

**Prayer is...Petition**  
**March 17<sup>th</sup> / Daniel Hickenbotham**

**INTRODUCTION - Prayer is Petition**

- INTRODUCE YOURSELF
- As we continue our series in prayer today, we are going to jump right... Read with me:
  - **Philippians 4:4-7**
    - **“4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”**
  - Let’s pray...
    - “God we love you. We need you. You are our hope for transformation, our hope for effectiveness in ministry, and our hope for satisfaction in our lives. We ask that you would disciple us in prayer, through your word, by the power of the Holy Spirit... We don’t want to just know lots of things about prayer... we want to be a people devoted to prayer... make us that now, we pray... Amen”
- **Prayer is Petition**
  - Out of all the different facets of prayer we have looked at so far, this may be the most “natural” one. It is certainly the one we usually default to in prayer meetings, or when we pray with others.
    - Most prayer drifts immediately into petitioning God for things... why?
      - Some of it is because our hearts are pretty Anthropocentric...
        - Most of our prayers, especially when we are immature, have to do with meeting our own human needs, whether real or perceived...
          - As we mature that shifts,
            - We discover that some of our “needs” aren’t what we really need at all...
              - EX... I begged God to save me from consequences, when what I needed was a change of heart so I would stop participating in the behaviors that LED to the consequences...
              - ...but we also begin to see the value in praying for others needs... which are much like our own...
                - But even then, the common theme is usually us, or those important to us, because, well, that’s kind of the default setting of our heart as humans, to be human-centered...
    - But it’s also because we are like.... super needy creatures...
      - We need food and water and shelter and clothing and relationships, and these things all cost us a lot to acquire... but we never stop needing them... so we now both need those 5 things as well as needing the means to acquire those things.... and protection from other things that are trying to prevent us from getting those things... and on and on...

- Our lives here in the west, as comfortable and convenient as they are, can sometimes distract us from feeling those needs as acutely, but we are no less needy than the poor man...
- That doesn't even begin to touch on things we need when those 5 things or our access to them gets broken... or they break us while in pursuit of them, etc.
- When we start to compile a list, our needs, though easily simplified, can be incredibly complex and burdensome
- And scripture bears witness to this:
  - Listen to what the passage we read says again:
    - "Don't WORRY about anything, but in EVERYTHING through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."
      - It says out of the many things that you could potentially worry about, don't pick one to fret over, rather take ALL of it ALL the time to the Lord in grateful prayer.
    - Do you know what worry is? Worry is just praying to yourself...
      - That's how Anthropocentric we are... Instead of making a request to God, we just talk to ourselves about... pray to ourselves about it...
        - Although there can be medical issues, chemical imbalances, post partum etc. that cause anxiety, for most of us anxiety, worry, is a worship issue... we are giving preeminence to something other than Jesus and it starts to torment us...
          - Maybe it is other people's thoughts of us
          - Maybe it is how much money we have or don't have in our savings account
          - Maybe it is just our own comfort
            - We put SELF things before JESUS, and use self tools to try and cope with it and that causes us to worry every time...
    - Paul is prohibiting that self-glorifying self-prayer, and prescribing in its place, "in EVERYTHING through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Because biblical petition IS Worship.
  - **Petition is Worship.**
    - WAIT... WHAT? Am I really saying it is an act of worship to ASK things of the Lord?
      - Yes... that is exactly what I am saying... HOWEVER... Before you go running off to worship God by asking for a Bentley and a million dollars... Let's clarify...
        - Worship, in the overarching scheme of things, is what?
          - Obedience to God's commands... But Pastor Daniel, you say, that sounds so legalistic!
            - Well, in 1 Samuel 15, in Amos 5, and lots of other places scripture makes it plain that the Lord delights in obedience above the religious ritual.
              - WELL PASTOR DANIEL, THAT IS OLD TESTAMENT, YOU SAY... JESUS WAS ALL ABOUT LOVE... Worship is just pouring out LOVE towards God...
                - True, but Jesus said in John 14, if you LOVE me you will, what... obey my commands!

