

PRAYER
PART 5 – “UNANSWERED” PRAYER

Introduction:

1. “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).
2. For the Christian, there are no unanswered prayers.
3. However, there are things that can hinder prayer.
4. Sometimes, the answer to prayer is “No,” or “Wait.”

I. Hindrances to Prayer

- A. In order to enjoy the privilege of prayer, one must be a Christian.
- B. Yet, some things will hinder a Christian’s prayers.
 1. Unforgiven sin (Isa. 59:1-2; 55:6-7; 58:6-9)
 2. Impure heart (Psalm 66:18; Prov. 28:9; John 9:31)
 3. Self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14)
 4. Unforgiving attitude (Matt. 6:15)
 5. Lack of faith (James 1:5-8)
 6. Selfishness (James 4:3)
 7. Trouble in the home (1 Peter 3:7)
- C. We should seek the remedy for things that hinder our prayers

II. When God Says, “No”

- A. Sometimes, God does not grant the request asked of Him.
- B. This does not mean that the petitioner has been rejected.
 1. Moses’ sin (Psa. 106:32-33; Num. 20:10-12)
 2. Moses’ prayer & God’s answer (Deut. 3:23-27)
 3. A greater blessing (Luke 9:30-31; Rev. 15:3)
- C. Often, the petition is not what is best.
 1. Paul’s prayer & God’s answer (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
 2. God acts with grace for our best interest.

III. When God Says, “Wait”

- A. Sometimes, God wants us to wait for the answer to prayer.
- B. To deepen our understanding (Job 19:7; 30:20; 42:1-6)
- C. To strengthen our faith (Matthew 15:21-28)
- D. To accomplish His purpose (Mark 5:22-42)
- E. To demonstrate His power (John 11)
- F. To encourage obedience (Luke 23:34)

Conclusion: “*Pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Hannah's Prayer

Text: I Samuel 1:9-18

- I. I Thessalonians 5:17
 - A. It is a short passage, but it isn't short on meaning. What is meant "without ceasing?"
 - B. Paul isn't talking about a 24-hour a day, non-stop prayer. There are other things which must be accomplished in life.
 - C. He is talking about prayer where you don't give up.
 - D. Such prayers are illustrated by a woman named Hannah - I Samuel 1:9-18
- II. She prayed because of her anguish - I Samuel 1:10
 - A. Her husband had taken a second wife. She was able to have children, but Hannah could not. And she rubbed into Hannah's face - I Samuel 1:6-7
 1. While the incident recorded here happened one year, we see that Hannah prayed in a similar fashion year after year.
 - B. God is the One we come to in times of trouble - Psalm 46:1-3
 1. He invites us to bring our trouble to Him - Psalm 50:15
 2. And He will answer - Psalm 91:14-16
 - C. It isn't that we only run to our Father when we are troubled, but it is a comfort to know that He is there when we need him - I Peter 5:6-7
 - D. When you pray, do you just pray a few times and the answer doesn't come shrug and go on about your business? How badly do you really need help from God?
- III. She offered a vow - I Samuel 1:11
 - A. Don't look at this as a vain attempt to bribe God. Hannah wanted to demonstrate the lengths she would go if her prayer was answer.
 1. What she vowed was within her ability to keep - Ecclesiastes 5:1-5
 - B. But notice that in asking for aid from God, Hannah stated she would do what she could. She wasn't asking God to do everything while she sat back and enjoyed the benefits. She had something she could offer back to God.
 1. When you pray for something, how far are you willing to go if He answers you?
 2. What will you do that is truly within your ability to give back to God?
 - a. When you pray for strength and growth in the church, are you willing to work for it? - Ephesians 4:15-16
 - b. When you pray for strength to resist temptation, do you make effort to minimize your exposure? - Romans 13:14
 - c. When you pray for an opportunity to teach, do you go seeking those opportunities? - Colossians 4:2-4
- IV. She continued to pray - I Samuel 1:12
 - A. Does repeating a prayer show a lack of faith or dedication to a cause?
 1. Jesus prayed three times in the garden - Matthew 26:39, 42, 44
 2. Paul prayed three times - II Corinthians 12:7-8
 - B. God desires a persistency in prayer - Luke 18:1-8

- C. When you pray, how badly do you want an answer to your prayer? What are you willing to do to show it?
- V. She sincerely prayed - I Samuel 1:13
 - A. Hannah's prayers were not done to impress others. Her deepest desires were spoken between her and God - Matthew 6:5-6
 - B. It was sincerely prayed, much like Paul's personal prayer - Romans 10:1
 - 1. And like Hannah's prayer, it came from his grief - Romans 9:1-3
 - C. Are you praying what you really want to happen?
 - 1. Or are you praying what you think other people want you to say?
 - D. Psalm 20
- VI. She was confident she would be answered - I Samuel 1:17-18
 - A. Eli wasn't speaking from inspiration. He didn't know God would answer her prayer. He didn't even know what she was praying about. He just offered his hope that God would answer her prayer.
 - 1. His assurance bolstered her – someone else believed God was listening and would answer
 - B. But more importantly, Hannah left and began acting as if her prayer was already answered.
 - C. Here was a prayer of faith, without any doubts - James 1:5-8
 - 1. She didn't know the answer God would give, but she was confident that God cared
 - D. God knows our needs better than we do ourselves - Matthew 6:8
 - E. Ultimately, what we know is that God's purpose will be done and that it is His will that good results from our lives - Romans 8:28
 - 1. It probably won't happen the way I expect
 - 2. But the answer will be beyond my wildest dreams being better than I had dared to hope - Ephesians 3:20
 - F. When you pray, are you confident that there will be an answer and no matter how it is answered, it will be better than you planned? - I Timothy 2:8; Mark 11:24
- VII. Hannah received her heart's desire - I Samuel 1:20
 - A. She got more than she could have expected. Her son became a priest before God, a judge of Israel, a mighty prophet, and the establisher of the kings of Israel
 - B. Hannah's story is recorded for us for a reason - Romans 15:4
 - C. Let's all pray in faith as Hannah did.

