

2-14, 2010 Philippians 4:6-7 “Prayer: C. S. I” (Part 2) by Richard Boatman

Philippians 4:6-7 – *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

“But in everything, by prayer and supplication...” Supplication means petition or asking God for certain things. The great 19th century British preacher, Charles Spurgeon, said, “Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the Kingdom.” But just as a carpenter needs a tape measure and a square to give him a standard for building, we also require a standard, a paradigm for petition. Our greatest model for petitioning is *The Lord’s Prayer*. I’d like to briefly revisit it.

Depending on how we count them, there are five to six petitions made in this prayer. Let’s follow its flow: Our Father who art in heaven, **1) *hallowed be Thy name...*** This is a petition for God’s name and presence to be held as sacred within our hearts, revered, worthy of adoration. It is a request that our heavenly Father shape our vessels, our minds and attitudes as uniquely God’s. **2) *Thy kingdom come...*** In other words we are asking for heaven’s realm of light, love and truth to rule here. The rest of this petition deals with the specific way in which this happens: *Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*. In other words, to the degree that our will is genuinely yielded to God’s, the kingdom realm has come to us. **3) *Give us this day our daily bread...*** This speaks of dependence upon God for practical sustenance like food, jobs, strength—needs not “greeds”—as well as our need for spiritual food. **4) *And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...*** Such a petition postures us to live in the flow of God’s love—that flow of forgiveness that runs to us AND continues through us. **5) *And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil...*** This request helps us come to terms with our vulnerability to sin and the stain that evil’s entrance places upon our soul. As one has said, *we cannot resist temptation by haunting the environs where it is bred*. We are too often like the fellow addicted to pastries who drove past a donut shop on his way to work everyday. He prayed, “Lord, if I’m not to stop here today, please let there be no parking place available in front.” He had to drive around the block eight times before a spot opened up. The Lord’s Prayer then ends on a doxological note: *For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.*

Notice the guidelines for petition this model prayer sets that cause us to be **formed by the Word and Spirit**: *Reverence, Surrender, Dependence, Forgiveness* and

Deliverance (or freedom). These major themes create **petition with a punch** as they first *inform* us and then *form* our requests. So we see that while The Lord's Prayer is extremely relational, it is not in any way trivial or shallow. C.S. Lewis asked something to which we can all relate: "If God had granted all the silly prayers I've made in my life, where would I be now?"

Supplication (petition) at its best comes from or is an extension of Communing Prayer. In that place of inner dwelling and listening, God may softly impress upon us a course of action or a direction for specific requests. Hear three Scriptures that help us understand this process: James 4:2b-3 – *You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives...* In communing prayer, motives are examined. We labor inwardly with the Spirit to discern the presence of selfishness or fear that may be hindering us. Mark 11:24 – *Whatever you desire, when you pray, believe you receive them and you shall have them.* In other words, godly desires are birthed in the inner atmosphere of communing prayer. This becomes the basis for believing. Psalms 37:4 – *Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* As we delight in the Lord, God places within us heavenly desires. Desires (good or bad) motivate us, move us in a direction. God-birthed desires fill us with the confidence that what we ask is in line with the Father's heart.

So this combination of examining motives, having God's desires formed in us, and believing and receiving, that is, asking for and acting upon what God reveals, is at the heart of 1 John 5:14-15: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."

What we are really talking about is **Spirit-led supplication**. By this I mean making specific requests that are centered in Christ (perhaps using breath prayers), that inquire: "What would *you* have me to ask, Lord?" and that petition God based on the clarity given us.

So in expanding this Spirit-led supplication into something we can actually speak or write down, allow me to suggest a few steps: **a)** Identify a personal need that presses on your heart and mind. **b)** Center in Christ – "Breath Prayers" – holding this need before him. **c)** Inquire: "What would *you* have me to ask, Lord?" **d)** Petition (try writing it out) based on the clarity given. And **e)** Give God thanks and praise. Remember, Philippians 4:6 says, "prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving...*"

I know this gives us a lot to think about. It may seem too big at first, maybe even a little overwhelming. But allow me to encourage you. I've told you about my little *Toro* snow blower. Well, the other day after an 8 inch snow, I went out to face my driveway. The graders had gone by and had piled this huge mound of snow at the mouth of our drive—the largest I've seen in three years. I would say it was twice the height of my blower and quite wide. It was kind of overwhelming, but I began to do what I could. Instead of the train, I felt like it was *the little Toro who could...I think I can; I think I can...* I slowly burrowed through, backing up then forging ahead then backing up again and pushing ahead. I finally made it to the street, but it was a slow, arduous task. Suddenly I looked up and there was Randy Tjaden at the helm of his skid-steer loader. He plowed into that small mountain of snow, and in minute or two it was history. That's the way God's presence and power work in our lives. We face the "mountains" before us with what we've been given. And as we are faithful to walk in the light we have, God joins us in new ways and empowers us to accomplish far more than we imagined.

Hear [Ephesians 3:20-21](#) and be encouraged: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."