

Philippians 4:4-9

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

What a joy-filled letter Paul writes to the Philippians from his place in prison. He encourages us to be joyful in all our circumstances as well. It is our privilege and duty to rejoice in the Lord because He is the source of our life and the one who makes our eternal life possible. We have the privilege and responsibility of calling upon the Lord in prayer when we are in need and when we have plenty. Nothing in this life can outweigh the reasons we have to rejoice in Jesus and offer all of our prayers to Him.

Arthur John Gossip wrote: "Christ holds that prayer is a tremendous power which achieves what, without it, was a sheer impossibility. And this amazing thing you can set into operation. And the fact that you are not so using it, and simply don't believe in it and its efficiency and efficacy, as our fathers did, and that so many nowadays agree with you, is certainly a major reason why the churches are so cold and the promises [of God] seem tardy of fulfillment.... That mighty preacher, Thomas Chalmers, was once pondering over why, in spite of all his efforts and enormous popularity, there was not more spiritual outcome to show for it all, and came to this conclusion—that he was trusting to his 'own animal heat and activity' rather than to the Holy [Spirit]. And is that not a shrewd and accurate diagnosis of the church's ailment in our day? Never was there a ministry so bustled and rushed and perspiring as ours is now."<sup>1</sup>

Discuss the following questions. If you are in a larger group, you may want to divide into groups of three for this discussion. You may then decide to report back to the larger group or to move directly to prayer time.

1. When shall we pray? How shall we pray? What comes of our praying?
2. Describe your prayer life. What are the hindrances to prayer? What are some helps to prayer for you?

Closing Prayer: We praise you, Lord Jesus, and rejoice in your Holy Name. You uphold us when we are bowed down and you dance with us when we are celebrating. Teach us to bring everything to you in prayer with thanksgiving in our hearts that we may become a winsome congregation, full of the Spirit's power and the joy of our Lord. In your name we pray. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Doberstein, *Minister's Prayer Book*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, p. 297.