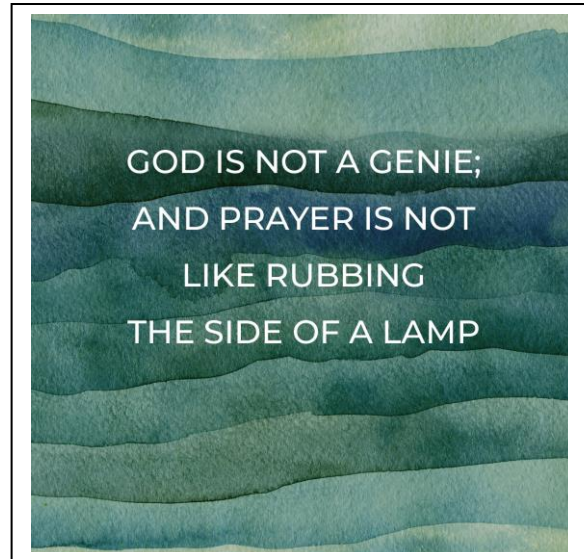


Sunday 10th October 2021

The Always God

Scripture - 2 Kings 19:14-20 and & 20:1-5.

Today, we are looking at the fact that God is continuing to call people to pray because He is still hearing prayers today.



When was the last time you received an invitation? So many ways to receive them today and sometimes invitations that need to go you're your garbage bin – like getting a loan or credit card with cheaper rates to lure you.

The genuine invitations you receive however affirm that you have been thought of and included. God has given us the greatest invitation in all of scripture - the invitation to pray, to know Him, communicate with Him and grow in our relationship with Him. And He promises if we call upon Him, He will hear our prayer.

Some find it difficult to pray on a regular basis. They may say grace over a meal, pray quickly for the safety of their family or call on God when facing a healthy crisis. Often, though, when the crisis has settled, prayers often dwindle.

Our minds may wander and we start thinking of other things; or we have questions, such as how long should I pray, what should I pray and, anyway, if God already knows what is going to happen do my prayers really matter?

All these difficulties come from our enemy, Satan who will do anything in his power to keep us from praying and our needs, like the credit card invitation, our needs gets stuck in the garbage.

Hezekiah was the King of Judah and even though he was not perfect he had integrity, faith and trusted in the Lord. prayed. Let's explore 2 specific times he prayed – one when experiencing a national crisis and the other when he was told he was going to die.

So how do you pray in a healthy way?

Some beliefs suggest prayers should consist of chanting; others believe in repeating the same prayer over and over. But prayer is not some magical chant – as if God was a genie. Prayer is being in relationship with God, so repetition, like rubbing the side of a lamp until the answer comes – is not what God seeks.

Healthy prayer includes a healthy posture.

When confronted with being assaulted and overthrown by an enemy and then when confronted with his own mortality, Hezekiah responded the same way in both prayers, with humility and brokenness.

His physical posture changed. Posture is to prayer as tone is to communication. If words are what you say, then posture is how you say it – your posture impacts your hearts and minds towards humility.

The Bible suggests 5 ways we can pray: sitting, kneeling, standing, lying prostrate with your face toward the ground, or praying with hands lifted up.

Psalm 34:17-18 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them, He delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Although Hezekiah was a King he realized there was someone far greater than him – the God of the universe. His prayers emphasized the sovereign rule and reign of God acknowledging that the world did not revolve around him.

Healthy prayer begins when we understand – we are not God. And this takes humility and an element of brokenness to understand and embrace this.

Do you approach God in the same way as Hezekiah – giving God the respect as the God of the universe – or do you place demands on God and when your prayers are not answered in the way you would like – you complain?

There are a number of things that affect our prayer lives. Let's look at 4 specific ones – all having the common denominator of **pride**.

Have you ever waved around your mobile phone trying to connect with nearby towers or driven through a “dead spot” when you don't get any signal – like the Burnley tunnel? It is so frustrating. This is what pride does to our prayers...it causes a dropped call...it's a dead spot in the road between us and God!

- 1. Unbelief** can keep God from responding to prayer. When we pray, we must pray in belief...KNOWING God hears our prayers.

2. Selfishness which is another form of pride limits the responses.

When what you are asking for is not for God's glory but instead asking the Lord for something for the wrong reasons, with the wrong motives – our prayers are not responded to because SELF is at the core of the prayer.

James 4:3 – “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your own passions.”

3. Disobedience is also another form of pride. The Bible says in Isaiah 59:1-2

Choosing to live in willful, habitual sin will cause a dropped call every single time. Just because there is an invitation to call upon the Lord doesn't mean you can do what you want and then just “Genie” Him up when needed.

