

God's Glory in Our Prayer

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Date: 17 October 2010

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[0:00] David writes most of the Psalms, but we also see that some of them have been written by Asaph.

And this is one of Asaph's Psalms. And I'm going to read the first 15 verses of chapter 50. A Psalm of Asaph.

The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.

From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes and will not be silent. A fire devours before him and around him a tempest rages.

He summons the heavens above and the earth that he may judge his people. Gather to me my consecrated ones who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

[1:03] And the heavens proclaim his righteousness for God himself is judge. Selah. Hear, O my people, and I will speak.

O Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God, your God. I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me.

I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens. For every animal of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills.

I know every bird in the mountains and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you. For the world is mine and all that is in it.

Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Yes. Sacrifice, thank offerings to God. Fulfill your vows to the Most High and call upon me in the day of trouble.

[2:11] I will deliver you and you will honor me. What would you do to be more like Jesus? Would you make a strong effort to pray better?

Luke 4.15 says, Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Prayer was important to the incarnate Son of God, and prayer must become important to us if we're going to be like Him.

William Carey said, Prayer, secret, fervent, believing prayer, lies at the root of all personal godliness.

Jesus was a godly man, not just because He was God, but because He knew how to pray. His life was rooted in that secret, fervent, believing prayer.

And if we want to be like Jesus, that must become the settled mark of our lives as well. Now last week I preached on prayer, and I want to do the same this evening.

[3:26] I want to remind you again from the beginning, as I did last time, that we can be honest with each other right from the beginning. Prayer is something that we are not good at.

Prayer is something that we struggle with. None of us are anything to write home about, and I doubt any of us will be used to sermon illustrations in the future, and real warriors of prayer.

But because we are that way now does not mean that we can't be better. And again, that is the subtle conviction that I have, that just because we aren't so great now doesn't mean that we can't be better.

We can all learn how to pray. Well, last week we said that prayer is hard, but it is not impossible. It's hard because of our flesh.

As soon as we sit down to pray, you know this from experience, that all of a sudden there's a million things to do. And it's hard because of Satan. Satan hates prayer.

[4:33] It destroys his kingdom. And so he opposes it. But greater than Satan, greater than our flesh, is the Spirit who lives within us, who teaches us how to pray.

And so we can say that prayer is hard. It is not impossible. We also saw that prayer is learned. Jesus' disciples said, Lord, teach us how to pray.

And if they said that, and he went about doing that, that means that we can learn how to pray better. And then we saw that prayer matters. And without going into all the caveats and the details of that, we want to say that prayer is the way that we join God in shaping the future.

God uses our prayers to bring about his will. And so we just can't say, well, whatever happens, whatever he wills is going to happen, so it doesn't matter if I pray or not. That's not at all how the Bible looks at prayer.

Everywhere it says that prayer matters. And this evening I want to encourage you again to pray. And the way I want to do that is to show you that God glorifies himself when he answers our prayers.

[5:49] God glorifies himself as he answers our prayers. And you might be saying, well, how is that precisely a motive and encouragement to pray?

Well, I think it's a motive to pray because it strikes right at the point where sometimes I think we get hung up on not praying.

We know that God does everything for his own glory. We preach that frequently. And you hear that frequently. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And we always go on. And the chief end of God is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. And our flesh can take any truth and twist it against us and it takes this truth as well.

And somehow our flesh takes that truth that God is always after his own glory, his own honor, and it uses it to keep us as an argument from praying.

[6:49] Something deep inside of us, I have found this to be true, can't speak for you, but something deep inside of me at least says, well, if God is going to do everything for his own glory, then he must be really ambivalent about me and what I need about answering my prayers.

God isn't so concerned about what I need because really he's after his own glory, which is good. It's right. He should be that way, but it sort of leaves me hung out to dry.

Wondering if he really cares about what my problems are and what my needs are. And we become jaded and then we stop praying.

And, well, but the reality is is that objection misses the point altogether. God is after his own glory. But one of the greatest and one of the best, the clearest ways that he has of seeking his own glory is by answering our prayers. By answering our prayers.

[8:00] Now, you have your Bibles open to Psalm 50. And look at verse 14 and 15 and you'll see what I mean. Sacrifice, thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble.

That's prayer. I will deliver you. That's God answering prayer. And you will honor me. That is God being glorified for answering prayer. So God doesn't look on our prayers as these bothersome requests that get in the way of what he really wants to do.

