



# PHILIPPIANS

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**Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.** Philippians 4:1

Paul has just been speaking of the resurrection of our earthly bodies and their being conformed to Christ's glorious body. With that thought still in mind, Chapter 4 begins with "Therefore." As always, when encountering a "therefore," one must go back and see what it is there for. In this case, as noted, he is summing up the thought of the resurrection. From that, he now provides practical advice concerning this issue.

In this, he is amazingly consistent. He followed the same pattern in both Romans and 1 Corinthians. Immediately after speaking of the resurrection in these books, he penned for us the following –

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:1, 2

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 15:18

In this beginning of his practical application, he states, "...my beloved and longed for brethren." It is a touching note of endearment which is all the more necessary based on what he will instruct for them in the coming two verses. They are in his heart, and they are brethren in the Lord. For this reason, it is for his comfort, and for their favor to accept his words as they will be

given. The words “longed for” certainly are based on his current status as a man in chains. His inability to come to them personally has only pulled his heart strings even more. The word for “longed for” is *epipothétos*. It is found only here in Scripture, and it signifies “to long for with great affection.”

He next calls them “my joy and my crown.” Again, he uses words and ideas which he uses elsewhere. Two examples of such honorific words are found in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians –

“If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 9:2

“For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? <sup>20</sup>For you are our glory and joy.” 1 Thess 2:19

For the Philippians, they are his joy even in suffering, and his crown which awaits in glory. The work that he has done, and the fruit which has been realized through his labors make both of these things true. Because of this, and because of his hopes for this to continue in them, he next says, “...so stand fast in the Lord.”

These words certainly are given because of the hope of the resurrection (see the note on “Therefore” above), but they are exhortations based on the content of all of chapter 3. He wants them to stand in Christ and not get drawn into legalism through an insertion of the law, nor get drawn into license by assuming grace allows and promotes sin. With this in mind, he again calls them “beloved” to close out the verse. The scholar Bengel notes that, “This word is twice used with great sweetness; first as at the beginning of the period; and then, for strengthening the exhortation.”

Life application: Because of our hope in the resurrection, we should be all the more willing to stand fast in the Lord. How often this is turned completely around! We tend to think, “I am on the heavenly highway, and so I don’t need to worry about my actions as much.” This is a 180 degree turn from what is actually appropriate.

**I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.** Philippians 4:2

There was obviously a dissension in the church between these two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Nothing more is known about these ladies than that they were known by Paul personally, that they labored with him in the gospel, and that they were not in agreement over some particular issue. Speculation as to their position, if any, in the church is without merit.

Paul implores each of them individually – “I implore Euodia,” and “I implore Syntyche.” This is especially stated so that neither is elevated above the other as if one was in the wrong and Paul was siding with the other. It could be that either one, or both, were in the wrong. No matter what, Paul was not taking sides, but was simply asking them to drop their feud and “to be of the same mind.”

These words mean that they should be united in the cause and reconciled over what has divided them. And to solidify this, he adds “in the Lord.” They should not only be united, but united in Christ Jesus. If they both had their eyes, hearts, and affections on Him, then their petty differences would fade into the background.

It is of note that the verb which is translated as “to be of mind” is found 10 times in Philippians, more than any other book. Paul uses it only 23 times in all, and so almost one half of its uses are in this little epistle. There is a high stress on unity here.

As a note: The name here is Euodia, not Euodias as some versions incorrectly state. This is clearly a female as will be seen from verse 2. If your Bible says Euodias, you can pen in the correction.

Life application: Are you a divider or one who unites? And even if you are not a divider, are you caught up in a division? It is time to put the petty aside and strive forward with Christ as your only true passion. In so doing, all other things will find their proper place.

**And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.**  
Philippians 4:3

Speaking of Euodia and Syntyche of the previous verse, Paul now implores some unidentified person, here translated as “true companion,” to intercede. The word is *suzugos*, and it is only found here in the Bible. It indicates a “yoke-fellow,” or a “colleague.” It is wholly unknown who it is. There are several interesting speculations.

One is that it is Epaphroditus who is being sent back with the letter. It could also be Luke who was closely associated with the church at Philippi. Other names have been suggested as well. However, the word could be used as a proper name. If the name means “Yoke Fellow,” then his name could form the same type of play on words that Onesimus does in the book of Philemon. If a proper name, it could be his given name, or a nickname which was bestowed upon him by Paul and by which he had become known. In the end, it is all speculation, and the truth is lost to history.

