

## FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

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### Philippians 4:4-9

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!  
Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.  
Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication,  
with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the  
peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your  
hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever  
things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just,  
whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things  
are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything  
praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned  
and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace  
will be with you."

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This is a message on prayer but the word prayer has different meanings to different people, many times it is based on different understandings of what God's Word says about prayer. With some folks though prayer is the thing you do when all is lost and there's no other options available. You know, the "God save me" prayers. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with "God save me" prayers, just that for some people, that's the only time they talk to God. Nevertheless, we all have to start somewhere, right? Others may use prayer strictly as their defense mechanism against the evils of this world, to try and pray away all of the bad stuff that comes against them. That reminds me of an old Eddie Arnold song, "Make the World Go Away." Yet, God doesn't intend to just make all of the bad things go away. More times than not He wants to take us through those times. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me." (**Psalm 23:4**) At the heart of what prayer is all about is a need for understanding who God is and learning to trust in God, that He IS God Almighty, that He is Sovereign over all of creation, that He is in control of all things, that nothing surprises Him or catches Him off guard, and that He has the perfect plan in all of HIS creation and then that God loves us way more than we can possibly imagine and that He wants to be our God and Father. God is not fretting or worrying about what has gone on in the past nor what is going on at the present, but He does have a perfect will and a perfect plan and in that perfect plan is what the Apostle Peter said in **2 Peter 3:9**, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." We're still here because God isn't finished with us yet and hasn't finished building His eternal kingdom. There's still more room at the table for others.

But God is not just trying to save us so that we can have eternal life to where we just can run wild in heaven, swimming in the crystal sea and eating of all the trees and frolicking with all of the animals. Admittedly I would love to wrestle with a polar bear or a lion. All of those things perhaps we will get to do, but God is calling us into His family, to be His child, and to be perfected in Him. If we keep our hope in Him we will be made perfect in Christ Jesus! I'm certainly looking forward to be perfected in Christ Jesus and while I'm looking forward to not wearing these glasses anymore I'm really talking about being like my Heavenly Father, being filled with His beauty and goodness and being in perfect communion with Him. The Apostle John speaks of that fellowship in saying, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (**1 John 1:3**) The antagonist to that is what the Apostle Paul said, to not have fellowship with demons. (**1 Corinthians 10:20**) Paul wasn't calling people demons but there are people who are carrying with them demons, some more so than others.

At the heart of what is the gospel of Jesus Christ is that God Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, the one we ascribe to in the Scriptures that says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (**Psalms 24:1**), He is calling us into **His** fellowship and into **His** eternal kingdom." As God is calling us into fellowship in Him, there are therefore things necessary for us to let go of in order to abide in Him as He purposes. It certainly makes perfect sense for a perfectly holy God to not want to fellowship with a rebellious and evil person, right? When Moses asked God who he should tell Pharaoh of Egypt who is sending him, God replied, "I AM that I AM." God then says throughout the Exodus story, where God is delivering His people, the Israelites, from their bondage in Egypt, "Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God" (**Exodus 6:7**), and "that you may know that I am the Lord" (**Exodus 8:2, 10:2, 16:12**) but then there's two contrary things God says, one of what God is doing for His people and then the other thing that He is doing against His enemies. God says to His people, the Israelites, "that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you" (**Exodus 31:13**), and to his enemies, the Egyptians He says, "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord." God Almighty, creator of all things, wants for us to know Him, in all His beauty and perfection and then He wants us to be in fellowship with Him, to be set apart in His holiness (sanctification), and to allow Him to be not only our Savior from our sins, through Jesus Christ, but to also be our Lord, to abide in Him, to rest in Him, to put our every hope and trust in Him, to recognize Him as our God and Father, so we can "be holy cause I am holy." (**1 Peter 1:16**)

What does all that have to do with our passage of Scripture for today in Philippians? There is El Elyon, God Most High, and then there's us, His creation, and in between us and Him is all of the false gods and man's idols. While the false gods of the Old Testament were false gods that the people made images of and worshipped them and sought their favor, while in this day and age our false gods are really the things that get in the way of who we are intended to be, and what is God's will for us, as we are God's creation, purposed by Him to be in this present time for a specific purpose. It is surmised by scholars and students of the Bible that the fallen angels or demons that were behind those false gods have been judged as God said He would do when He said, "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord." You ever wonder why most of the world doesn't seek after the false gods of the Bible, that could be why. But, as we know, there are certainly demons still present on this earth and still influencing people in rebellion against God and God's ways. As ludicrous as it sounds to us today that people stood before a pole of wood and worshipped it, think of how insane it really is that we seek out the silly things of this world instead of the awesome blessings of God. As most people today, at least in this country, know that it is mere silliness to put up a totem pole in one's yard so that they can worship it and get some kind of divine favor from it, yet we know that there is all forms of witchcraft and the seeking of evil still being done by most of the persons on this earth. Many people would not even admit that they are seeking after evil because they are totally ignorant to what is Truth and to know good from evil. A perfect example is what is presently being worshipped. The false gods behind abortion and homosexuality and transgender and many other forms of lusts of the flesh and sexual immorality and all the other pleasures of this world. And then, it's not just in the big sins, or what we look at as big sins. If I had a dollar for every time I've heard of one homeless person stealing something from another homeless person.

