


St. Therese Catholic Church

St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians
Chapter 4

May 30, 2023

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Overview

Philippians 4	
Live in Concord	VV. 1 - 3
Joy and Peace	VV. 4 - 9
Gratitude for Generosity	VV. 10 - 20
Farewell	VV. 21 - 23

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Affectionate Language

- **Long for:** Paul begins the chapter with a burst of affectionate language.
 - Brothers
 - Long for
 - My joy and crown
 - Beloved
- **Key:** Paul wants them to stand firm in the Lord, imitate Paul and his companions, and be willing to suffer for Christ and the advancement of the gospel.

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Two Women

- **Euodia / Syntyche:** Two prominent women are singled out to get along. They had some disagreement. Paul calls them to be of the same mind.
- **Phil 2:2:** Complete my joy of being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing.



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Promoting the Gospel

- **Clement:** Early Christian tradition identifies him as Clement of Rome, the fourth bishop of Rome (after Peter, Linus, and Anacletus) and the author of an ancient epistle known as *1 Clement* (Hahn, 21).
- **Book of Life:** A registry of saints in the saints kept in heaven. God alone knows the complete list of names since he along made the entries (Hahn, 21).
- **Key:** The book of life is a biblical metaphor for salvation.

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Exhortations

- **Rejoice:** Paul returns to a great theme of joy in the letter. There is great joy when Christians are united in the Lord.
- **Key:** Joy is the mark of living the story of Christ well.
- **Kindness:** Their gentle and courteous disposition should be known to all.
- **The Lord is near:** Expresses confidence that God is responsive to those who call upon him.

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Peace of God

- **Have no anxiety at all:** Paul provides an antidote to anxiety, i.e., prayer, petition, and thanksgiving.
 - When you give thanks to God, you realize the good that you have and how good God is. When we think we are alone or it's up to us, we get anxious.
 - Paul knows that the Lord is always with him, regardless of his circumstance. He makes his requests known to God.
- **Peace of God:** If we pray to God about our problems rather than worry about them, God will guard us.

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Think about these Things

- Paul concludes this section by focusing on the mind (thinking) and will (doing).
 - **Thinking:** Peace will be given by focusing on what is good, honorable and true. For example, watch a horror movie or listen to lurid music and see how you feel!
 - **Doing:** By imitating what they have seen in Paul, they will be given peace from God.
- **Key:** Paul's "whatever is true, just, lovely," reminds us to find the good and the true and beautiful wherever you find it (Hamm, 144).

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Paul's Gratitude

- **I rejoice greatly:** Paul turns to the delicate task of thanking the Philippian Christians for their support.
- **Lacked an opportunity:** Paul doesn't state the reason why their gift was delayed. However, he remains grateful in the fact that they have given generously.

Benefits of Gratitude	
Grateful people are happier	Gratitude improves your health
Grateful people have more friends	Gratitude improves your sleep
Grateful people are more optimistic	Grateful people see God in others
Gratitude reduces anxiety and stress	Grateful people like dogs

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Paul's Detachment

- After spilling quite a bit of ink on gratitude and presenting Christ as a model of humility (including Timothy and Epaphroditus), Paul presents himself as a model for coping with struggles of being a Christian.
- **Key:** How do I maintain peace, stability, and joy in *all circumstances*?
- **Self-sufficient:** Whereas Americans pride themselves on self-sufficiency based on their own abilities and resources, Paul's "self-sufficiency" is based upon his *dependence* on God.

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Paul's Detachment

- **Humble circumstances:** The literal translation would be “to humble oneself, to be humbled” (Hamm, 146).
- As pointed out in the Christ-Hymn, Paul encourages the Philippian Christians “in *humility* regard others as better than yourselves” (Hamm, 146).
- **Live with abundance:** Paul knows how to remain close to Christ with prosperity. He still relies on Christ.
- Paul remains intimately united with Christ in *abased* times (Christ-crucified) and *abundant* times (Christ-Resurrected).

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Paul's Detachment

- **Phil 4:13:** I have strength for everything through him who empowers me.
- **RSV:** I can do all things in him who strengthens me.
- **Personal:** This is my favorite Bible verse! It is beautiful in that it highlights that we are “in Christ.” As Christians, our lives make no sense apart from Christ.
- And, in Christ, we can endure the extremes of earthly life, from peace and prosperity to affliction and destitution. Christ is our hidden strength! (Hahn, 22).

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Paul's Detachment

- Paul wants to remind his fellow Christians in Philippi that he is grateful for their gift.
- However, he wants to remind them that, as a Christian, his ultimate security lies in Christ. He can deal with famine or feast, suffering and comfort because he is utterly *dependent* on the Lord (Hamm, 148).
- Additionally, Paul's detachment from material goods challenges us to examine how we live with our abundance.
- **Key:** Our hearts lie not in circumstances or goods, but with the One who guides all things and made all things.