Whoever this yoke-fellow is, he is now asked to “help these women.” Again, it is speaking of Euodia and Syntyche. In the past, Paul notes that they “labored with me in the gospel.” They may have helped him financially as the women did who were with Jesus as is seen in Luke 8:3. The word used to describe their labors is found only here and in Philippians 1:27. It means “to strive together.” Whatever their labors were, it was of great help to Paul, so great that he put their efforts on an equal standing with his.

He then notes, “with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers.” He has placed these two women in a high position of note along with all of the others who labored with him. Clement is speculated by some to be Clement, bishop of Rome. This goes all the way back to the time of Origen. Others dismiss this as unlikely. However, he is singled out by name here as being a great help to Paul, and acknowledged as such.

He finishes with noting that these women, along with the others he refers to, have their names “in the Book of Life.” This is not to be taken as a literal book which is in heaven, and which pen and ink are applied to. Rather it is a state in which these people stood, metaphorically identified as a book of remembrance before the Lord. This Book of Life would compare to the saying of Philippians 3:20 which notes those whose citizenship is in heaven. They have come under the blood of Christ, and they are sealed with the Spirit of God. Thus they are in the Book of Life before the Lord. In Revelation 3:5, Jesus says the following about such people –

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

To “overcome” is to be saved by the blood of Christ. Such salvation is therefore a complete guarantee of entry into heaven for the redeemed.

Life application: Paul’s interest in the affairs of these women indicates his strong desire for there to be harmony and peace between believers. Although this is at times very, very difficult, it is what is asked of us. When strife arises, those around who are aware of it should do their best to assist in the process of reconciliation.

**Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!** Philippians 4:4

Paul now returns to the words of verse 3:1 –

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.”

The theme of joy which flows from Paul's pen is an exhortation for all to not merely rejoice, but to "Rejoice in the Lord." He has just given stern warnings concerning the "mutilators of the flesh," and living in the flesh for this world as opposed to living in the Spirit in anticipation of the next. After that, he noted the division between Euodia and Syntyche. Certainly each of these points would lead to, or be the cause of, a lack of joy. However, Paul would have it otherwise for them. And not only were they to "Rejoice in the Lord," but they were to do it "always."

The only way this would be possible would be to fall back on his warnings from the previous chapter and to "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." With this as their constant goal, they would truly be able to "Rejoice in the Lord always."

And then to go beyond the words of exhortation, grounding them solidly in the minds of those at Philippi (and thus to us!), he says, "Again I will say, rejoice!" It is more than a mere exhortation, but it comes out as a full-fledged command. It is our very duty as Christians. We are instructed to rejoice. It is to be our determined and set purpose at all times. Commanding joy may seem impossible, but by adhering to his exhortations, it is not only possible, it is to be fully realized in each of us. What can the world do to us if we have our hope in something beyond this world? That is the intent and purpose of Paul's words to us.

Life application: Rejoice in the Lord always!

**Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.** Philippians 4:5

The word Paul uses for "gentleness" is an adjective which gives the idea of being fair and reasonable. We should relax our overly strict standards in order to keep a spirit of fellowship between one another. Instead of just demanding the letter of the law, we should apply the spirit and intent of it when dealing with others. The noun form of the word is used when speaking of Jesus in 2 Corinthians 10:1 –

"Now I, Paul, myself *am* pleading with *you* by the meekness and gentleness of Christ..."

By Paul's direction, this gentle spirit should "be known to all men." What this means is that our outward conduct is to apply equally to both the saved and the unsaved. If we have an overbearing attitude towards the lost, they will certainly remain lost. If we cannot be fair and reasonable, why would anyone want to then join together with us? And if we treat the unsaved with such care, how much more should we act in this manner towards believers.

How often it is that Christians tear one another apart instead of seeking harmony! And such an attitude towards one another does not go unnoticed by the unsaved.

To finish the verse, he says, "The Lord is at hand." He uses a Greek translation of the Aramaic term Maranatha which means, "Lord come!" In this, he is probably referring to the imminent return of the Lord, meaning that there is no time when we should not expect Him. At the same time, he very well could be indicating that the Lord is near, being present at all times for those in His church. In either sense, the thought that our conduct is being monitored and will be judged, is clearly evident.

Life application: Our conduct towards others, both the saved and the unsaved, needs to be carefully considered. How we act can lead to eternity-changing decisions for those who see our behavior. Let each of us remember this, considering that we too were once lost, but have been given the blessing of coming to know Jesus. Let us not be the cause of any to not have this same opportunity.