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How wealthy are you? After busting the bank on Christmas gifts, perhaps you're not feeling very wealthy. The holiday season around Christmas is a time of contradiction. On the religious side, the church's focus on Advent celebration reminds us of the nature and purpose of Christmas. On the secular side, the advertising bombardment at us to buy, buy, buy pushes us ever away from the spiritual and into the material. Our country's economic well-being for the entire year has become largely dependent upon Christmas sales of things. Small children are conditioned to want things, and lots of them, for Christmas. We as parents, or perhaps as grandparents even more, feel guilty if we don't buy most of the things the kids clamor for at Christmas.

So Christmas ends up being a time of conflicting emotions. As believers we desire to honor the first coming of our Lord. As Americans caught up on our society's orientation toward things, we feel guilty somehow if we don't spend lavish sums of money on Christmas.

Couple this with our culture's expectations on this time of the year. A major emphasis in the popular Christmas songs stresses family togetherness. So everyone feels a strong urge "to be home for Christmas." And yet, large chunks of our culture cannot be together as a family at Christmas for one reason or another. And given the dysfunctionality of an exploding number of families in our culture, being together brings the disaster of fussing and fighting over the least little thing. Togetherness turns sour and produces the opposite of happiness.



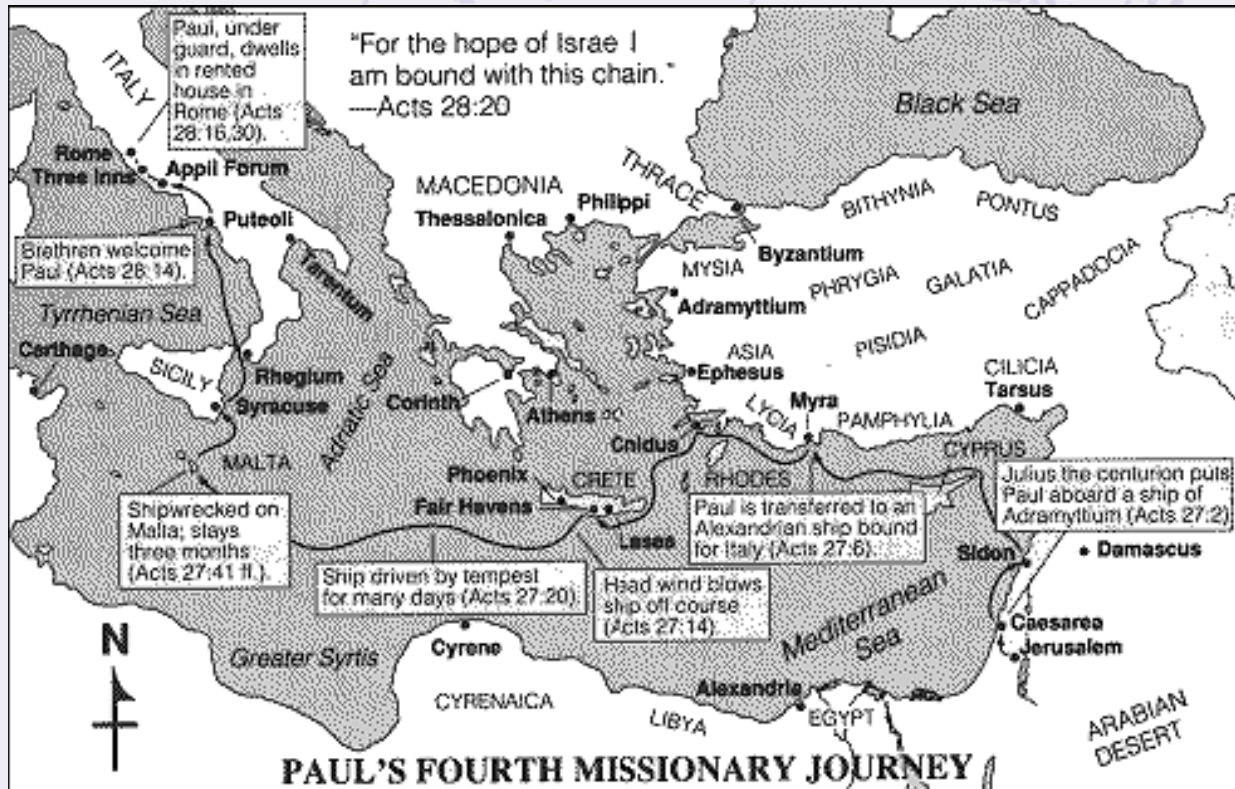
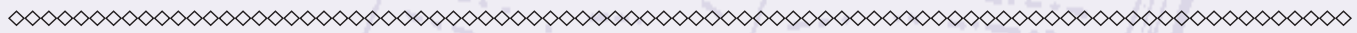
What word does scripture bring to us? One important message comes from Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians and is found in 4:2-9. As Paul turned to the so-called "practical matters" in the body of the letter, 4:2-20, he stressed living in the spiritual riches that we have been given in Christ. Although a



prison of the Roman government when this letter was composed, the apostle realized that circumstances, be they positive or negative, shouldn't impact our approach to living and serving. Thus during one of the darkest periods of his life, Paul composed one of the most uplifting and positive letters that he ever wrote. That's a word we use during Christmas.

