

Christ Community Covenant Church
Philippians 4 - Let Your Requests Be Made Known to God
Pastor Dave Scherrer - September 30, 2012

Philippians 4:4-7

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.

Philippians 4:4 – Rejoice in the Lord always!

We have been talking about this a lot in our study of this little book – Rejoicing. This idea is found throughout this little letter. 15 times in all in just four pages we read of joy or rejoicing or even the idea of contentment. And knowing it is written from prison makes it even more mind boggling. We know that by reading the end of this book that there are a couple of women that are quarreling, Euodia and Syntyche have fallen out of fellowship and for 2000 years people have avoided naming their children Euodia and Syntyche fearing that people would think of them as trouble makers! And it is not just in this little book – joy is everywhere in Paul's writings:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

James 1:2-4

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Romans 5:1-4

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

We rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God and we learned last week that the Glory of God is revealed in suffering well in the lives of the saints for the cause of Christ. Here we are seeing that a 'production' line of sorts of Christlikeness is formed. Suffering produces endurance, endurance then character and character produces hope – and we rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God.

I wish it was all that easy – but suffering is called suffering for a reason. It hurts. But at least it hurts for a reason!

Quote – “Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition, when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” C.S. Lewis.

To rejoice in this world with all its pain and discouragement and difficulty is truly an act of God. So we have to connect with God to suffer well. The suffering and hardships of this world also has an alternative production line too. Hardship produces pain, pain produces fear, fear produces anger and anger leads to bitterness and death. Death of heart and mind and soul. There are two assembly lines of virtue and God is asking you to join the assembly line that leads to abundant life. But that will take prayer. Prayer

interrupts the false and deadly results of fear and anxiety. When you feel that fear coming on, Paul says the answer is prayer.

Don't be anxious – but in everything be prayerful

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

This is a tough concept. Jesus said essentially the same thing:

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Prayer is vital to your life and the life of this church.

We gather tonight to give ourselves to God as we approach this time of preparation for our hopes of building a new church. We want to do this because it is only by faith in God that we can do the things demanded of us. I desire for us to not merely find a place to exist. We exist to do things and to be things that can't be done without the supernatural grace of God.

4Cs exists to do things that can't be done without God's special, supernatural grace

- We don't exist to merely preach, but to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit so that people are supernaturally awakened from unbelief and changed beyond what any human preaching could cause.
- We don't exist to teach Sunday school, but to teach in the power of the Holy Spirit so that children and young people and adults are supernaturally converted and built up in faith and love beyond what any human could cause.
- We don't exist to sing, but to sing in the power of the Holy Spirit because the affections of our hearts are supernaturally illumined, and the glory of Christ is seen and savored beyond what any mere human or any music could cause.
- We don't exist to simply do justice and mercy and missions, but to do evangelism and ministries of compassion in the power of the Holy Spirit so that hard, unbelieving hurting hearts would be supernaturally changed into healed, believing hearts.

And the list could go on and on. Do you see this? Are we in agreement on this, 4Cs? We are not a club. We are not a mere social organization. We are not a weekly pep rally. We are a covenant band of saved sinners who have been supernaturally converted from unbelief to belief in Jesus as our God and our Savior and our Treasure. We are a people in whom the Spirit of the living Christ mercifully dwells. Therefore, everything we aim to accomplish as a church is impossible without God's special, supernatural

action. From the making of a meal for Helping Hands, to the changing of a diaper in the nursery, to the singing of a song—our aim in all of this is to do it by the grace that God supplies so that in everything he gets the glory. And that is impossible without prayer.

The reason we pray several times every service, why the staff gather weekly to pray for you and the church and why we pray at every Council meeting – why we will gather tonight to give ourselves to God at the Concert of Prayer, is because we know God has designed and ordained and planned and promised ***that he will act for us when we pray.*** God has promised to do for us things we cannot do our ourselves when we pray—that is, when we get on our faces before God and confess our sins, and give thanks for his grace, and lift up our hands in hope of an embrace, and plead for him to fill us with supernatural blessings for the needs in our lives we know that he hears us. He lives in our prayer and praise.

Doesn't it just take your breath away to hear Jesus say, “ Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

Matthew 7:7

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

Doesn't it just cause you heart to skip a beat to hear the brother of Jesus himself brother James say, “ You do not have, because you do not ask.”

