

## Comments on Philippians 4

Paul closes the letter with some specific instructions to people within the ecclesia, and some general exhortations.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

v1 Paul starts with benediction with a general statement of satisfaction over the ecclesia.

"my joy and my crown", Paul is saying the ecclesia at Philippi bring him joy and glory, because of their steadfastness in faith in Christ. They are still faithful, while others are not (e.g., Galatia, Corinth), so Paul is quite pleased.

<sup>2</sup> I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

v2-3 Paul is addressing some unknown individual, the "yokefellow" an associate, and telling him that two specific women among the ecclesia need to be reconciled. Apparently these two women were formerly close friends and very much involved in the ministry along with Paul and one named Clement. Paul very much wants to eliminate contention within the ecclesia, whatever the reason, so they will be united.

We might assume the "yokefellow" is one of the bishops or deacons in the ecclesia referenced in 1:1.

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. <sup>6</sup> Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. <sup>9</sup> Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

v4-9 Paul gives them some closing advice in how to obtain the peace of God. Note v. 7 and 9 both close with statements saying

if they do these things they will have the peace of God with them.

Paul tells them to not be anxious about what is worrying them, but rather to forbear and pour out their desires in prayer (v. 4-6). He then tells them they should seek after and do good (v. 8). If they do these things, they will have the peace that God bestows upon the faithful (v. 7, 9).

The anxiety they are suffering from is probably the persecution they are facing referenced in 1:28-30.

v4 They are being persecuted at the moment because of their faithfulness to Christ, but Paul tells them to rejoice instead of mourn or complain. Paul's encouragement is for them to focus on their eternal well-being, rather than their present temporal discomfort.

v5 "moderation", i.e., patient, restrained, gentle, forbearing. Paul wants them to have a good reputation as being long-suffering among all of their Roman neighbors, as that will clearly work to their benefit, assuming the Judaizers are spreading negative rumors about them.

"The Lord is at hand", I take this to mean the Lord is with them, in the sense that He is aware of their situation and will work to support and sustain them in their difficulties. I do not read this as having any eschatological intent as there is nothing in the context to suggest as much.

v6 "Be careful for nothing", the IV/JST emends this to "Be afflicted for nothing". Modern translations typically render it something like "Don't worry about anything".

v8 Here, Paul encourages them to focus on what is good, and do what is good. In the face of persecution it is easy to turn bitter and angry and spiteful. Paul is emphatically telling them not to do that. Stay positive in the Gospel, don't go negative and worldly like your opponents. If you do, God's peace will fill you, instead of the contention of the world.

<sup>10</sup> But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

<sup>15</sup> Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. <sup>16</sup> For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. <sup>17</sup> Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. <sup>18</sup> But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

v10-20 Paul closes with profuse thanks for their concern over his well-being (v. 10-11) and apparent exceptional generosity in supporting him in his prior missionary efforts (v. 14-18). While he has learned to live in any circumstance, being supported by the hand of the Lord (v. 12-13), he obviously appreciates the kindness shown him by these people. He then blesses them with prosperity as a result of it (v. 19), and thanks God (v. 20).

v12 "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound", the New American Standard renders this "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity". Paul's reference to living in prosperity is probably alluding to the time prior to his conversion. We learn in Acts 22:28 that Paul was born a Roman citizen, but we know that Paul is of natural Israel. Thus, someone in his family must have purchased Roman citizenship, which was rather expensive. And we also know that Paul received the finest religious education available at the time. This all suggests that Paul came from a wealthy family.

What happened to that wealth is a question left unanswered. He returned to work at one point (cf. Acts 18:3), and clearly was living under more humble circumstances after his conversion. Many scholars suggest his Jewish family cut him off. Also possible is his inheritance ran out, necessitating him to return to work. What seems most likely to me is that Paul, like the other early saints (cf. 4:23-27, 11:29-30), practiced the Law of Consecration and donated his wealth to the ecclesia, as Paul is the kind of person who would practice what he preaches.

<sup>21</sup> Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. <sup>22</sup> All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. <sup>23</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

v21-23 Closing. A final statement of encouragement in unity among the geographically separated members of the ecclesia.

v22 Note there are saints among Caesar's household, presumably in Rome. Paul's implicit message might be that the ecclesia is making inroads into Rome and therefore might be obtaining some legal favor, as do their Jewish neighbors. If 1:30 suggests the ecclesia is being persecuted by the local Roman authorities, then this closing remark might offer some hope of relief from that persecution.

It would also be Paul saying that there are faithful believers everywhere all throughout all Roman territories, even in the Emperors own household. And, if they can be faithful, then so can the saints in Philippi, among retired Roman centurions.

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