I. Context

From [previous studies in Philippians](#) posted under Bible Studies at Cranfordville, we will draw most of our background material. New materials will supplement this source.



a. Historical

External History. Paul's letter to the congregation at Philippi is part of the later writing ministry of the apostle that is often labeled [The Prison Letters](#). Traditionally, these letters (Philemon; Ephesians; Colossians; Philippians) are thought to have been written from Rome in the early 60s after Paul arrived there to stand trial before the emperor (see Acts 28). More recent scholarship, however, is inclined to separate out Philippians from the other three letters, which are closely related to one another, and perhaps see Philippians written at a different place and time, perhaps while in Caesarea Philippi before traveling to Rome in the late 50s of the first Christian century. Although some aren't convinced that this letter was written by Paul, most New Testament scholars will attribute it to either Paul or a disciple of Paul's. The situation of Paul is described in [1:12-26](#). He is a prisoner being held by the [Imperial Guard](#)

awaiting legal action. But his opposition is coming from inside the local Christian community as well, with some having taken to preaching the gospel in the hope that this would eventually lead to Paul's execution (vv. 15-18). Timothy and Epaphroditus are close by, assisting Paul ([2:19-30](#)) and awaiting his instruction to travel to Philippi. Although caught up in very depressing circumstances personally, this letter is one of the most upbeat and joyous letters he wrote. Part of this came from the deep concern for Paul that the Philippian church had shown ([4:10-20](#)).

Thus from prison, either in Caesarea (in the late 50s) or more likely in Rome (in the early 60s), Paul dictated the contents of this letter to an unnamed writing secretary. Once in finalized form Timothy and Epaphroditus -- either of whom may have been that writing secretary -- took the letter to the Christians at Philippi to read it and to explain it to the congrega-

tion.

Internal History. The time and place markers inside 4:2-9 are very limited. The paraenetical nature of most of the material rises above one particular historical circumstance in order to declare basic principles of Christian living that apply equally at any point of time. The first segment in vv. 2-3 regarding the problems that Euodia and Syntyche were

having with one another is the one place where we could wish for more historical details. From the text we don't know exactly what their problem was, and just how extensively it was impacting the Christian community in Philippi. In the exegesis section below we will address the limited amount of historical detail about this.

b. Literary

Genre. At the larger genre level, we are looking at an ancient letter. Philippians follows that pattern with the basic elements common to letters in that world:

Praescriptio - 1:1-2

Proem - 1:3-11

Body - 1:12-4:20

Conclusio - 4:21-23

Inside the body of the letter, 1:12-4:20, our passage, 4:2-9, comes toward the end. It contains the paraenetical materials focused on Christian living and discipleship at the point of lifestyle and behavior. The first emphasis, in vv. 2-3, is limited to the historical situation at Philippi. But the second (vv. 4-7)

graphical material (3:4b-16). A final set of admonitions comprises most of chapter four, with another personal note inserted in 4:10-19. The traditional Conclusio finishes the letter in 4:21-23.



and third (vv. 8-9) segments are timeless emphases on approaches to Christian living. It is this purer expression of paraenesis that had led to the widespread popularity of these verses across the centuries of Christian interpretation. The relevancy of their declarations can be clearly and easily

One of the major emphases in this letter is the theme of unity. In writing while fellow Christians were trying to get him executed, Paul underscored the importance of Christians finding ways to work together in true harmony and unity. The Philippian Christians had exhibited unity in their support of Paul. Epaphroditus had brought a love offering from Philippi to Paul (4:18) and most likely carried this letter back to Philippi (2:28-30). The role of women in this church had been significant since the outset when Paul first preached the gospel at Philippi on the second missionary journey in the early 50s (Acts 16:11-40), and a church was formed from these women and they met in Lydia's home. Paul would pass through Philippi again briefly on the third missionary journey in the middle 50s (Acts 20:1-2). Now several years later, two ladies in the church were at odds with one another, Euodia and Syntyche, and urged them to reconcile their differences (4:2-3). This leadership role of women in the church was probably at the heart of the intently missionary orientation of this group.

determined, while some of the more historical oriented material has to be examined very closely before application comes.

Literary Context. Our passage, 4:2-9, comes as an important segment of the [body of the letter](#) (1:12-4:20). After the traditional Praescriptio (1:1-2) identifying the sender and recipients with a greeting and the Proem (1:3-11) expressing thanksgiving to God, Paul reassures the readers with a positive depiction of his personal situation (1:12-26). He then moves into encouraging the readers toward living a worthy life of unified service (1:27-2:11). This is followed by another set of admonitions for Christian living (2:12-18) and then a personal note about Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-3:1). A third set of admonitions (3:2-4:1) is interspersed with autobio-



II. Message

Literary Structure. The internal structure of the ideas in vv. 2-9 is rather easy to determine, and is reflected in the [Block](#) and [Semantic](#) diagrams of the Greek text found in the larger internet version of this study. An analysis of the rhetorical organization of those ideas can be found in the [Summary of Rhetorical](#)

[Structure](#) section.

The three sub-sections are 1) vv. 2-3; 2) vv. 4-7; and 3) vv. 8-9. These three segments are relatively detached from one another in a manner typical of ancient paraenesis. No inter-locking connections between the sections can be traced legitimately. Only one possible exception to this can be identified. The “peace of God” (**hkeijhnh tou qeou**) in v. 7 becomes the “God of peace” (**oqeo; th~ eijhnh~**) in v. 9. Both serve in the “promise” declaration in a similar command / promise literary pattern in vv. 6-7 and vv. 8-9.



a. Getting together, vv. 2-3

Greek NT

NASB

NRSV

NLT

4.2 Eupdian

2 I urge Euodia and

2 I urge Euodia

2 And now I want

**parakalw kai; Suntu-
vhn parakalw to; aufo;
fronein ej kuriw/ 4.3
nai; ejrtw kai; sey gn-
hsie suzuge, sullam
banou aujai~, aifine~
ej tw euaggeliw/ sun-
hqlhsan noi meta; kai;
Klhento” kai; twñ
loipwn sunergwn nou,
w ta;ojowata ej biblw/
zwh~.**

I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

to plead with those two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. 3 And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. And they worked with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Notes:

The literary shape of these verses is clear; the precise historical details aren't.

The thought structure revolves around two sets of admonitions. First, Paul addresses the two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who are having problems. Then, in pointed language he enjoins an unnamed “loyal companion” to help mediate the situation between the two ladies.

