

Outline of Philippians Emphasizing Love for God in Speech and Behavior

The Epistle to the Philippians is often called Paul's "hymn of joy" - a letter radiating with happiness despite being written from prison. Written around AD 61-62 during Paul's Roman imprisonment, this letter demonstrates how **love for God produces joy, unity, and contentment regardless of circumstances**. Unlike his other epistles that address specific problems, Philippians is a letter of encouragement and thanks, showing how mature Christian love expresses itself through partnership in the gospel, Christ-like humility, single-minded devotion, and joyful contentment[1][2][3][4].

I. Philosophy for Christian Living - "To Live is Christ" (Philippians 1)

Paul establishes the foundation for Christian living by demonstrating that **love for God makes Christ the center and purpose of all existence**, even in suffering and uncertainty.

Partnership in the Gospel (1:1-11)

Paul begins by identifying himself and Timothy as "servants of Christ Jesus" (1:1), immediately establishing their identity as those who serve out of love[3][5]. His greeting reveals the deep affection and partnership that characterizes relationships rooted in love for God.

Thanksgiving for Partnership (1:3-8):

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (1:3-5)[6][7].

Paul's joy stems not from circumstances but from the Philippians' faithful participation in gospel ministry. This partnership demonstrates how love for God creates bonds that transcend geographical distance and personal hardship[8].

Prayer for Discerning Love (1:9-11):

This prayer represents one of the most comprehensive descriptions of mature Christian love in the New Testament[9][10][11]:

"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (1:9-11)[9][10].

Key Elements of This Prayer:

- **Love that Abounds:** Not static but continuously growing
- **Love with Knowledge:** Informed by truth, not merely emotional
- **Love with Discernment:** Wise love that can distinguish between good and excellent[9][11]
- **Love that Produces Purity:** Moral excellence flowing from love
- **Love for God's Glory:** Ultimate purpose is God's honor and praise
- **Love for God Expressed:** Praying for others' spiritual growth; desiring love that is both passionate and wise
- **Speech Impact:** Intercession for fellow believers; thanksgiving that focuses on spiritual rather than material blessings
- **Behavior Impact:** Partnership in gospel ministry; investment in others' spiritual development

Gospel Advanced Through Suffering (1:12-18)

Paul demonstrates how love for God transforms perspective on suffering and setbacks[12][4].

Suffering as Gospel Opportunity (1:12-14):

"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ" (1:12-13)[12][3].

Paul's imprisonment became a testimony throughout Caesar's household. His love for God enabled him to see suffering as an opportunity for gospel advancement rather than personal tragedy[12].

Rejoicing Despite Opposition (1:15-18):

Even when some preach Christ "from envy and rivalry" to "afflict" Paul, he responds: "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice" (1:18)[3].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Using suffering to advance God's kingdom; rejoicing when Christ is proclaimed regardless of motives
- **Speech Impact:** Testimony that points to Christ rather than self-pity; encouraging others through example
- **Behavior Impact:** Finding purpose in pain; maintaining joy despite opposition

"To Live is Christ" (1:19-30)

This section contains one of the most profound statements about Christian purpose and priority[4][13].

The Christian's Dilemma (1:21-24):

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account" (1:21-24)[4][13].

Paul's entire existence is defined by Christ. Death would mean immediate presence with Christ (gain), but life means continued service to others. Love for God creates this tension between personal desire and sacrificial service[13].

Conduct Worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30):

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27)[14][15].

This phrase translates a word meaning "to live as a citizen" - particularly relevant in Philippi, a Roman colony where citizenship was prized[3][16]. Paul calls believers to live as citizens of heaven with conduct that honors the gospel[14].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Making Christ the supreme value and purpose of life; living for God's glory rather than personal comfort
- **Speech Impact:** Testimony that demonstrates Christ as life's highest treasure; encouraging others to persevere
- **Behavior Impact:** Conduct worthy of the gospel; standing firm together for the faith; courage in face of opposition

II. Pattern for Christian Living - "The Mind of Christ" (Philippians 2)

Chapter 2 provides the supreme example of how love for God expresses itself through humble, self-sacrificing service, using Christ as the ultimate model[17][15][16].

Unity Through Humility (2:1-4)

Paul appeals for church unity based on their shared experience of God's love[17][16].

