



Sunday School Lesson
Phil. 4:4-9
 by Lorin L. Cranford
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Live joyfully and reflectively

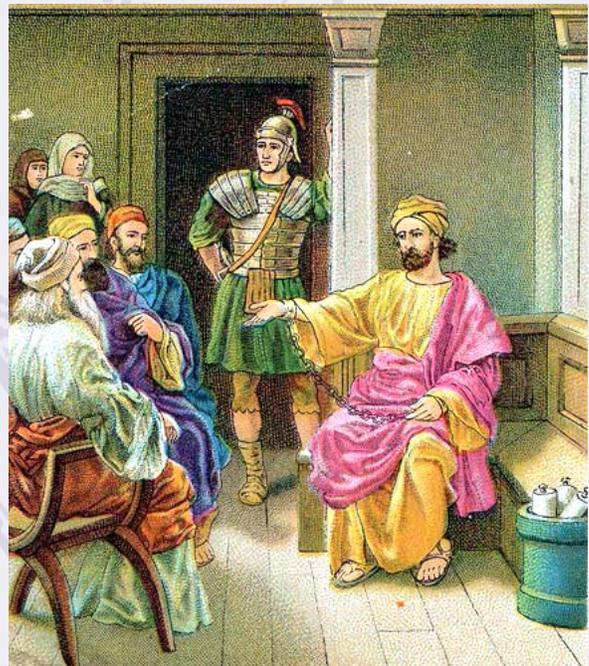


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How much fun do you have in life? If you're like me, you're probably way too serious minded. "Joy is okay, but there's always work needing to be done." Paul's letter to the Philippians is saturated with the theme of Christian joy.¹ Why he stressed this theme in this writing more than in his others is not absolutely clear. Perhaps, because this church, begun with a group of women, had fewer problems than most all the other churches? Perhaps, because this church contributed time and time again both prayers and financial support to Paul's missionary activities? Amazingly, these words were dictated by one who was under house arrest by the Roman authorities and whose life depended upon the whim of a Roman emperor. Thus, they reflect the reality that Christian joy is not based upon one's circumstances, as is true of purely human joy. This joy is deeper and permeates one's existence to its very core. There is something for us to learn from these admonitions of the apostle.