The use of the verb **parakalw** signals urgency in Paul's appeal, and his repetition of the verb in relation to each woman only heightens the intensity of the appeal. The thrust of his appeal to them is **to; aufo; fronein ej kuriw/** The difficulty of adequate English translation of this phrase is reflected in the wide diversity of translations: NASB - “to live in harmony in the Lord”; NRSV - “to be of the same mind in the Lord”; NLT - “because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement”; TEV - “try to agree as sisters in the Lord”; Message - “to iron out their differences and make up. God doesn't want his children holding grudges.” Ralph Martin (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) provides important insight into the rich meaning of the Greek expression:

This exhortation to live harmoniously together is for a way of life that is fit and proper for all who claim to have placed themselves under the Lordship of Christ (**to; aufo; fronein ej kuriw/**, “to agree with each other



in the Lord”). Once again the important Pauline word **fronein**, “to have an interest in,” “to pay sympathetic attention to,” “to have concern for,” “to think,” “to form or hold an opinion about,” “to set one's mind on, to be intent on,” appears (Phil 1:7; 2:3, 5; 3:15, 19; 4:2, 10). And the richness of meaning in the phrase **to; aufo; fronein** exceeds any single translation, such as “to agree with each other”; for it embraces not only the idea of possessing “a common mind” but also the idea of having identical feelings and attitudes toward each other, a total harmony of life (see Comment on 1:7).

Thus Paul appeals to the women to be reconciled over whatever differences that may be dividing them.

The historical identity of these two individuals has puzzled readers of this text since about the fourth century onward. The similar expression **to; aufo; fronein** in 2:2 positions the model of Christ's self-giving example over against a self-serving egocentric tendency present among the members of the congregations (cf. 2:3). If this provides any insight, their problem may have been jealousy over leadership roles in the life of the church. The seriousness

of the problem is hinted at by Paul mentioning these ladies by name. He virtually never does that any where else in his writings. People being mentioned by name usually means being recognized for some positive trait or accomplishment. Troublemakers normally go unnamed with only indirect references.

He does indicate in verse three that they “have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel” (**ai t̄i ne~ ej̄n tw/ euǰǰeli w/ sunh̄ql h̄san moi**). This strongly implies leadership roles and may suggest that they were house-church leaders at Philippi along side Lydia (cf. [Acts 16:11-40](#)).

Thus we know very little about these two women. But gaps in scriptural text information usually prompt speculation among commentators. Such is the case here, as Martin (*WBC*) notes in a lengthy comment:

The principal parties involved in this quarrel, Euodia and Syntyche, were women. The names appear quite frequently

in inscriptions, always in the feminine form (BDAG), and Paul refers to them in v 3 with feminine forms of the pronouns, **auj̄ ai ~**, “them [fem.],” and **ai t̄i ne~**, “who [fem.]” There are thus no grounds for taking one or both of these names as names of men, as did Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. a.d. 350–428). He claimed to have heard that Syntyche should be spelled Syntyches, a man’s name, and that Syntyches was in fact the Philippian jailer of Acts 16, the husband of Euodia. But this is an admitted rumor and is totally without support in fact (Michael, Vincent). Nor is there any support for the fanciful view of the Tübingen School that saw Euodia and Syntyche not as two individuals but as symbols for the Jewish Christians, on the one hand, and the Gentile Christians, on the other, and the **suzuge**, “yoke fellow,” of v 3 (Syzygos = “the Unifier”) as the apostle Peter, who was charged with mediating between these two factions within the church and with bringing them together (cf. Barth).

Nothing is known about these two women or the nature of their quarrel. Just possibly one of them could have been the Lydia of Acts 16 (cf. vv 14, 40). Λυδία, “Lydia,” is an adjective meaning “the Lydian,” i.e., the woman from Lydia of Asia Minor, and either “Euodia” or “Syntyche” could have been her proper name. (Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 114, 231, takes the view that Lydia was in fact a personal name, based on inscriptional evidence in Asia Minor.) Lydia’s



prominent role in the founding of the church at Philippi lends a certain credibility to this conjecture (but this is doubted by Bockmuehl, 17). In any case, these two women appear to have been important persons within the church and among its most active workers, perhaps deaconesses; perhaps within each of their homes a separate congregation met for worship. Certainly it is clear from the Acts account that women played a noteworthy role in the founding and establishing of the Macedonian churches (Acts 16:14, 40; 17:4, 12; see Thomas, *ExpTim* 83 [1971–72] 117–20; Gilman, *Women*). Thus that these people in particular, two influential women who had the potential for

upsetting the harmony of the larger community, were quarreling caused Paul to beg each, face to face as it were, to make up their differences. Their differences may have had to do with church leadership and which of the two women was to have the greater voice and influence within the church at Philippi (see Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice*). Paul’s plea here for them to be of the same mind (**to; aujo; fronein**, “to agree with each other”)

recalls Phil 2:1–5, where the general problems that plagued the Philippians—self-serving, self-seeking attitudes—were set over against (**touto froneite**, “act in this way” [2:5]) the self-sacrificing, self-giving attitude of Christ, who was in the form of God but who poured himself out unselfishly in obedience for the good of others. Nor should the models of Timothy and Epaphroditus be overlooked, as Paul holds up these “patterns” that the two women were failing to emulate. These two colleagues would have more immediate appeal, as they were known at Philippi as Paul’s fellow workers.

The second set of admonitions in verse three shifts attention to the appeal for an unnamed individual to mediate the situation between these two women. The identity of this individual -- a man -- is more mysterious than that of the two women. Mosés de Silva (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Logos Systems) observes:

Who the γνήσιε σύζυγε (gnēsie syzyge, noble yoke fellow) was has been the source of great speculation. Was it Epaphroditus (Lightfoot)? A man actually named Syzygos (O’Brien 1991: 480–81)? Paul’s wife (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.6.53)? Many other speculative proposals have been made (Fee 1995: 394–95 argues for Luke), none of which can be proved or disproved. On the basis of our limited

information, the most reasonable interpretation is that the appellative is in effect Paul's way of inviting the various members of the church to prove themselves loyal partners in the work of the gospel. (On Paul's use of the second person singular to address the recipients of the letter, cf. Rom. 2:1, 17; 8:2 [v.l.]; 9:20; 11:17ff.; 1 Cor. 14:17; 15:36; Gal. 6:1. Most of these instances, however, are negative in tone.)

