pretended it was a spiritual stage, 'I'm seeking the Lord more earnestly than ever' I told anyone who would listen, but the reality was I found I could not pray. I had never felt more distance from God.

Eventually we agreed to meet up, with another woman as well – she was our mediator and we talked it through. And then we prayed, we each prayed through our worries and fears, everything that made us anxious about each other, about the church programmes. As we did, I felt the most powerful sense of Christ in the room, the Holy Spirit was breathing through us and bringing peace. What a gift that peace is. I feel free at last, free to serve the Lord again.

So, I've opted for joy and gentleness, we're walking together again – or at least trying to walk like Jesus did humbly, caring for others more than ourselves. Me and Synch, we're a work in progress but delight in God's peace that unity has brought us. It's made us hopeful for us and for our church. Thank God!

We settled for turquoise cups.