

A Prayer-hearing God!

Lesson 13: **February 4, 2016**—*God Is*

If we want prayer to be heard and answered, it will be addressed to God Almighty or it is not prayer at all. There is no other ‘prayer-hearer’—no other to whom prayer can be made—no one else capable of answering—for there is no god but Scripture’s God! God originated prayer—and every form of the word—as he opened the communication lines for us to praise and petition Him. Examples: God first mentions...

- **‘pray’** in Genesis 20:7 when he tells Abimelech to return Sarah to Abraham and promises that “***he*** (Abraham) ***will pray for you and you will live.***” Abimelech learned that God would answer Abraham’s prayer for him, but notice God acted after Abraham prayed! The first mention of...
- **‘prayed’** is in Genesis 20:17-18 when God answers his promise to Abimelech after Abraham prayed: “***Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again, for the LORD had closed up every womb in Abimelech’s household because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.***” Scripture’s first mention of...
- **‘praying’** is in Genesis 24:15a after Abraham’s chief servant, sent to get a wife for Isaac, prayed to God for success that day: “***Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder.***” And...
- **‘prayer’** in Scripture appears first as Isaac petitions God on behalf of his wife in Genesis 25:21, and God answered: “***Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.***”

Notice in all these passages how fast—often in the same verse or sentence—that the LORD God heard and answered! **Faster than 911**...the answer is not “in-the-mail” or even “on-the-way,” but it is already at its destination, and being implemented by God. He longs to be entreated by us, however, and God waits to hear from us like he waited for Abraham’s prayer to heal Abimelech. **Our ‘asks’ in prayer mean everything to God!** Here is a profound truth from the revered Charles Spurgeon: “We believe in the providence of God, but we do not believe half enough of it...**Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God.**” God not only originates prayer, but he initiates it and insinuates it.

Matthew 6:8 “***Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.***” But we absolutely must know that God is waiting for our ask. And 7:11 “***How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!***” God knows what we need, before we ask, yes, but those who believe and ask will receive much more. Dr. David Jeremiah: “Prayer is not only motivated by the Word of God and measured by His will, but it is also manifested in our walk with God.”

1 Peter 3:12a “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers...” When we think of God ‘hearing’ us, we may think of human ears—one on one side of the head, and one on the other with the ability to hear in close proximity and only what is being said right now—and we may think that he is listening with ears like ours. But that is not the case, because God is not limited to the human capacity to hear or see; **God is omniscient: He knows!** And so he hears and sees with his infinite wisdom and his knowing.

“Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord,” Psalm 139:4.

Would it make any sense at all that we would believe God for our salvation and the eternal destiny of our soul, but would not trust him to care when we call out to Him with other needs after we are saved? God who cared enough to make the ‘way’ for us to come to Him, and go for Him, would he not make the way for us to be continuously heard and answered by Him? Yes. Jeremiah 33:2-3 says,

“This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it—the LORD is his name. 3 ‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Scripture is clear on the issue of God listening and hearing our every prayer! So the question is not does God hear? The question is do we faithfully pray? When we become sure—assured—that God is listening, why would we not break out in praise and petition at every point and place in our lives? James 4:8a says,

“Come near to God and he will come near to you....” And the verse right before it says *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”* Imagine, God coming near us in response to our coming near him. Imagine the devil running from us. **Remember that we need God more than we need each other, and we need God more than God needs us!**

Sir Walter Raleigh once made a request of the Queen and she petulantly answered, “Raleigh, when will you leave off begging?” To which he replied: “When your Majesty leaves off giving,” and his request was granted. We, of course, can stop praying only when God stops answering—and he never will. The God of all grace never ever grows weary of our ‘ask’, and does not rebuke us for it. Every time we pray in earnest, believing God for the answer, we are recognizing His sovereignty—His rule! As we confess our own impotency, we submit and acknowledge God’s complete sovereignty.

In a little book titled, *The Red Sea Rules*, Robert J. Morgan outlines ten God-given strategies for difficult times based on the Israelites deliverance through the Red Sea, and he calls them ‘rules’ and *prayer* is one of them:

1. Realize that God means for you to be where you are.
2. Be more concerned for God’s glory than for your relief.

3. Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on the Lord.
- 4. Pray!**
5. Stay calm and confident, and give God time to work.
6. When unsure, just take the next logical step by faith.
7. Envision God's enveloping presence.
8. Trust God to deliver in His own unique way.
9. View your current crisis as a faith-builder for the future.
10. Don't forget to praise Him.

We'll not elaborate on these rules in this lesson, because we will do so in a later lesson this spring. But this list helps us to see how we can believe in, and even lean into, God's total rule and control. We may be out of control, our families may be out of control, our lives may be out of control, our world **is** out of control, but our Sovereign Ruling **God is not!** And his word exhorts us to pray. About the Israelites' experience at the Red Sea, they discovered first hand that **God is** faithful to hear and answer prayer as he miraculously delivered them from Egyptian bondage. But had they really learned the lesson?

