

Words of Truth

“Let My Prayer Come Before Thee”

By: Brian A. Yeager

The Psalmist said: *“O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry... LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice”* (Psalms 88:1-2 and Psalms 141:1-2). Obviously, these inspired truths written by the Psalmist show us that prayer is a privilege, not a right. Some people act as though God is always willing to hear whatever we want to say to Him. That is not true.

Just as there are conditions for our salvation (Luke 11:28 and Hebrews 5:8-9), there are conditions for the privilege of prayer. God, at times, will shut out prayers (Lamentations 3:8). Though man may cry out to the Lord, there are times wherein He will not listen (Job 30:20). Even fervent prayers are sometimes ignored by God (Psalms 22:2 and Habakkuk 1:2). In a lamentation we read this: *“Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through”* (Lamentations 3:44). Therefore, it doesn't matter how hard or how often you pray, there are times when God will not listen to you.

While some of us may know exactly when God does and does not hear prayers, it is good for us to study this subject on occasion. We never want to allow ourselves to begin acting like God owes us His ear anytime we desire to speak with Him. Some people forget the difference between the Creator (cf. Isaiah 40:28) and the created.

We will set forth a question in our study about when God does and does not hear prayers. Before we do that, let's get one easy point out of the way. That easy point is that you first have to be a child of God to have a prayer relationship with Him.

Prayer Is A Privilege Reserved For God's Children

To make this point of our study very easy to understand, we'll make a few basic points that cannot be misunderstood by thinking people. First off, a person who prays to God is praying to their Father in heaven (Matthew 6:9 and Colossians 1:3). Therefore, we have to understand how to become the children of God. That is a very simple question and the answer is a very simple answer. We become the children of God by continual obedience to His will (Matthew 12:46-50 and I John 3:8-10). A child of God is one who initially obeys the call of the Gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14, Romans 10:17, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 3:19, Romans 10:10, and Acts 2:38-41). A child of God then continues to obey the Gospel all the days of his or her life (Matthew 28:18-20, John 8:31-32, and Colossians 1:23). That includes obeying everything God says (James 2:10-12) without partiality (Matthew 23:23-24 and I Timothy 5:21). Having made that clear, let's talk about what sin does to our privilege of prayer.

There Are Two Main Things That Keep Prayers From Being Heard

The first thing that keeps prayers from being heard is sin. The only time that we can pray to God while in sin is to confess that sin in the process of our repentance (II Chronicles 7:14 and I John 1:9). Other than the exception just mentioned, sin keeps our prayers from God. Notice these Scriptures: *“The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous... He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination... Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness... Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth... I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting... For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil... And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight”* (Proverbs 15:29, Proverbs 28:9, Isaiah 59:1-3, John 9:31, I Timothy 2:8, I Peter 3:12, and I John 3:22).

The second thing that keeps our prayers from being heard is if we pray for something that is not the will of God. It is not okay to pray any way you want to and for anything that you want to pray for. There are correct and incorrect prayers. Nearly each time I teach this point there is someone who wants to object. Listen, this is not my doctrine. Notice this clear Scripture: *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”* (James 4:3). Additionally, one can even pray in an incorrect manner (Luke 18:9-14).

Prayer is something one must learn to do right. Notice this: *“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples”* (Luke 11:1). If you read the remaining context, you'll notice that Jesus does not reply by saying, “just pray any way you want to”. He gave them an example of a prayer. We know that example is not accurate now in that the kingdom has come (Colossians 1:12-13), etc. However, the principle that we need to learn to pray is very much valid today.

Our prayers have to be in accordance with the will of God. Please consider the following truths from God's word: *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him”* (I John 5:14-15).

Conclusion

Like the Psalmist, we should all want to be sure that our prayers are coming before God. If that means we have to clean up our lives to be able to pray, do so (Isaiah 1:10-18). We certainly do not want our words, offered up to God, to just be considered noise (Amos 5:21-24). If it is ignorance in prayer that keeps your words from God, study with a brother or sister in Christ who can show you the right way to pray through the Scriptures (Proverbs 1:5). The only person that will keep your prayers from the Lord is you. Additionally, the only one who can get your prayers to God is you. Let your prayers come before Him!