

Thankful Praying

Philippians 4:6-7

Dr. Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher

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INTRODUCTION

1. I would like to invite you to take God's Word with me this morning and turn to Philippians chapter 4.
2. We are currently in a series called "Cultivate Thanksgiving."
3. So that you have the context, I would like to begin reading at verse 1.
4. Read Philippians 4:1-9
5. As Paul begins chapter 4, he is building on his previous statements found in 3:20-21.
6. We know that because of his use of the word "therefore" in 4:1.
7. "Therefore" indicates "what Paul is about to write builds on what he has just written" (John MacArthur, Philippians, 268).
8. Paul has just stated that believers are citizens of heaven who are eagerly waiting for Jesus to return to transform their "lowly" bodies "that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (3:20).
9. Because of that the Philippian believer's are to "stand firm

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in the Lord" (4:1).

10. It is the Lord who has done the work in which we stand. And it is the Lord who enables us to "stand firm."
11. So in 4:1-9, Paul is telling the Philippians *how they are to stand firm*.
12. He says they are to stand firm *by being of the same mind, by rejoicing in the Lord, and by manifesting graciousness*.
13. Now as we look at verses 6-7, he gives another way they are to stand firm in the Lord and that's by *praying with thanksgiving*.
14. Notice what he says again in verse 6: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."
15. John Calvin says, "In these words he exhorts the Philippians, as David does all the pious in Psalm 55:22, and Peter also in 1 Peter 5:7, to cast all their care upon the Lord. For we are not made of iron, so as not to be shaken by temptations. But this is our consolation, this is our solace -to deposit, or (to speak with greater propriety) to disburden in the bosom of God everything that harasses us" (Calvin's Commentaries: Philippians).

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16. When we consider the subject of prayer we need to understand that "prayer is both an act and an atmosphere.
17. We come to the Lord at specific times and bring specific requests before Him. But it is also possible to live in an atmosphere of prayer.
18. It is possible that the mood of our life should be a prayerful mood.
19. Perhaps the word prayer in this verse signifies the overall attitude of our life, whereas supplication signifies the specific requests which we bring to the Lord" (William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary).
20. In the words of Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 *In all your ways acknowledge Him*, And He shall direct your paths."
21. Standing firm in the Lord means that you acknowledge Him in all your ways.
22. As Paul begins verse 6, he gives us the enemy of prayer: worry.
23. The construction of this phrase tells us they were already doing this, so Paul says, "Stop worrying!"

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24. If we keep in mind the clause in the previous verse, "The Lord is at hand," then there is no excuse for worrying.
25. "Because of God's nearness, believers should not be fearful, anxious, or wavering. They should not collapse, but be strong and stable" (MacArthur, 277).
26. Listen to what God said to Joshua in Joshua 1:6-9. He said, "Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, *for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*"
27. If *the Lord your God is with you wherever you go* then there is no reason for worry.
28. The psalmist said in Ps.18:2-3 that "The Lord is *my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my*

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salvation, my stronghold. 3 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies."

29. In Ps.28:7 he said, "*The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him*, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him."
30. Since the Lord is with you wherever you go and He is your strength and shield, why do you worry?
31. The only answer is because you're not trusting Him.
32. John MacArthur says, "Unfortunately, when they face trials, believers often seem to forget what they know about God. They lose their confident trust in Him, lose their self-control and spiritual stability, and are defeated. Even strong believers are not immune to an occasional lapse."
33. AW Tozer contributes this to a low view of God.

He says, "The Church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshiping men. This she has done not deliberately, but little by little and without her knowledge; and her very unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic.

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The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking. (Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, 6).

34. What does Paul say regarding this? "Stop worrying!"
35. The Greek word translated "anxious" (*merimnao*) means "to be encumbered with many cares" (LS). It occurs in 2:20 in a positive sense of caring for someone but here it "has the negative sense of anxiety, *a lack of trust in God's care*" (Louw-Nida, *A Handbook on Philippians*).
36. R.C.H. Lenski says, "The verb means 'to be of a divided mind, 'to be anxious, whether to seek this way out or that, to use this means or that'" (The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians [Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937]. 877).
37. Luke 10:41 says that Martha "was worried and bothered about so many things."
38. What was Martha "worried and bothered about?"
39. Verse 40 says she "was distracted with all her preparations."

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40. You see, Martha had invited Jesus and His disciples into her home.
41. Mary, her sister, was “seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word” (v.39), but Martha was “distracted” with taking care of her guests.
42. She complains to the Lord and says, “‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.’ But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her’” (vv.40-42).
43. What was the “good part” that Mary had chosen?
44. “Listening to His word” (v.39).
45. We can become so distracted by “many things” and neglect the one thing that “is necessary,” “listening to His word.”
46. Paul continues in Philippians 4:6 by saying, “Be anxious *for nothing*.” That literally means “not even one thing” (Wuest).
47. “The Christian is never to worry...about a single thing” (Lenski).