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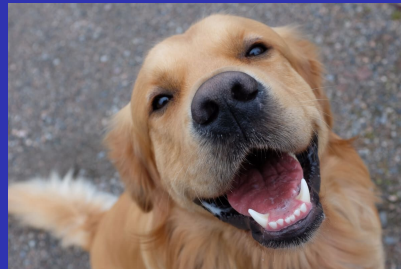
Paul's Detachment

Life without Christ



Cat: I need Jesus. Really bad.

Life with Christ



Goldy: I love Jesus. A lot.

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Paul's Gratitude

- **Share in my distress:** In the Greek, share is *synkoinōneō*, which means they have *shared jointly* – his Paul's troubles (Hamm, 147).
- **Note:** Phil. 4:13 brings us back to the beginning of the letter where Paul says in 1:7 that they are "partners" (*synkoinōnous*) with Paul in the grace.
- **Key:** Paul is thankful and overjoyed that the Philippian Christians partner with Paul not just in good times, but also when times are difficult (in prison).

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Paul's Gratitude

- **Phil 4:15-17:** The Philippian has been generous to Paul since he first visited them on his second missionary journey and they have consistently been generous to him.
- **Note:** Paul clarifies that he is not so much interested in their financial support, but the spiritual credit that accrues to their account from their generosity.
- **Key:** Generosity is critically important not just for those who receive the gift, but also for the spiritual growth of the giver! One *imitates* Christ by giving generously.

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Paul's Gratitude

- **A fragrant aroma:** Paul moves from a metaphor of commerce (or accounting) to that of temple sacrifice.
- The Philippians mirror the mind of Christ and participate in His sacrifice as celebrated in the hymn of chapter 2 (Hamm, 150).
- **Key:** As a “fragrant aroma,” the financial contribution of the Philippians is a sacrificial offering (money, prayers, time) are like incense (in Mass) rising up to God. The gift to Paul is actually a gift given to God.

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Paul's Gratitude

- **My God:** Paul ends his letter the way that he began the letter (“I give thanks to my God,” 1:3) (Hamm, 150).
- **Key:** Paul reminds the Philippians that generosity is richly rewarded by the Lord.
- **Our God and Father:** The doxology echoes not only the letter’s greeting (1:2) but also the climax of the Christ hymn (“Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” 2:11).
- **Key:** Their partnership and generosity glorifies God.

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Paul's Farewell

- **Greetings:** The conclusion of Paul's letters reveal how deeply immersed he is in building friendships and how much care he has for every person in each Christian.
- **Caesar's household:** He began the letter with "the whole praetorium" and now he ends with Caesar's household.
- **Key:** The gospel was gaining ground not only among the emperor's soldiers (1:13), but also among the hired servants. Paul must have been proud to say that the gospel of Christ's Lordship was echoing throughout the halls of the Imperial palace. This detail lends support to the view that Philippians was written from Rome (Hahn, 22).

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Summary

- **Matthew 13:52:** "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."
- Paul is a master evangelizer in that he brings from his storeroom both the new (Greco-Roman culture such as their love for sports, commerce with business ventures) and the old (Biblical imagery such as liturgical worship with offering sacrifice).
- Additionally, he is well aware that he must bring the gospel to a city that loves the Roman Empire with its military officers and has a strong allegiance to Caesar.

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Summary

- For Paul, the Philippian Christians may be citizens of the Roman Empire but even more citizens of heaven where Jesus is Lord and Savior.
- They must press on in this venture (e.g., a partnership where they sink or swim together) as they share in expanding the kingdom of God in this world.
- To do so, they must imitate Christ, who looked not to his own interests, but those of others. He humbled himself to death on a cross so that God, in turn, exalted him. Philippian Christians, likewise, must be humble and obedient like Christ.

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Summary

- Additionally, like Paul, the Philippian Christians must be joyful as an imperishable crown of glory awaits them as they run the race together.
- And like Paul, they grow in detachment from power, honor, pleasure, and possessions so that whether they are liked or disliked, abased (in need) or abound, they can “do all things in him who strengthens” them (Phil. 4:13).
- Furthermore, they must strive to be of one mind (1:27, 2:2), have the mind of Christ (2:6-11), and focus on the things of heaven (3:20-21). There is, then, in this letter a strong emphasis on the renewal of their minds (c.f., Rom. 12:1).

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Summary

- In short, Paul was strategic in bringing the gospel to Philippi in that it was a major city in the province of Macedonia. Planting the Church there, he could then spread the gospel to smaller cities in the area.
- He looked for what was positive from the culture (business ventureship, sports) and wisely corrected areas in need of conversion (Roman glory, imperial cult where Caesar was worshipped).
- **Key:** In our day and culture, what is good? What is in need of conversion? How, like Paul, can you evangelize others by bringing from your storeroom what is new and old?

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Proclaiming the Gospel



I am Lord and in charge.



Jesus is Lord and in charge.

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Summary

- In studying and discussing this letter, what are some things you have learned?
- What is it about St. Paul that you really appreciate?
- How can you take what you learned to prayer and in sharing our beautiful faith with others?

