

## Philippians Chapter 4 - John Karmelich

1. The book of Philippians is a short four-chapter book that focuses on how Christians are supposed to have a joyful life. If we're supposed to go through life being a witness for Jesus, shouldn't joy be requirement as that witness? Of course. Paul the author of this book realized to be a Christian means we should go through life with all its ups and downs with a joyful attitude. No one wants to be around a grumpy person all day. Even if we don't feel like being joyful, we owe it to people around us to be joyful, let alone God. That's why this book has a major emphasis on being joyful, no matter what the situation.
  - a) With that said, let me address those who think, "I'm already a joyful person, why should I study this book?" I could say it's a part of the bible or I could say it shows us reasons why God wants us to be joyful. However, the most important reason is it's here to teach us the proper attitude God wants us to have as we go through life. My point being is we may be dealing with a miserable person in front of us, or we may be dealing with a hard situation where no one may blame us if we're miserable, but despite all of that, God desires we be a great witness for Him and that begins with having a joyful attitude.
  - b) Ever wonder why did God made us in the first place? What's in it for Him? He created us to give glory to Him. We do that not only by praising Him, but being a living witness for Him as we go through life. Yes we have "chores to do and bills to pay", but even as we're dealing with those things and even when we're not doing what we have to do, God made us to be a living witness for Him. My point is this four-chapter book explains how to be a good witness for Jesus as we go through life.
2. There, now that I've explained the purpose for this book, let me summarize the last three chapters in a few thoughts and how that leads to this chapter. The first chapter focused on how to have joy no matter the external circumstances. Paul wrote this book while under arrest, yet he is joyful for what the Philippian church did for him (send him cash) while he was in waiting to be tried before Caesar for believing Jesus is God. Chapter 2 taught on have a good attitude despite whatever it is we're dealing with. Chapter 3 discussed dealing with miserable people, who desire we be just as miserable as well. In Chapter 4, Paul is going to bring it all home by effectively saying, "Now that you know how to be joyful, let me explain what we're to do with that joy". I'm oversimplifying a lot of what those chapters teach, but that's the basis idea. All of that leads to Chapter 4:
  - a) The chapter opens with Paul talking about a few people he knew in Philippi effectively to remind them to get along, because our purpose for living should be full of joy despite any issues we may be disagree over. Paul singles out two women in that church. The one who delivered the gift to Paul probably said something like, "You remember those two women who ministered to other women in Philippi? Well they're arguing with each other over an issue". Paul wanted to end that argument by reminding all of us of the "greater purpose" we have in life. It's like thinking, "If that person rubs us the wrong way, learn to deal with it, pray our way through it and realize we have a greater purpose for living than whatever is our issue of the moment." That's why they're singled out.
  - b) Then Paul reminds them (and us) that we're all saved not because we're something special but just because God picked us. To quote a famous proverb, "There by the grace of God go I". That was written by a pastor who watched a criminal executed and realized if it wasn't for God's grace, that would be his eternal fate (eternal separation from God). The point of all of this is that Christians should always be joyful simply because we're saved. That is why I see everything else as "small potatoes" compared to that fact. That leads us to Paul's next point: Be joyful all the time! We're saved, so have a good attitude going through life whether we feel like it or not. No matter what the issue we should pray our way through it. God wants us to enjoy His peace as we go through life. We do that by bringing all our issues to Him, and let Him deal with those issues that are beyond our ability to fix.