The Appeal (2:1):

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy..." Paul bases his appeal on four realities of Christian experience: encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, fellowship of the Spirit, and divine affection and mercy[17].

The Response (2:2-4):

"Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing

from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (2:2-4)[17][16].

Key Principles:

- **Same Mind and Love:** Unity in purpose and affection
- **Humility over Ambition:** Considering others more significant than self
- **Others' Interests:** Looking beyond personal concerns to serve others
- **Love for God Expressed:** Using God's love as motivation for unity; preferring others in humility
- **Speech Impact:** Words that promote harmony rather than division; encouraging rather than self-promoting speech
- **Behavior Impact:** Self-sacrificing service; putting others' needs before personal desires

Christ's Example of Humility (2:5-11)

This passage, often called the "Christ Hymn," provides the supreme example of self-sacrificing love[15][16][18].

The Mind of Christ (2:5):

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" – the same attitude of humility and service that Christ demonstrated[16].

Christ's Humiliation (2:6-8):

"Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (2:6-8)[15][16].

Key Elements:

- **Divine Nature:** Christ possessed the very nature of God
- **Self-Emptying:** He voluntarily set aside divine privileges (not divine nature)
- **Servant Form:** Took on human nature and servant's role
- **Ultimate Humility:** Obedient to death on a cross - the most shameful execution

Christ's Exaltation (2:9-11):

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (2:9-11)[18].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Following Christ's example of humble obedience; serving others sacrificially; acknowledging Christ's lordship
- **Speech Impact:** Confessing Jesus as Lord; speaking with humility rather than pride
- **Behavior Impact:** Self-emptying service; obedience even when costly; preferring others over self

Working Out Salvation (2:12-18)

Paul applies Christ's example to the believers' daily living[19].

Fear and Trembling (2:12-13):

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (2:12-13)[19].

This paradox shows that Christians must actively participate in their spiritual growth while recognizing that God provides both the desire and ability to please Him[19].

Shining as Lights (2:14-16):

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life" (2:14-16).

- **Love for God Expressed:** Reverent obedience; allowing God to work through you; being lights in darkness
- **Speech Impact:** Avoiding complaining and arguing; holding fast to God's word
- **Behavior Impact:** Blameless conduct that reflects God's character; joyful service without grumbling

Examples of Service (2:19-30)

Paul presents Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of selfless service motivated by love for God and others[3].

Timothy's Character (2:19-24):

"I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel" (2:20-22)[3].

Epaphroditus' Sacrifice (2:25-30):

"He nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me" (2:30)[3].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Genuine concern for others' welfare; seeking Christ's interests over personal gain; risking life for gospel work
- **Speech Impact:** Commending faithful servants; honoring those who sacrifice for ministry
- **Behavior Impact:** Proven service in gospel ministry; completing tasks despite personal cost

III. Prize for Christian Living - "Pressing On" (Philippians 3)

Chapter 3 demonstrates how love for God creates single-minded devotion that counts all earthly achievements as loss compared to knowing Christ[20][19].

Warning Against False Confidence (3:1-3)

Paul warns against trusting in external religious performance rather than Christ[20].

Rejoice in the Lord (3:1):

"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you."

Joy in the Lord provides protection against false teaching and misplaced confidence[20].

Beware of Dogs (3:2-3):

Paul warns against those who put confidence in the flesh rather than worshiping "by the Spirit of God" and glorying "in Christ Jesus" (3:3).

Paul's Former Confidence (3:4-6)

Paul lists his impressive religious credentials to show that he had every reason for confidence in human achievement[20][19].

His Pedigree (3:4-6):

"If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless."

Paul's resume was impeccable by religious standards - ethnic purity, tribal honor, linguistic heritage, theological precision, passionate zeal, and legal righteousness[20].

Counting All as Loss (3:7-11)

This passage contains one of the most dramatic value reversals in Scripture[12][20].

The Great Exchange (3:7-8):

"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (3:7-8)[12][20].

Paul changed his entire accounting system. Everything he once considered assets (gains) he now counts as liabilities (losses) because of "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"[12].

The Goal (3:9-11):

"And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (3:9-11).