But God is calling to us. The Apostle Paul tells us to what God is calling for us to do. "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." When Paul spoke of having fellowship of devils he went on to say, "Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) God does not want His children having fellowship in bars and brothels, or crack houses. And He doesn't want us FELLOWSHIPPING with those that do. What I've heard

many times, in fact I have said the same many, many times, is that God wants us to be among the "sinners" so that we can be a witness to them and be God's light among them. What did God tell His people, the Israelites? "Come out from among them and be separate!" That certainly means for many here that God is wanting to get you off of the streets and into a different place. Our hope and prayer is for all of God's people here today to overcome and if that means that we don't see you anymore because God has lifted you out of this place, then praise God!

There are certainly many times where we can't control our circumstances and we can't keep other people from operating in their own free will but we can if possible get out from among them and be separate from them. That is not to say that once we believe on Jesus that we suddenly become perfect and righteous and holy. But it is only in Christ that we can get there. "But of Him [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) You, nor I, nor anyone else will be sanctified in Christ by spending all of their time on the streets and not separating one's self from the wicked and evil in this world. We have to be spending time in prayer, in fellowship with God our Father, spending time in His Word, spending time meditating on what He is showing us and telling us, which means we have to be listening, a lot. A huge component of prayer is listening as we read His Word and wait in His presence. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" That rejoicing is not separate from being in fellowship with God our Father though. We are rejoicing in Him for what He has done, what He promises us, and then what He is going to do but it really is in just who God is. That is where our praising God comes from, it is not some shallow, meaningless, church phrases that we say because that is what they do in church. It is in knowing that God promises us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (**Hebrews 13:5**) Notice how the writer of Hebrews ties in fellowship with God as being contrary to covetousness, or in other words idols. He isn't going to give up on us though because "we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:10**) But it's rather hard to continue to rejoice in Christ Jesus though when we continue to follow after the things of the world instead of seeking the fellowship of God that we are called into, right? I know what that is all about, I've been in that place of torment many times. I also know what comes after that. You continue to say, time and again, I'm sorry Lord, I'm sorry Lord and then without even realizing it your heart slowly becomes harder and harder to where you quit saying, "I'm sorry Lord" and you don't even have Him in your heart or mind anymore. I've been

there. That is a scary place to be. God is leading us out of this world and away from our idols. He is preparing us to be one in Him, for all of eternity. God is full of mercy and grace but we have to go to Him to find it. Is God calling you? Is He tugging on your heart leading you back to Him? That is because as the Apostle Peter said, "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." THAT is something to rejoice in the Lord always about! The place to not entertain thoughts of remorse or to accept defeat. The Apostle John stated, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) The devil will always try and get you looking back. Looking back at your past sins in regret or looking back at your past sins to entice you to return there. Here is where the Apostle Paul gave reason to that problem. He says, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 3:12-14**)

Now let's get to the prayer part of the message. Paul speaks of prayers and he speaks of supplications or petitions. When we approach God in prayer we are going before God Almighty who reigns over all of creation. That petition is a legal term like taking a petition to a judge. When you go before a judge, in his courtroom, you know you have to act with respect to the judge. How much more do we therefore go to God, in His courtroom with reverence, a godly fear, honoring Him for who He is. He is THE Judge. Our ultimate goal should be though to seek His face and to find His will. For the time being seeking His face is figuratively speaking, since no one can see God and live as God's Word says (**Exodus 33:20**), but it does mean to seek His presence, to rest in His Holiness, Goodness, and Perfection. The more you seek God with a sincere heart, the closer you get to being IN HIS PRESENCE. That is not just some spiritual guru talk. God wants us to seek Him and to know Him and to want to be in His presence. The generality of prayer to God is not general in the sense of meaning just common ordinary babbling to God about our problems. It is in truly seeking our Creator and Father and Savior. Yes, we all hopefully, desire to make it to heaven but the real prize is in knowing God. When God called Abram, who God renamed Abraham, and told him to head to what we was called the promised land, or Canaan land, the first thing God says to Abram in Genesis 15 is this, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." (**Genesis 15:1**) What was Abram's response? "Lord God, what will You