- c) That leads to the natural question: What if I'm in a bad mood? How do I get joyful when I'm dealing with all these problems? Paul reminds them of what he taught them when he was with them: To always be grateful for the good things God's given us and go focus on those things. No our problems won't magically go away, but having a good attitude helps us to deal with whatever it is we must deal with in our lives.
  - d) Then Paul gets personal. I don't know how much money that church gave Paul. I doubt it was a great sum of money. What Paul was more grateful for was the fact that church took the time to support him in spite of all he's been through. The Philippian church didn't say "Hey, Paul's in prison now, let's go find other missionaries to support who are working in other places making a difference for Jesus!" Paul comments that after he left Philippi, that church sent him money when he went on to other towns on that missionary journey. Now that Paul's effectively in prison, that church collectively said, "We still need to help Paul as he helped spread the Gospel Message all over the place".
    - i) The amazing thing is then Paul says, "You'll be credited far more than the cash you actually gave me". (John's loose translation.) What that means is we can't out give God. I doubt the Philippian church was wealthy. They gave out of their means and I'm positive Paul believed they'll benefit far more than he would from that gift. I'd argue the Philippine church benefits based on their trust that God will take care of their financial needs for them to continue to do His will.
    - ii) Let me be careful here. I don't believe if we put \$1 in the collect plate, God owes us \$10. However, I'm positive God won't be a debtor to no person. He'll pay us back in a way we least expect. One of my favorite stories on this topic was about a large church being built in my area. The pastor read letter after letter of members giving to that cause and God "made up for that giving". As much he appreciated all those financial gifts, I remember him being more grateful reading about people who put their trust in God and "put their money where their mouth was" more than the fact they actually gave to his church construction project.
    - iii) Meanwhile let me finish my summary for this chapter:
  - e) Paul wraps this up by saying "give my blessing to everyone there and may God continue to bless all of you as you use your lives to make a difference for God". Yes there are more details, but the essential point of this "Thank You" Letter, is that Paul's full of joy despite all that he's going through and wants all Christians to experience that same sense of joy.
  - f) So what do I call Chapter 4? "How to live a joyful life no matter what the circumstances". Yes that summarizes the whole letter, but it also summarizes well this final chapter.
    - i) With that said, time to get started on the details.
3. Chapter 4, Verse 1: Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!
- a) There's a classic rule for bible study that goes, "When you see a "Therefore" find out what it is "there for". There's also an old rule in ministry that when a preacher says, "finally", it means he still has 20-30 minutes to go. I mention that because Chapter 4 opened with the word usually translated "Finally" and it was only the halfway point of this letter. The last few thoughts of Chapter 3 reminded us that the Christian "home" is in heaven, as opposed to wherever we're living now. That's Paul's way to tell us to "not sweat the small stuff" of whatever we're dealing with at the moment. Remembering the fact that our citizenship is in heaven gives us the strength to deal with whatever we're facing at this moment. Seeing life that way is helps us to put our cares and issues in the eternal perspective. A problem isn't so overwhelming if we see it from the eternal perspective of what matters and what doesn't. That 's how Paul could stay joyful despite the fact he was chained to two guards waiting to be tried on a life or death sentence.
    - i) My point here is we can always be joyful no matter what the circumstances. What we deal with we can't always control. We can always choose our attitude!

- b) Meanwhile, it's time to get back to the "therefore". Paul is saying since we can be joyful in any situation, "therefore" keep on trusting that Jesus is God and keep on trusting that He's in charge of our lives and desires that we use the time God's given us for His glory. I don't see Philippi as a wealthy town. In Paul's day that city was mostly retired soldiers. It was the scene of a major battle after Julius Caesar was killed for control of that empire. A lot of those soldiers did retire there. I don't know how many of them became Christians, I just know it was as a very "pro-Roman" city. The Philippian residents were respected by Rome as they helped to protect that empire at a critical moment in its history.
- i) Since I'm discussing history, let me spend a few moments giving what history that we know about how the Christian church started there. This is all based on Luke's account in Acts, Chapter 16. Paul was on his second missionary journey traveling through a part of Greece today that's also known as the Thessalonica area. The city of Philippi was in this area. The city earned its income from nearby gold mines. I mentioned it was a very pro-Rome city, which means that the residents there gave honor to the Roman gods. When Paul traveled from city to city, his favorite place to start preaching Jesus was in any local synagogue for the simple reason that they believed in the same God. Paul then had the great challenge to convince them the man who was crucified in Jerusalem roughly 20 years earlier was the Messiah and it's not too late for them to repent. Obviously it wasn't a popular message and that got Paul kicked out of a lot of synagogues. However God used that preaching as a lot of non-Jewish people accepted the Gospel message.
  - ii) Anyway, when Paul first arrived in Philippi, there weren't enough Jewish families to form a synagogue. (They had rules for that!) Acts 16:13 says Paul traveled along a river there looking for people who prayed to God. It was customary for a Jewish people to gather at such places if there wasn't a synagogue in town. That's why we read in Acts of a few women who Paul found there, and they accepted the Gospel. Those women became the first converts in Philippi. Paul stayed there long enough to start a church and other non-Jewish people joined the church to make it what it was by the time Paul left to "repeat all of that" in another city. I'm guessing that by the time Paul left, the church had members from Jewish backgrounds, but most of them were non-Jewish who saw the futility of worshipping all those Roman gods, and they became Christians.
- c) Gee John, that's a nice story. What does it have to do with Verse 1? Paul hasn't seen those people since he left that town probably 10 years earlier. Yet that church helped Paul as he went to the City of Thessalonica which was the next significant stop if one traveled in that area. The Christians in Philippi supported Paul as he repeated his pattern in Thessalonica. I mention all of that here as Paul refers to the Philippian church as his brothers. Paul had a long term love relationship with that church as they "put their money where their mouth was" on the issue of believing Jesus is God.
- i) Let me put it another way: When you read Paul's letters to other churches, none of them have the same sort of joy and admiration that Paul had for this church. Paul didn't love this church more than other Christians. He loved how they did trust in Jesus and again we're willing to prove it. That's why Paul loved them and thought of them as his "joy and crown". In my introduction I talked about a famous pastor in my area who thought of those in his congregation as "his joy and crown" as they gave to build that church. I'd argue Paul had the exact same attitude as he thought of Christians in this town.
  - ii) Paul saw them as his "crown" in the sense that it gave him great to see others trust in Jesus the same way Paul did himself. He realized that they benefited a lot more by their giving that Paul did by receiving it. That's the "crown" that Paul got. The greatest reward we get as believers is helping others to "get it" as much as we do.