I. Context

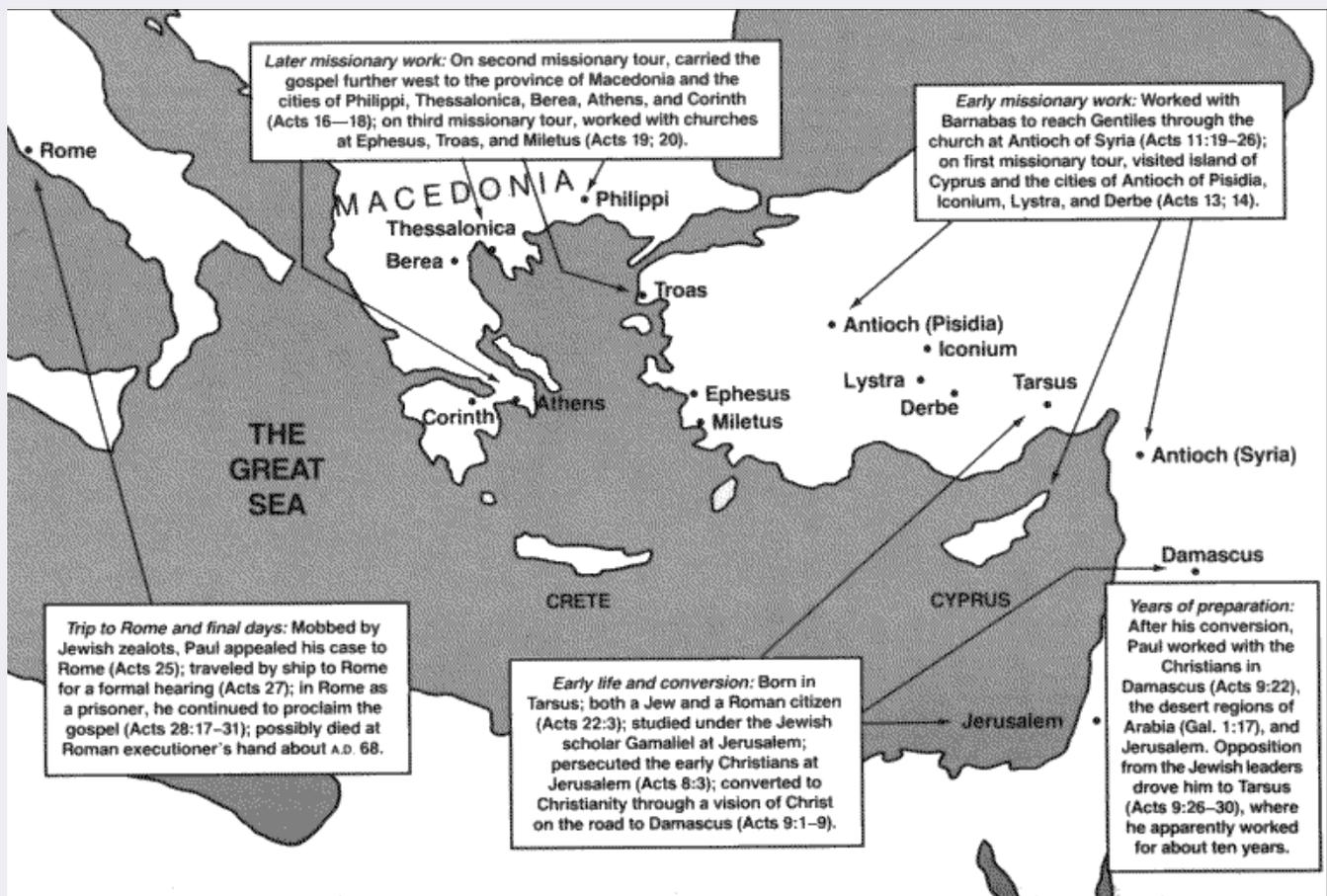
Clearly the historical and literary background of Paul's words are important for correct understanding. Consideration will be given to these issues.

Additionally, heavy use of [previous studies](#) in Philippians, and especially the [earlier Bible study](#) on 4:4-9, will be made. Only necessary updates of some aspects of that study will be included here.

¹Compare 9 uses of the verb χαίρω ('rejoice') in Philippians to 4 uses each in Romans and 1 Corinthians; 8 uses in 2 Corinthians; 2 uses each in Colossians and 1 Thessalonians. Of the 25 total uses of this verb by Paul, 9 of them are in this short writing of Philippians.

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 the letter was in finalized form, Timothy and Epaphroditus -- either of whom may have been that writing secretary -- took it to the Christians at Philippi to read it to them and to explain it to the congregation.

Internal History. Given the paraenetical nature of these verses (cf. the [Genre](#) discussion below), very few time and space markers surface. These, instead, are focused on verses 2 and 3 of chapter four.

The time markers that appear in 4:4-9 are limited to "always" (πάντοτε; v. 4) and "near" (ἐγγύς; v. 4). Πάντοτε simply means continuously and/or repeatedly.² Paul uses this adverb four times in Philippians, out of a total of 27 uses in the Pauline corpus of the New Testament, and 40 uses in the entire NT. Ἐγγύς

²Compare 67.88 πάντοτε; ἐκάστοτε: "duration of time, with reference to a series of occasions—'always, at all times, on every occasion.'" in Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:640.

connotes ‘nearness’ both temporally and spatially, although in the context here the temporal aspect is the dominant emphasis. Paul expected the return of

Christ at any moment. This is Paul’s only use of the adjective in Philippians, although he makes use of it four other times in his letters.

