

Assurance of Salvation
Part 88
Prayer:
"Unanswered" prayers



IF GOD ANSWERED
ALL OUR PRAYERS
THE WAY WE ASK THEM
↓



Sometimes it's best if God says "NO" to our request.

- **ISRAEL:** "Give us a *king*, just like the nations around us! (We're tired of being ruled by *God*.)"
- **GOD:** "I'll let you have a king... but you will regret your choice."

"When that day comes, you will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but the Lord will not help you."

1 Samuel 8:18 (NLT)

TODAY...
↓

Sometimes our prayers seem to go unanswered.

- Sometimes it seems that they don't reach God...

... or even get past the ceiling.



Sometimes our prayers seem to go unanswered.

- The question is:



FIRST:
A quick "reality check!"

WHY

do we call them "unanswered"?

Is it just because we aren't getting the answer we want?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.

PART 1: "Unanswered" Prayer... because of us.

God is willing to answer, but our sin has put a barrier between us and God.

Even a good request may be wrong, if we are unwilling to first deal with the sin issues.

SOME OF THE POSSIBLE WAYS...



1. The prayers themselves may be corrupt.

- Wrong motives.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

James 4:3 (NASB)



- Questioning God's ability to keep his promises.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, ... But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

James 1:5a, 6-8 (NIV)



2. We might have a self-centered attitude.

- Pride and arrogance.

And if they do cry out and God does not answer, it is because of their pride. But it is wrong to say God doesn't listen, to say the Almighty isn't concerned.

Job 35:12-13 (NLT)

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- A self-righteous attitude.

The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ...

[Jesus' response:]

"I tell you that [the tax collector], rather than the [Pharisee], went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:11-12, 14b (NIV)

With this mask, God won't see I'm fake!



3. Our relationship with God may be filled with pretense.

- Unwilling to pay attention to God's Word. (1)

If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.

Proverbs 28:9 (NIV)



- Unwilling to pay attention to God's Word. (2)

But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.

They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.

"As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear," says the LORD of hosts ...

Zech. 7:11-13 (ESV)



- Sin not dealt with; perhaps still ongoing.

If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.

But God did listen!

He paid attention to my prayer.

Psalm 66:18-19 (NLT)

But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)



- Religious activities filled with pretension.

[This is an Old Testament example.]

"When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!" says the Lord Almighty.

"Go ahead, beg God to be merciful to you! But when you bring that kind of offering, why should he show you any favor at all?" asks the Lord Almighty.

Malachi 1:8-9 (NLT)



4. We may be guilty of sin against other people.

- Ignoring the poor.

If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

Proverbs 21:13 (NIV)

- Do not confuse the "poor" with the "lazy." See 2 Thessalonians 3:10.



- Oppressing God's people. (This passage was directed toward the leaders.)

You hate good and love evil.

You strip the skin off my people and the flesh off their bones. You eat my people's flesh. You strip off their skin. You break their bones to pieces. You chop them up like meat for a pot, like stew meat for a kettle.

Then you will cry to the Lord, but he will not answer you. He will hide his face from you at that time because you have done evil things.

Micah 3:2-4 (GW)



- "Bloodshed" – Lies, injustice, oppression, etc.

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; ...

Isaiah 1:15 (NIV)

- This "bloodshed" symbolized all kinds of oppression, injustice, etc. – things that destroy people. (See the context.)

The REMEDY!

To remove the barrier: We need to deal with our sin – repent, confess, etc.

The DANGER!

If we refuse to deal with our sin, the time may come when it's too late to do so.

★ Heed God's warnings while you can! ★

THESE WARNINGS ARE FOUND IN SCRIPTURE!

JESUS REMEMBER ME!



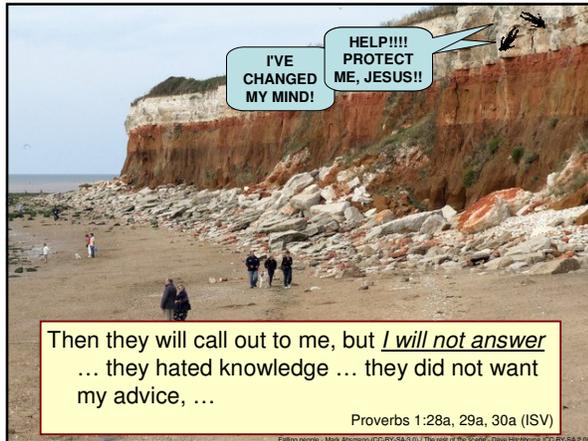
TODAY, YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE!

YES, IT IS TRUE...

The thief on the cross had an opportunity to change in the last moments of his life. This may have been his only opportunity.

But it's quite different when a person has a "zillion" opportunities, and continues to say "NO" to God.





PART 2: "Unanswered" Prayer... because of God.

If God does *not* answer the way we expect, it's because he has something *better* in store for us.

The request may be good ... but a "YES" answer would *not* be good for us.

THERE ARE MANY POSSIBLE REASONS THIS COULD HAPPEN...

... BUT ALL OF THEM ARE BACKED BY HIS GOODNESS AND FAITHFULNESS!

- He will do *nothing* contrary to his ultimate "calling" for us!

And we know that God causes *all things* to work together for *good* to those who love God, to those who are *called* according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28 (NASB)

There are many possible reasons...

- To teach us or grow us; to increase our faith.
- To test our attitude.
- To build us up in some other way that we need it.
- To prevent trouble in our lives (if our prayer is misguided).

★ **IN ALL THESE CASES:** If God answered our prayer the way **WE** would like, *we would not experience this good*.

Some special examples...

- God may need to modify our sincere but *misguided* prayers.

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but *the Spirit himself intercedes* for us with groans that words cannot express.

Romans 8:26b (NIV)

- We desire what is right; but we don't understand the real (or deeper) issues.
- The Spirit of God will "translate" our prayer into something that God *can* answer. (*When the answer comes, we may or may not realize it.*)

- God may say "NO" in order to *display his power* in our life.
 - This also tests our attitude!

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, *so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

2 Cor. 12:8-9 (NIV)

• God may delay his response, in order that something better may happen ... such as the salvation of others.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise [to return], as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

– **DO YOU REALIZE HOW GOOD THIS DELAY HAS BEEN?** Because of this delay, WE have had the opportunity to be saved! (*Don't throw away this opportunity!*)

– God even delayed answering the prayers of Old Testament people, so that WE can share with them the joy of God's salvation!

All of these people we have mentioned [*in the previous verses*] received God's approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can't receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race.

Hebrews 11:39-40 (NLT)

YOUR MISSION: Are your prayers not being answered?

- If it's because of YOU: **REPENT!**
- If it's because of GOD: **REJOICE!**

Remember also last week:
We can expect different types of answers for different types of prayers.

Credits (1)

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