

# NOTES: Sermon- Why Pray?

Wednesday, September 6, 2023 2:29 PM

## A. Background

### Philippians 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

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.

## B. Exposition

### Group 1 (Verses 4, 5a)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

### Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

This reasonableness (Christlikeness) welling up in us is the manifesting of the fruit of the Spirit in true humility. This humility is genuine because we understand who we truly are before our Holy God.

This humble understanding of ourselves enhances our reasonableness and is seen in us with the fruit of the Spirit that grows as part of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. So these are in a sense what we are called to be and below is how we strengthen them by abiding in Christ in the Holy Spirit.

### Group 2 (Verse 5b, 6)

The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything,

The second part of verse 5 and first part of verse 6 really demonstrates that God is our caring Father. The first part of this sentence is often overlooked because it is part of verse 5. The impact of these few words are clearly connected to the first portion of verse 6 via the semicolon.

This is a beautiful picture that shows us as part of the same sentence, the Lord is at hand (time/space) to help us. The phrase 'at hand' is used in two ways in the Scriptures- for the judgment of people or to help His people. In this case it is clearly used to show that the Lord is nearby as promised to aid us because He cares for us. He is telling us to not worry or be concerned about anything. We are to cast all our cares on Him. We then are told the way in which we cast all our cares on Him is by prayer!

God commands you to obey in not being anxious, but He does so as a loving Father that knows what is best for His child. He also knows the priceless benefit and blessing you will obtain when you do obey.

A few verses to support what I am saying about handling your anxieties.

#### Luke 12:22

22 And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.

#### 1 Peter 5:6-7

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you

Our Master is calling us to trust and faith. Worry and anxiousness diminishes us. It prevents us from reaping the benefits that God provides in being near at hand. Anxiousness shows a lack of trust, faith, and knowledge of the sovereign God who says He will guard us. By growing in the peace of God, our trust and faith will increase and our anxiousness will decrease.

Now, how do we embrace that God is near, and that we are to trust Him and obtain the peace of God?

Prayer and meditation!

Paul, tells us in the rest of verse 6 and then expands in verse 8.

but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Verse 6b focuses on the key aspect of praying.

But in everything by prayer...

Some things? Most things? No, Everything!

Remember this is the privilege of God's true children. Do you comprehend that the sovereign, all-powerful creator of everything has ordained that we, as believer's in Christ, have the right to come before the throne of Grace and commune with Him? Do you really get that? Do you really believe it?

A prayer is a petition. It is a formal request made to a deity, in this case to the one true God. True prayer for the Christian can only be offered to God the Father, in Jesus the son through the Holy Spirit. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Joseph. The God of our faith. Prayers offered to other idols or false gods are of no benefit and are in vain.

But in everything by prayer and supplication...

Supplication is part of a prayer and is an urgent request plea, or even begging. This accompanies the actual request like praying for a child's salvation with the passion and zeal begging for the request from God.

But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...

Thanksgiving is showing gratitude and appreciation. Thanksgiving here is to be viewed as reactive and proactive. So we are very comfortable giving thanks for those prayers granted in the past. We can also give thanks for those that haven't been answered as yet. This is not presumptuous. Giving thanks for prayers that have not yet been answered is based on trusting that God will answer all of our prayers. Thanksgiving will encompass all of our prayers whether God's answer is yes or no.

In 1 John 5:13-15 we see the key point is to remember that we are to pray according to His will. In doing so we're thankful that our sovereign all-knowing God will answer our prayers in the best possible way for us. Even if the answer is no, because it is not according to God's will. We are to be thankful for everything.

In Ephesians 6:13-20 we see the full armor of God and that it is clear that prayer is critical to the Christian life as a warrior for Christ.

Ephesians 6:13-20

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in

opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Prayer is critical in supporting our taking up the full armor of God. The armor shows how each of these key elements are the tools for our success against the evil one. We then see in verses 18-20 how critical prayer is to wrap around the armor to keep you in the peace of God and intercede for the saints.

### Group 3 (Verse 7)

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In verse 7, we see that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The peace of God is not as the world gives. It is not a fake peace which is an absence of war, compromise or other fallible human conventions. It comes directly from God and is fundamental to the construction of the temple in us by the work of the Holy Spirit and manifests in humility and the fruit of the Spirit as we grow in trust, faith and knowledge of God. It is part of that fountain that wells up in us and breaks forth from our very soul that rests in who God truly is based on the illumination of His Word by the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at a few verses for additional insight...