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48. Paul says, “Be anxious not even for one thing” because the Lord’s is near according to verse 5.
49. You do that by *praying with thanksgiving*.
50. “The heartthrob of all true prayer is thankfulness” (Lenski).

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I. Everything We Do Should Be Accompanied By Prayer (v.6)

Paul says, “in everything by prayer and supplication.”

“In everything” means simply that! In all things!

The word Paul uses for “prayer” (proseuche) “speaks of prayer addressed to God as an act of worship and devotion” (Wuest).

“Paul emphatically urges the Philippians to find release from anxiety in prayer” (Ralph Martin, Word Biblical Commentary).

A. This is the Only Antidote for Worry

Charles Spurgeon said that “Some of the best prayers that have ever been prayed had not a single word to express them, they were heart prayers and went up to heaven in all their naked unclothed glory” (Compiled by George Burch, Nuggets of Gold, 120).

That sounds like what Jesus said in **Matthew 6:33**:

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient

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for the day is its own trouble.”

True seeking is with the heart not the mouth. There are many who “say” they seek God but deny that with their life.

The first priority of our life is “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” not our basic necessities, so if we’re worrying it’s because the kingdom and the righteousness of God is not “first” in our lives at that moment.

We have replaced them with our physical needs rather than our spiritual needs. Your spiritual needs will always be of a greater necessity than your physical ones.

3 times in Matthew 6 Jesus says “do not worry.”

1. **Matthew 6:25-32** says, “Therefore I say to you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by **worrying** can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you **worry** about

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clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 ***Therefore do not worry***, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

2. **Jeremiah 17:7-8** says, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, *And will not be anxious* in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit."
3. David said in **Psalms 55:22** says, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." (NASB)
4. Peter said in **1 Peter 5:6-7**, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that

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He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” (NASB).

John Calvin wrote, “For we are not made of iron, so as not to be shaken by temptations. But this is our consolation, this is our solace ‘to deposit, or (to speak with greater propriety) to disburden in the bosom of God everything that harasses us.’

Confidence, it is true, brings tranquility to our minds, but it is only in the event of our exercising ourselves in prayers. Whenever, therefore, we are assailed by any temptation, let us betake ourselves forthwith to prayer, as to a sacred asylum” (Calvin's Commentaries: Philippians, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries [Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998]. Php 4:6).

B. This is the Priority of the Kingdom Over Your Physical Needs

Every time you pray your putting the kingdom of God above your needs.

You're also conquering the opportunity to worry because your trust is in the right person—the only Person who can meet your real needs.

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Its not praying that reveals your lack of trust in God and the fact that your not living in the awareness of God's presence.

Listen to David's prayer in **Ps.143:8**. He prays, "Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, *For in You do I trust*; Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, *For I lift up my soul to You.*"

What kind of things should we pray about?

"Everything"

There are 3 words Paul uses here for prayer:

"prayer" "supplication" and "requests." "These three synonyms...all refer to specific, direct offerings of petition to God" (MacArthur, 283).

1. "Prayer" (proseuche) "speaks of prayer addressed to God as an act of worship and devotion" (Wuest).
2. "Supplication" (deesis) is "primarily a wanting, a need, then an asking, entreaty" (WE Vine). "It denotes that which in a given moment seems to be necessary or inevitable to a man or a group of men" (Kittel).

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3. “Requests” (aitema), refers to a “request” or “demand” (Louw-Nida).

Paul though is not giving us “the theology of prayer...but rather its priority and the attitude the believer brings to it...The assumption of the text is that believers will cry out to God when they have a need or a problem, not with doubting, questioning, or even blaming God, but with thanksgiving” (MacArthur, 283).

II. All Prayer Should Be Accompanied by Thanksgiving (v.6b)

“With thanksgiving”

- A. When We Pray About Everything We Are Emphasizing the Priority of Prayer

We’re trusting our problems to God who alone can carry them.

Our faulty assumption is that we think we can handle these things our self.

Ephesians 5 teaches us that the “walk” of the new man is to “be imitators of God” (v.1), “walk in love, just as Christ also loved you” (v.2), and to not let

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“immorality or any impurity or greed...even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, **but rather giving of thanks**” (vv.2-4, NASB).

This is Spirit-led, Spirit-controlled living with no dependence on the flesh.

This is putting “on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [making] no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts” (**Rom.13:14, NASB**).

