~ Joy Through Prayer ~

Text: Phil 4:4-9

Theme: No matter the circumstances, we must prayerfully maintain and godly testimony for Christ.

Intro:

1. Last week, we studied the first three verses of this chapter and considered the need for *Joy and Christian Unity*.
   a. Paul had experienced a great deal of joy through the fellowship he had with the church at Philippi and he was concerned about those in the church who were allowing their personal dispute to spill over into the public life of the church and bring both disunity in the church and a poor testimony before the lost.
   b. Paul's solution was for the brethren to put the Lord first in everything, being of the same mind in the Lord, and to work together for the gospel's sake.
2. Today, we are going to take a close look at verses 4-9 of the chapter.
   a. We will see that verses 4-6 contain several short commands for the Christian, to aid them in maintaining a godly testimony and being faithful in the Christian race.
   b. Verses 8-9 give us a detailed outline of the kind of life we ought to be living as Christians.
3. We will look at these verses under two main headings:
   I. The Prayer in Every Thing (Vs 4-7)
   II. The "Whatsoever" Things (Vs 8-9)

Main:

I. The Prayer in Every Thing (Vs 4-7)
   A. Paul's Response to Everything (Vs 4-6)
      1. Rejoice in the Lord
         a. The first key that Paul gives in the verse that will help us to run the Christian race without quitting, to keep the unity of the faith in the local church, and to maintain a godly testimony before the lost is to rejoice in the Lord always.
            i. Let me remind you once again that the church at Philippi had been going through some rough times.
               - Their beloved Apostle Paul had been imprisoned and could be facing death.

- Epaphroditus had been in Rome with Paul and had been sick unto death.
- The church was feeling the flow down effects of persecution against the Christians that was coming out of Rome, the seat of power at the time.

ii. No doubt, the Philippian Christians were struggling to find anything to be joyful about at this time and you can just about hear them saying, “Paul, what do we have to be happy about, how can we rejoice when everything seems to be against us?”

iii. Paul’s response in simple, “Rejoice in the Lord alway.”

b. How can we rejoice in the Lord when everything is against us?

i. Well, lets quickly be reminded of what we studied in chapter 1 of the book. There we find Paul in prison, the church of Philippi struggling, Epaphroditus has been unwell and yet Paul was able to rejoice because the work of the gospel was being preached.

- **Philippians 1:18** *“What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”*

ii. What about his bonds in the prison, how did they affect his joy? Paul saw his potential death, not as a defeat, but as a victory if he could remain faithful to Christ through it all.

- **Philippians 1:20-21** *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

iii. We can have joy in everything when our joy isn’t dependent upon our circumstances.

- I heard a young man say that when you are the child of an immigrant who has escaped communism you can’t have a bad day because the minute you say you had a bad day you parents will say, “How did you have a bad day? Did somebody steal your freedom today?”
- It is the same for a Christian. Next time you feel everything is against you and you are tempted to be discouraged and complain, take instead the approach of the psalmist.

  Psalm 42:5 *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and*

why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

iv. We have to ask ourselves some questions such as:
- Have I lost my salvation?
- Have I lost my fellowship with God?
- Is there anything that was mine in Christ that has been lost because of these circumstances?

v. If the answer is "no", which I know it is, the we can still rejoice in the Lord always.

2. Be mild mannered
   a. Let your moderation be seen by everyone.
      i. The word "moderation" carries the meaning of being mild in your mannerisms or conduct toward others, being *"appropriate, gentle, and patient."*[1]
      ii. "This has also been translated yieldedness, sweet reasonableness, and willingness to give up one's own way. The difficulty does not lie in *understanding* what is meant, but in *obeying* the precept **"to all men."**"[2]
      iii. The Christian's life ought to be characterized by those attitudes and behaviors that are gentle, endearing, and appropriate to Christlike living.
   b. Our Christlikeness ought to be evident to "all men."
      i. We are to show Christlikeness to sinner and saint alike.
         - If it is your brother in Christ at church, be meek and gentle toward him.
         - If it is your neighbour who always plays their music too loud at 11:00pm so you struggle to sleep, you still need to show him Christlikeness through a meek and gentle spirit.
         - If it is that boss at work who always gives you the hardest or dirtiest tasks you still need to show this good Christian character to him.
      ii. We often use the phrase "wise as serpents but gentle as doves" to describe the good character of the Christian.
         - Godly wisdom will help us to stand out as people who are not easily fooled by the world and its priorities, and moderation in conduct will make us stand out as people of good character who can be depended upon even when the going gets tough.