- d) Believe it or not, I'm not done with Verse 1 yet. (Hang in there, "final" point!) Paul wanted those Christians to "stand firm" in Jesus. It's like saying he was endlessly grateful for what they did, but Paul wanted them to "keep at it". It's not a plea for more money. It's not that they or us could lose our salvation if we stop trying. The issue is joy. The way we keep it going in terms of having that joy is to keep using our lives as a witness for Jesus. We may be young or retired. Either way we interact with others and we can always have a positive attitude as we go through life. Like I've been preaching all through this series, we cannot control our circumstances, but we can always control our attitude. We can be joyful with people who are joyful and ask God for the strength to deal with challenges.
  - e) Speaking of challenges, we're actually ready for the next verse.
4. Verse 2: I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
- a) If you've read the entire four-chapter book of Philippians, you may have noticed that Paul never got "personal" with any Christian there. For example, he never said, "I really love A, B and C, but I'm to crazy about X, Y and Z". Paul spoke highly of all believers in that city without singling out anyone in this letter so far. You might recall from Chapter 2 of a man named Epaphroditus was the one who delivered Paul the money gift. We'll discover near the end of this chapter that this same man will deliver this letter to the Philippi church. I'd suspect that because this letter had so much joy in it, it was quickly copied so others could read it, and that's how eventually it became part of the bible.
    - i) I remember having a conversation with a wonderful bible scholar, who I'll just say was on the committee for the bible translation that we're reading here. I asked him once about how did they know which bible books belonged in the New Testament. How did they know which one's were fake and which were the real deal? He said, "I think they just knew as God made it obvious to them." My point here is that I'm pretty sure once this letter was circulated, people just knew it was "bible worthy".
    - ii) Meanwhile my other point is Paul "switches gears" to discuss some specific people in Philippi. We don't know who they are. We do know from history that the early church did work "by sexes". That just means that men ministered to the needs of other men and women ministered to the needs of other women. I suspect most of the Christian churches still follow that model today. I bring all that up as the two women Paul brings up were not just "regular" members of that church, but women who worked with Paul in that church. We don't know if they were among the girls who Paul first converted by the "riverside", but obviously they worked in Philippi and Paul wanted to address some problem they were having.
    - iii) Notice we don't know the specific problem these two women had. We just know it was some issue they didn't agree over. It could have been "how to do their work" or some theological issue. All we do know is that it was serious enough that Paul wanted to address it in this letter. I suspect this reference is "Holy Spirit inspired" (after all it's part of the bible) is that Paul wanted an example of how we can have joy despite disagreements we may have within the church.
    - iv) What Paul wants from these two women is to rise above it. We may think that our way is the right way, but often in order to put God first and others first we have to give up our rights. That's the type of sacrificial love that God desires we have. It's a matter of saying, "I know we disagree here, but I'll let it go, because our joy is to serve Jesus, even if I disagree this is the right way to do it." Obviously limits have to be placed. For example, "We don't steal or kill to serve Jesus". But if it's just an issue over methods or who leads, Paul's pleading with these women (and with us) to let go of our desires and trust Him to work out that situation for His glory.