Paul's goal is not religious achievement but intimate relationship with Christ, including sharing both His power and His sufferings[20].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Counting all earthly achievements as loss for knowing Christ; pursuing intimacy with God over religious status
- **Speech Impact:** Testimony about Christ's surpassing worth; refusing to boast in human accomplishments
- **Behavior Impact:** Abandoning false confidence in flesh; pursuing righteousness through faith; willingly sharing Christ's sufferings

Pressing Toward the Goal (3:12-21)

Paul concludes with his philosophy of Christian progress and citizenship[20][19].

Not Yet Perfect (3:12-14):

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (3:12-14)[20][19].

Key Principles:

- **Honest Assessment:** Acknowledging spiritual immaturity
- **Single Focus:** "One thing I do" - concentrated effort
- **Forgetting the Past:** Not dwelling on failures or successes
- **Straining Forward:** Intense effort toward the goal
- **Divine Calling:** The prize is God's upward call in Christ

Citizens of Heaven (3:20-21):

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (3:20-21)[21][22].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Single-minded pursuit of God's calling; living as citizens of heaven; eagerly awaiting Christ's return
- **Speech Impact:** Refusing to dwell on past failures or successes; encouraging others toward spiritual maturity
- **Behavior Impact:** Pressing forward despite obstacles; living with eternal perspective; straining toward spiritual goals

IV. Power for Christian Living - "I Can Do All Things" (Philippians 4)

The final chapter demonstrates how love for God produces joy, peace, contentment, and generous partnership regardless of circumstances[2][23][24][19].

Standing Firm and Rejoicing (4:1-7)

Paul concludes his practical instructions with calls to stability, unity, and joy[23].

Stand Firm in the Lord (4:1):

"Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved."

Unity Among Believers (4:2-3):

Paul addresses a specific conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, urging them to "agree in the Lord" and asking others to "help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel" (4:2-3)[23].

Rejoice Always (4:4-7):

This passage contains one of the most beloved promises in Scripture[2][23][24]:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:4-7)[2][23][24].

Key Elements:

- **Constant Rejoicing:** Joy rooted in relationship with the Lord, not circumstances
- **Gentleness:** Reasonable, gracious attitude toward others
- **No Anxiety:** Replacing worry with prayer and thanksgiving
- **God's Peace:** Supernatural tranquility that guards heart and mind
- **Love for God Expressed:** Standing firm in the Lord; promoting unity; rejoicing in the Lord always; trusting God with all anxieties
- **Speech Impact:** Words that promote agreement; prayer and thanksgiving replacing worry; gentle speech toward others
- **Behavior Impact:** Stability in the Lord; helping fellow believers; demonstrating gentleness and reasonableness

Think on These Things (4:8-9)

Paul provides a filter for Christian thinking and practice[23][24].

Mental Discipline (4:8):

"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" (4:8)[23][24].

Paul lists eight qualities that should occupy Christian thinking:

1. **True** - aligned with reality and God's truth
2. **Noble** - worthy of respect and honor
3. **Right** - morally just and fair
4. **Pure** - morally clean and undefiled
5. **Lovely** - beautiful and attractive
6. **Admirable** - of good reputation
7. **Excellent** - virtuous and morally superior
8. **Praiseworthy** - deserving of commendation

Practice and Peace (4:9):

"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you" (4:9)[24].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Disciplining thoughts to focus on virtue and excellence; practicing godly principles; seeking God's peace
- **Speech Impact:** Speaking about things that are excellent and praiseworthy; avoiding corrupt or worthless conversation
- **Behavior Impact:** Living according to godly principles; demonstrating virtue in daily conduct; modeling Christ-like character

Contentment in All Circumstances (4:10-13)

This section contains one of the most quoted verses about Christian strength and contentment[2][19].

Learning Contentment (4:11-12):

"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need" (4:11-12)[2][19].

Paul learned contentment through experience. The word "learned" suggests this was not natural but acquired through practice and divine grace[2].

Strength in Christ (4:13):

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (4:13)[2][19].