Silva's proposal, however, has little to commend it. The limits of the text stress simply an individual whom Paul considered very capable of helping solve the problem: "my loyal companion" (**gnhsí e suzuge**). Much speculation over the mentioning of a Clement exists in interpretive history, since a leader of the church at Rome by this name wrote a letter to the Corinthians about 96 AD called [First Clement](#). The likelihood of this Clement being the person that Paul had in mind in 4:3 is very remote.

What is clear is the character of these women and of Clement. They -- along with others -- were "fellow laborers" (**sunergwñ mou**) with Paul. Their names were in the Book of Life (**ejñ bíblw/ zwh~**).

The term co-worker is found in a number of places in Paul's writings. Bertram (*Kit-tel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Logos Systems) makes this observation:

Paul uses **συνεργός** in various connections for his pupils and companions, R. 16:21; 2 C. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; 4:3; Phlm. 1, 24. R. 16:3, 9 adds "in Christ"; this describes the sphere of common labour. One is not to see in all this unconditional equality with the apostle.¹⁹ Paul never yielded to anyone the singularity of his position.²⁰ But he honoured his companions by using this and similar terms,²¹ thereby consolidating their authority in the churches. Of a special nature are those statements in which Paul includes himself among others as a **συνεργός**, cf. (→ III, 1097, 37 ff.) **sunergoi; th~ cara~ ulwñ** in 2 C. 1:24²² and **sunergoi; eij thñ basileian tou` qeou`** in Col. 4:11,²³ though only the relative clause which follows here makes the connection with Paul. The participial sayings in 1 C. 16:16 and 2 C. 6:1 (→ VI, 682, 23 ff.)²⁴ may also be mentioned

at this point. The categories here are not sociological; Paul is not just honouring his companions. What we have is rather a theological statement: Paul and the rest are in the same service; they are all God's "helpers" and "handymen" (1 C. 3:9) and they are thus "workers" in the kingdom of God.²⁵ **συνεργοί** in 1 C. 3:9 (→ I, 442, 14 ff.) corresponds to **διάκονοι** in 3:5.²⁶ In this connection one should also refer to 1 Th. 3:2, where in many MSS **διάκονος** occurs as a synonym of **συνεργός** which has been left out due to misunderstanding or related by the genitive **υμῶν** to the apostle's assistants.²⁷

The phrase Book of Life is not very common in the New Testament, but has a rich heritage in intertestamental Judaism. Peter O'Brien (*New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Logos Systems) observes:

The expression 'the book of life' (here **bíblw~ zwh~**) turns up in the OT to describe God's covenant people who have survived some disaster and 'enjoy a renewed spell of life on earth'.⁴⁰ In later apocalyptic literature (Dn. 12:1; cf. 1QM 12:3) the imagery comes to be used of those who are admitted to eternal life, whose 'names are written in heaven' (Lk. 10:20; cf. Heb. 12:23). This figurative language is employed several times in the book of Revelation to describe believers as conquerors (3:5), those who do not worship the beast (13:8), who have been predestined from the foundation of the world (17:8), and who will enter the presence of God after the last assize (20:15).

The possession of eternal life is the heritage of every believer. F. F. Bruce suggests that here something more may be in view, namely

that the service for the gospel by Paul's coworkers is also recorded along with their names in the 'book of life'.⁴¹

Although we feel like we're listeners to one end of a phone conversation and don't know who is on the other end of the line, we do pick up enough details to learn that the apostle was deeply concerned about harmony in the church at Philippi. These two women had some serious differences with one another and it was threatening that harmony. Paul encouraged them to put aside their differences for the sake of the gospel and of the church. He asked others to



get involved in making that happen.

What can this say to us today? Plenty! Differences of viewpoint occur among earnest, sincere believers. But if those differences arise out of wanting to be “top dog” as some have suggested at Philippi, then such differences must be set aside immediately. We all serve as “coworkers” and servants. No one is to boss the others. We serve the gospel, not our-

selves.

As a side-note, what a way to be remembered? No one names their baby Euodia or Syntyche! Two women who probably had made considerable contribution to the cause of Christ as fellow-laborers are instead remembered because of a disagreement with one another. Not the kind of legacy we should want to leave behind us!

b. Rejoicing, vv. 4-7

Greek NT

4.4 Cairete ejh kuriw/pantote: pavin ejw, cairete. 4.5 to: epieike; uhwñ gnwsqhtw pavin ajqrwpoi~. oJ kurio” egguv. 4.6 nhden nerimate, ajl jeji panti; th/proseuch/kai; th/ dehsei meta; eujaristia” ta; aijhv nata uhwñ gnwrizesqw pro; ton qeon. 4.7 kai; hJeijhnh tou qeou hJuJ perevousa panta nouñ frouhsei ta; kardia~ uhwñ kai; ta; nohnata uhwñ ejh Cristw/ Jhsou.

NASB

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

NRSV

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

NLT

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Notes:

This second segment of the text is perhaps the best known passage in the entire letter, particularly verse four. Paul moves to what stands as a major theme of the entire letter, that of joy. Earlier he had admonished the Philippians to rejoice; cf. 3:1, “Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.” Some nine times in this letter Paul mentions rejoicing. This out of a total of 74 uses in the entire New Testament for the verb *cairw*.