- b) Then Paul switches gears to mention someone named Clement and "the rest of my fellow workers". If you read Paul's letters to other churches, he goes out of his way to list lots of people there. With Philippi, it's almost the opposite. Other than single out two women as an example of how we're to get along, he only singles out Clement who was most likely a church leader there. It'd be like saying to people you know, "Beginning with leaders and all the way to the newest member there", may God work in all your lives so all of us will have a joyful attitude as we make a difference for Him. My point is I'm willing to bet that Paul singled out this man simply because he was the church leader when Paul was there.
  - c) Finally we get a reference to the "Lamb's Book of Life". This book is referenced a few times in Revelation (3:5, 13:8 and 17:8). There are also hints in the Old Testament that God has a book with such records (See Exodus 32:33 and Psalm 69:12). I have an acquaintance who's a devout Orthodox Jewish man. I asked him once what is the proper greeting at Passover. He said, "May you be written in the Lamb's book of life". I remember telling him that as a devout Christian, I have no problem giving that greeting. My point is both devout Jewish believers as well as Christians accept the concept that God has a book of names.
    - i) It dawned on me that if "God is God" why does He need a book to recall all those who are eternally saved? I don't think it's a "let me check the record source". It's a way for people to relate the idea of God having records of who's in and who's out.
    - ii) This leads to the classic debate of God knowing all things and we don't. My view is that everyone who is saved is in effect written in that book before time began. I don't know who's on that list and neither do you. Therefore, from our perspective, this list exists in "God's world" but we don't know who's on it.
  - d) This leads to the classic discussion of "who is a saint". In the Roman Catholic world, it's a matter of how a person lived and whether the church considered that person "worthy" of being called a saint. I don't think it's meant as a complete list of who's saved, but simply a list of who's to be respected and honored. As far as the bible is considered, "we've got the saved and the unsaved" and the saved are the saints, end of issue. I bring that up here, as it was in effect Paul's final point in Verse 3. OK, time to pick up the pace or we will never get through this final chapter.
5. Verse 4: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
- a) OK, Paul breaks out in "revival" here. My question is why here and now? Paul just spent the last few verses talking about believers in the Philippian church. What I suspect Paul's getting at is, "Hey you want to be a good witness for Jesus? Be full of joy! Do you want to get along with other believers, be full of joy! It's hard to be depressed when you're feeling joyful at the moment. As I've said before in my discussion of this book, do you want to be hanging around joyful people or miserable people all day?"
    - i) The big question of course, is what do we have to do to be joyful like this? We get the answer through the first three chapters of this book. They focused on external and internal issues we may have that keep us from that joy. The short version is if we realize we'll be in heaven forever, then the issues of this life aren't as important. If we have the attitude of putting other's needs as priority over our needs, that will give us the type of joy that Paul desires here in this verse.
    - ii) Stop and think what makes you really joyful: Is it some benefit for yourself or the times when you've made a difference for someone else. The joy of helping others in need is far greater than any benefit or thing we've earned for ourselves. To use my own life for example, I'm proud of what I've accomplished in business as well as my personal life. However, the joy of seeing people "get it" and grow in Jesus is a far greater joy than all the things we can accomplish in this life.
    - iii) Let me try it one more way: Suppose we're suffering right now for some reason. If joy seems like a remote possibility, first remind yourself that you'll live forever. I'll admit this life can be horrid at times. So how do we have joy in the tough times?

- a) Paul will get into that in a minute. The short version is "fake it until you make it". Focus on the good things of life.
  - b) Let me also be realistic here. No one is going to expect you to not be sad if a loved one dies for example. No one is going to expect us to not cry out in pain if we're truly in pain. What Paul's trying to do is get our perspective in the proper perspective of that pain. If people see us being joyful in spite of what anyone would consider a painful situation, that's what the attraction of Christianity. Jesus will say people will recognize us by our love for each other. Let's be honest, we're all a lot more attractive when we're joyful. I'd say that's Paul's underlying point. Speaking of Paul:
6. Verse 5: Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- a) OK, time for a "cheer everybody up" speech. Before I discuss these verses, realize Paul is dictating this letter while chained to two guards. He's about to send someone on a 1,000-mile journey (more or less) to deliver this letter. Paul didn't realize the letter was inspired by God, he just dictated it and hope the person delivering it would make it there. What I am getting at is Paul had every reason in the world to be pessimistic. He could easily give a "poor poor pitiful me" speech here. Instead he reminds the Philippians and us as well of the fact that God is near. If God is God, He sees all things at all times and knows all things we do. My point is if we're saved by grace, and we can't foul that up, then no matter what happens to Paul or what happens to the guy delivering the message or the Christians who are reading this letter, it's a "no lose" proposition. That alone is a great reason to be joyful no matter what the situation.
  - b) With that said, Paul then gets into specifics when it comes to worrying: "Don't be anxious about anything but pray for all things" (Yes that's paraphrased, but it's the same point.) I sometimes get asked what is it we should pray for? The answer is all things. I figured out a long time ago that whatever prayers weren't His will, He won't answer, but it won't hurt to ask for anything or everything. To me a secret of prayer is about requesting His will be done. That's what prayers all about. The reason He wants us involved in the process is so we give Him the credit when the things come to pass. I never hold the view that anything is too big or too small to pray about. Since we don't know the answer, God calls us to pray about all issues.
  - c) Which brings us back to the "kicker". We can't lose. Even if we're in horrible pain over an issue, we're saved no matter what. It doesn't mean we won't have our bad moments. All I am getting it as a way to deal with a bad mood, is literally to give the situation to God to ask Him to intervene or at least help us to see the problem from His perspective. Prayer is not going to solve all our problems, but it will help our perspective about what we got to deal with. Let me give a simple example. There are few things that frustrate most people around here than being stuck in traffic for hours. What I find helps is to start praying for people around me. If we're going to be "dealing with" those strangers for a while, I find a great way to pass the time is literally to start praying for those around me. I'm just saying it's a simple way to put these verses into practice.
  - d) Notice the last phrase of those verses. The essential point is God promises He will give us a great sense of peace when we pray this way. The issue here is how to have God's peace in any situation. I'm just saying developing an attitude about praying our way through a situation is a great way to change our perspective and bring us peace. By the way, prayer doesn't have to be formal as in standing up or on our knees. If we're driving God hears it just as much as any formal or group prayer. Again, think in terms of praying for all things but realizing God's got every right to say no if something isn't His will.