#### Isa. 26:3

3 You keep him in perfect peace  
whose mind is stayed on you,  
because he trusts in you.

#### Col. 3:15

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

#### John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Notice how we are told that because we trust Him, our mind is stayed on Him, and He keeps us in perfect peace. Since we have Christ's peace, our hearts should not be troubled or afraid. Here we see this peace ruling in our hearts and unified in one body.

As we grow in Christ, this peace of God will grow in us because we are growing in the knowledge, trust and faith of our sovereign Lord. You will see a growing submission to God's control and the reduction in your anxiousness.

This peace keeps watch over and guards against the work of the evil one. This is all part of God's work in us and is vital to the process of sanctification, our growing in Christlikeness through our time on this earth.

#### **Group 4 (Verse 8-9)**

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

In verse 8 regarding meditation is truly a transformational step as part of prayer.

The key word in this verse is the word THINK. Of course it obviously applies to using our mind to reason, think, and digest the truth of God's Word. We are to ponder over the true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy. We are to reckon, consider and reason over these things.

John Calvin indicates the use of the word here is meditation. The depth of this meditation is deep, it reaches the level of sighing or moaning.

As we think or meditate on all proper things we will be transformed in our thoughts. In doing this we will develop a Christian thought life. A Christian thought life that is built on the pure truth of God's word. As we fill our minds with thoughts of God, we will push out sinful thoughts. We do this by taking our thoughts captive, eliminating sinful thoughts and replacing with Godly thoughts.

In this next verse we see why we take every thought captive and what why it's needed.

#### **2 Cor. 10:4-5**

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

We will see our desires changing as we keep our minds engaged on pure things and not the drivel of the world. We must master our thoughts through the Spirit and remove those things that seek to divert, distract and take us from our Lord. To obey Christ, we must take every thought captive. The peace of God which guards our hearts and minds will help us succeed In bringing all our thoughts captive. We do this through prayer, meditation and reading of Scripture.

In the verses below we can see the importance of meditation and filling our hearts and minds with the Word of God.

#### Joshua 1:8

8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

#### Psalm 1:1-2

1 Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.

#### Psalm 19:14

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer

I want to share a few quotes from some of the giants of our faith regarding meditation. They say so much in so few words...

**Read it to get the facts, study it to get the meaning, meditate on it to get the benefit. ~ John Owen.**

**Meditation comes first then action. ~ John Calvin.**

**What we take in by the Word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer. ~ Thomas Manton.**

Meditation begins to overtake your thoughts and actions that are not focused on truth. This is the essence of taking our thoughts captive and working to transform our minds according to Word of God. Unlike Eastern meditation which strives to empty the mind and allow all manner of sin to fill the void. We certainly see this today with all the godless media pouring into our minds.

Biblical meditation seeks to fill the mind with all things God. The Reformers and Puritans were experts in meditation. While this practice has existed in various forms, most deeply during the time of the Puritans, it is rarely practiced today due to all the distractions, narcissism and competing idols that exist.

**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.**

In verse 9, Paul tells us to imitate him. He has told us all these things. Paul tells us to practice them and the God of peace will be with you. Hear the difference? Instead of peace of God, it is the God of peace! Practice these things and you will have the peace of God AND the God of peace!

Remember He is near. This shows you just how near!

So now let's look at practicing these things...

## **C. Application**

As I have said, these instructions and commands in Philippians 4:4-9 are given in love for our benefit and provides the means of communing with God and shows us the way to grow and be more intimate with Him.

With our study of God's Word, we must consider how to apply and practice our Christian duty and discipline.

### **What are the scriptural truths we have reviewed?**

1. We are to always Rejoice in the Lord.
2. We are to be reasonable with everyone. This is true humility manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.
3. We are to understand that the Lord is at hand, to help us.
4. We are to accept that with the Lord at hand, we are to not be anxious about anything.
5. We are to offer all our requests by prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving to God.
6. We are to believe and trust that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
7. We are to meditate developing a Christian thought life on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy. This is the Word of God.