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, 4:4-9, comes toward the end. It contains the paraenetical materials focused on Christian living and discipleship at the point of lifestyle and behavior. The first (vv. 4-7) and second (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 determined, while some of the more historical oriented material has to be examined very closely



before application comes.

Literary Context. Our passage, 4:4-9, 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 autobiographical 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.

II. Message

Literary Structure. The internal structure of the ideas in vv. 4-9 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 two sub-sections are 1) vv. 4-7; and 2) vv. 8-9. These two 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” (**ἡεἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ**) in v. 7 becomes the “God of peace” (**ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης**) 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. Live joyfully, vv. 4-7

Greek NT (NA27)

4 Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἔρω, χαίρετε. 5 τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς. 6 μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε,

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

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

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

ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθω πρὸς τὸν θεόν. 7 καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

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.

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.

anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Notes:

This first 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 *cairō*.

The idea of joy and rejoicing in the world of Paul was a mixed picture. In Greek philosophy joy (*carā*) stood opposed to *logos* (λόγος), 'reason,' and thus was viewed with suspicion, if not hostility. This was particularly true of Stoicism, which looked upon joy as defective judgment, since it was 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 *śmh*) 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. *chaírō* 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 the idea of joy. Their formula structure suggests a fixed pattern that Paul is most likely drawing upon, rather than creating them new.

First is the admonition / warning (v. 5): "Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near." (το; ἐπι εἰ κε;~ ἡμῶν γνωσθήτω πασι ν ἀπqr-

ῶποι ~. οJ kuri o" ἐγγυv.) The range of meaning for the expression το; ἐπι εἰ κε;~ 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 ἐπι εἰ κε;~, "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 (πασι ν ἀπqrῶποι ~, lit. "to all people"), not just by their fellow believers (cf. John 13:35). ἐπι εἰ κε;~, "magnanimity," a neuter adjective used as an abstract noun, is almost untranslatable (cf. MM). Related as it is to εἰ Jkov, "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 bodi kai o~, "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 kh;~, "magnanimity," keeps company with such words as ἀμωco~, "peaceable" (1 Tim 3:3; Tit 3:2), ἀγαqov, "good" (1 Pet 2:18), ἀγnhv "pure," εἰ Jhni khy "peace-loving," ευπει qhv, "open to reason," and μεsth; εJ εou~, "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 *merimnaw* 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!"



b. Live reflectively, vv. 8-9

Greek NT (NA27)

8 Τὸ λοιπόν,
ἀδελφοί, ὅσα ἐστὶν
ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά,
ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἀγνά,
ὅσα προσφιλῆ, ὅσα
εὖφημα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ
καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος,
ταῦτα λογίζεσθε·
9 ἃ καὶ ἐμάθετε
καὶ παρελάβετε
καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ
εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα
πράσσετε· καὶ ὁ θεὸς
τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται
μεθ' ὑμῶν.

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 F i n a l l y ,
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,
one final thing. Fix
your thoughts on
what is true, and
honorable, and right,
and pure, and lovely,
and admirable. Think
about things that are
excellent and worthy of
praise. 9 Keep putting
into practice all you
learned and received
from me—everything
you heard from me and
saw me doing. Then
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 *ὅσα* (*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 *φρονεῖν* (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); *ἁγνός* (*hagnos*, pure; 2 Cor. 7:11; 11:2; also in the Pastorals); *προσφιλήs* (*prospihilēs*, lovely, winsome; nowhere else in the NT); *εὐφῆμος* (*euphēmos*, of good repute; also a NT hapax legomenon, though the noun *euphēmia* occurs in 2 Cor. 6:8); *ἀρετῆs* (*aretē*, excellence, virtue; nowhere else in Paul). Moreover, the term *ἐπαινοs* (*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 *λογίζεσθε* (*consider*) or a comparable verb, he says *πράσσετε* (*prassetē*, 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