- e) Finally, let me throw out a tough one: Suppose we're dealing with a child who's dying of cancer. Let's also assume we've devout Christians. Why would God allow something this horrid to occur? If this life is all there is, it is very unfair. If there is a next life, then we can have assurance of seeing that loved one again. My point is I can't explain all tragedies and I've seen my share. I just know there's a just God who allows all things to occur ultimately for His glory. OK enough on tragedy. Back to joy!
7. Verse 8: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.
- a) Speaking of "positive things to get our perspective right", I present Verses 8-9. When we're depressed about something, stop and list things we're grateful for. It's impossible to be in a bad mood if we're grateful for something. That's essentially Paul's point here. All of us if we try can find something we're grateful for. For example, we can be grateful for the time we got to spend with a loved one. We can be grateful for places we've been, or simply the fact we're still standing here breathing! Attitude is about perspective!
- b) Remember the goal here is much more than say to cheer us up when we're in a bad mood. It's about how Christians should act all the time. Yes that's "all". If you consider yourself to be a Christian, realize we owe it to God to be joyful! I'm not saying we can't experience bad moments. However, when people think of us, they should realize, "I can't explain it, I just know (fill in your name) is always a joyful person to be around". Others should see us and think, "I can't explain that person, but I just know he or she is always joyful and that's something to be admired".
- c) OK, what if I've been a grumpy person most of my life? "Fake it until you make it". None of us can change our past, just learn from it and change. Ask yourself if you would rather go through the rest of your life being known as one who's grumpy most of the time or one who's joyful most of the time? Paul's not giving this "how to be happy" speech to wear off in say 10 minutes. Paul is trying to teach us why we should be joyful all the time. I figure if Paul could be joyful in his circumstances, than I owe it to God to be joyful in mine. Who else benefits from it is secondary. A joyful attitude alone makes us a good witness for God and what we say over and above that should also be based on our attitude going through life. OK then. Let's go have a good attitude before I run you over! (Yes I'm kidding!)
8. Verse 10: I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.
- a) I suspect that when that Epaphroditus fellow showed up on Paul's doorstep with a money gift for Paul it was the last thing he expected. It's not like Paul sent a messenger to there to say, "Send me some cash and do it now!" Remember that Philippi is over 1,000 miles away and the fastest way to get a message there would be on horseback, if one had the means to deliver that message. That's why he states near the end of Verse 10 that he was concerned for that church but had no way to express that concern other than through prayer. It was a "coincidence" that Paul prayed for that church from his prison cell (or house arrest) as "all of sudden" a person shows up with a gift from that church. It was Paul's proof that all the Christians in that church really cared for Paul.
- i) Does this mean if I pray for a cash gift to show up on my doorstep, it'll happen? It doesn't work that way. I have heard a few stories of people who were really down to "nothing" and God has miraculously provided for them at such moments. As to the rest of us, God provides the circumstances to give us what we need (not all we desire). The simple point is God not only cares for our salvation but also our lives as we use them as a witness for Him and Paul shares that example here for us.