He doesn't look on our prayers like sometimes we look on our children's requests. So men, there you are. You're working on the water heater and your kids come up and they ask you for something. Can you help me with my homework, Dad?

And we're all irritated. Can't you see I'm busy? I have something else I've got to do. Go ask your mom. That's not how God looks at our prayers at all.

You see, when God answers your prayer, your prayers, that opens up all the windows to his glory. And so we see it. We appreciate it.

[9:08] Other people see it. Other people appreciate it. And so God's glory shines into our lives. So God says, call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you will honor me.

And isn't that a great deal for us? We have problems. We have needs. God has power. God is pursuing his glory.

And so when God answers prayer, he opens up the doors of our hearts. He gets glory and we get the help that we need. So when God answers prayer, our good and God's glory unite and they become one.

And so our good and God's glory are not at odds when we pray. They walk hand in hand. Now, just think of all the ways that God glorifies himself as he answers our prayers.

First, when God answers prayer, you see God's power. You see his power. Now, think in your mind to the gospel of Luke and Jesus and the Canaanite woman.

[10:17] And her daughter is demon-possessed. And she's suffering terribly. And so she goes and sees the Lord and she prays.

She asks the Lord, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus doesn't answer. Doesn't look like Jesus cares. He has his own things to worry about.

Lord, help me. It isn't right. It isn't right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs. Wow. It really looks like Jesus doesn't care. Yes, Lord. But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. And then Jesus answered, Woman, you have great faith.

Your request is granted. And she went home and her daughter was healed from that very hour. So what kind of glory did that woman see from Jesus Christ when he answered her prayer?

[11:20] Well, she saw his power. A thought went out and a demon fled her daughter. So she saw God's power when Jesus prayed.

Think of the centurion who had a servant who was sick. And he explains the situation to Jesus. And Jesus, it looks like he's going to start, he's going to get up and go with them.

And he says, No, Lord. I'm not worthy to have you under my, in my house. Just say the word. And that very hour, his servant was healed.

So what kind of power was Jesus showing as he answered prayer? He was showing omnipotent, divine power. Glorious power. Now, what about you?

Do you think God is ready to show you his power if you'll pray? He is. And he will if you pray.

Because God is ready to answer your prayers.

[12:26] He's ready to show you his power because that glorifies him. And so when, when we come face to face with a rock that we cannot move, and you're facing a difficulty, you're facing a temptation that you can't make any headway against and you're, you simply don't have the strength for it.

And out of this great sense of weakness, weakness, you call out to the Lord. And God answers.

How does God's power look? Looks amazing.

It looks magnificent and beautiful. Here I am on my weakness. I can't do anything. And he is so strong. You say, I was helpless, but a mighty fortress is my God.

And your heart runs out to him and you praise him for his power. And so, you see, God isn't going to look at our prayer for help, for strength, with a jaundiced eye.

No, his goal and your need come beautifully together when you pray and as he answers prayer. So secondly, when God answers your prayers, you see his love.

[13:37] You see his love. Darlene Dibbler was a missionary with her husband Russell in the East Indies in the 1940s and the early 40s.

And in 1942, the Japanese army invaded the island that she was on and they captured her and her husband. And her husband went in one truck and she went into another truck and they never saw each other again.

And for two years, she lived in a prison camp. She worked in a prison camp. And sometime during those next two years, she got word that her husband had died of dysentery.

So at age 26, in a prison camp, she's a widow. Well, suddenly, in 1944, Japanese secret police come and they accuse her of working as a spy.

Now, there's no grounds. There were no grounds for that accusation. There was no truth to the tale. But she was thrown into solitary confinement and there was only one barred window in her room and she was sure she was going to die.

[14:49] It was death row. And for six weeks, they repeatedly questioned her. And she grew physically weaker and weaker. And one day, when she was in her little prison cell, she pulled herself up and she looked out through the high window of her prison cell.

And outside, along the fence, she saw a woman walking. And the woman stopped. And then all of a sudden, she saw these hands come out from the other side of the fence and give the woman who's on the inside of the fence a present, a package.

And the lady on the inside immediately stuck it up under her shirt and walked away. But not before Darlene saw what it was. It was a small bunch of bananas.

Now, the thought of bananas started driving Darlene crazy. She started craving bananas. bananas. And she got down on her knees and she said, Lord, I'm not asking you for a whole bunch like that woman has.

I just want one banana. And she looked up and she pleaded, Lord, I just want one banana. And then she began to think, how in the world is God going to get her a banana?