---

[1] Strongs Concordance | Ref G1933, Esword.
[2] William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1978.

c. “The Lord is at hand” means that the Lord is near to us and always able to help us.
    i. As we seek to please God through our moderation, or godly conduct, the Lord Jesus Christ is ever present to enable us to live a life that is pleasing to Him and that is a good testimony for Him.

3. Be careful for nothing
    a. The word “careful” means to be filled with care or anxious about something.
        i. How many of you have heard the phrase “he’s a worry wart”? It means that the individual is always worrying or anxious about everything.
        ii. I remember when I was in Bible College and I was doing a course on Christian counselling; there was a particular section on anxiety over foolish things. The lecturer gave the hypothetical example of a woman who was too afraid to serve in the church because she was anxious about getting it wrong and looking foolish. This woman is asked to sing with the choir but she immediately begins picturing herself trying to walk up the stairs onto the stage and tripping on them or maybe standing with the choir and fumbling and dropping who song book or perhaps getting up there and being so nervous that she just freezes up and can’t sing, and all these imagined hurdles prevent her from serving God.
        iii. The mind of the anxious person is always thinking of all the things that “could” go wrong and of all the “problems” that “might” arise instead of simply trusting God and serving him by faith.
    b. The antidote to anxiety is the prayer of faith.
        i. We are commanded to make our petitions to God through prayer and with thanksgiving.
            - To make supplication is to make a request of another person, knowing that it is not within your own power to fulfill your request. It requires us to depend totally on God.
            - To make a request is to simply ask God for the things that we need.
        ii. Our prayer is to incorporate thanksgiving.
            - We can only incorporate thanksgiving into our request if we trust that God will answer and grant our request in his time.

- When we trust that God has heard and answered our prayer, then there is no need to be anxious about it anymore. If we continue to be anxious then we reveal that we haven't truly learned to take it to God and leave it with God by faith.
- We ought to have a spirit of thankfulness for answered prayer.

B. Paul's Confidence in Everything (Vs 7)
   1. The peace of God will guard your heart
      a. The result of making thankful prayers to God is that God's peace will comfort and guard our hearts.
         i. This peace is given to us by God when we trust him to carry us through and to provide our needs. It is a peace that comes when we are resting in the knowledge that God is in control.
         ii. This peace of God surpasses our understanding. It is more excellent and beneficial than we can even know or understand.
      b. This peace keeps and guards our hearts against worry, fear, and anxiety over the future.
         i. The word "keep" means, "to hem, protect, or be a watcher against."
            - It pictures the peace of God as standing guard on the walls of the castle of our heart to protect us against the enemies of our soul which are fear and anxiety.
         ii. When we have brought our requests to God in prayer and with a spirit of faith and thanksgiving, then we will known this peace of God that protects us from worry and fear we will know what it is to rest in God's control.

II. The "Whatsoever" Things (Vs 8-9)

A. The virtuous and praiseworthy things (Vs 8)
   1. Verse 8 is the final portion of direct instruction for Christian living Paul gives in the book of Philippians. This instruction centres around 6 characteristics that we are exhorted to esteem.
      a. Things that are true.
         i. The first thing on Paul's list is truth itself. Paul's desire was that Christians should stand up for the truth and be truthful themselves.
         ii. One sure way to undermine your testimony as a Christian is to be known as a liar. Nobody appreciates being lied to and people quickly learn not to trust a liar.

iii. Paul's concern for the truth extends beyond the things we say. The truth of the Word of God, the truth of the gospel these are the things that Paul desired the Christians to both value and uphold.