- b) Speaking of Paul and receiving gifts, notice he says near the beginning of Verse 10 that he knows how to be content with a little or a lot. Given the fact that Paul spent the better part of his adult life traveling from town to town preaching the gospel, I'm sure Paul had times of near starvation and other times where people took him in and provided for him. To be a professional missionary for Jesus is never life of luxury but it does have its moments as I am aware of many missionaries who loved that lifestyle as they get to lead people close to Jesus by that work.
  - c) So what does a prisoner do with money anyway? Realize Rome didn't tell their prisoners "You're under arrest so we'll provide your food and lodging for free while you await for a trial date". Paul needed that money to pay for his "accommodations". I'm speculating but I can see Paul thinking, "I remember when I left Philippi and that church supported me as I went on to Thessalonica to preach the gospel. (That's in Acts Chapter 16 as well.) It'd be a great thing for me and for them if "all of a sudden" someone from that church came here with a financial gift to cover my costs! My point is Paul just didn't just pray for Christians he knew, he also prayed for his own needs. I picture Paul praying (yes while chained to a pair of guards), "Lord I know I'm saved and I know that whatever happens to me it's Your will for me, but it would "make my day" if someone from maybe the Philippian church or another group that I helped just showed up here with a financial gift!"
  - d) The point here is that Paul was grateful for the gift. It wasn't the exact amount of the gift he was concerned about as much as the fact that he realized that church cared for him and was willing to help Paul in his hour of need. Again, I never promise that God will act like He has in the past. I just know from experience that God truly cares for us and He'll help with our needs when we can't do it ourselves. OK, what about the example you gave of a child dying of cancer? Where is the help there? Sometimes God's answer is, "I'm calling it a life for that person so they can be with Me and without all that pain!" Again the point is that life is all about accepting His will and doing the best we can while accepting that fact.
  - e) Speaking of Paul learning how to be content in all situations, let's get back to Verse 12.
9. Verse 12 (cont.): I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
- a) Verse 13 is one of the most quoted verses in the New Testament. I recall a man at my gym who wore a t-shirt with that verse that he wore while lifting weights. Let me pause here to discuss the idea of "everything". We may desire to be the world's fastest person or another great achievement. This verse doesn't mean that if we believe in God, "We'll be Number 1 in the world" at something. Remember that God provides us with the power to do what's His will, not our will. I've met many a person who've had wonderful gifts to do amazing things. They still had to work hard at it even though God gave them that gift. We might have a gift for "something", but we have to develop it in order to use it. Again, the issue is about doing His will, not our will.
  - b) Now let's look at Verse 13 in context of Verse 12. Paul states that he's learned the secret of being content in all situations. That's what Verse 13 is all about. I'm willing to bet Paul had many moments in his missionary career of having little to no food and having other times of plenty. Either way, Paul realized God gave him the strength to go through it!
  - c) As my regulars know, I love to think of "extreme" examples. Let's suppose we're in horrid pain at the moment. Does that mean we should just say Verse 13 over and over again and never ask for help? Of course not. God wants us to use the resources He's provided for us in our life. The underlying issue is whether we live or die, we accept as His will. It doesn't mean we ever stop trying. It simply means we stop worrying about the outcome as we're accepting that outcome as His will through whatever we're dealing with.
  - d) Remember the underlying issue is how to be joyful in all situations. If we accept whatever happens as His will, I promise we can't help but being joyful in the toughest of situations.



10. Verse 14: Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.
- a) This is Paul explaining how the Philippians benefit from what Paul's going through. They could have just thought, "OK, here's some money for Paul. I guess that means we can't go out for that big steak dinner tonight!" There's an old Christian saying that goes, "You can take your money with you into the next life. The secret is to send it up ahead of time!" It's back to the idea that we can't out give God no matter how hard we try. I'm not saying we can get rich by giving. I'm just saying God will be a debtor to no person!
  - b) OK then I'll bite. How did the Philippians benefit other than some eternal reward for that gift? Remember what God desires of us, to be a witness for Him. By "putting our money where our mouth is", we're showing people that we care for other Christians. My guess is other non-Christians in Philippi heard about this gift being sent. At the least we know the prison guards knew of the gift. We never know who's watching what we're doing. We're always "on the clock" for Jesus whether we're aware of it or not. No I'm not saying you've got to write me a check to be a good Christian. I'm saying that it benefits our lives if we're using them to make a difference for other Christians. That's why Paul was convinced that those Christians benefited far more by what they gave than by whatever Paul actually got by receiving that gift.
  - c) OK, I beat that point to death. Paul's going to expand on that point in the next few verses.
11. Verse 15: Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;<sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.<sup>17</sup> Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.
- a) Paul essentially states that of all the churches he started on that particular missionary trip after he started the one in Philippi, no other church sent Paul a financial gift. It's time for a little of Paul's missionary history: If you study the book of Acts carefully, Paul went on a total of three missionary journeys. Realize the events of Acts covers decades. Paul started the church in Philippi on the 2nd Missionary Journey. That story is in Chapter 16. So Paul is saying here that all the other churches that he started post-Philippi never sent him a gift of financial support. For that fact alone, Paul is eternally grateful for the church members there. One of the churches Paul started a church in after Philippi was in Thessalonica. At that time, Paul was financially hurting and the Philippians got money to him then.
  - b) Verse 17 is the "punch line". Paul says the reason he's grateful was not for receiving all of the cash, but that God "credits their account".
    - i) So do we have a bank account with God? Does our eternal rewards depend upon the amount in that account? Don't know. What I do suspect is we're rewarded in heaven based on how much time and effort we made to use what resources God's given us and used for His glory. If a person served faithfully for years in mission work but didn't give a lot of money to other causes, I doubt their eternal rewards are hurt because of that. On the other hand, someone who has millions and "only" gave say 10% of their income, personally, I'm positive the missionaries rewards is going to be far greater than a rich person who gave a percentage of their income.
    - ii) So will the members of the Philippine church be greatly rewarded for their gift? I would say yes, simply because Paul teaches us we are rewarded when we give of our "hard earnings" to help Christian causes. Again, based on historical evidence of who lived in that city in that time, I seriously doubt the Christians were loaded with money. I think the gift was modest and Paul didn't complain, "Hey is that all you can raise?" Paul didn't say, "I'm sending Epaphroditus back for Round 2 and I will condemn all of you if you don't write a really big check!" Instead Paul shows his gratitude for what they gave and argued that they eternally benefited for what they gave to Paul.