[16:09] There's no way it could happen. She couldn't ask anyone to bring it to her. She didn't see anyone. And so she prayed again, Lord, there's no one here who can get a banana to me.

There's no way for you to do it. Please don't think I'm not thankful for the rice porridge. But those bananas look so good. And that morning, the next morning after she saw the bananas, she had a surprise visitor.

The usual men who interrogated her and then the prison commander, the commander of the prison camp, Mr. Yamanji. And he could be a real tyrant at times.

And Mr. Yamanji came to her and he said, you're very ill, aren't you? Yes, sir, Mr. Yamanji, I am.

And after a few more minutes, he just turned on his heels and left the room.

And when Mr. Yamanji and the other officers left, Darlene realized that she had forgotten to bow to them. And they were going to beat her for it. So when she heard the guard coming back, she knew he was coming for her.

[17:17] So she struggled to her feet to get ready to go to the interrogation room. And the guard opened the door, walked in, and with a sweep of his hand, dropped bananas at her feet. And he said, they're all from Mr. Yamanji.

And Darlene was stunned as she counted 92 bananas at her feet. So why do you think God answered Darlene's prayer so extravagantly?

Do you think it could be that just because he wanted her to know how uncontrollable and uncontainable his love for her was, and that she would feel it, she would know it, and then she would tell the story to others, and that God's love and God's glory would be seen?

I think so. So what about you? Is God ready to glorify his love in your life? Yes, if you pray. If you'll pray.

See, prayer gives God an opportunity to show off his love. And so we shouldn't be afraid to ask what we desire, what our heart desires.

[18:30] Will the answer always be yes? Yes, probably not. No. But every time he says yes, and even every time he says no, it shows his passionate love for his people and for you.

And you'll know it, and you'll see it, and Psalm 50 says you'll honor me. So when God answers your prayer, thirdly, you see his faithfulness.

See his faithfulness. How many times does Jesus say, ask and you shall receive? How many times does God give us those promises and say, you know what, they're yours if you pray.

And so, God puts himself out there. He puts his word out there, and he says, trust me. And when we pray, we trust him. We venture on him, and we say, God, I'm trusting you.

Now hear me. Hear me when I pray. Now, will God let his word fail? Will God let his word fail? Never. You have exalted above all things.

[19:38] Two things. Your word, your name, and your word. And then the next line is, when I called, you answered me. Psalm 138 too.

God answers us because he cares about his faithfulness. And so, when he answers your prayers, he shows himself reliable and true. Now, earlier we heard about the Canaanite woman that Jesus, who healed, that Jesus healed her daughter.

Now, in 1 Kings 17, Elijah goes and lives with a woman from the town of Zarephath near Sidon, almost like in the same area where Jesus was.

Now, if you remember the story, the woman is out picking up sticks. She's getting ready to make her last meal for her son and her and then they were going to die, so she said.

And then Elijah came and God miraculously provided flour and oil for the entire stay and they had food and he lived with her that whole time. Now, sometime later, her son became ill.

[20:51] And you remember the story. He became ill and he died. And she said to Elijah, what do you have against me, man of God? Do you come here to remind me of my sin and to kill my son?

And then Elijah said, give me your son. And he picked him up. He must have been a small boy.

Took him upstairs. And he said, and he cried out to the Lord, O Lord, my God, why have you brought tragedy also upon this widow that I'm staying with by causing her son to die?

Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the Lord, O Lord, my God, let the boy's life return to him. And the Lord heard Elijah's cry.

The boy's life returned to him and Elijah picked him up and brought him back to his mother. Now what of God's glory did the woman see?

Well, listen to what she said. Then the woman said, now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth. So what did she see of God's glory?

[22:01] She saw that when the Lord speaks, every word that he says is true. God is faithful. And answered prayer shows us that. So, if answered prayer shows God's faithfulness, do you think he cares about answering your prayer?

He does. Because his glory is riding on it. His glory, his name depends upon it. And so pray. Pray. Fourthly, when God answers your prayers, you see his self-sufficiency. You see his self-sufficiency. You see that God doesn't need anything and that it is his glory to be the giver and not the receiver.

So, if you have your Bible still open to Psalm 50, you'll see it right there. But if not, you need to turn back to Psalm 50. And let's look again at verse 15.

Let's look at the context. Now, verse 7 says this, Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God.

[23:15] You're God. I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings which are ever before me. I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens for every animal of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills.

