

Philippians 4:6–7

“Prayer: a Means of Peace-Applying Grace”

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⁶ Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Philippians chapter 4. Our portion this afternoon is verses 6 through 7, what is ask God for his help. Hey, thank you and praise you all. God for making your own grace that by which we live and your own peace. That which guards our hearts and we thank you for the ministry of your spirit and carrying along the apostle.

So that he might write for us what all the very words of God. And we pray for the ongoing ministry of your spirit that he would use this your own word and that he would give us light to understand with our minds and that he would warm our affections towards you and subdue our wills that we would hear believingly willingly and that you would produce in us that which is described and give us the enjoyment of the benefit and make us to know that you are the one who have done it.

So that we would bless your name all the more we pray it'll God in Jesus name amen. Philippians 4 verses 6 and 7, these are God's words be anxious for nothing. But everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God.

What surpasses all understanding. Will guard your hearts and minds. Through Christ Jesus. Amen this ends this reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

We considered last week how? The Lord actually commands us to rejoice and commands us to be furious always and how impossible such a command is except for that we always have the ground for it the ground for rejoicing is our being in the Lord and that's not just the the ground the right cause for addressing but even the ability the capacity for that rejoicing comes from him himself, he is the one by whose life.

Is strength by use power we may rejoice well praise God that we have him because we have another perhaps even more seemingly they're equally impossible because impossible is impossible. Well but I don't know about your experience we're all constructed a little bit differently. I actually have more difficulty with the command be anxious for nothing than I do have with the command to rejoice always anxiety or being anxious over things seems to be something that is continuously arising in my own heart for my own remaining fleshliness from my remaining sinfulness and so it's very important that if you were like I am that you.

And I together we read Philippians 4:6 and 7 well that we don't read it in the way that I have very often read it in my life and so if you are reading it like this you are in good bad company as bad company because you are with me but at least we can sit under the word together as first of all, you must be anxious for nothing and once you're done with a bang that or in conjunction with that being that you have to pray according to the four part checklist of verse six.

And if you achieve being anxious for nothing and if you achieve according to this four-part checklist, then you will have a plan to next level. Christianity in which God's peace finally guards your hearts. Anyone else guilty of having read this passage that way perhaps. I'm preaching only to myself now and you all will say oh strange a pastor over thought of it that way.

I thought of it this the following way my whole Christian life, which is you already have close. Jesus you are in the Lord verse 4, he is already at hand with you you're a united to him by faith verse 5 and the peace of God guards you. Our heart and your mind through Christ Jesus already now like everything else in the Christian life we are growing in our practice of it and we are growing in our experience of it and the fair parts of prayer in verse 6 are instrumental means by which the peace of God excludes anxiety for the Christian so yes there is something of a cause and effect relationship but it's not.

I can get there if I do this well enough it's the Lord has given you peace with himself in Christ Jesus and he has given you prayer in the four different aspects that are described in verse six as a mechanism by which or a means by which the peace that he has given you in Christ.

Jesus is more and more experienced by you so prayer is a, We load all the price more and more the spirit stirs up our faith by his grace this is one of the things that you will that you will note if you are very very very minut about such things and you study the Dutch reformed or the continental reformed writers and the 16th century and you see that they really emphasize as the means of grace and sacrament word

and sacrament I even hear, you know, there's been a recovery of means of grace type thinking in the ARP which first I'm delighted.

And I will hear other ministers in the ARP say we're ministers of word and sacrament and I want when they say that because that means that that we are recognizing again as a church that God is the one who who saves his people who causes people preserves his people and that he has appointed means by which to do so I just wish I could start hearing some of them say we are ministers of word and sacrament.

And prayer that's one of the advances in the Westminster standards over the three forms of unity is that prayer is acknowledged as a means of grace one of these mechanisms by which God has given us that the spirit stirs up our faith in Christ and grows us by the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and so by making biblical prayer to include these four aspects he has married prayer a means by which he makes us to embrace Christ more and more to experience more and more the peace of God taking up fortified positions, some of you like to play airsoft some of you are hoping perhaps considering thinking as you think about your future going into the military there, you know, if Peter was here then I could say some of you already doing that or if Nathan was here we could so it was respect to Nathan.

Or the Philippian church was you know, the colony of Philippi was a Roman soldier retirement colony, they would understand language of what it means to take up a fortified position around something and guard it that's the picture in verse 7 the piece of God taking up a fortified position around your heart and refusing to let any of that anxiety in so you can just you're behind not a Roman guard.