IV. Doing what we can does not reflect our belief in God's aid

- A. If so, then when we pray for our daily bread as taught in Matthew 6:11 we should not go to work because we would be showing a lack of belief.
1. But this conflicts with II Thess 3:10
 2. It is a recognition that God is in control. I have my job, not because of my greatness, but because of God's generosity. I have the ability to work because God has given me good health. God wants us to work for our bread even though we are to pray for it.
- B. We do the best we can and leave the rest in God's hands - Prov 16:9
- C. There is a tale being circulated about a man who is trapped by a flood. The police came by to warn him to leave, but he declined saying he would pray to God and place himself in His care. As the waters rose, rescuers came in a boat, but again the man declined. "God will rescue me," he said. Soon the water was so high, he had to climb on his roof. A helicopter came by and dropped a ladder to him, but he refused to climb on. Just then, the house gave way and he drowned in the flood. As he appeared before God, he said, "I just don't understand Lord. I prayed as you said and I put my trust in you. What did I do wrong?" The Lord answers, "I did answer your prayers. I sent the police, the boat, and the helicopter, but you refused my aid."
- D. Using the tools that God has provided does not hinder His help nor does it reflect a disbelief in God's power on our part. These tools are here because of God. Those steps, determined by man, are still from God - Prov 20:24
- E. Hence when Timothy was ill, Paul advised him to drink a little wine as medicine - I Tim 5:23
- F. This is also why Luke is referred to as the beloved physician - Col 4:14
1. Though a Christian, Luke retained his occupation
 2. His use of medical tools did not lessen others respect for him.

When God Told David, “No.”

Text: II Samuel 7:1-17

- I. David had gained a measure of peace in his reign. The battles had settled down. Now was a time to think about other things.
 - A. David was embarrassed that he lived in a fine, solidly built house while God’s “house” remained a tent.
 - B. It was David’s desire to build a permanent structure for God and so he told the prophet Nathan.
 - C. Nathan thought it a fine idea and seemed certain that God would support the effort, but as we later learn Nathan forgot one important thing: He forgot to ask God.
 1. As often happens when men are so certain as to what God would like, Nathan was wrong.
 2. It happened to Samuel when looking for Saul’s replacement - I Samuel 16:6
 3. That night Nathan was told to correct his statement
- II. No, thank you
 - A. God explains that He has chosen for hundreds of years to use a tent as His place.
 1. He never asked for permanent place, though there were plenty of opportunities.
 - B. God has raised up David from a lowly shepherd to mighty warrior and famous king. David doesn’t need to build a house for God to further his reputation.
 - C. But it is time for Israel to settle down, so God is going to establish a permanent house to rule His people.
 - D. David’s son will build a house for God and God would watch over him. God will not cut off David’s line as He did Saul’s
- III. How do you respond when God says, “No”?
 - A. There are times we’ve asked God and have been turned down
 1. Prayers for loved ones to be healed
 2. Prayers for better circumstances
 3. Prayers for burdens to be lifted
 4. Prayers for opportunities
 - B. How do you cope with being told “No”?
 - C. David’s response was gratitude - II Samuel 7:18-24
 1. David didn’t sulk, he looked back at his life and was amazed at what God had done for him.
 2. He knew he wasn’t deserving of all of God’s favors and the fact that God said, “No,” to one more wasn’t a major let-down.
 3. Do you count all the blessings God has favored you, despite you being who you are?
 4. Look at what you have instead of what more you think you should get.
 - D. David listened to what God really wanted
 1. God didn’t outright reject David’s idea. He told David it was a good thought - I Kings 8:18

2. But God had other plans. He had someone else in mind to build His house.
 3. So David did what he could to support God's plan
 - a. The building would go on land that he had purchased - I Chronicles 21:22-26; 22:1
 - b. He negotiated and supplied material for the building project - I Chronicles 22:2-5
 - c. He drew up plans - I Chronicles 28:11-13
 - d. He financed much of the building - I Chronicles 28:14-19
 - e. He planned out the services and workmen - I Chronicles 28:21
 - f. And then he gave more and the people gave as well - I Chronicles 29:1-9
 4. Even with all this preparation, it still took Solomon seven years to actually build God's temple.
 5. Now think a moment. If David had built the house himself, would it have been as grand? Or, would the pressures of further battles and other issues have caused David to take practical short cuts?
 6. What we may see as an unanswered prayer may merely be God saying there is a better way.
 - a. You might get passed over a job promotion and so you missed out in uprooting your family and moving half-way across the country.
 - b. Perhaps what God really wants is you to grow in influence in the local church and serve as an elder there.
 - c. You just never know what God has planned - Romans 8:28
- E. David looked toward the future
1. What shocked David most was while God said, "no" to David building Him a house, God declared he would build David an eternal house - II Samuel 7:25-29
 2. David offered God a gift and God gave him a far greater gift in return
 3. How can anyone be glum over not getting what he asked for when God gives something greater? - II Corinthians 4:17-18
 4. David prayer was answered, but not in the way he expected - Ephesians 3:20-21
- IV. Don't sell your dreams short
- A. What we think as best often isn't.
 - B. When we pray for someone to live, do we think about the quality of life they will have here on earth or the pain they might suffer?
 1. And yet God can grant them eternal life in an immortal body.
 2. Which is the greater gift?
 - C. God might change our plans, but they always exceed what we expected the results to be.