I know every bird in the mountains and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you for the world is mine and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

Sacrifice, thank offerings to God. Fulfill your vows to the Most High and call upon Him in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you will honor me. Now do you see what's going on here?

In the minds of some Israelites were very confused. They thought they were feeding God with their sacrifices.

So you have to imagine what was going through their mind. They're getting ready to go to the temple and before they go, they have to pick out one of their animals.

[24:19] And so there they go. The Israelite, he's going through the ritual of sacrifice and he goes out to a stall and he's thinking God is hungry again. I work and God takes my food and I have to give him his food or he's going to be angry with me.

I work hard to raise my food and then God takes it from me. And God expects me to feed him with the work of my hands.

And God says, I'm here to testify against you. You have this all wrong. I don't need a bull from your stall and I don't need your goats.

I don't need food to eat. If I were hungry, would I ask you? I own the cattle on a thousand hills and so if I was hungry, I have enough food.

I have enough to eat without asking you. And so, God says, no. No, no, no. You are needy. I am not. I'm sufficient.

[25:25] You are not. And so, I will be glorified in giving. I will not be glorified by taking. And so, brothers and sisters, do you see how this applies to you?

Do you think God gets tired of giving to you? Do you think God says, here they are again. The beggar's at my door. They need help again.

Not at all. Because every time he gives, it shows that he is sufficient. That he has this never-ending resources of grace and power and help for you.

And so, as he gives, he glorifies his name and he helps you. So, should you think that God doesn't care about you?

No. Should you think that God gets tired of you? Not at all. God is self-sufficient and his godness is magnified as he gives to you.

[26:26] And that's why in verse 7 it says, I am your, I'm God. I am God. I'm not like you, always needy.

No, my glory is that I am a great giver. And so, God is ready and he's willing to answer your prayers because it shows off his self-sufficiency and it shows off of his kind and generous heart.

So, don't think for a minute that God is tired of hearing your prayers or that somehow your prayers are secondary to his main pursuit of glorifying himself.

He pursues his glory, but the way he does it is by answering your prayers. So, his glory and your prayers are traveling on the same road.

They're on the same path and so, when he answers, you taste and see the glory of God and you taste and see that he is the great giver and that he is the father of the heavenly lights from whom every good and perfect gift comes down from him.

[27 : 30] That's what you see. Now, fifth, finally, when God answers prayer, it shows the glory of Jesus Christ, the mediator.

It shows the glory of Jesus Christ, the mediator. So, when your flesh starts to tell you that God doesn't care and God is in it for himself and I don't fit in with that plan, remember the cross.

At the cross, Jesus Christ was pouring out his life and love for you and God was getting glory for himself.

And so, in Jesus Christ, your good and God's glory become the same thing. They join. They unite. And when we pray, we don't just add those words in Jesus' name for no reason because we pray in his name. We put all of our requests and we put it under him and we say, God, answer me because of Jesus Christ.

[28 : 42] And so, God loves to answer prayer when we pray in Jesus' name because it shows the value of Christ. It shows the glory of Christ.

The book of Hebrews says, therefore, brothers, since we have confidence, confidence, to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, open for us through the curtain.

That is his body. And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. Full assurance and confidence should mark our prayers because of who we are coming through.

We are coming through Christ. And so, we should expect to be answered. We should expect that God will look on our prayers and be pleased to answer them.

according to his will and in his wisdom and in his way. And so, when God answers our prayers, the value of the death of Christ is lifted up.

[29 : 43] And so, when we pray, we come in Jesus' name. And so, every time God hears us, it proclaims to the heavens that Jesus Christ was enough.

His life, his death, was enough to cover your sin. His life and his death was enough to appease the wrath of God. It was enough to pay for our sins.

And it was enough to open up the floodgates of heaven and begin showering every spiritual and every physical blessing that we need.

It shows that Jesus is worthy, that his life and his death was enough for his people. See, when you pray, you know you don't deserve to be answered.

When you truly pray, you know the position of your heart is the beggar's position. And you know there's nothing in you that God should say yes to you.

[30 : 52] And so, when God says yes, you have to ask yourself, why. And you follow that back and it always comes back to Jesus Christ. And so, every yes, every answer, it comes back to Jesus Christ and his goodness.

And we say, you know what? The only reason God ever hears me is because of my mediator. He's my great high priest and his name carries weight with God.

And God answers and gives glory to himself because of Jesus Christ. So, don't be afraid to pray. Don't be afraid to pray.

