

## Doctrinal Summary of Prayer: The Means of Leaving Concerns at the Throne of God

In Philippians 4:6, the apostle Paul identifies prayer as a means of navigating personal concerns about the details of life.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

The words “be anxious” are translated from the Koine Greek word μεριμνᾶτε (“mer-im-nah-teh”) which more literally means, “you all are commanded to perform the continuous type of action to have a mentality of overly focused care or concern for the small parts or fine details of something that governs your perspective and behavior.” It identifies a mentality that focuses on particular details of one’s circumstance or situation. Once focused on, these details become the mental fixation of the individual until they become magnified into the only thing capable of being mentally entertained. Consequently, the individual’s stream of conscious thought cycles constantly through the fine details of what is being focused on. This results in the constant evaluation and filtration of knowledge in the individual’s mind as he attempts to sort out all the details in view and order them into actionable information that provides him the ability to control the circumstance toward a favorable outcome. Though this is a command, it is modified by the phrase “for nothing,” challenging the individual to use his free will to keep himself from becoming overly focused on the details of his circumstances. There is not one thing in the believer’s life that he is to attempt to sort out and control apart from the grace and will of God. For this reason, the believer is to let his requests be made known to God through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

The word “prayer” is translated from the Koine Greek word προσευχῇ (“pros-eu-chae”), which more literally means, “the act of petitioning another who has the ability and authority necessary to supply what has been asked for, based on response.” It identifies the action that someone engages in when they have a desire or need that they cannot fulfill on their own. This results in them seeking someone who can supply what they lack. Prayer is based on response to the individual’s recognition of his need, of his inability to supply it himself, and of the ability that another has to supply it on his behalf.

The word “supplication” is translated from the Koine Greek word δέξαι (“de-ae-sei”) which more literally means, “urgent request for a specific need or want to be supplied by another, based on response.” It identifies the request that one urgently makes in order that he might receive it from another. Whether he receives the what he is requesting is completely up to the will and benevolence of the one to whom his request was made. This urgent request is to be made with thanksgiving.

As a result of his position in Christ, the believer has been granted the right to directly communicate to his Heavenly Father, the almighty God of the universe (cf. Eph. 1:5). This right affords him the opportunity to take any and all cares or concerns that he has to the foot of the throne for God to do with as He pleases. However, this right is often under utilized as a result of the believer becoming focused on his circumstances and abilities rather than relying on communicating his needs to God while trusting God’s righteous judgment and loving concern for him to guide the decision to grant or reject his petition. When the believer recognizes the ability and authority of God to properly grant or reject his request, prayer becomes the means through which he can remove concerns over his circumstances, desires, and needs from his stream of consciousness and leave them at the foot of the throne.