

Prayer: What Does the Old Testament Say About Prayer?

Ricardo Campos, Teaching Elder Grace Chapel, Orange, CA June 13, 2010

I. Introduction

The Old Testament has many lessons to teach us about prayer. Among other things, it teaches us that: we must be careful what we ask for, we can pray for our nation, God will not hear us if we have sin in our lives, and prayer works. One of the key things the Old Testament reveals about prayer is that when we cannot see the hand of God, we have to trust the Word of God.

II. Review

The Mechanics of Prayer

1. *We Must Address Our Prayers to God the Father*, Matt. 6:9.
2. *We Are to Ask for the Father's Will to be Done*, Matt. 6:10.
3. *We Are to Ask for Our Needs*, Matt. 6:11.
4. *We Must Confess Our Sins*, Matt. 6:12 (notice: it doesn't have to be at the beginning).
5. *We Are to Ask for Protection from the Devil*, Matt. 6:13.
6. *We Must Not Pray to Get Attention*, Matt. 6:5–6.
7. *We Must Not Pray Empty Repetitive Phrases*, Matt. 6:7.
8. *We Must Pray in Jesus' Name*, Jn. 14:13–14 (15:16; 16:23–24, 26).
9. *We Must Pray with Belief not Doubt*, Matt. 21:20–22; Heb. 11:6; Jam. 1:5–8.
10. *We Must Pray with a Thankful Attitude*, Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2 (1 Thess. 5:18).
11. *We Must Pray According to His Will not Against It*, Jam. 4:3; 1 Jn. 5:14.
12. *If We're Rightly Walking with God, We Should Pray with Confidence*, Jn. 15:7; 1 Jn. 3:22.

III. Principles of Prayer in the Old Testament

- A. *Be careful what you wish for*, Num. 11:18, 31–33, if what we want is not what God wants, we need to be very careful about asking. The children of Israel wanted meat to eat.....and they got it, but it was not as a blessing.

- B. *We can pray for our nation in order to avert God's wrath, 2 Chro. 7:12–14*, at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed to God. He asked Him to forgive Israel of their sin if they repented and cried out in prayer. God replied that He would indeed hear their prayer. Though this speaks of Israel, by way of principle it applies to other nations today (Rom. 15:4). In fact, there's a Gentile nation who repented and prayed to God and was delivered, Jon. 3:8, 10.
- C. *God will not answer those who will not acknowledge who He is: Creator, Job 35:12–13*, if we are suffering and begin to speak foolishly about God, if we do not recognize Him as God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the One who controls everything including our circumstances, then God will not answer our prayers.
- D. *We must wait for God's answer, Job 35:14*, Job was frustrated with his situation and he thought God was nowhere to be found: 23:1–9. But Elihu reminded him that he had to wait on God, 35:14.
- E. *God will not hear our prayers while we have sin in our lives, Ps. 66:18*, the Lord heard the psalmist's prayer because there was no iniquity in his heart.
- F. *God will not hear us if we ignore the cries of the poor, Prov. 21:13*, sometimes God uses how we treat others as the standard for how He will treat us. Thus, if we ignore those who cry out to us in need, God will ignore our prayers.
- G. *Prayer works,*
Abraham, Gen. 20:1–7, 17, Abimelech's life and those of his household were in danger unless he restored Sarah to Abraham and Abraham prayed for him, 20:1–7. God answered Abraham's prayer, 20:17.
Samson, Jud. 16:28–30, God answered Sampson's last prayer.
Hannah, 1 Sam. 1:8–11, 20, God answered Hannah's specific prayer.
Elijah, 1 Kin. 17:17–22, God sent Elijah to stay with a widow, but then her son died and she partly blamed Elijah. So he prayed to God and He revived the child.

IV. CONCLUSION

God always hears the cries of His children. But if we sin or ignore the cries of the poor, He will ignore our pleas. We must remember who He is, the Creator, the One in control of everything including our tribulations. And if we have doubt of His deliverance, we can look at the countless individuals who cried out to God and were delivered.