The idea of joy and rejoicing in the world of Paul was a mixed picture. In Greek philosophy joy (*caray*) stood opposed to logos (I *logo*-), reason, and thus was viewed with suspicion if not hostility. This was particularly true of Stoicism which looked upon joy as defective judgment, being an emotion. So it is out of Paul’s Jewish religious heritage that he gained a positive view of the idea of joy. Hans Conzelmann (*TWNT abridged*, Logos Systems) depicts that heritage this way:



B. The OT. In the OT the experience and expression of

joy are close, as the terms for joy (usually *smh*) and its expression show. Joy expresses the whole person and aims at sharing, as in festal joy. God’s work of salvation is a chief occasion (Pss. 5:11.; 9:2; 16:9, etc.). The law is an object in Ps. 119:14, the word of God in Jer. 15:16. Joy is a reward for faithfulness to the law in Is. 65:13-14. There is joy at weddings (Jer. 25:10) and at harvest (Is. 9:2). God himself rejoices (Is. 65:19), and thanksgiving demands joy (Dt. 16:13ff.). Feasts offer occasions for joy before God (Dt. 2:7). Hymnal jubilation expresses devotion to God (Joel 2:21). In accordance with its inner intention, OT joy culminates in eschatology (Pss. 14:7; 126:2; Is. 9:2; 12:6, etc.). High points in the prophets carry the call: *chaire* (Zeph. 3:14ff.; Joel 2:21 ff.; Zech. 9:9-10).

C. Judaism. 1. Qumran. At Qumran we find the OT motifs of joy in God, of God’s own joy, and of eschatological joy. The elect can rejoice in spite of present suffering because they know that they are



in God's hand. **2. Rabbinic Writings.** Here, too, we find festal joy, which God gives and into which it is a duty to enter. Joy is joy before God. The meal is part of the joyful festival. A significant thought is that of perfect future joy. **3. Philo.** The group is a significant one in Philo. He relates joy to religious "intoxication." Joy is a supreme "good mood." It is the opposite of fear. Isaac is its OT

symbol. God is the giver of joy, and its objects are health, freedom, honor, the good, the beautiful, and worship. While joy is a "good mood" Philo does not view it in Stoic fashion as a self-achieved harmony of soul. Joy is native to God alone; we find it only in God. It comes with virtue and wisdom. But this is possible only on the presupposition that by way of the *lógos* God himself is the giver.

Thus one should not be surprised to find a large emphasis upon joy in Paul's writings. Conzelmann (*TWNTa*, Logos Systems) describes Paul's use of the word group this way:

a. For Paul *chará* is the joy of faith (Phil. 1:25) and a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). God's kingdom is joy (Rom. 14:17). Joy and hope are related (Rom. 12:12). Its opposite is affliction (cf. Rom. 5:1 ff.). Joy actualizes freedom and takes shape in fellowship (12:15). Paul wants to come with joy (15:32). Joy is reciprocal (Phil. 2:28-29). Joy is in God (1 Th. 3:9) or in the Lord (Phil. 3:1). In the relation between Paul and the church, joy is eschatological; the church will be his joy (1 Th. 2:19). The mood of Philippians is one of joy (1:4). This is joy at the preaching of Christ (1:18). It is future joy experienced as joy in the present (4:1). As the joy of faith it includes a readiness for martyrdom (1:25). This joy maintains itself in face of affliction (2 Cor. 7:4ff.). Paul himself, like the Lord, is an example in this regard (1 Th. 1:6). Paul's apostolic authority works for the joy of the church (2 Cor. 1:24). He rejoices in his own weakness when it means the church's strength (13:9).

b. There is nothing new in later works. *charó* occurs in Col. 1:24; 2:5, and *chará* in Col. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:4. The most important aspect is that of joy in suffering.

Fred Craddock (*Interpretation*, Logos Systems) observes this about Paul's use of rejoice in Philippians:

The refrain of joy resumes now that Paul has attended to the distasteful but necessary admonitions. As said earlier, the word rejoice can also be translated farewell; context aids the decision in each case. Here the inclination is toward farewell because verses 4–7 have the clear ring of a closing word. In fact, verses 5b–7 may not only be a benediction, but may be a benedictory formula which Paul is quoting.

Paul quite often inserts benedictions in the body of a letter (Rom. 11:33–36; 15:5, 6, 13, 33) and the sense of verse 4 calls for rejoice rather than farewell. The New English Bible says both. What Paul urges, apparently, is that the church not be victimized by its problems within and without. The joy and forbearance (gentleness, II Cor. 10:1) which constitute part of the church's witness to the world (vv. 4–5a) are genuinely grounded in the church's faith. Two of the tenets of that faith form a parenthesis around them not only making joy and gentleness possible but liberating them from anxiety. On the one side is the affirmation, "The Lord is at hand." Most likely Paul meant this eschatologically, an expectation he never lost (Rom. 13:11; I Cor. 16:22b). However, it may also be taken in the sense of the present experience of the church. By using Philippians 4:4–9 as a lectionary reading near the close of the Pentecost season (the Lord has come in the Holy Spirit) and prior to Advent (the Lord will come), the church has appropriated both meanings.

Growing out of the twofold admonition to rejoice (v. 4) comes a set of amplifications expanding on the idea of joy. Their formula structure suggests a fixed pattern that Paul is most likely drawing upon, rather than creating new.