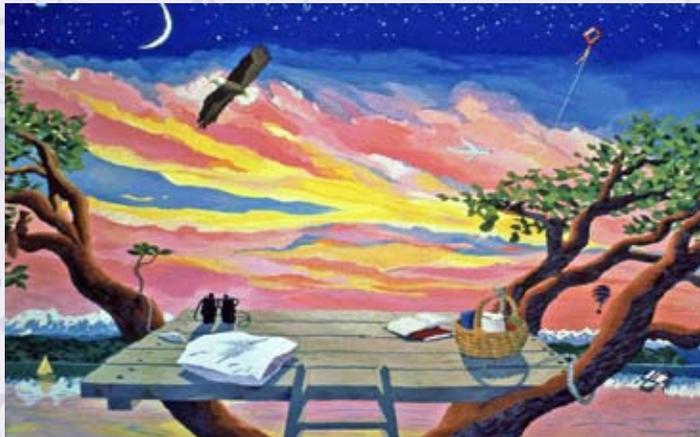
the God of peace himself who will overshadow us with his care. Yet that promise is conditioned by the command to lead obedient lives. Whereas verses 6–7 call upon us to exercise faith through prayer, verses 8–9 draw us to a holy walk. And so the simple, even childlike, message of the familiar hymn captures 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 **λογίζεσθαι** these virtues is somewhat distinct. Earlier in 2:2 the verb **φρονέω** is used with a list of virtues for the Philippians to not just think about but to implement. Yet, **λογίζεσθαι** 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.

Thus the Philippians could understand Christian



action from what they had “**learned** [ἐμάθετε] and **received** [παρελάβετε] and **heard** [ἠκούσατε] and **seen** [εἶδετε]” in the life and living of the apostle Paul.

The Philippians are to **ταῦτα πράσσετε** (“these things be practicing”). Paul’s single use of this verb in Philippians has some distinctive aspects, as Christian Mauer (*TWNT*, Logos Systems) observes:

In the NT one may see in even stronger form the tendency noted in secular Greek (632, 10 ff.) and especially the LXX (634, 22 ff.). Whereas the verbs ποιεῖν (*Mk.* 5:19; *Mt.* 19:4 etc. 464, 10 ff.), ἐργάζεσθαι (*Jn.* 5:17 II, 640, 13 ff.) and κατεργάζεσθαι (*R.* 15:18; 2 *C.* 12:12) are used for the work of God or Christ, there is no instance at all of any πράσσειν⁷ of God. This colourless word is used only with reference to man’s action, and a predominantly negative judgment is implied.

1. *Positive Evaluation.* With two exceptions (in John) the 39 instances are found only in the writings of Luke (Gospel 6 times, Acts 13) and Paul (18 times) and only rarely do they bear a positive evaluation. *Ac.* 26:20: ἄξια

τῆς μετανοίας ἔργα πράσσο-
ντας, is a weak rendering of the καρπὸς ποιεῖν of *Mt.* 3:8; *Lk.* 3:8. In *R.* 2:25 νόμον πρόσσειν is found in combination with other verbs (*φυλάσσειν* v. 26; *τελεῖν* v. 27; *ποιεῖν* v. 14). *Phil.* 4:9 is a summons to imitate the apostle. Probably one might also refer to εὖ πράξετε in *Ac.* 15:29 in the sense of “you will do well,” though this might also be a promise

of blessing: “It will go well with you.”⁸ The latter would fit in well with common Gk. usage, cf. *Eph.* 6:21. But the former fits the preceding participle better and is found in Christian usage elsewhere.⁹ A neutral use, either without evaluation or defined by ἀγαθὸν ἢ φαῦλον etc., may be seen in *Ac.* 5:35; *R.* 9:11; 2 *C.* 5:10. The same applies in *Ac.* 26:26 and 1 *C.* 9:17, where the emphasis is on the modal definition of the act rather than the act itself. 1 *Th.* 4:11 is another example of a neutral sense: πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια, “to be concerned about one’s own affairs.” *Lk.* 3:13 and 19:23 refer to the exacting of money.¹⁰

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.