### **Application of these truths:**

- 1-Be diligent, disciplined and don't give up. Build the habit.
- 2-Practice prayer and meditation out of obedience and love in private, with the family and corporately.
- 3-Prayer is hard! Warm up the Spirit with Scripture.
- 4-Purify self, thoughts, actions. Kill sin in thought, word, and deed. This includes temptations.
- 5-Seek intercessory prayer of brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 6-Develop a plan for prayer.
- 7-Develop a plan for meditation.

## Plan for Prayer:

A plan for prayer will encompass many points.

It is important to note that sin can break your communion with God and Christ through the Holy Spirit. I am not talking about your salvation. Once you are saved, you cannot be taken out of the Lord's hand. The plan for prayer needs to address your sin. We need to be in a state of continual sincere repentance to maintain our communion with God.

- 1- **Personal Prayer.** Commit to praying in the morning and evening in private. Establish a Scriptural reading plan that includes reading at least 1 chapter in the morning and another in the evening. Perhaps the New Testament in the morning and the Old Testament in the evening.

Then pray each time in accordance with the familiar acronym ACTS. Pray with sincerity and your own words. Do not engage in vain repetition of prayers.

**-Adoration:** Show adoration for God in who He is. Praise his attributes and His majesty, holiness, etc. This reminds you of your position before the Almighty God.

**-Confession:** Confess your sins specifically and repent! This is needed to enable you to abide and commune with God.

**-Thanksgiving:** Thank God for all He has done in your life, family, church, nation, Israel, History, etc. This establishes a spirit of thankfulness in preparation for requests.

**-Supplication:** This is zealously, pleadingly, and even begging for specific requests according to God's will and includes intercessory prayer for others.

The reading of Scripture warms your heart in preparation for prayer. The reading and prayer can easily be done in 20 minutes. This will grow as you form this new habit based in love and obedience. Start small and grow. Focus on obeying in love not legalism. Follow through even when don't want to do so.

- 2- **Family Prayer.** Commit to pray with your family. This can be done before meals and with a time each evening when possible. Praying at bedtime is also very good. There are many good books and tools that can be used to enable this time. Be flexible on time. This stage in life is often very difficult to lock down specific times and durations. Let your family know how to pray and why it is important as opposed to driving for specific times/durations.
- 3- **Corporate Prayer.** This is for those times in prayer that are held as part of the church's ministry. This is done during the worship service, prayer meetings, small groups, and other events where prayer is offered. This serves as powerful example to new Christians and builds the family of faith.

## Plan for meditation.



The process of meditation includes the memorization, reading, and study of Scripture to be followed by the turning of those truths over in your mind to such an extent that you thoroughly digest what you have read, captured and memorized so that you are able to apply it to all areas of your life. Meditation then transforms into a constant state of prayer as you consider the truths of God and imbibe them into your very heart and mind. You cannot help but pray and praise God at this point. Engaging in this prayer and meditative process is then what is meant by never ceasing to pray. In doing this we maintain that deep level of communion and praise with God that can take us through the entire day.

The following are an example of a possible plan for meditating.

- 1- Determine what will be meditated upon. This is often a key verse or verse that was read/studied in your prayer time. Write this down or have it readily available on a Bible app.
- 2- Strive to memorize, read over and over, and study words/phrases to add depth to understanding.
- 3- Turn over this verse or verses in your mind, thinking through it from every possible perspective. Pray over this meditatively seeking for the Holy Spirit to illumine your understanding. It is this part of meditating that will form connections in your mind with other Scripture you study and meditate upon.
- 4- Seek to apply what you learn and take notes to be drawn upon later.
- 5- Revisit and meditatively pray when appropriate to refresh and reconnect.
- 6- Strive to meditate and pray throughout the day. It is in this stage that you begin to pray unceasingly by having your formal prayer times and meditating formally and informally through the day. Meditating can be done in the car as you are driving, while exercising, while eating, even while falling to sleep.
- 7- Use meditation to take your thoughts captive by reciting the verses when you begin to think ungodly or even sinful thoughts. Do not allow Satan to get a foothold through your thoughts.

There are a number of amazing resources on meditation from the Puritans, the Reformers and even some from the last few decades. A good source is [monergism.com](http://monergism.com).