B. When We Pray with Thanksgiving We Are Emphasizing the Attitude of Prayer

“Instead of having a spirit of rebellion against what God allows, believers are to trustingly cast ‘all [their] anxiety on Him, because He cares for [them]’ (**1 Peter 5:7, NASB**).

God’s promises support the wisdom of gratitude” (MacArthur, 283).

1. God has promised that no trial believers face will be too difficult for them to handle

1 Cor.10:13 says, “ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to

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man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

2. God has also promised to use everything that happens in believers’ lives for their ultimate good

Rom.8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

3. God even uses suffering to “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Pet.5:10).

C. Believers Should Always Have An Attitude of Thanksgiving When They Pray

1. They should thank God for His power

Rev.4:11 says the twenty-four elders worship God by saying, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and *power*; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

2. They should thank God for His promises

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Paul said to the Corinthians in **2 Cor.1:20**, “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”

3. They should thank God for the hope of relief from suffering

- a) Paul says in **2 Cor.4:17**, “For our light affliction, *which is but for a moment*, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

- b) Peter says in **1 Pet.5:10**, “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, *after you have suffered a while*, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

4. They should thank God for the hope of glory

Paul said in **Romans 5:2** that those who have been justified (5:1) have peace with God and “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

5. They should thank God for His mercy

Romans 15:8-9 says, “Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision

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for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, 9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God *for His mercy*, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name."

6. They should thank God for His perfecting work in them

Philippians 1:3-6 says, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

John MacArthur says, "People become worried, anxious, and fearful because they do not trust in God's wisdom, power, or goodness. They fear that God is not wise enough, strong enough, or good enough to prevent disaster. It may be that this sinful doubt is because their knowledge of Him is faulty, or that sin in their lives has crippled their faith. Thankful prayer brings release from fear and worry, because it affirms God's sovereign control over every circumstance, and that His purpose is the

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believer's good (Rom. 8:28)" (283).

With that kind of attitude you are to "let your requests be made known to God" (v.6c).

III. When You Pray with Thanksgiving God's Peace will Guard You Against Worry (v.7)

Paul says, "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

- A. If Everything is by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving Then God's Peace will Result

William Barclay says, "When we pray, we must always remember three things. We must remember the love of God, which ever desires only what is best for us. We must remember the wisdom of God, which alone knows what is best for us. We must remember the power of God, which alone can bring to pass that which is best for us. He who prays with a perfect trust in the love, wisdom and power of God will find God's peace.

The result of believing prayer is that the peace of God will stand like a sentinel on guard upon our hearts" (The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible

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series, Rev. ed. [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975]. 78).

B. God Gives His Children Peace

1. Not just at salvation (Rom.5:1)
2. Peace is the result of believing prayer—that kind of prayer that trusts God in spite of the circumstances

Isaiah 26:3 says, “You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”

3. It is also the result of being filled with the Spirit (Gal.5:22)
4. David said in **Psalms 119:165** that God’s peace is a result of loving God’s Word

“Great peace have those who love Your law,
And nothing causes them to stumble.”

5. The kind of peace that God gives is not like this world

Jesus told His disciples in **John 14:27**, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as

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the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

C. What is “the peace of God?”

The “peace of God” is “Inner calm or tranquillity” (John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible: Phil.4:7) which “surpasses all understanding.”

God’s peace “transcends human intellectual powers, analysis, insights, and understanding.”

God’s peace is “a transcendent calm that lifts the believer above the most debilitating trial.

The real challenge of the Christian life is not to eliminate every unpleasant circumstance; it is to trust in the good purpose of our infinite, holy, sovereign, powerful God in every difficulty.

Those who honor Him by trusting Him will experience the blessings of His perfect peace” (MacArthur, 284).

D. What does God’s peace do?

Paul says it “will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

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“Will guard” (phroureo) “is a military term used of soldiers on guard duty” (MacArthur). This term is “picturing soldiers standing on guard duty and refers to the guarding of the city gate from within, as a control on all who went out” (Fritz Rienecker, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 561).

Kenneth Wuest says, “God’s peace, like a sentinel, mounts guard and patrols before the heart’s door, keeping worry out.”

Paul states again the source of this peace at the end of verse 7: “through Christ Jesus.”

CONCLUSION

1. Standing firm in the Lord is *by being of the same mind, by rejoicing in the Lord, by manifesting graciousness, and by praying with thanksgiving.*
2. The key is being a citizen of heaven and eagerly awaiting Christ’s return.
3. Where do you stand this morning?
4. Do you have true lasting peace with God?
5. You do if you have surrendered your life to Him.

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6. Have you repented of your sin and turned to Christ who alone can save you?
7. Will you do so right now?
8. Let's pray.