- iii) That leads me back to the idea of "Can you take it with you to heaven?" Yes we can if we "send it up ahead of time". So is the amount we give effect our eternity? I'll start by saying what we give is between God and ourselves. We shouldn't give all our money to God as He doesn't expect us to be a poor beggar because we gave. It is not written anywhere in the New Testament that one should give exactly 10% of one's take home income. You don't find any references in the New Testament to a Christian giving 10%. I simply hold the view that we should give "generously and cheerfully". I we grumble as we give, keep it. If we're joyful to give because it will help the Christian church, then we give accordingly. I simply get in the habit that when I get paid, I figure part of it goes to God. I can't out give God as this chapter teaches heavily.
  - iv) There, now that I've made everyone feel guilty that we're not giving enough let us get back to the text. We're almost to the end.
12. Verse 18: I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.<sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
- a) We're in the "wrap up" phase of this letter again. I think Paul hints here that all the money that church raised was given to him. It was mentioned as to imply that Epaphroditus did not cheat Paul and charge a delivery fee! Remember that Paul was effectively in prison. I would bet that the money sent was enough to cover the expenses of his incarceration for a good while. Paul compares the gift to a "fragrant offering". This is a "Jewish thing" that a Gentile in the Roman world would understand as well. Both in the official temple, and in pagan temples, it was common for certain types of offerings that "smell nice". The reason he compared that financial gift to a fragrant offering is because that nice smelling offering is because those types of offerings are associated with prayer. Just as "nice smells" rise up like smoke rising, so it's a picture of our prayers going up to heaven.
  - b) The shorter version is just as God "credits our account" when we give to Christian causes, it is like a prayer going up to heaven. The even shorter version is it's pleasing to God.
  - c) Verse 19 is another bible promise and this one is a good one. It is that God will supply all of our needs. Based on a little bible research, realize this applies to financial needs. Think of all the time many of us spend worrying about money. Now realize that God's going to supply all our needs. OK, that's going to require a few more details:
    - i) Does that mean if we're a devout Christian we can kick back at home all day as He will rain food down on us? Not that I've ever seen. It's also not a promise that all of our desires will be fulfilled.
    - ii) David wrote in the Psalms, "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread." (Psalm 37:25.)
      - a) I believe David's point is in effect the same as Paul's. That God never will forsake those who seek Him. Again, it's not an excuse to be lazy and yes a Christian can still suffer from tragedy. It is a promise that as long as one is seeking God and living as He desires we live "we can't lose". I'll take it one step further and say that as long as we're making every effort to live as He desires we live, He will take care of our financial needs. Again, this isn't an excuse to be lazy, but a reminder that our hard work for Jesus is somehow going to be paid back to us in this life and in the next one.
    - iii) By the way, if you're ever going through a period of your life where you're having doubts if God is real, try putting Him to the test by giving financially. Again, God will not be a debtor to no person. I'm not saying to give away all we got, but just a simple test to prove God is real is go give away time or resources for Him and watch what happens.