So then **LIVE!** This is the apostle’s admonition. But do so with Christian joy, and with reflection on all that God has given us.

Greek NT (NA27)

4 Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἔρω, χαίρετε. 5 τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς. 6 μηδὲν μεριμνάτε, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθω πρὸς τὸν θεόν. 7 καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

8 Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί, ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἀγνά, ὅσα προσφιλῆ, ὅσα εὐφημα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος, ταῦτα λογίζεσθε· 9 ἃ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε· καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν.

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.

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

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 F i n a l l y , 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

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 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Greek NT Diagram

1 4.4

Cairete

ej̄n kuriw/
pantote:

pāti n

2

ej̄w,

3

cairete.

4 4.5

to; epi ei ke; ūn̄ gnwsqhtw

pāsi n ajq̄rwpoi ~.

5

oJ kuri o" egguv (ej̄sti n).

6 4.6

mhden merim̄ate,

aj̄l j

ej̄n panti;
th/ proseuch/
kai;
th/ deh̄sei
meta; euj̄caristi a"

7

ta; aīj̄mata ūn̄ gnwrizesq̄w

pro; ton qeon.

4.7

kai;

8

hJ eīj̄nh̄ tou` qeou`.. frouh̄sei ta; kardia~ ūn̄

hJ ūp̄er̄ēousa panta noūn

kai;

ta; noh̄mata ūn̄

ej̄n Cristw/ j̄hsou`.

4.8

To; loipon,

aj̄lel foi y

ōsa ej̄sti n aj̄h̄qh;

ōsa sem̄nay

ōsa di kai a,

ōsa āgnay

ōsa prosfilh;

ōsa eufh̄ma,

ei | ti ~ aj̄reth;

kai;

ei | ti ~ epai no",

9

tauta logizesq̄e:

4.9

a) kai; ej̄m̄q̄ete

kai; parel̄abete

kai; h̄kousate

kai; eīd̄ete ej̄n ej̄moi y

10 **tauta prassete:**
 kai;
 11 **oJ qeo; th~ eijhnh~ eJtai**
 meq j uJwñ.

Semantic Diagram

	1-----	1	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	P	(uJhei ~) cai rete
A --								
		a -----	2	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S (egw)
		2 --						
		b -----	3	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	P (uJhei ~) cai rete
		1 -----	4	Pres	Act	Imp+	3	S to; epi ei ke;
I -- B --		2 -----	5	Pres	---	Ind	3	S) oJ kuri o~
		a -----	6	Pres	Act	Imp-	2	P (uJhei ~)
		1 --						
		C -- b -----	7	Pres	Pass	Imp+	3	P ta; ai Jhmata
		2 -----	8	Fut	Act	Ind	3	S hJ eijhnh tou` qeou`
		1 -----	9	Pres	Dep	Imp+	2	S (uJhei ~)
A --								
II --		2 -----	10	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	S (uJhei ~)
		B -----	11	Fut	---	Ind	3	S oJ qeo; th~ eijhnh~

Summary of Rhetorical Structure

The first segment, #s 1-8, stresses joy and related attitudes. Statements 1-3 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 4-8 are an admonition buttressed by a warning; Statements 6-8 follow the ancient command / promise structure.

The second segment, #s 9-11, 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 9 these are abstract qualities that are to be contemplated (**logi zesqe**). In statement 14, these are discipleship qualities that are then to be practiced (**prassete**). The larger pattern is again the command / promise form with two commands (#s 9-10) buttressed by the divine promise (#11). The general structure is similar to the command / promise pattern in statements 6-8 with a twofold command followed by the divine promise.