A piece of God guard and you can sing in the midst of anything even as the Philippian church began in the inner part of a prison. And so there would there would even be those who remember where at the beginning of when they're church was just being planted by the spirit through the ministry of the Apostle Paul the singing from the prison the rejoicing in the Lord always that was able to take place why.

Because the piece of God was standing guard round their hearts, so as you and I seek that and pursuing it and pursue it verse seven is not being held back as a reward that you might get if you pray well enough in the verse six way verse seven is reminding you that it's God himself who has made his peace with you in the Lord Jesus Christ and he's given you prayer in the four aspects that are described here as a means by which the spirit grants you to experience the benefits of that peace you have with him still very important to pray in these four ways there's instruction here so if you and I are not praying in this way and we're not experiencing the the peace of God one of the reasons is because it's God who gives his peace to guard your heart that way and so just any kind of old speaking in the air or thinking thinking in the air is not the means by which that peace guards your heart if you're hoping in God to do the work then that hope is expressed by use of his means.

So by where of introduction what are the four aspects of prayer first? Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer another that's translated prayer here is a word that expresses orienting oneself to God it can refer even to physical posture but it also especially applies to spiritual posture laying your soul before him seeing yourself before his face, there's some connection even to what we're hearing in Luke 21 the what we heard this morning what we're hearing next lord say that if we are always before the face of a god who has redeemed us in Christ, we're oriented first towards him what is there in the creation that can that can take away the peace that you have with him so orienting yourself always to God in your prayers something we actually need to think about as we pray sometimes we're praying and we're even not just oriented to others hoping that we'll sound really theologically precise and like we're really experiencing God, so that others will think that.

We're experiencing God and thinking about what others think about whether or not we're experiencing God becomes the means by which we don't experience possible even to do that and it's even possible to do that without anybody else there. Really wishing just for your own self that you could feel like you're like, you're pregnant no.

Errors oriented towards God before Him mindful of Him. And sometimes when you're trying to follow this part of prayer, you're praying ends up being praying to pray. Right. You know that you ought to be oriented towards God. You realize and you have few sentences into your prayer or a few sentences since the last time you realized it within that prayer that you're no longer oriented towards God.

And you cry out Lord. Direct my heart back to you. Help me to to focus on you. I just in the last few sentences. I've I've been distracted from you. So first of all, you enter towards God's second of all as we've just been saying we're just been describing supplication.

You can see the words supply there and that's a that's a very good way to remember what supplication is. You need things you don't have them. God does and you ask him for them and he gives them to you. Supplication. Specific part of praying that comes from personal neediness and knowing God's sufficiency for that need and God's willingness to give it to you.

I wonder if I hope I'm not just becoming foolish and overindulgent as a father the further along I get but I have some younger children who who know that the yes is coming if it is at all possible for me

to reconcile my conscience to saying yes for whatever the request is.

God is not like me. He is perfectly wise and he is even more inclined to give his yes. He will always always give the yes for what is good and he will give you the yes, but if there is something better and give it to you in the better way and he will give you the know that's better altogether but supplication that asking God out of your neediness and laying hold not only of his sufficiency for the need but of his willingness.

So oriented towards God expressed. Your need and embracing his sufficiency in his willingness where thanksgiving with Thanksgiving, this is not just gratitude but submission. Because God doesn't always give you exactly what you're asking for or does he? And yet you were all ready to be thanking him for what he will give you.

When you're asking him for it knowing that it might be something different than what you asked for. So I think we really we very easily recognize the gratitude part. We should be thankful to God for his goodness to us but there's also as you're making your requests known to him just repeating before him we sometimes.

Use the language of remembering that before God as you're making your requests sent to him you're thanking him for however he will answer because he is God and we we are not and so there's orienting ourselves towards him there's looking to him for our supply which isn't acknowledgment of our neediness and his sufficiency and his his willingness there's with thanksgiving your rethinking him.

We thank God retrospectively no about you, but when I start thanking God prospectively for what he is going to do. I automatically and convicted about how little my thankfulness has been for what he has already done right you're thanking him for what he's going to do and you realize that there's all these things that he's already done and that he is doing and even that he has reminded you to pray and in his providence his spirit has brought you to where you are that very second and it's his mercy that you're called.