This famous verse is often misapplied to any difficult task. In context, it specifically refers to finding contentment in all circumstances through Christ's enabling power[2][19].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Finding satisfaction in Christ rather than circumstances; trusting God's strength for all situations
- **Speech Impact:** Testimony of contentment and God's faithfulness; avoiding complaining about circumstances
- **Behavior Impact:** Demonstrating stability through changing circumstances; relying on Christ's strength rather than human ability

Partnership in Giving (4:14-23)

Paul concludes by thanking the Philippians for their financial support and promising God's provision[2][3][8].

Sharing in Affliction (4:14-16):

"Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only" (4:14-16)[3][8].

The Philippians were Paul's only supporting church during his early ministry - a unique partnership in gospel advancement[8].

God's Provision (4:17-20):

"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen" (4:17-20)[2][3].

Paul sees their gift not as mere financial support but as spiritual investment that produces fruit to their credit and pleases God. Their generosity demonstrates partnership in gospel ministry[8].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Generous giving as worship and ministry partnership; trusting God's provision; seeking others' spiritual profit
- **Speech Impact:** Expressing gratitude for others' generosity; giving glory to God; promising God's faithful provision
- **Behavior Impact:** Sacrificial giving to support ministry; partnership in gospel advancement; demonstration of practical love

Key Points All Christians Should Know from Philippians

Theme	Key Teaching	Impact on Speech and Behavior
Christ as Life's Center	"To live is Christ" (1:21)	All decisions and priorities evaluated by what honors Christ most
Discerning Love	Love growing in knowledge and discernment (1:9-10)	Love guided by wisdom and truth, not mere emotion
Mind of Christ	Humble, self-sacrificing service (2:5-8)	Following Christ's example of putting others before self
Pressing Forward	Forgetting past, straining toward goal (3:13-14)	Single-minded pursuit of God's calling without dwelling on past
Rejoicing Always	Joy in the Lord regardless of circumstances (4:4)	Constant joy rooted in relationship with Christ
Contentment	Satisfaction in Christ through all circumstances (4:11-13)	Finding sufficiency in Christ's strength rather than external conditions
Gospel Partnership	Active participation in spreading the gospel (1:5)	Generous support and prayer for gospel ministry

Summary

Philippians demonstrates that **love for God produces joy, unity, and contentment that transcend circumstances**. Written from prison, this letter shows how mature Christian love expresses itself through:

Speech that reflects love for God:

- Thanksgiving and prayer for fellow believers' spiritual growth
- Testimony that focuses on Christ's worth rather than personal accomplishments
- Words that promote unity rather than division
- Gentle, reasonable communication with others
- Confession of Christ as supreme Lord and treasure
- Thanksgiving and prayer replacing anxiety and complaint

Behavior that demonstrates love for God:

- Partnership in gospel ministry through practical support and prayer
- Humble, self-sacrificing service modeled after Christ
- Using suffering and setbacks as opportunities for gospel advancement
- Single-minded pursuit of knowing Christ above all achievements
- Contentment and joy regardless of external circumstances
- Generous giving as worship and ministry investment
- Standing firm in the Lord despite opposition

Relationships marked by love and unity:

- Considering others more significant than yourself
- Helping fellow believers in their spiritual journey
- Resolving conflicts through appeal to shared love for Christ
- Supporting those who sacrifice for ministry
- Encouraging others through example of faithfulness

The epistle's structure - moving from philosophy to pattern to prize to power - shows the progression of Christian maturity. Love for God begins with right thinking about Christ's centrality, develops through following His example of humble service, grows through single-minded devotion to knowing Him, and culminates in supernatural power for joyful, contented living.

Philippians calls every believer to examine what truly occupies the center of their life. Paul's dramatic testimony - counting all former achievements as "rubbish" compared to "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" - challenges Christians to evaluate their priorities honestly. When Christ becomes our supreme treasure, everything else falls into proper perspective.

The letter's emphasis on joy (mentioned 16 times in 104 verses) demonstrates that authentic love for God produces supernatural happiness that cannot be destroyed by external circumstances. This joy flows from understanding our citizenship in heaven, our partnership in the gospel, and our certain hope in Christ's return.

Ultimately, Philippians teaches that the Christian life is not about trying harder but about loving Christ more deeply. When He becomes our greatest treasure, humble service becomes natural, contentment becomes possible, and joy becomes constant. This transformed living becomes a powerful witness to a watching world that seeks happiness in temporary things while believers find lasting joy in their eternal relationship with Christ.

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