

Joyful Prayer

By John Richardson

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 1:3–11

[3] I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, [4] always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, [5] because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. [6] And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. [7] It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. [8] For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. [9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

OBSERVATION

Paul writes to the church of Philippi to encourage the believers to continue on in the Gospel work that was started. We get to look into the relationship Paul had with this church and understand how Harmony Hill should be yearning for one another in the same way. The church should seek prayer for one another and with love and joy.

- Paul’s prayers for people in this church were earnest. Remembering the believers in Philippi brought joy in every prayer. Prayer was the chance that Paul took to care for the church when he was not able to be present with them. The prayers of Paul not only impacted the church, but it brought him joy. The joy was not only connected to the people but the partnership these people had in a shared mission (vv. 3-5).
- In verse 6 we have a very familiar “coffee cup” verse which is often cited as encouragement for an individual in tough circumstance or an uncertain future. “You” in verse 6 is a plural you, meaning that the context of the verse is speaking to the whole church and not individuals primarily. The completed work of Christ Jesus is more than a promise to individuals; God is completing the work through His church. The body of believers will be partnering together to see God complete the mission of making Jesus Christ known across the world. Every member of the church can cleave to this verse as they pray for other church members.
- Paul affirms the truthfulness of his own words, “it is right for me to feel this way about you all.” The feelings Paul has about the completion of the mission of redemption and the joy in prayer is certain because believers are united in the

grace of God through Jesus' redemptive work on the cross. The church can hold each other in joy and hope about the future because of the unity that is in Jesus. Paul gives a model of care for brothers and sisters in Christ: God as my witness, as I yearn for you with all the affections of Christ Jesus. This is a very bold statement; God can testify on behalf of the love Paul has toward the believers in this church...love that is from Jesus. Verses 7-8 can be either an indictment or encouragement for how we feel about people within Harmony Hill.

- Paul closes with his continued prayer that the church will grow in love, knowledge, and discernment, as they continue to become blameless through their combined love. The church has an opportunity to walk with one another and grow in each of these characteristics, but it takes everyone. The praise of God is expressed as the collective church loves one another onward in the mission of salvation going outward. How will you care for the church in prayer this week, seeking growth in love for God through one another?

OBEDIENCE

Many people have more time in their lives in this season which can be maximized to pray for people in the body of Christ. Setting time out for scheduled prayer will be essential in growing in love for excellent things. How will you plan to pray toward joy?

- As members of Harmony Hill, we can pray for each other, seeking to complete the mission of redemption through our own sanctification. How are you praying for members of the church? Maybe it would be helpful to reach out to the church to get a list of the membership to pray for each day.
- Have you told someone lately that you are yearning to see them? This isolative time will press people to think about who/what they love. This time will also move people to wonder if anyone loves them. Today we can share our yearning for others, and if we don't yearn, we can ask God to move our hearts toward the faith family.
- How is your holiness? God is giving you more time to uncover sin outside of busyness. Ask God to reveal sinfulness in your life and ask others to pray for you.
- The work will be completed—the work being the mission of God to save the world. How will you continue to work toward God's mission as you are more alone?

PRAYER

Pray for others in the church. Thank God for a faith family to lean on. Ask God how you can continue to share Jesus with people this week. Ask God to give you people by name to share how you yearn to see them.