James 4:2

² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

Or to put it positively, “If you had asked, God would have acted to meet your need.” This is astonishing: God acts in response to prayer. The all-knowing, all-foreseeing, all-planning, all-governing God wills for your Christ-exalting prayers to be the occasion of his action.

Our Concerts of Prayer evenings make the statement that we exist to do things that we cannot do without the special, supernatural grace of God—because God planned and promised that he would do these things ***in answer to prayer.*** So when we join to pray in a concerted way, we are saying: the special, supernatural action of God is essential in the life of this church and the life of our mission.

Think about this in relation to our mission as a church. ***We exist to love God, to love others and to advance the Kingdom together.*** If that's why we exist, then our success in this is utterly dependent on the special, supernatural work of God. Nobody has a passion for the love of God and His glory, a passion for others, especially the “others” that we consider our enemies, and a passion to sacrifice for the lost - in all things for Christ's sake - without a supernatural filling from God.

God will complete His saving purposes by prayer!

Paul reminds us of the option first negatively, then positively. Negatively: “Don't be anxious about anything.” Positively: “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Paul promises that a life of faithful, Christ-dependent, Christ-exalting prayer will be a life protected from anxiety (and its many sinful fruits) by God's peace.

How shall we do this? Paul uses three words. In everything “by ***prayer***”—that's the broad word of spiritual devotion, including different kinds of prayer. And “supplication”—that's the narrow word that focuses on the kind of prayer, namely, asking for help. “With ***thanksgiving***”—that's the humble, non-demanding mindset that flavors all of prayer. Making requests ***thankfully*** means that we will be content and thankful with whatever God wisely and lovingly gives us. And we know that he will hear our prayer and wisely and lovingly give us what's best for us.

When we let our requests be made known to God like this—in the devotion of prayer, in many specific requests for help, with a heart that is thankful for everything God designs for us, the pleasures and the pain—then his peace will guard our minds and free us from anxiety in a way that defies mere rational explanation; it surpasses all understanding.

The Peace of God will guard your heart and mind

Philippians 4:7

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

Eirene (I – ray' – nay) is the Greek word for peace used here and is the root word of the English "serene" (= clear and free of storms or unpleasant change, stressing an unclouded and lofty tranquility!) and "serenity".

The picture of **eirene** is reflected in our modern expression "*having it all together*." It has as its root meaning to join together. The idea is that broken things are not at peace, but things united and in harmony and working together – that is peace. Everything is in place and as it ought to be, joined together as it is supposed to be. When things are disjointed, there is lack of harmony and well-being. When they are joined together, there are both.

Peace for a believer is not the absence of danger but is the presence of God. Peace is not a quiet feeling that comes over us in church but is the supernatural fruit of a heart set deep in God and His Word.

***I hear the words of love,
I gaze upon the blood,
I see the mighty sacrifice,
And I have peace with God.
Horatius Bonar***

Confession

I struggle to be at peace in these days with the Stewardship campaign ahead of us. Don't get me wrong. I actually like asking for money for a good cause. I have raised millions of dollars for the cause of leading teens to Christ and telling them the truth about God's design for love and sexual intimacy. Maybe tens of millions. And I have loved getting ready for our series on stewardship that starts next week. I truly believe that we are on the threshold of some amazing truths that could transform our fellowship and release resources into the hands of God that will bless Him and give Him magnified glory. Jesus talks about money being the god of our world that keeps from believing in the God of the Eternal Kingdom. So that part does not make me anxious.

What makes me concerned is how you will respond. Will you feel put upon, will you feel overwhelmed and intimidated. The world of marketing is so strong in this world, and advertisers can talk people into buying almost anything and then people are filled with regret. Words like these are never to be found in the Christian community:

***Manipulate
Pressure
Coercion
Guilt
Fear***

I used to tell my teens that the ministries of Worth Waiting For were not about fear and guilt, though sin can fill us with both. But God is about grace and love and forgiveness. These are the words of the Kingdom.

Faith
Encouragement
Hope
Grace
Love

1 Thess. 2:3-6

³ For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. ⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

Join me in the Shalom of God

- Psalm 29:11
The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.
- Psalm 34:14
Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.
- Isaiah 55:12
You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.
- Matthew 11:28-30
"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- John 14:27
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
- John 16:33
"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
- 1 Corinthians 14:33
For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,
- 2 Thessalonians 3:16
Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.
- Romans 15:13
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.