

WHY DOESN'T GOD ANSWER MY PRAYERS? (1)
James 4:1-10

Introduction:

1. Have you ever prayed for something and felt God did not hear?
2. Is God obligated to hear and answer every prayer no matter how it is expressed?
3. Are there any conditions for acceptable prayer?
4. What does God require for our prayers to be acceptable to Him?

Discussion:

I. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE IN FAITH.

- A. The writer of Hebrews said: "...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).
- B. James wrote: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind, for let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8).
- C. The only way to build faith is by a diligent study of God's Word (Rom. 10:17).

II. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE SINCERE.

- A. Jesus warned about praying from the wrong motives:
"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward" (Matt. 6:5).
- B. Jesus applied Isaiah's prophecy to the Pharisees:
"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8).
 1. Two men who led prayer at the presidential inauguration preached rather than prayed.
 2. Our prayers must be our heartfelt expression to God.

III. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE HUMBLE.

- A. Jesus taught a parable “to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to Heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14).

- B. We must realize our own unworthiness in the presence of God as did Isaiah (Isa. 6:5).
- C. We must not be like the TV preacher who said we simply demand that God give us what we want.

IV. OUR PRAYERS MUST COME FROM A GODLY LIFE.

- A. Jesus healed a blind man on the sabbath (John 9).
1. The Pharisees accused Jesus of sin for healing on the sabbath.
 2. The healed man said: “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31).
 3. He based this squarely on the teaching of the Scriptures:
 - a. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Psa. 66:18).
 - b. “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Prov. 28:9).

- B. Peter quoted from the OT and applied to Christians this same principle:

“He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Pet. 3:10-12).

V. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE PERSISTENT.

- A. Jesus taught that God wants to hear and answer our prayers (Luke 11:9, 10).
1. He may test our sincerity by not answering right away.

2. We must just keep on praying.

B. Jesus “spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city: and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for awhile; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’ Then the Lord said: ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?’” (Luke 18:1-7).

VI. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE FERVENT.

A. Too many prayers are vain repetitions (Matt. 6:7).

1. When I was a boy, I could repeat most of what would be in their prayer when certain brethren were called upon.
2. They prayed for things legitimate but had repeated themselves so often, it became little different than a Catholic repeating “Hail Mary.”

B. Our prayers must be fervent, heartfelt!

1. “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).
 - a. Our prayers must be fervent.
 - b. They must come from a righteous life.
2. Elijah prayed fervently and effectively (James 5:17, 18).

Conclusion:

1. Our prayers must be in faith, sincere, humble, from a Godly life, persistent, and fervent to be acceptable to God.
2. Prayer is the precious privilege of the child of God.
3. We become children of God when we believe in Christ, repent of our sins, confess our faith in Christ, and are buried in baptism for the remission of sins.