give me, seeing I go childless..." (**Genesis 15:2**) Abraham hadn't quite gotten the overall picture yet. God had already purposed for Abraham to be the father of many nations, that many kings would come from him. God spoke of the great reward when He said, "I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." Once again, God has already purposed for us to be to be His workmanship to do His good works. He has the plan, He has the purpose. He wants for us to know Him. He wants us to know Him to the depth of what Paul said in **Philippians 3:10-11**, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." Paul wasn't focused on the reward of eternal life in heaven. He was focused on the exceedingly great reward of knowing God, knowing the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. As King David was said to be a man after God's own heart the same could be said of Paul. He wanted to know the heart of God.

An evil and selfish generation says "what can God do for me". An evil and godless generation says, "I'll do what I want and if God doesn't like it then phooie on Him." A people that are seeking after God for who He is will be looking for the things of God in any and every situation. As Paul said, "whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." The world has plenty of things to sidetrack us and get us looking in the wrong direction, even looking to those things behind us but God is calling us to look to Him, to seek His face to not just look for what He is **doing** but to be **looking for Him**. That is where the supplications or petitions come in. We are seeking God and for Him to be in our circumstances, but in seeking God's heart we find we long for Him to set us and the people around us free and for God's goodness to lead us to repentance (**Romans 2:4**), for that IS the will of God.

It all starts with the understanding of God's love for us, personally. God loves each and every person and wants none to perish. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3:16-17**) But just believing that Jesus was a real person that died on a cross is not what that is saying. John was more specific in what that means by saying in **1 John 1:9**, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." So how are we called into fellowship with God's people and with God the Father and His Son Jesus? John gives us the answer once again, "But as many

as **received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:12-13**) We have to be born again before we can partake in true fellowship with God's saints, as we are really fellowshiping in the Spirit, and to have fellowship with God to where He continues to draw us closer as we continue to earnestly seek Him. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (**Hebrews 11:6**) What is the true reward that he speaks of? Just what God told Abram, "I am your exceedingly great reward." Many preach, as I have done, that the reward is heaven. Really that is just a byproduct of the true reward. Jesus is our goal, He is our reward, and then the byproduct of that is that we will be joint-heirs with Jesus (**Romans 8:17**) and if we endure, clinging to Jesus, then we will reign with Him. (**2 Timothy 2:12**)

It's funny how we think it's such a hard thing for God to get us to where He is leading us. But really, God is greater than all my sin, all of your sin. **Hebrews 12:1-2** says, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us [God promises that He will make a way of escape-**1 Corinthians 10:13**], and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Where is our focus, that is the question? Is it on all the the turmoil in this world? Are we putting ourselves in a position where we can keep looking to Jesus or are we dwelling in the tents of the wicked? And by tents that can also be where we are keeping ourselves. The books of Acts starts with the apostles and others waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit before they were sent out to ministry. Without the fellowship of the Father in knowing the power of His Resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings through their time in prayer they would have surely failed in their ministries. You've heard the expression, "opposites attract." In our humility in prayer, our fellowship with God WILL bring forth the power, not only to overcome but to be His witnesses. Paul begged God to heal him of his weakness, whatever that was. But God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (**2 Corinthians 12:9**) **James 4:10** says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." That's not talking about hunching over when we walk and talking with a soft voice. It is where when we go to him in prayer we are seeking His face, giving Him reverence, and then loving Him for who He is. He is God Almighty who is perfect in all of His ways! Listen to what **Psalms 33:18** says, "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy."

In closing, Paul said, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." We are to be witnesses of Christ in what we say but mostly in what we do. Meaning, sometimes we just have to be quiet and let God be God. Those two have to be in agreement with each other. That will only come forth as we spend time with God our Father in reading His Word, praying to Him, recognizing Him for who He is, and then obeying Him. As we spend time with Him He will become our Wisdom, and Righteousness, Sanctification, and then Redemption. So then he who glories let him glory in the Lord and then rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice for Christ has risen from the grave so that we too can have abundant life in Him. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (**John 8:36**) That is something to rejoice about!

Heavenly Father,  
I confess that I have sinned against You.  
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.  
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,  
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,  
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,  
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,  
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.  
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,  
and live in the newness of life,  
being led by Your Holy Spirit,  
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!