

Proper Petitionary Prayer

Grace Gospel Church Ministry

The most frequent type or forum of prayer exercise is that of supplication, i.e., the requesting of what one desires or perceives to need from God. There is also another widely misunderstood forum, namely intercession, which is identified as the practice of requesting things for others. There are great concerns and particular problems involved in these aspects of prayer. Here we first address some of the issues relating to supplicatory (petitionary) and so-called "intercessory prayer." One of the most controversial issues is whether God's people have been granted a blank check concomitantly with the command to pray. In effect, does the privilege of prayer mean that God is in someway committed to affirmatively accommodate all the elect's petitions? There is no question that He is certainly able to answer and effectuate such prayers as He has the power but is His sovereignty consistent with such teaching?

Some religious persuasions foist that God has unconditionally given such promises in His revealed will. In this mindset, they appeal to verses such as Matthew 7:7-12; 18:19; John 14:13; 15:7; 16:23; and John chapter 17. Their prayers are remarkably like the ill-stated one documented in Mark 10:35 (from the Greek Text), "Teacher, we wish that whatever we may ask for ourselves, you may do for us." This approach is common in the so-called "Name it, Claim it" or "Blab it, Grab it" movements. But this doctrinal cogitation is unscriptural in all its insinuative techniques. In no way do they truly respect God's divine sovereignty. These doctrines fail to exegete the above texts in the vein of their assigned dispensational and covenant settings. There are specific instructions in these writings, which outlay balanced principles and conditions that are germane for this future Kingdom Millennial age that is yet to come.

Informed prayers are always conveyed in conformance to God's authority. Proper petitions are proffered in the form of "requests", not demands (Philippians 4:6). When one consciously or subconsciously demands things from God, it serves as viewing Him as an equal entity or even as a servant, but certainly not as the sovereign Lord. One must never view God as being obligated in any sense to comply with the dictates of ones wishes. Contrariwise, one should be continuously submitting oneself humbly to His will as **He is the Lord**. Believers should be careful particularly in the use of imperative verbs when they pray. The uninformed disciples employed the blank check approach in Mark 10:35 but notice how the Lord gently rebuffed them in verse 40: "But to sit on my right or on my left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." Thus God had already foreordained who will sit where, hence their prayers did not submit to the predestination of His divine sovereignty.

The key components for the proper structuring of petitions to God should entail the following criteria that all requests are:

- (1) In recognition and respect for the sovereignty of God.
- (2) In earnest submission to the will of God.

- (3) In alignment with the assigned course Which God has designed for ones life.
- (4) In full compliance with the Word of God.
- (5) In pursuit of ones spiritual growth and development.
- (6) In light of understanding that the emphasis should be on the pleasure of God, not oneself,

Accordingly, all petitions that are submitted to God for His consideration, should be couched in the attitude that the requests should always be concomitant to the pleasure of His Good will. This attitude is consistent in view of Philippians 2:13, which states (from the King James Version), For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure." And from the Greek Text, "for God is the one working in you both to will and to work out His good pleasure." Note, that the emphasis of this verse is entirely on what God does irrespective of what occurs outside of Him. Thus the phrase, ***Theh•os gahr ehs•teen o ehn•ehrg•on ehn ee•meen*** rendered "God is the One working in you", depicts what God does without any influence from anyone who is separated from His counsel. Hence, God is the One working (***ehn•ehrg•on***) "in you" (***ehn ee•meen***). The Greek participle ***ehn•ehrg•on*** (working), is constituted of the preposition ***ehn*** and the verb ***ehr•go***, which denotes "working in", "producing in" and accomplishing (in His elect) "in you." The thought conveyance is that God is the one continuously energizing in the elect, as the emphasis is on an in-working in the believer. Here it is the Holy Spirit internally working in conjunction with the elect's spirit to produce an inner conformity to His will which will be externally expressed.

This now induces the question, "why is it necessary for God to energize or work in the believer?" The logical answer is that it is due to ones lack of innate ability to either determine or do what is right before Him. First we must understand that God works in the believer unto the end ***to thehl•een*** rendered "to will", i.e., to effect a "willing", "wishing", "wanting" and "desiring that is pleasing unto Himself. Of course, we should all recognize that the will of the natural (physical) man is in opposition to the will of God, and that none would desire to function in conformity to His attributes nor His decrees. Thus it is absolutely necessary for God to work and effectuate His will in the lives of His beloved. God's people need to be motivated to want and desire that which is according to His Word in a manner that is pleasing unto God. The Greek phrase ***to thehl•een*** rendered "to will", involves the thought of both knowing and desiring to do what pleases God.

Finally, we observe that God works in the believer unto the end ***ehn•ehr•yeen*** rendered "to work", i.e., to produce, effect and accomplish that which is His good pleasure. This phrase implies that believers in themselves are impotent and incapable of pleasing God (Romans 8:8). Actually there is nothing that can please God, which has its origin in the mind, spirit and flesh of mankind (Romans 7:14, 17-23). If ones thinking and acting is going to be pleasing to God, it must be the result of the Holy Spirit energizing and working in and through His elect. Thus, God is the one who moves into the lives of believers to effectuate a willing and working ***eep•ehr tees ehv•thok•ee•ahs*** rendered "out (on behalf of) His good pleasure." The literal Greek meaning is that God's willing and energizing (working) is ***eep•ehr*** rendered "on behalf of ***tees ehv•thok•ee•ahs*** rendered "His good pleasure", i.e., His good mind-set, purpose and plan. Note, the willing and working of the Holy Spirit in the believer, is a link in the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. Accordingly it is in this vein that petitions should be submitted with the confidence and attitude: "**Lord, let your will be done, irrespective of mine!**"

