

Prayer: *Why Am I Still Suffering?!!*

Ricardo Campos, Teaching Elder Grace Chapel, Orange, CA June 27, 2010

I. Introduction

If you think your prayers have fallen on deaf ears and you begin to doubt God's love, remember that the entire Bible reveals His love for you, especially in the death of His Son. If your suffering remains though you've prayed for relief, remember: (1) suffering was not God's plan for man, (2) sometimes we suffer because of our sin, and (3) suffering is part of being a Christian.

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 God's 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.

Principles of Prayer in the Old Testament

1. *Be careful what you wish for*, Num. 11:18, 31–33.
2. *We can pray for our nation in order to avert God's wrath*, 2 Chro. 7:12–14; Jon. 3:8, 10.
3. *God will not answer those who will not acknowledge who He is: Creator*, Job 35:12–13.
4. *We must wait for God's answer*, Job 35:14.
5. *God will not hear our prayers while we have sin in our lives*, Ps. 66:18.
6. *God will not hear us if we ignore the cries of the poor*, Prov. 21:13.
7. *Prayer works*, Gen. 20:1–7, 17; Jud. 16:28–30; 1 Sam. 1:8–11, 20; 1 Kin. 17:17–22.

Principles of Prayer in the New Testament

1. *Prayer is a command*, Matt. 6:9; 1 Thess. 5:17.
2. *God knows what we need before we ask*, Matt. 6:8 (10:30).
3. *Pray for your enemies*, Matt. 5:43–48.
4. *Pray for the governing authorities of the land*, 1 Tim. 2:1–2.
5. *Pray for one another*, Eph. 6:18; Jam. 5:16; 1 Jn. 5:16.
6. *God will not hear a husband who mistreats his wife*, 1 Pet. 3:7.
7. *Don't give up, keep asking*, Lk. 18:1–8.

III. When God *Appears* Not to Listen, Should You Conclude that He Doesn't Love You?

A. God Shows His Love for You from Beginning to End

When we've prayed and prayed, but our suffering remains, what should we conclude, that God doesn't love us? The entire Bible from cover to cover reveals God's love for us: from the moment man sinned in the Garden and God promised a Seed who would one day deliver man, Gen. 3:15, to the last verse of the Bible, where God wishes us grace, Rev. 22:21, God reveals His love for us.

B. God Shows His Love for You Through His Love for Israel's Patriarchs

Abraham faced famine, but ends up with riches, Gen. 12:10; 13:2. His nephew Lot is captured, but God delivers Abraham against four kings, Gen. 14:13–16. Abraham's wife is barren, but God blesses her with Isaac, Gen. 21:1–3.

Isaac's in mourning after his mother's death, but God blesses him with a wife who comforts him, Gen. 24:61–67. Isaac's wife, Rebekah, is barren, but God blesses her with Jacob and Esau, Gen. 25:19–26. Isaac faced a famine, but God blesses him with wealth, Gen. 26:1–3, 12–14.

Jacob's wife is barren, but God blesses her with Joseph, Gen. 30:22–24, and Benjamin, Gen. 35:18. Laban tried to cheat Jacob, but God protected Jacob, Gen. 31:1–13, 36–42. Jacob thought he'd lost his son Joseph to an animal attack, but God allows him to see Joseph and his two sons before his death, Gen. 48:8–11.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are God's children. They weren't always perfect, but God kept loving them. You are God's child and if you want to know if He loves you, look at His love and care for His other children.

C. God Shows His Love for You Through His Love for Israel

The birth of Israel began with a man named Abram who had a barren wife. At 90yrs old God opened her womb and gave her Isaac. Isaac's wife was also barren, but then God blessed her with Esau and Jacob. Jacob in turn had 12 sons, two of which were by a barren wife. One day this nation of 19 grows to 70 and they go to Egypt where Joseph, Jacob's son, is second in command, Gen 46:1–7, 26–27. Eventually this nation of 70 grows to over 2 million and the Pharaohs that follow after Joseph's death enslave them for 400yrs, Ex. 1:1–14 (Gen. 15:13). God then appoints Moses and delivers them, Ex. 3:1–10; 12:29–36. Eventually God brings Israel to the Promise Land, but Israel refuses to enter, Num. 13:30–14:5. Despite Israel's refusal to enter and God's right to destroy them for testing Him ten times, God allows them to live, Num. 14:11–25. After 40yrs in the wilderness, God brings Israel back to the Promise Land, Josh. 1:1–6, and this time they enter and conquer it, Josh. 14–21. God did this because of His love for Israel and the promises He made to their patriarchs, Deut. 7:6–8.

How does this reveal God's love for us? Where did the Deliverer of mankind come from? Israel, Gen. 12:3, 7; 22:18; Gal. 3:16.

D. God Shows His Love for You Through His Son

We see countless examples of God's love for us in His Word, but the greatest is His Son: Is. 53:4–5; Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:9–10. When you pray and begin to doubt God's love for you, remember His Son and what He did for you.

IV. *I Pray to God, But I'm Still Suffering, Why?!!*

A. How Did Suffering Enter This World?

God did not intend for man to suffer. His desire was for man to eat from the Tree of Life and live forever in harmony with Him and Creation, Gen. 2:9; 3:22. But man chose death instead, Gen. 3:6. This brought suffering to man and creation.

B. Sometimes Your Suffering is Because of Your Sin

Sin comes with a price: God's wrath, Rom. 1:18. Thus, sometimes we suffer because of our sin, Jn. 5:14. Instead of blaming God, we need to look at ourselves.

C. If You're a Believer, You Should Not Be Surprised When You Suffer

Our Lord warned us that our life here on earth would come with suffering, Jn. 15:18–21. In fact, it is part and parcel of being a Christian, Phil. 1:29.

D. If Your Suffering is **Not** Due to Sin, Ask, "How Can I Glorify God in This?"

If your suffering is not due to sin but because God allowed it, then you need to seek how you can glorify God through it, realizing that He's in control of it, Job 2:10.

V. CONCLUSION

Though God has not answered our prayers and our suffering remains, we must never doubt God's love, which is ever-present, especially in the death of His Son. First, we must look at ourselves to see if our suffering is from sin. Second, if it is not, then we must realize that as Christians we are called to suffer and then we should ask, "How can I glorify God through this?"