13. Verse 20: To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
- a) OK it's wrap-up time as we're near the end of the letter. Remember that we don't pray to God for His sake, but for ours. God doesn't have a big ego where He needs to hear us say how much we love Him. We give God the glory to remember who's really in charge of our lives. We give God the glory to remind ourselves to be grateful for His salvation plan for us. When life is at its worst, that's when we praise Him to remind ourselves who's really in charge of our lives, Him or us? If we're really willing to trust Him with every aspect of our lives, we can't lose no matter what happens.
  - b) Speaking of happy endings, let's finish this book.
14. Verse 21: Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. <sup>22</sup> All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.
- a) As I stated earlier, Paul doesn't take the time to single out many of the Christians living in that city. Paul simply refers to all believers as saints. If you believe Jesus is God and He is in charge of your life and He died for all your sins, then you are a saint! Accept it as such.
  - b) So who are the "brothers" who are with Paul? I'm sure that includes Epaphroditus. Back in Chapter 1, Verse 1 it states that Timothy was with Paul when he wrote it. I also ponder if that included some of the Roman soldiers who are chained to Paul. I'm sure he saw all those guards as a "captive" audience, and based on Verse 22, I'm pretty sure some of them actually converted to Christianity based on Paul's testimony. The point is that Paul didn't think of himself as being superior to other Christians who were with Him in that room or even in that city. Paul thought of himself as just another Christian who God called to use his life to make a difference for Him.
  - c) Remember that Paul was a prisoner in Rome. Somehow other Christians in that city had a way of communicating with Paul. He wanted to make the point before this letter was sent that there are people on Caesar's payroll that were Christians. It's Paul's way of saying the Gospel Message is spreading and even those in the "highest ranks of human government" include some believers. I once read about a man who did some research about the people Paul named in his writings who were Rome based, and compared that list to records that we have about that period of time. I'll just say that nonbiblical historical records confirm the names Paul gave as belief in Jesus was growing in the Capital city.
    - i) Also remember why this was important to the Philippian Christians. That city did consider itself to be very "Pro-Roman" as it was filled with many retired and active soldiers for Rome. By telling the Philippians that Christianity was also growing in Rome is a way for the Christians in Philippi to "relate" to them. That's why Paul is mentioning that fact here at the end of the letter.
    - ii) OK then, time for the last line:
15. Verse 23: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.
- a) To understand this last verse, first we have to remember that we're "three-fold" beings. It is the idea that all of us have a physical body. All of us have a soul that lives in our body. All of us who are saved also have the Spirit of God taking up residence within us. What I have come to realize about God's Spirit is He will never go where He's not wanted. What I mean by that is we still have the free will to turn from God at anytime, but we also have God's Spirit within us willing to draw us closer to Him if we desire to. That Spirit is also who helps us pray about what is His desire and leads us closer to Him.
  - b) That leads me to "grace". That's the idea of getting a gift we didn't earn. We get that gift as a "bonus prize" for believing Jesus is God. Let's be honest, God could say, "You're now saved, I'll see you after you die, now go do whatever you want in the meantime!" What I am getting it is we were saved for a purpose! That purpose is to glorify God while we're living this life! That's why we get the Spirit of God living inside of us, so if we choose we can use our lives to glorify Him by how we live. That's what His grace is all about. That is also why Jesus wants us to be full of joy as His witnesses to the world around us.

- c) Now that's a happy way to end this lesson and to end this book. Therefore, I'm not going to add to that, but cut it off here. Since this is my last lesson on Philippi, the next page is a list of my sources that I used to prepare for this study. Therefore, if you want to read more about Paul's letter to Philippi, I recommend the sources listed on the next page.
16. Let's pray: Father, we don't know what You have planned for the rest of our lives. Help us to use the time You've given us to make a difference for You. With the Holy Spirit guiding us, we can be used by the God of the Universe to make a difference for Him. Make it obvious to us what's Your desire for our lives right now. Then help us to do what's "logical" given that realization. Help us to realize our time is Your time. Our life is Your life and may we never waste that resource. Help us to glorify You by how we live. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

## Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted me to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to them further via the places listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the bible is the bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in preparation of my lessons. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV), Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) (no copyright on that version); the English Standard Version. (ESV). The copyright information for the ESV is in point #7 below. The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189; "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text used in these lessons (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over these lessons. The specific commentaries just on Philippians are listed first, and then bible-wide commentaries. They're listed in alphabetical order by author. References to audio commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Philippians by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>.
2. Commentary on Philippians by Bob Davis. They are available for free in MP3® format at <http://northcountrychapel.com/studies/>.
3. Commentary on Philippians by David Guzik. It is available for free in audio and text format. The web address is [http://www.enduringword.com/library\\_commentaries.htm](http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.htm) Mr. Davis quotes a lot of famous authors from the 19th and 20th Century on these books and I've used some of those quotes.
4. Commentary on Philippians by John MacArthur. Available for free in MP3® at [www.gty.org](http://www.gty.org)
5. The English Standard Version Study Bible; Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers".
6. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every bible verse. It is available through Zondervan. Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this same source.
7. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: [www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm](http://www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm).
8. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997); ISBN: 0849912229.
9. I also refer sometimes to J.P. Moreland apologetic ministry which is at [www.jpmoreland.com](http://www.jpmoreland.com) and Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at [www.str.org](http://www.str.org) I also quote from Dennis Prager on many Jewish issues. He is a nationally syndicated radio broadcaster. See [dennisprager.com](http://dennisprager.com).

My apology if I have quoted someone else and I have forgotten to include them in this list.