First is the admonition / warning (v. 5): "Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near." (το; *epi eike;* ~ *uñwñ gnwsqhtw pañi n ajqr-wpoi* ~. *oJ kuri o' egguv.*) The range of meaning for the expression το; *epi eike;* is too rich for simple English expression. A wide range of English expressions will surface: ESV - reasonable-ness; GNT - gentle attitude; HCSB - graciousness; KJV - moderation; Message - "you're on their side"; NASB - gentle spirit; NIV, NRSV - gentleness; NLT - considerate in all that you do; RSV - forbearance. Martin (*WBC*, Logos Systems) amplifies the dilemma for us:



The Christian life, furthermore, is to be characterized by *epi eike;*, "magnanimity." This quality is such an important one that the apostle demands that it become evident among the Philippian Christians to such a degree that it will be seen and recognized (γνωσθήτω, "let [it] be known") by everybody (*pañi n ajqrwpoi* ~, lit. "to all people"), not just by their fellow believers (cf. John 13:35). *epi eike;*, "magnanimity," a neuter adjective used as an abstract noun, is almost untranslatable (cf. MM). Related as it is to

ει κὸν, “reasonable,” it radiates the positive ideas of magnanimity or “sweet reasonableness” (to use Matthew Arnold’s phrase [Literature and Dogma, xii, 2]). Aristotle contrasted it with ἀκρι βὸδι καὶ ὀ~, “strict justice.” For him it meant a generous treatment of others that, while demanding equity, does not insist on the letter of the law. Willing to admit limitations, it is prepared to make allowances so that justice does not injure. It is a quality, therefore, that keeps one from insisting on one’s full rights, “where rigidity would be harsh” (Plummer, 93; cf. Aristotle, Eth. nic. 5.10 §1137b.3), or from making a rigorous and obstinate stand for what is justly due to one (Vincent). In the nt ἐπι εἰ κη~, “magnanimity,” keeps company with such words as ἀμᾶκο~, “peaceable” (1 Tim 3:3; Tit 3:2), ἀγαθὸν, “good” (1 Pet 2:18), ἀγνῆ “pure,” εἰ ἰῆνι κη~ “peace-loving,” εὐπει қη~, “open to reason,” and μέσθ; εἰ εὐου~, “rich in mercy” (Jas 3:17). Thus ἐπι εἰ κε~, “magnanimity,” “is that considerate courtesy and respect for the integrity of others which prompts a [person] not to be forever standing on his rights; and it is pre-eminently the character of Jesus (2 Cor 10:1)” (Caird, 150; cf. H. Preisker, TDNT 2:588–90). This term has something to contribute to the debate on Jesus and Paul (see Wenham, Paul) in view of the word’s use in Matt 11:29 (see Leivestad, NTS 12 [1966] 156–64).

The warning, “The Lord is near,” has eschatological tones and reminds the Philippians that accountability is a motivating factor in showing gentleness to others.

The second set of amplification comes in the form of a traditional command / promise rhetorical structure (vv. 6-7). For detailed analysis of Greek text see the [Semantic Diagram](#):

Antithetical Commands:

- Do not worry about anything,
but
in everything
by prayer and supplication
with thanksgiving
- + let your requests be made known to God.

Divine Promise:

And the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds
in Christ Jesus.

Joy and worry don’t mix. With rejoicing comes the ability to put aside undue anxiety over the affairs of our lives. The antidote to worry is prayer in this formulaic expression of Paul. The command to not worry comes as a present imperative verb expression in the Greek and has more the tone “Stop worrying...” The idea of the Greek verb μερι νηαυ is worry in the



sense of being anxious over rather than being concerned about. Care is legitimate; worrying typically reflects lack of confidence in God’s care and power. Jesus had a great deal to say about this

in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 6:25-34, as an implication of praying “Give us the bread that we need for today” (cf. 6:11).

The divine promise is that God’s peace will protect our hearts and minds, if we stop worrying and start praying. God’s peace is dynamic, not passive. It’s not just the absence of bad; it’s the presence of all that is good from God (cf. Jas. 1:17-18). When that peace floods into our decision making (i.e., hearts) and our thinking (i.e., minds), there’s no room for debilitating worry. What is that peace? Paul declares that its meaning defies understanding. We can’t explain it; we just experience it. One thing is clear: it floods into our lives in the context of our being “in Christ.” Christian commitment is the basis for experiencing God’s peace.

Joy for the Christian means the ability to rise above negative circumstances. Joy is not just an emotion. Paul’s Jewish heritage taught him, and us, that joy is an expression. We don’t hold it in; we express it to God in praise and worship. Joy like this is closely linked then to a posture of gentleness toward other people, both inside and outside the



church. Joy fortifies us against worry. All of it is focused on reaching out to God in prayer. He then floods our lives with His goodness and peace, and thus protects us from disabling emotions and experiences. This is so much richer than the shallow slogan in our culture: “Don’t worry; be happy!”

c. Filling our lives, vv. 8-9

Greek NT

4. 8 To; loipon, ajlelfoiy oſa ejstin ajhqh; oſa semnay oſa di kai a, oſa agnay oſa proſfilh; oſa eufhma, ei [ti~ ajeth; kai; ei [ti~ epaino”, tauta logizete: 4. 9 a) kai; ejnate kai; parelabete kai; hkeousate kai; eiſete ej ejnoiy tauta praxete: kai; oJ qeo; th~ eijhnh~ ejtai meq j ulwn.

NASB

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

NRSV

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

NLT

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you.

Notes:

The final segment of the passage also follows a doublet command / promise pattern, but with different content and arrangement than in vv. 6-7. He merges into this structure a [virtue list](#) as well in verse 6.

whatever is true,
whatever is honorable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is pleasing,
whatever is commendable,

if there is any excellence and
if there is anything worthy of praise,

think about these things.

Keep on doing the things

that you have learned
and received
and heard
and seen in me,

and

the God of peace will be with you.

Both **commands** are positive in nature and represent a “step” parallelism. First, we are to think about some things, then we are to do some things. The second builds off the first in advancing the thought. Once these prerequisites have been met, the [divine promise](#) is for God’s peace to be with us.