To think this way is to have a very obscure view of God and a very twisted view of yourself. One more reason God may not respond to our prayer is

4. Fractured relationships when we are holding onto ill feeling towards others; or do not forgive or want to get payback – also is a form of pride.

Healthy prayer includes a healthy perspective.

Hezekiah acknowledged the sovereign rule and reign of God and he trusted the Lord to answer his prayer...and this is key – **HOWEVER** the Lord saw fit.

The key ingredient to prayer is to **ASK OF GOD.**

When Hezekiah asked of God to intervene when the Assyrian nation was advancing, I am sure he had no idea what God was going to do – but he asked and waited in faith. When Hezekiah was told he was going to die he once again asked God and waited in faith.

Notice how Hezekiah responds – he doesn't say to God, when could you maybe give me more than 15 years extra – how about 25 or even 30? No, because of a deep-seated trust in God the Father, he could pray with an honest heart, "Not my will, but yours be done."

Do you have this deep-seated trust in God? What if His response is "**No?**" Do you have a healthy perspective that God is sovereign, in control and knows better? God operates on a different level than we do. His ways are not our ways. His timing is not our timing. He's all-together different from us...working His plan.

Sometimes, we are so broken by our circumstances, we are like Hezekiah and don't know what to say and can only weep bitterly. During these times the Bible tells us to: ask God...ask God for what's on your heart. Ask him to move in whatever situation you are facing. Ask Him to meet the needs of your loved ones. **ASK!**

Stress is at an all-time high within our world today with an increase in medication given to relieve anxiety and depression. Even though there are positives with the advances in technology, we struggle to find inner peace and time for ourselves.

Have you ever left home and suddenly realised – oh no, I have left my phone behind? Panic, you race back even though you were only going

to the shops a few kms away? We never disconnect. That mini-computer in your pocket called a phone never lets you have a moment to unwind. On average, we check our phone for messages every 6 minutes. We suffer withdrawals when we don't have our phone with us and turned on. We have information at our fingertips, but we don't have a pause button for our life to take a breath. It is 24/7.

Everyone is busy. You hear people say - "I am busy" BUSY, BUSY, BUSY! What are you doing with yourself, why are you so busy?" I don't know I am just busy. Never shut down.

Multi-tasking on every level of your life. Not being able to just sit and relax. I never hear someone say that they have free time and just living the dream. Those who are retired often state – I am so busy now, I don't know how I found the time to work.

When you get that busy, you know what suffers first?

Devotion, prayer and fellowship time with God.

Paul told his listeners to slow down and make sure they are praying and seeking the Lord in the midst of ministry and working. He told us twice to rejoice in the Lord always.

It is hard to rejoice when you cannot get a breath! It is hard to be gentle like Christ or Christ-like when the weight of the world is riding on your shoulders and most of the time, we are putting it on ourselves.

Paul also said: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God."

Instead we read that as **"Do be anxious about something and in every situation, by worry and complaint, with ungratefulness whine as you demand God to answer your request."**

If our lives are too full and we are not asking God through prayer to help us, we are missing the main ingredient for having our anxiety lifted from us.

Praying believers can live the dream because the dream is wrapped up in Jesus. Praying believers pray in the first instance of a situation – not the last thing they do. How much more would we see God do if we came presenting our request to God and believing that He is a God of the impossible?

So, you want less anxiety, don't be worrying about things that may not happen. Bring the things that cause anxiety to the Lord with prayer, petition, and present those things to God.

Why not sit with God and let the Holy Spirit help.

- Is there something you are asking God to do, but deep on the inside doubt whether or not He can do it?

Maybe just breathe a prayer right now – as Jesus said – All things are possible for those who believe. Say to Jesus - I believe, help my unbelief.

Maybe you need to ask God to give you a desire for His will over your will. Ask Him to search your motives and see if it's the glory of God you are after or the glory of self?

Maybe you need to confess a sin, to deal with it, let it go, quit holding onto it. Confess this to God and seek His power to help you let go.

Maybe it's a fractured relationship? There is distance between you and your family, parents or friends that need healing in the first place so you can come before God with an open and honest heart.

God is still in the business of hearing prayers, but we have to come before Him with a healthy posture and that is a humble heart toward him. God is NOT looking for perfection, He's simply looking for one who displays a continual posture of humility and brokenness.

Let's close in prayer:

Anxious for Nothing.

I will be in peace for no matter what happens I will live unafraid. I will cast all my anxiety on Christ for He cares for me. I will not be anxious about anything but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving I will present my requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard my heart and mind. I will not be afraid for I will be protected by God. I am called by name I am His and He is mine. I receive the gift of peace I will cast my cares on the Lord and He will sustain me. For God gave me a Spirit, not of fear but of power, love and self control. I pray this in Jesus' name. AMEN.