

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY FOURTEEN

A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23

In many ways, Philippians reads like a love letter from God's heart to ours, so it's almost sad that we have come to His final words. Reading a love letter is not like reading junk mail, thank goodness. We don't glance at it and then trash it. Oh no, we absorb it, letting our eyes linger over every word.

—Charles R. Swindoll

IT'S an incredible letter, isn't it? Just a few more well-chosen words and Paul's epistle of immense affection comes to a tender end. But before we enter into Paul's gracious conclusion, let's turn and take a brief look back at how far we've come through this study of Philippians.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Whatever your situation, the words of this remarkable letter can encourage you, offering joy, hope, and encouragement for all who've felt beaten down by life's cares. Take a few moments to read back through some of your favorite passages from Philippians. Allow Paul's words to refresh you anew, like a cool afternoon breeze . . . and praise God for His faithfulness in providing the living, active, healing Word for you.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Philippians 4:19–23



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Paul wrote with a sincere affection for the believers at Philippi. His letter flows with expressions of endearment and genuine spiritual concern you'd expect from a beloved pastor tending his prized congregation. Survey the following sections from Paul's letter, and write a sentence summary about the significance of each.

Philippians 1:6

Philippians 1:12–14

Philippians 2:5–11

Philippians 3:12–14

Philippians 4:11–19



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Observation: Looking Closely at the Apostle's Words

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. Paul concluded his letter with a climactic expression of personal affection. Take a few minutes to study carefully what he included in those final words.

How Do We Proceed? Philippians 4:19–23

The sad thing about great letters is that they come to an end. Tears may well have flowed from the eyes of the aged apostle as he wrote this goodbye as well as from the Philippians' eyes when they read his closing remarks:

And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

Now all glory to God our Father forever and ever! Amen.

Give my greetings to each of God's holy people—all who belong to Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. And all the rest of God's people send you greetings, too, especially those in Caesar's household.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (Philippians 4:19–23)

Go back through this passage and circle each time Paul mentioned God and Jesus Christ. Often, by observing repeated words and phrases you can determine the biblical author's focus.

How many times did Paul mention *God*? How many times did he mention *Christ*?



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What other words do you see that Paul repeated in these few verses?

In this brief span of verses, Paul wrote two blessings for the Philippian believers. Do you see them? Which verses are “blessings” toward the Philippians?

Paul mentioned groups of people, moving from broad to more specific descriptions. Can you see each group he mentioned (Philippians 4:21–22)? List them as they appear in consecutive order.

Paul apparently had both God and his Savior on his mind as well as the people in Rome and Philippi who had come to mean so much to him personally. As he concluded, he clearly indicated the ultimate meaning of his intimate and tender salutation.



Interpretation: Glory and Greetings—Philippians 4:20–22

Interpretation involves a process that helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* Interpretation flows from the work you do in observing what the text says. As he finished his letter, Paul highlighted the glory of God and the personal greetings appropriate between God’s people.



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The Glory of the Lord's Plan

Paul closed his letter to the Philippians with a focus on the *glory* of God. Chuck Swindoll taught that the Greek use of the word translated “glory” can mean “brightness, splendor, and radiance,” as in the glory that shone in the holy of holies described in the Old Testament (Exodus 26:33). But it can also refer to “the credit, the place of significance.”

Which meaning do you think Paul intended here in Philippians 4:20?

How does Paul giving all glory to God reflect the overall emphasis of his letter on the Christlike virtue of humility (Philippians 2)?

Why would it have been important for Paul to end this letter with an emphasis on God receiving the glory?



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The Greeting of the Saints

The greetings Paul exchanged are easily understood, but for centuries, imaginations have been spurred by his intriguing reference to “Caesar’s household” in Philippians 4:22. To whom do you think Paul was referring?

If you’re using a study Bible, locate the scholarly notes (usually in the margins) and see if there is an entry on verse 22 related to the identity of “Caesar’s household.” What do you learn?

This may also be a good time to reference a commentary on Philippians to study what views are proposed as to the identity of the people from “Caesar’s household.”

What becomes clear is that, despite Paul’s unusual circumstances (being in house arrest in Rome!), the message of Christ flourished in that stronghold of paganism and intense persecution of Christians. Even members of Nero’s own family might have embraced Paul’s gospel, falling in love with the Savior!

What joy! What comfort! What grace is there in knowing God is able and always working for His glory and for our good . . . even in the most trying times and perilous places.

But let me tell you something: It’s good what God’s doing, even though it makes no sense to you. He isn’t finished. And when it is all done, and when in panorama it is all unrolled in front of you, in the presence of His glory, when you stand faultless, you will see it was good; it was right.
—Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: An Expression of Praise

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Paul's words are echoed through the very end of the New Testament witness. And in the final epistle before the Revelation, Jude concluded his compelling letter to Christians facing persecution with a similar exhortation as Paul to stand firm to the end.

But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.

And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.

Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All Glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen. (Jude 20–25)

What other New Testament passages come to your mind that resound with praise to God and a challenge to believers to stand firm?



Application: Truth to the Finish

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Take a few moments to thank the Lord for His ministry to you through Philippians. Be



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sure to offer Him genuine praise for His grace and goodness in providing for your salvation in Christ. Then write down at least three personal applications from this section for your own walk with Him.

1.

2.

3.



A FINAL PRAYER

Our God, we pledge our allegiance to You as we would to none other. Thank You for Your plan, full of surprises, changes, unpredictable and unexpected events, tears as well as triumphs, pain as well as pleasure. We thank You for Your good hand upon us, for what You have taken as well as what You have given. These have been acts of grace.

Thank You—as we conclude the study of Philippians—for the words of this remarkable man, the apostle Paul, who has written this letter and who has touched more lives perhaps by his epistles than any other writer of the New Testament. But he, too, acknowledged Your lordship over him, as we do. We offer you praise through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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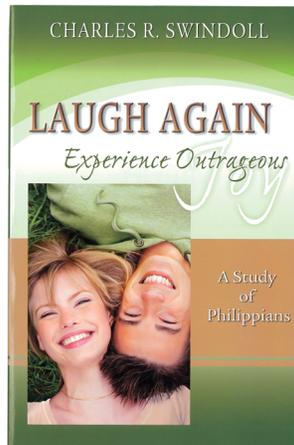
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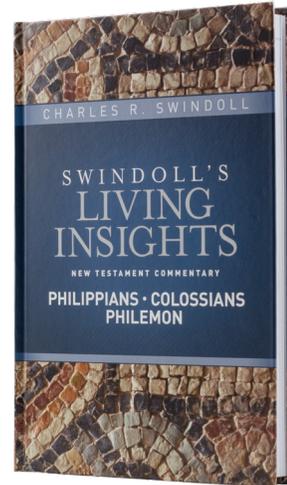
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