Mosés de Silva (*Baker Exegetical Commentary to the New Testament*, Logos Systems) provides a helpful summation:

Although (as pointed out in the introduction to this section) Paul elsewhere exhorts believers by using lists of virtues and/or vices, the list here in 4:8 is distinctive in several respects. For one thing, it has a strong and effective rhetorical tone. Paul achieves this stylistic effect by the sixfold repetition of the relative pronoun *oſa* (hosa, whatever), followed by two conditional clauses, “if [there is] any virtue, if [there is] any praise.” These last two clauses are meant to reinforce the all-encompassing character of Paul’s exhortation, since no list could be complete (cf. also Gal. 5:21, kai ta homoia toutois, and things like these). It is also unusual for Paul to use the verb λογίζομαι (logizomai, think, consider) with reference to a list of virtues; one might have expected to see here once again the verb phroneō (as in Rom. 8:5; Col. 3:2).

More important is the substance of this list, since it contains five terms that are not particularly common in the Pauline letters: σεμνός (semnos, honorable, noble; occurs in the Pastorals); αγνο~ (hagnos, pure; 2 Cor. 7:11; 11:2; also in the Pastorals); προσφιλήs (prophilēs, lovely, winsome; nowhere else in the NT); ευφημο~ (euphēmos, of good repute; also a NT hapax legomenon, though the noun euphēmia occurs in 2 Cor. 6:8); ajretē; (aretē, excellence, virtue; nowhere else in Paul). Moreover, the term epaino~ (epainos, praise), though relatively common in Paul, occurs here in an unusual passive sense (“worthy of praise”), and some writers infer that it reflects the Greek ethical use of the word with reference to the society’s approval of human conduct.⁵

On the basis of these data and the fact that moral

philosophers sometimes used similar lists of virtues, Hawthorne (following other scholars) argues that Paul is here appealing to the Philippians' cultural background, that is, to their familiarity with current pagan morality: "You must not fail to live up to the ideals of your fellow men, which were also your ideals, before you were converted."⁶ It is of course true that Paul's lists, like many other elements in his style, reflect the world in which he lived. Moreover, the note of citizenship characteristic of this letter (1:27; 3:21) may be thought to support some allusion to civic duty.

On the other hand, Paul's very use of the citizenship motif is intended to draw the Philippians' attention to their higher Christian allegiance, and that is surely the case here as well. The idea that at this point in the letter Paul descends from such heights and asks his brothers merely to act like well-behaved Greek citizens can hardly be taken seriously. Given the broad context of the epistle as a whole, the narrower context of 3:2–4:9 (see esp. Schenk 1984: 270), and the immediate context of verse 9 in particular, we must understand Paul's list as representing distinctly Christian virtues (though we need not deny that many non-Christian citizens exemplify such virtues in their lives).

In verse 9 Paul intensifies the force of his exhortation in three ways. First, he changes his vocabulary: instead of repeating *logizesthe* (consider) or a comparable verb, he says *πράσσετε* (prassete, do, practice). Second, he emphasizes the sound instruction the Philippians have received with a fourfold reminder: "learned ... received ... heard ... seen." With such modeling before them (cf. also 1:30; 3:17) the Philippians have no excuse for improper behavior. Third, Paul ties this exhortation to his previous promise of peace (v. 7) with the words, "and the God of peace shall be with you." It is not only the peace of God but the God of peace himself who will overshadow us with his care. Yet that promise is conditioned by the command to lead obedient lives. Whereas verses 6–7 call upon us to exercise faith through prayer, verses 8–9 draw us to a holy walk. And so the simple, even childlike, message of the familiar hymn captures quite accurately Paul's words: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Paul's call to *logizesthai* these virtues is somewhat distinct. Earlier in 2:2 the verb *froneo* is used with a list of virtues for the Philippians to not just think about but to implement. Yet, *logizeomai* is a relatively common verb in Paul's writings and, as Martin (*WBC*, Logos Systems) describes, it typically stresses

"to focus the mind on," is a strong word and a favorite of the apostle, used by him thirty-four of the forty times it appears in the nt. It means "to reckon, calculate, take into account," and as a result "to evaluate" a person, thing, quality, or event (cf. BDAG; MM). It includes also within the range of its meaning the ideas of "to ponder or let one's mind dwell on" something. Perhaps Paul employs it here to imply that the Philippians must ever be critical toward heathen culture and evaluate carefully its standards of morality. But certainly he does not intend by its use any encouragement to reflection without action. Rather, he intends to say that the Philippian Christians must carefully consider certain things and evaluate them thoughtfully for the ultimate purpose of letting these things guide them into good deeds (cf. H. W. Heidland, TDNT 4:289).

Reflecting on what is good and noble must lead to action, which Paul promptly outlines in the second command. In the parameters defining practice, Paul modeled what being a Christian is all about. Not only could he say, "Do as I say," but also, "Do as I do." In a day when people had limited access to written materials, it became all the more important for them to see Christianity in action, if they were to know how to live faithfully. Also, they needed to see consistency between what they heard Paul say and what they saw him do. He felt sufficiently confident that they could emulate his Christian discipleship and be on the right track in serving God.

The divine promise underscores that the God who brings His peace flooding into our lives will be with us as we obey these commands to reflect and to practice.

Living in wealth? For Paul, we as believers live in untold wealth, of the kind that really matters. Central to it is God's peace flooding our lives.

Stepping into God's Peace



Greek NT

4. 2 Eujdi an parakalw` kai; Sun-tuchn parakalw` to; aujto; fronei` n ejn kuriw/. 4. 3 nai; ejwtw` kai; sey gn-hsiei suzuge, sul-lambanou aujai~, aiaine~ ejn tw/ eu-jaggeliw/ sunhqlh-san moi meta; kai; Klhmento" kai; twn loi pwn sunergwn mou, wn ta; ojnomata ejn biblw/ zwh~.

4. 4 Cai rete ejn kuriw/ pantote: pafin ejrw, cai rete. 4. 5 to; epi eike;" uhw n gn-wsqhtw pasin ajqr-wpoi~. oJ kurio" egguv. 4. 6 mhden merimnate, ajl j ejn panti; th/ proseuch/ kai; th/ dehsei meta; eujcaristia" ta; ai-jhmata uhw n gn-wrizesqw pro; ton qeon. 4. 7 kai; hJ eijhnh tou` qeou` hJ uperevousa panta noun frourhsei ta; kardia~ uhw n kai; ta; nohmata uhw n ejn Cristw/ jhsou`.