Upon him and it's his mercy that you know Christ and that you can come to him through Christ and that you have all of his favor in Christ and say prospective thinking him for future things often stirs up in us even think thankfulness for present and past things so oriented towards him asking for for his supply with that gratitude and submission that Thanksgiving that are involved and thanksgiving make your requests or let your requests.

Or other be made known to God requests asking for specific actions by God to intervene not only for yourself but requests are also made for others that's a great mercy that God gives us command to make our requests known tell him what you would like him to do how much prayer is wasted when we have the request already and we we get to that part of the praying and we realize.

Oh no have I really thought through if this is the right thing to ask for? Now we should as the the children so hopefully reminded us this morning that the whole word of God is of use to direct us in our praying and that especially the form of prayer that the Lord Jesus taught us gives us a manner of speaking to God and a number of things for which to come to him and in order of priority even in those things and how they interact with it, we should have our praying informed by scripture.

But one of the things that scripture says is let your requests be made known to God. Don't be afraid to tell him specifically what you would like him to do. Now yes, he's golden you're not and you're leaving it to him and you're instructed to be thankful for whatever he's going to do.

But praying itself is is a it praying is itself a form of nevertheless not my will but vine be done. So you're saying what the request is. The Lord Jesus was not wrong to say if it is possible as far yeah if it is sorry if it is possible let this cut pass from me.

He actually knew it wasn't possible he had been telling his disciples who couldn't get it through their thick skulls for years that it wasn't possible. And yet. His humanity shrunk and trembled at the whore that faced him the next day when he took what your and my sins deserve on himself.

And he didn't sin when he said let this cup pass from me. Now he didn't actually have to verbalize not my will but find me done but he does verbalize it and sometimes we've verbalize it and sometimes we don't have liberty dear. Christian. To plead with God the specific thing that you desire he is not going to overrule his perfectly wise and perfectly good providence and plan because you happen to ask for the wrong thing.

He commands you to let you requests be made known to him you tell him. Lord, I would like for Joe Biden to be either exterminated or converted or some other way replaced by not Pamela unless you convert her. But by someone who knows you and is washed in the blood of Jesus and wants to see the love of Christ kept to the glory of Christ in this land.

Just tell God which one? Let you requests be made known to him that is part of this four-part description

of the kind of praying by which the Holy Spirit grows you in faith and makes the peace of God to take up that fortified position around your heart refusing anxiety to refuse anxiety to pass through and enable you to rejoice in peace.

Behind the protection of the peace of God, which will guard your hearts. And minds through Christ Jesus, let's pray.

O Lord we. So want to pray like this? And so we come before you this afternoon and we confess that this kind of praying as something that we feel like infants in like we barely know how to do this. And so we pray that your spirit would apply to us the mind and heart of Christ.

That we would be humble before you that we would know your sufficiency and your goodness that we would be convinced that you are giving us every good and every perfect gift. What we thank you not just for the day in which the work that you have begun will be completed, but we thank you oh God that what we are asking for is what we've just read in your word that to the extent that we have understood it rightly and desire it well, you will give it to us.

And we thank you for the extent to which if we have understood it. Poorly and insufficiently and desired wrongly that you will give us the right and the good instead. We'll hold of your goodness and we bless your name for it. And we ask Oh God that you would make us a praying people.

That it wouldn't just be a few times on the Lord's Day together and every once in a while in our closets and with our families. But that you'd make us regular and our keeping of stated times of prayer calling upon your name with that intentionality and perseverance that your own son demonstrated displayed in the gospel how we thank you that is praying is already counted for us and it is to him that you are conforming us in our prayers and we pray that you'd make us to be.

More and more like him. So that even the the heart and the mind and that interaction with you that happens in the stated times would bleed into the rest of our lives that we would always be before your face always lifting up our hearts. Always thanking you for your goodness always making requests known to you always not just feeling our neediness but your sufficiency for that need praying continually.

And so we pray our God that by this means your spirit answering this prayer about this kind of prayer. That you would thereby enable us to obey this wonderful command but impossible except for your grace for which we ask now that we would be anxious for nothing. Grant to tell God grant that the peace that you have made with us in Jesus Christ would guard our hearts and our minds that others who observe it and even we who experience it would not be able to understand the the marvelous way by which you have made your peace to guard us.

So grant us an increasing experience of it we pray and Jesus name amen.