- That includes His command to pray
- So petition is worship in that sense, but it is also worship in another sense:
  - It recognizes and honors God for WHO He is and what He has done... and then rightly expresses humble DEPENDENCE upon Him.
    - I personally think this is the reason that Prayer is SO difficult for SO many of us...
      - THE VERY ACT OF PETITION IS A CONFESSION THAT “THOU ART GOD, THOU ART WORTHY, THOU ART GREAT AND MIGHTY, AND THOU ART PROVIDER AND SUSTAINER.”...And I art none of those things...
        - To ask of God is to confess our inability... our weakness... our not Godness...
          - And it is to confess His all-sufficiency and ability, His strength, His kindness, goodness, faithfulness, etc..
        - Petition serves to make God right sized in our universe and it leads us to become right sized in His... and we confess it when we Petition.
- Finally, Petition is Worship because it aligns us with the work of God in the earth.
  - As we petition God for our hearts to be made more Christlike, for our families to be transformed, for the hungry to be fed, for the naked to be clothed, for our neighborhoods and nation to be made new, etc. we are bringing our hearts, and actions, into alignment with the work that Jesus began...
    - In many ways it is THE most effective tool we have for joining our hearts to the Father’s business as Christ did...
      - Ever let a little kid help you build something, or work on a car, or paint a room... ever notice them start to mimic you... to do things the way you do it... to look at things the way you look at them?
        - Maybe you remember doing it with your parent, or older sibling, or an aunt or uncle..
          - We naturally want to be like that older person who has included us in their project...
          - God has invited us into His project, and the more we participate, including in prayer, the more we will become like Jesus...
        - Our petitioning to be more like him, to see a soul saved, to see society come into obedience to Him, is aligning ourselves with the work of the Kingdom that He is doing... it is being about His business, and cheering Him on it, which glorifies Him... and it makes us want to be like Him!
- But even though petition itself is worship, it also needs to be preceded by worship, and lead to more worship:
  - Petition divorced from a heart filled with honor for God and a life of intimacy with Him, is in danger of being utilitarian at best, and mercenary at worst.
    - James 4 talks about this: We do not have because we do not ask, and when we do ask we ask amiss... to spend it on selfish gain...
      - HE DIAGNOSIS THIS PROBLEM AS STEMMING FROM INTIMACY WITH THE WORLD RATHER THAN INTIMACY WITH GOD.
        - A NOT YET, or a NO given to a petition that stems from a heart without intimacy, leads to BITTERNESS with God...

- But petitions born out of a heart to see God honored above all, born out of intimacy with him... that petition is trustworthy and impassioned...
  - PSALM 37 “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.
    - As we seek the Lord, as we delight ourselves in Him in worship and prayer, the desires of our heart become trustworthy, because they are GIVEN to us by God...
      - As we become more Christlike, our petitions will be more in line with the things of Christ’s Kingdom... as will our response to however God replies...
- Which leads to the second point:
  - **Petition is Working.**
    - I know many people who consider prayer to be the appetizer before the entrée of getting busy.
      - They would never say it out loud, but their behavior reveals that they think that DOING stuff is more important, more effective, than praying...
        - That WORKING is working and that Praying is... something else...
          - They don’t believe that prayer changes things...
    - I know other people who feel prayer is kind of useless because of their high view of God’s sovereignty.
      - God is going to do what God is going to do...
        - He doesn’t need us...
    - So here is my answer when people ask me “Why should I pray if God is truly Sovereign”:
      - Well first, Mr. High Sovereignty Of God Guy... HE TOLD YOU TO... And to do it without ceasing...
        - Jesus told us to pray to the Sovereign Lord of the Harvest to send workers into the field.
      - And second, throughout all of scripture it is clear, as clear as God’s sovereignty, God responds to His people’s prayers.
        - THAT IS A MYSTERY! THAT IT IS A PARADOX... but it doesn’t mean that it isn’t true...
          - Light is both a particle and a wave.... That is a paradox too... but it’s true
    - The way I put it: In God’s sovereignty, somehow, he has sovereignly ordained that our prayers and petitions would affect Him...
      - That he will not delay in bringing justice for His elect when they cry out to Him day and night, as explained by the parable of the persistent widow...
      - <STORY OF MOSES> Moses prayed and it says that God relented from His anger...
        - WHAT?!
    - You’re right... God doesn’t NEED us...
      - But He wants us... He chose us...
        - He has ordained to work in and through us, rather than distinctly from us...

