

PHILIPPIANS—WEEK 9
Finding Security in God's Presence and Peace: Philippians 4:1-9

Paul was devoted to the church at Philippi and to seeing these saints finish their spiritual race. Chapter four opens with Paul reminding them of his great love for them and urging them to stand firm in the Lord. He quickly raises the banner of unity among the church members. His first concern is the strife between two of the women in the church (Euodia and Syntyche). If there is one thing that will deplete our awareness of God's presence and peace, it is strife/anger among us. We must "wrestle" together for the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27) to work out the issues between us that cause division.

Paul's rebuttal to strife...REJOICE! Delight in the Lord! He says it twice in the same sentence. Even in the midst of trials, rejoicing in the Lord (choosing joy) will trump strife and hardship. If we practice His presence and look through His eyes, we can see how he uses all things to work for good in our life. We are promised the desires of our heart if we will delight ourselves in the Lord (Ps. 34:7). It reminds me of the old song *Don't Worry Be Happy!* The opposite of rejoicing is worrying. Worry is based in fear, and fear negatively and erroneously magnifies the circumstances. When we worry we entertain thoughts and imaginations that exalt themselves above the truths in the Bible.

Why worry when we can pray? Or is it why pray when we can worry?! Have you ever prayed about something you were worried about, experienced peace for about two minutes and then gone back to worrying?! If there is anything that can rob us of peace, it is worrying. And there is so much we could worry about. But, Paul's first words in Philippians 4:6 are: Do not worry about anything. What?! How is that possible?! The answer to that finishes verse 6: but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God.

There are so many ways to pray, and there is no end to praying. The more we pray, the less we worry, and the less we worry the less anxiety we have *and* the healthier we will be. Sometimes our prayers are passionate; sometimes they are calm. When we don't know what to pray, God shows us. If we are not praying, we are most likely worrying. Nothing positive is accomplished by worrying. Our prayers go straight to God's heart, and he hears and answers. Isaiah 65:24 says, "It shall happen that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Our prayers might not be answered immediately, but God hears them immediately and answers them in His perfect time.

When we pray, we are talking directly to God—what a privilege. We can tell him anything and everything. He never stops listening to us. In fact, He loves to hear us pray and he loves to answer our prayers. The words 'pray', 'prayer', and 'prayers' are used almost 600 times in the Bible. God is very serious about prayer. When we pray, God's promise is that His peace (quietness and rest) that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Ph. 4:7).

Paul's wrap up in this section encourages us to think worthy thoughts, and he actually lists the things we are to ponder. He urges us to practice what we have learned from him and seen him display in his own walk with God. The reward is the promise that God's presence and peace will be with us.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How do you usually deal with your anxiety?
- 2) If we obey Phil 4:6, what does God promise us in Phil. 4:7?
- 3) What are the eight things in Phil 4:8 that Paul tells us to think about? What is our reward if we do?