4. 8 To; loipon, ajlelfoiy osa ejstin ajhqh; osa semnay osa dikai a, osa agnay osa pros-filh; osa eufhma, ei [ti~ ajreth; kai; ei [ti~ epaino", tauta logizesqe: 4. 9 a) kai; ejnate kai; parelabete kai; hk-ousate kai; eiflete ejn ejnoiy tauta prasete: kai; oJ qeo; th~ eijhnh~

NASB

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

NRSV

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

NLT

2 And now I want to plead with those two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. 3 And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. And they worked with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you

ե՛ստի մեզ յսևին.

learned from me and
heard from me and saw
me doing, and the God
of peace will be with
you.



Greek NT Diagram

- 1 4.2 Eupdi an parakal w`
kai;
- 2 Suntuchn parakal w` to; aujto; fronei n
ejn kuri w/
- 3 4.3 nai; ejrtw` sev...
gnhse suzuge
kai;
- 4 sullambanou aujai~,
ejn tw/ eujaggeli w/
aitine~... sunhqlhsan moi
meta; kai; Kl hmento"
kai; tw n loipw n sunergw n
mou,
/-----|
w n ta; ojomata
ejn biblw/ zwh~.
- 5 4.4 Cai rete
ejn kuri w/
pantote:
pa n in
ejw,
cairete.
- 6
7
- 8 4.5 to; epi ei ke;~ uhn gnwsqhtw
pa n in ajqrwpoi~.
- 9 oJ kurio" egguv (ejstin).
- 10 4.6 mhden merimmate,
ajl j
ejn panti;
th/ proseuch/
kai;
th/ dehsei
meta; eujaristi a"
- 11 ta; ai jhmata uhn gnwrizesqw
pro;~ ton qeon.
- 4.7 kai;
- 12 hJ eijhnh tou` qeou`... frourhsei ta;~ kardia~ uhn
hJ uperevousa panta nou n kai;
ta; nohmata uhn
ejn Cristw/ Jhsou`.

4.8

To; l oi pon,
ajdel foi y
oşa eştin aj hqh;
oşa semnay
oşa di kai a,
oşa aġnay
oşa prosfil h;
oşa eufhma,
ei | ti ~ ajreth;
kai;
ei | ti ~ epai no”,

13 tauta logizesqe:

4.9

a) kai; ejmaqete
kai; parelabete
kai; hkousate
kai; eiġete ejn ejnoiy

14 tauta prassete:

kai;

15 oġ qeo; th~ eiġhnh~ eştai
meq j uġwn.

Semantic Diagram

	1	-----	1	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(egwv
	A	--							kai;
			2	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(egwv
I	--								---
			1	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(egwv
	B	--							kai;
			2	Pred	Dep	Imp+	2	S	(su)

			1	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	P	(uhei ~) cai rete
	A	--							pa i n

			a	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(egwv

			2	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	P	(uhei ~) cai rete

			b	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	P	(uhei ~) cai rete

			1	Pres	Act	Imp+	3	S	to; epi ei ke;

II	B	--							---
			2	Pres	---	Ind	3	S)	oJ kuri o~

			a	Pres	Act	Imp-	2	P	(uhei ~)
									aj l j
			1	Pres	Pass	Imp+	3	P	ta; ai jhmata
	C	--							kai;

			b	Fut	Act	Ind	3	S	hJ eijhnh tou` geou`
			2						to; loi pon, ajel foi v

			1	Pres	Dep	Imp+	2	S	(uhei ~)

	A	--							---
			2	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	S	(uhei ~)
									kai;

	B	-----							---
			15	Fut	---	Ind	3	S	oJ geo; th~ eijhnh~

Summary of Rhetorical Structure

These verses naturally divide into three segments: 1) the admonitions to the two ladies (#s 1-4; vv. 2-3); 2) the general admonitions relating to joy (#s 5-12; vv. 4-7); and 3) the admonitions to contemplate the positive (#s 13-15; vv. 8-9). As general paraenesis in genre, they are rather loosely strung together at the end of the letter Body. This is typical of such a literary form. For a charting of the basic structure of Philippians see my [Epistolary Divisions in the Letters of Paul](#) at Cranfordville.

The first segment, #s 1-4, focuses on a series of admonitions to two women in the Philippian community of faith, Euodia and Syntyche, who were having trouble getting along with each other. The admonition directed to each one personally (#s 1 & 2) are equally balanced so that Paul expresses no heavier burden of responsibility on either of the ladies. He then turns to an unnamed member of the church whom he only identifies as **gnhsie suzuge**. With intensive expression, he asks this individual to mediate the problem between these two women.

The second segment, #s 5-12, stresses joy and related attitudes. Statements 5-7 strongly admonish rejoicing as an ongoing expression in the community of believers. Related postures such as gentleness and no worrying are then put on the table. Each of these is cast in an identifiable form. Statements 8 - 9 are an admonition buttressed by a warning; Statements 10-12 follow the ancient command / promise structure.

The third segment, #s 13-15, are distinctive in form. Paul uses a series of appositional relative clauses to stack up a pile of traits that then become the focus of the admonition. In statement 13 these are abstract qualities that are to be contemplated (*logizese*). In statement 14, these are discipleship qualities that are then to be practiced (*prasete*). The larger pattern is again the command / promise form with two commands (#s 13-14) buttressed by the divine promise (#15). The general structure is similar to the command / promise pattern in statements 10-12 with a twofold command followed by the divine promise.

Whether any real connection of sections two and three to section one exists is hard to say. It could be that the concern for harmony between these two women prompted the emphases found in the next two sections.