Look how intimately God dealt with his people and how intricately their prayers were connected with what God would decide about how to deal with them. See, the way God dealt with his people then is still the way he deals with us today. While Moses was up on the mountain getting the Ten Commandments, the people had made a golden calf and were worshipping it. God was angry with them, yes, but watch God respond to and act on Moses' prayer for the Israelites. Exodus 33:1-2 *"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, "I will give it to your descendants. I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hitites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites." We know from Scripture that God did everything he promised Moses and the people he would do, but remember that God had decided not to go with them? Exodus 33:3-5 "Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. **But I will not go with you,** because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.'*

*4When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. 5For the LORD had said to Moses, Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and **I will decide what to do with you.**'"*

► **Time to pray:** Moses went into the tent of meeting to inquire of the LORD. Exodus 33:11 says, *"The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend...12Moses said to the LORD, 'You have been telling me, "Lead these people,": but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, "I know you by name and you have found favor with me." 13If you are pleased with*

me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” In the next verse—God’s decision:
 14 “The LORD replied, **‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’** God will go with them, and he will give rest, too. Matthew Henry: “God often outdoes our prayers.” And in verse 17 God tells Moses why he is answering this way—“And the LORD said to Moses, *‘I will do the very thing you have asked, because **I am pleased with you and I know you by name.**’*”

Now jump over to the New Testament where Stephen is about to be stoned. A little background in Acts 6:8 “Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. 9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, 10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.” So they plotted against him and made false charges against him, so much so that Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin. And notice how God honored Stephen in verse 15 “All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”

Stephen is allowed to reply to the charges, but he delivered a 52-verse sermon to the Sanhedrin instead, beginning with the call of Abraham and God’s call on Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egypt...and more. Then Stephen charges the Sanhedrin with killing the Righteous One. This made them beyond furious and Scripture says they gnashed their teeth at him—they stoned him to death.

► **Time to pray:** Acts 7:59, “**While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed,** ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.” Notice the courage and strength God gave to this saint even as he was dying for his faith in Jesus.

By the way, it is always time to pray! 1 Peter 4:7 “The end of all things is near. Therefore **be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.**” The devil is up to so much and we constantly need to have God’s knowing decision—his hearing answer. A few chapters later in Acts 12, Peter is in prison but believers are praying for him. We know God is hearing, but what will God do in response to believing prayer for Peter? Stephen was stoned—God’s Word will tell us...

- **PRAYER—Acts 12:5** “So Peter was kept in prison, but **the church was earnestly praying to God for him.**” That very night (v 6) God began to deliver!
- **ANSWER—Acts 12:17a** “Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how **the Lord had brought him out of prison.**”

“We can know with certainty that our praying will be heard and responded to in the way that not only is wisest in terms of God’s own total purposes but also is best in the long run for us as individuals,” J. I. Packer.

James 5:13-16 says, “*Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray.*” Notice that the one who is in trouble is to pray. “*Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.*” Notice that the one who is happy should praise God. 14“*Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.* 15*And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.* 16*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.***”

●Certainly Jesus was more righteous than anyone, and he prayed many times: Matthew 26:36 “*Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘**Sit here while I go over there and pray.**’*” Hebrews 5:7 “*During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and **he was heard** because of his reverent submission.*” “The victory on Golgotha was won in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane,” says William C. Brownson, Jr. And Jesus prays for us. Spurgeon: “We little know what we owe to our Savior’s prayers.” In Ephesians 6 right after listing the armor of God that we’re to put on to stand against the devil’s schemes, Paul exhorts us to “**pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests**” in verse 18 and “**always keep on praying for all the saints**” in verse 19.

◆The devil and his cohorts can hear us when we pray aloud, but they will not stay around to hear praise to God. When we begin our prayers with praise—Thank you for being the great and mighty God that you are: You are awesome and holy and magnificent, O God; God only wise, You are merciful, faithful and loving. There is none like you, O Lord, Creator, Sustainer, Provider and Lord Protector, all-knowing and all-seeing. You are sovereign above all—we **send eaves-dropping demons** scattering never to learn from our lips our deepest needs. This is one reason, in addition to the fact that God deserves and inhabits our praise, that when Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6:9-10, he began with honor and praise to God: “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” before ever he taught them to ask: Give us, forgive us, lead us and deliver us!

Henry van Dyke “But if there were Someone above the moon and stars who did know and care, Someone who could see the places and the people that you and I would give so much to see, Someone who could do for them all of the kindness that you and I fain would do, Someone able to keep our beloved in perfect peace and watch over the little children sleeping in their beds beyond the sea—what then?”

Lord, you know, you see, you care and you hear!