

Midweek Message

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6,7 ESV)

As I said previously, I would like to share with you some of the requests that are certainly within the revealed will of God as found in the Scriptures. Obviously, this won't cover everything for which we can ask of God. However, I'm hopeful that in sharing these particular issues for making requests in our times of prayer we all will be even more encouraged to go the Lord in prayer, seeking His mercy, grace, and love in some very practical ways. The Apostle Peter tells us that in prayer we can be *“casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”* In other words, whatever is burdening us we can freely bring it to the Lord. And I want to add that these requests are not only for ourselves but can also be made for those around us. So, with that in mind, let's look at a few areas from Scripture regarding requests that have been expressed by those who sought God's help in times of need.

First, we can pray for our daily physical needs. We recite what we call the Lord's Prayer every Sunday as part of our worship. However, I wonder if we know what each of the petitions we recite actually mean. In that prayer, we ask God to *“give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11 ESV)* which is meant to convey to us, as well as being a request to the Lord, our need for the things of life that are necessary for us to live life for His glory. The WCF Shorter Catechism tells us that when we pray this particular petition to the Lord we're asking *“that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.”* God delights in blessing His people and He certainly delights in seeing that we have all things for life and godliness. The Psalmist tells us, *“I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing” (Psalm 37:25, 26 ESV)*. The point the writer is making isn't that we will never face times of hardship, but that when we go to the Lord, seeking His help, He is there and will provide for us in His time and His way. Now, did you notice how the catechism told us that we *“may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life?”* You see, when we pray that God will supply our needs for the day, even praying for a specific need, we do so with the understanding that God will give us what is necessary for our needs, and not simply because it's something we desire for our own pleasure. As we heard in the sermon a couple weeks ago, the reason why we don't often receive what we asked for is because we make it all about ourselves, which is what James tells us in his letter to the church. So, what are your daily needs? Are you trusting in yourself to provide them or do you look to the Lord for His promised care over you? You see, we can come to the Lord for everything we need such as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, health, relationships, employment, and other such daily needs, God is there to help us if we'll just look to Him and trust in His unfailing love.

Second, we can pray for our spiritual wellbeing. This is one of the greatest aspects of our Christian life in that when our relationship with God is right, then most of the issues we face in life, such as assurance, emotional stability, fear, doubt, anxiety, and other such aspects of life are greatly helped by our petitions before the Lord. In regard to our spiritual wellbeing I would say that perhaps the first place we should start is in our continual sins against the Lord. Scripture tells us, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 ESV)*. Confession isn't just telling God we've sinned although that's certainly part of the process of restoration. Confession of sin carries with it the idea of brokenness, of contrition, of heartache over the truth that we've sinned against the Lord who has loved us so greatly in the cross. When we come with that intent, we're told we're forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousness. In other words, that through person and work of Jesus we're completely restored to fellowship with God and can be reassured that in Jesus we're safely secure. You see, as believers in Jesus, we can never lose our salvation, but when

we sin we often lose the sense of God's assurance, the sense of God's presence, and His love, mercy, and grace toward us. However, when we genuinely come to God and confess our sins, that inward sense of God's peace is restored as we accept the truth of His Word that He wipes the slate clean. However, that's not all as we can ask for our growth in grace as the Apostle Paul tells us in his prayer,

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:14-19 ESV).

Now, there's a lot in there but the main point is that we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18 ESV). You see, those who grasp the wonder and beauty of God's grace will also be those who are spiritually mature, being stabilized in their faith through the knowledge of God.

Third, we can pray for our nation. I preached about this a couple weeks ago, so I'll only remind you of what the Scripture says. The Apostle Paul tells us, *"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Timothy 2:1,2 ESV).* When Israel was being sent into Babylonian captivity, God told them through Jeremiah to, *"seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7 ESV).* You see, when a nation prospers, God's people also prosper, especially if they're allowed to live in peace. We need to pray for our nation and its leaders so that we, as God's people are free to worship and share to the good news of salvation.

Fourth, we can pray for church unity. One of the greatest testimonies of God's grace is revealed in the unity we experience through the power of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, one of the greatest hinderances to the gospel is when churches are in disunity. The Apostle Paul reveals this need in another prayer when he writes, *"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11 ESV).* He added these words in chapter 2, *"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."* The love of the saints expressed in unity, even in the midst of our diversity, with all the different perspectives, personalities, and every thing else that makes us unique, reveals a lot regarding God's love, mercy, and grace toward us, in us, and through us.

Finally, (though it's not everything we can request of God) we can pray for revival. Praying for the salvation of souls, for church revival, for the growth of the Kingdom, should be an everyday occurrence in our lives. This was so important that Jesus tells us, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2 ESV).* The Apostle Paul added his request in this way, *"To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak (Ephesians 6:18b-22 ESV).*

I do hope this is helpful and that we all take time to pray.

Pastor Mark