

20 June 2026

THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS “Conclusion of the Epistle”

Phil 4:4-9, 11-13

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

Today, we conclude our meditation on the “Letter of Joy,” also known as St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. The passage begins with the Apostle’s exhortation to rejoice in the Lord. In fact, he repeats it twice, adding the word “always.”

In recent meditations, we have heard St. Paul explain the reason for his joy, even though his external circumstances could undoubtedly be considered difficult. Paul is in prison and does not yet know how his trial will end. During his first missionary journey, he endured much persecution and rejection. Objectively speaking, none of this seems to be a cause for joy. But it is important to understand the perspective from which he views things.

We have discussed the priority that defines his life. The Apostle wants to proclaim the Gospel at Jesus’ command and strengthen the faithful entrusted to him so they won’t lose heart in following the Lord. If he achieves these two goals, then Paul has cause for great joy, and adverse circumstances are of little consequence. He even welcomes them willingly if they serve to spread the Gospel. This is a very mature spiritual attitude on the part of the Apostle to the Gentiles. We have heard that if he could choose, Saint

Paul would be willing to stay on earth longer to support the community, despite his deep desire to depart and be with the Lord forever.

The source of the Apostle's unshakable joy is God Himself. God has awakened in him a deep, self-sacrificing love. His life belongs to Christ, whose love burns within him and drives him to proclaim His Kingdom. Christ has become his life.

St. Paul wants the community in Philippi to experience this joy as well and to always live in it. With their eyes fixed on the Lord and the firm conviction that God will use all circumstances for the good of those who love Him and for His glory, this joy can grow day by day. It is joy in and because of God.

After adding some personal greetings to his letter, Paul ends it with a series of beneficial exhortations for everyone. Closely linked to joy is the call to be free from worry. When it arises from intimate union with God, it becomes more and more a source of joy, because one experiences and discovers with increasing intensity just how much God cares for His own. Gratitude for the Heavenly Father's loving providence generates an inner security that fills the soul with joy. Life becomes lighter; the soul can focus more on what is essential; and a person's entire inner state becomes more serene.

This must be accompanied by prayerful trust in God, through which we entrust everything within us and all the circumstances of our lives to Him. Thus, the peace that comes from God enters and remains in the heart. This inner peace makes us instruments of peace for those around us because it is a peace that the world cannot give (Jn 14:27). It is the peace that springs from union with God and keeps us anchored to Him.

The Apostle then exhorts us to strive for virtue and to embody in our lives those values that bear witness to God and are signs of His presence to others, as well as being a source of healing. Indeed, who would not be moved by the goodness of a person whose words and being radiate sincerity and integrity?

These instructions from Saint Paul take on even greater significance when considered in the context of the mission entrusted to him. Even when circumstances barely allow for proclaiming the Gospel, we always have the option of evangelizing through the witness of our lives. If we internalize and put into practice the values that stem from our faith, God can reach people through us, even when verbal proclamation is no longer possible.

Finally, the Apostle reminds the community once again that they must imitate his

example. He points out that, by God's grace, he has learned to be content in any situation. Here, too, we can speak of serenity in God, knowing that we are always sustained by Him, even in tribulations.

Not only must the community in Philippi imitate this example, but we, centuries later, still have much to learn from it. Thanks be to the Lord, St. Paul's letters have been handed down to us. Thus, the instructions he gave to a specific Christian community at that time continue to be relevant today for all who wish to follow Jesus with all their hearts. And we have not only his words but also the witness of the holy life of the Apostle to the Gentiles, to whom we owe so much.

Reflection on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-old-testament-in-the-light-of-the-new-covenant/>

Reflection on today's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/carefree-in-the-love-of-god-2/>