

Philippians 4:4-9 (ESV & NLT) – Rejoice in the Lord Always

[This could also work as two separate studies.]

Main point: The Lord is at hand.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi, the ruins of which are now on the coast of Greece. When St. Paul wrote this letter, he was in a Roman prison for preaching the gospel. What do you think a prison in ancient Rome was like?? Given the harshness of Paul's situation, his theme of rejoicing may strike you as somewhat surprising.

Focus of the study:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness 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.

⁸ Finally, dear brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Questions:

1. *What are Paul's instructions to the Philippian people? (and how many times?)*
 - a. v. 4: Rejoice, twice!
 - b. v. 5: Have a gentle ("reasonableness or patient") way of life that others can see
 - c. v. 6: Do not be anxious about anything.
 - i. *What is included in "anything"?* Everything!
 - d. v. 6: Pray about everything
2. *What is the reason Paul gives for rejoicing, being gentle, not being anxious, and praying?*
 - a. v. 5: The Lord is at hand – *what does it mean when something is "at hand"? Take the hand of the person next to you; they are now "at hand," close to you; you can feel them, they can feel you. That's what the Lord is to us!*
3. *Is it always easy to rejoice? Why not?*
 - a. Circumstances can be hard! We struggle with sickness, frustration, confusion ...
 - b. *Again, where is Paul while he's writing this letter?*
 - i. In prison! Yet Paul is rejoicing: why? Because the Lord is at hand, right with him, never leaving him.
4. *In verse 6, Paul says "Do not be anxious ... instead, pray." So what is prayer?*
 - a. Talking to God: *why do we talk to God?*
 - i. God knows our hearts, knows what we need, listens to us, answers us.
5. How *does Paul say we should talk to God?*
 - a. Supplication: *what does "supplication mean?*
 - i. Dictionary: "asking or begging; earnestly, humbly"

- b. With thanksgiving: *how does being thankful help our attitude when praying?*
- c. With belief, knowing that God is always there for us and is on our side
- 6. v. 7: *What result does Paul say we will have if we rejoice and pray?*
 - a. *“The peace of God that surpasses all understanding...” I wonder what “surpasses” means?*
 - i. Way above and beyond any other kind of peace! It’s a peace that doesn’t necessarily make sense, given circumstances (like Paul being in prison!)
 - b. *“...will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” When something is guarded, what does that mean?*
 - i. It’s safe! This is a peace that goes into our hearts and minds from God, not from the world.
- 7. *When do you feel God’s peace?*
- 8. *What keeps you from feeling God’s peace?*
- 9. *How can we pray for each other and our anxieties today?*

[could stop here]

- 10. In verse 8, Paul then gives the Philippians a list of things to think about: Whatever is... [*ask for examples of each of these words*]
 - a. true
 - b. honorable
 - c. just, or right
 - d. pure
 - e. lovely
 - f. commendable, or admirable
 - g. excellent
 - h. praiseworthy
 - 11. *Let’s think about opposite of these words for a minute: what things are NOT true? NOT lovely? NOT excellent, etc.?*
 - 12. *Why does it help to think about the things Paul lists? When you’re thinking about these kinds of things, what are you not thinking about?*
 - a. anxiety, fears, ugly things
 - 13. *In verse 9, Paul says when we practice the things Paul has taught them about the Lord, what will happen?*
 - a. Again, PEACE: “the God of peace will be with you.”
 - 14. *Let’s pray for each other today, that we would know God’s peace and presence with us always.*
- Ask for prayer requests for today.
 - Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
 - End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

Philippians 4: 4-9

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