b. Things that are honest.
   i. The word "honest" refers to those things which are right and honourable and worthy of veneration. It refers to moral attractiveness.
   ii. The command for the Christian is to conduct themselves in all honesty without deceitfulness; to display good moral conduct.
   iii. This means that we are to do what it right all the time. The phrase "What would Jesus do" has become so cliché it has lost its original meaning, and many people have a skewed view of what Jesus would do anyway. But the Christian is encouraged here to ask himself, "what is the right thing to do?" In effect, "What WOULD Jesus do?"
   iv. We ought to be known as people who always do the right thing even when it's inconvenient.
c. Things that are just.
   i. "Just" refers to things that are equitable, innocent, holy, and right. It refers more directly to making a right judgement and upholding justice.
   ii. We live in a day when justice is constantly perverted by the abuses of a corrupt legal system.
      - In Australia, the average time a murderer stays in jail is between 20 and 23 years. That means you could kill someone when you're 20 and be a free man at 40.
      - In W.A. the minimum mandatory sentence for murder is life in prison, however, that still allows the murderer to live out the rest of their life while their victim's life was cut short.
d. Things that are pure.
   i. This refers to those things that are clean, innocent, modest, and perfect.
   ii. This means we ought not to let our thought dwell on impure things, or things that are defiling to the heart and mind.
   iii. This is especially needful for our men in a day when pornography is everywhere and the world sensualises everything they can.
e. Things that are lovely.

i. This refers to things that are lovely or pleasant to consider and admire. It is an appreciation of beauty and goodness.
ii. Look in the art galleries and you'll see the abominations that the world considers beautiful, and you will notice that they love things that are abstract, destructive, and just plain weird.
iii. Christians ought to be able to appreciate the beauty that is all around us in the creation that God has made. Meditating on these things will produce a reverential owe of God that is beneficial to our spiritual growth.
- Note: There is great value in beauty, and we should appreciate it, but beauty is not the end goal. Beauty is there to point us to God. Beauty is fading and is in the eye of the beholder.

f. Things that are of good report.
i. The meaning is straight forward, we are to think on those things that are well spoken of, that are held in good reputation.
ii. Again, it is important as Christians that we be people of good reputation.
- "Right living results from right thinking. If a person's thought-life is pure, then his life will be pure. On the other hand, if a person's mind is a fountain of corruption, then you can be sure that the stream that issues from it will be filthy also. And we should always remember that if a person thinks an evil thought long enough, he will eventually do it."[3]

B. The learned, received, and heard things (Vs 9)
1. Finally, Paul instructs the believers to follow his teaching and his example.
a. He wanted them to continue in the things that he had taught them.
i. Those things you have learned of me and have begun putting into practice in your own lives, keep doing them.
b. He wanted them to follow his example.
i. They had Paul as their example, having been saved under his ministry and been taught by him, and Paul wanted then to continue to follow the example that he had set for them.

---

[3] William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1979.

2. The result of verses 8 & 9 is that the God of peace would be near to them in a special way.
    a. In verse 7 we have reference to the peace of God but in verse 9 we have God describes as the God of peace.
        i. "Those who are faithful in following the example of the apostle are promised that the God of peace will be with them. In verse 7, the peace of God is the portion of those who are prayerful; here the God of peace is the Companion of those who are holy. The thought here is that God will make Himself very near and dear in present experience to all whose lives are embodiments of the truth."[4]
        ii. If we, as Christians, will seek to walk close with the Lord through prayerful dependence upon him and by living lives that are characterized by the things mentioned in verse 8, then we will know a special closeness with the God of peace that belongs only to those who wait on Him and walk with Him.

Conclusion:

1. Are you anxious about the future and worried over things outside of your control? Make your requests known unto God, with the faith that produces thanksgiving, and the peace of God will guard your heart.
2. Are you seeking to live a life that is imbued with the qualities outlined in verse 8, or do your thoughts dwell on unholy and worldly things? Your life will trend toward the things your mind dwells on.

[4] William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1979–80.