- He has elected us to GOOD WORKS... THE GOOD WORKS OF HIS KINGDOM...
  - So as my beloved Charles Spurgeon said:
    - “Election is the guarantee of complete salvation, and an argument for success at the throne of grace. He who chose us for himself will surely hear our prayers.”
- Think about the little kid helping with the project:
  - Who is doing the work, who is ensuring/guaranteeing that the job gets finished? You are...
    - If Clem puts her little hand on a wrench I am turning and pulls hard, is she doing the work? Yes... but she would be entirely incapable of experiencing the wrench move without me doing what I am doing!
  - Little ones don’t have the capacity to accomplish the task... they don’t have the strength, they don’t have the dexterity, and they definitely don’t have the attention span...
    - But just because YOU bring the task to completion, does that negate their contribution? Does it mean that what they did was meaningless?
    - Absolutely not! It was meaningful to you to watch them try and be like you and do the things you do, and it was meaningful to them to see that piece of wood cut, or that wrench turned, or that tiny little section of wall painted... and it CONTRIBUTED to the work being accomplished...
    - God is GOING to accomplish the task of making all things new... He is GOING to accomplish all He has promised to do...
      - But he INVITES us to participate... to cheer Him on as He does it... to put our little weak hand on the giant wrench he is turning and throw our insignificant weight into seeing it turned...
        - And our petitions are part of our putting our hand to the plow!
  - But it isn’t just about getting prayers answered or power for ministry.
    - The work that grateful, worshipful petition does in building our own soul and our corporate church community cannot be overstated. It serves to:
      - Align our hearts with God’s will
      - To grow in faith and trust in the moments when it seems God is not listening,
      - And fills hearts with joy and wonder when we see prayers have effect.
  - People who pray together grow in intimacy, in effectiveness, and in fervor for the work of the Kingdom.
    - It grows us into a community as we worship, and it grows us into a community when we petition.
      - Petition is the work of building and edifying the church, including our individual souls!
- **Petition is Wide-Ranging**
  - So what topics does biblical, God honoring, petition cover?
    - It basically extends to where ever the Kingdom of God extends!
      - Three Basic Categories:

- Supplication: Petition For Self
  - We see David prayed this way all throughout Psalm 51
    - “Create in me a clean heart... Cast me not away from your presence... Restore to me the joy of my salvation”
  - We see it in the Lord’s Prayer”
    - “Give us this day our daily bread”
  - We pray these prayers, humbly remembering our utter inability and His continual faithfulness. These prayers are to be made without selfish ambition... we seek to know His will and we seek the power to carry it out!
- Intercession: Petition For Others
  - We see this prayer in Christ’s life, as He prays for His disciples throughout the Gospels.
    - Jesus even explicitly tells Peter... I have prayed for you...
  - We see it in Paul’s writings, where he describes his intercessions for the people He is writing to.
    - Ephesians 4:16-19 is a prime example of this when he writes:
      - For this reason I kneel before the Father<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. <sup>16</sup> I pray that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power in the inner man through His Spirit, <sup>17</sup> and that the Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God’s love, <sup>19</sup> and to know the Messiah’s love that surpasses knowledge, so you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”
  - This prayer is offered with the very best of attitudes towards the person or people being prayed for. We don’t call down judgment in the form of hellfire and brimstone upon those unbelieving cities. We ask for Mercy. We ask for Blessing. We ask for the knowledge of God. We ask for repentance. This is not SIC-EM prayer...
    - 14-DAY PRAYER FOR THOSE YOU ARE BITTER TOWARDS... For your enemy and persecutor...
- Missional: Petition for God
  - Sounds weird
    - Jesus told us to pray that the Lord of the harvest might send workers out...
    - He told us to pray that God’s name would be hallowed
      - We are to pray that God’s Kingdom Come and His Will Be Done....
        - You can pray with the Moravians, “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering.”

SO... as part of our worship... to be doers of the word, not just hearers... WE ARE GOING TO DO THAT RIGHT NOW AS A CHURCH... (Prayer points, grab 3 or 4 other people...) IF you are a guest and this weirds you out, sorry... if you notice people without a group grab them...

## NOT THE TIME FOR LONG WINDED PRAYERS...

- Out of all the different aspects of prayer we have looked at so far, this is the EASIEST one to find in scripture.
  - In fact, the problem in picking a text for this topic was not a lack of passages, but sorting through all of them.
    - Petition has been around a long time... almost right from the start!
      - In Genesis chapter 4 we see people begin to call upon the name of the Lord...
        - What does that mean? To call upon the name of the Lord?
          - The Psalms are choc-a-bloc FULL of petitions to God for protection, for provision, graciousness, etc..
            - But it is also full of petitions for... salvation... deliverance...
            - We saw last week in Psalm 116 David did what?
              - Took the Cup of Salvation and called upon the name of the Lord
          - The New Testament paints the picture that to call upon the name of the Lord is to make the ultimate petition a person can make:
            - It is a petition for deliverance... a supplication for salvation...
      - Because of all our needs as human beings... our most pressing need is for the penalty of sin to be removed from our account, that you might have a peace with God.
        - Our biggest need isn't the healing of our inner child, or a job that gives us dignity, or peace on earth good will towards men... it isn't even food and water... it is our need for the just wrath of God that abides against us... because of our willful rebellion against a good and gracious sovereign... be dealt with, before it destroys us... we NEED a savior...
          - And I think that is why the first petition in scripture is to call upon the name of the Lord
            - To call upon the God who saves...
    - As we close our eyes and bow our heads... call upon Him... Call upon the God who saves...