God is for you. He's all for you in Jesus Christ. Now, two points of application and then we'll be done. First, unbelievers. Is God moving in your life?

Are things changing? So, you see that the biggest problem that you have is sin. And then when you look around, everything else compares or pales in insignificance and insignificance when you think about your sin.

[32 : 04] And perhaps God is convicting you and he's drawing you and pressing you to get right with him. Maybe that's where you're at.

But you just don't know if God really means to do you good. Maybe you're unsure that your prayers for mercy will be heard.

And I hope and pray that everything that you heard here tonight will encourage you to see that God will answer your prayer. He's not slow to answer prayer because his name is wrapped up in it.

His glory is wrapped up in it. And I can say with all the authority of the word of God from the mouth of God that if you pray and ask for mercy and if you throw your arms around Christ and his cross and you say, God, you can throw me in hell but you're going to have to pry my fingers off the cross.

You're going to have to do that because this is where I'm at. This is where I'm taking my stand. I desperately need the cross of Christ and I desperately need Jesus and Lord, have mercy on him. [33 : 14] on me for his sake, God will hear you. God will answer you because do you think for a minute God will deny himself the glory that will come from saving a sinner?

Not in a million years because if he says yes, the angels sing and if he says yes, his love is made glorious and his power is made glorious and his faithfulness is made glorious and his sovereignty is made glorious and Jesus Christ is made glorious.

So do you think for a minute God will say no to your answer or your prayer for mercy? So pray for mercy.

Pray one time. Pray two times. Pray seven times. Seven times. Pray until the answer is yes because all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

So my unbelieving friend, don't be afraid to pray to God to save you because he is willing to save you if you are willing to pray.

[34 : 28] God loves to answer prayer. The second point of application is to my brothers and sisters in Christ. If God is glorified in answering prayer, then would he not be greatly glorified in answering great prayer, great prayers, great petitions?

You are coming to a king. Large petitions with you bring. So great petitions honor a great king. So if you love God's glory, if you love God's glory, if you want God's glory to shine, then ask for great things.

Pray for big things. Pray for things that are on the edge of your faith that you can barely believe that God would do it. You pray for those things and pray and stand back and watch God move.

He might not answer your prayers in the ways that you think. His prayers might be, his answer might come no and he might give you something else. But I'm telling you, if you pray for great things, God will be glorified.

John Knox, the great Scottish reformer, knew how to pray for great things. And if you know anything about John Knox, you know that his situation was very similar, was just as difficult in some ways as Luther's.

[35 : 49] Scotland was ruled by Queen Mary and she was a staunch Roman Catholic. And when she ascended the throne, Knox fled to Geneva, afraid for his life, but soon he came back and then began this battle for the heart of Scotland.

And Queen Mary was trying to stop the reformation there and John Knox was trying to get the reformation started and going.

Knox was trying to spread it. Now, Queen Mary, she worked by bribes and power and force. And John Knox just worked by prayer and preaching.

And Knox knew how to pray. He was a praying man. One time a visitor was at his house and he overheard Knox praying in secret.

And later, this is what the visitor wrote. After a few moments of silence, his voice became clear and this earnest petition went up from his struggling soul to heaven.

[37 : 01] Oh Lord, give me Scotland or I die. Then a pause. Silent, calmness, then, Oh Lord, give me Scotland or I die.

And once again, everything was silent and yet for the third time, even more intense than before. Oh Lord, give me Scotland or I die. And if you know history at all, God gave him Scotland.

despite Mary, despite the Roman Catholic Church, despite all the monks, despite all the power, despite all the money, God heard John Knox and it was God's joy to answer him.

See, God is glorified when we ask great things of him. So let's stretch out our faith and let's expect great things from God as we pray, even as we attempt great things for God as we pray.

So let's pray now. Our Lord, who is a mighty king like you, who when a man prays, you'll give him a country.

[38 : 22] That kind of power puts to shame our politicians and it puts to shame our efforts and it puts to shame our armies and our, the thoughts of men because your wisdom is greater than all of our wisdom.

And your folly is greater than all of our wisdom. Lord, there is none like you in heaven and on earth. And I pray that we would see how high and lifted up you are, how committed you are to your glory, to the spreading of your name and your fame.

And we would see that as good news. And we would see that how you wrap us up into that story and that you love us.

You love us for Jesus Christ's sake. You hear us for his sake. Will you help us and teach us how to pray? Father, you deserve to have people who bring you great petitions.

It's the right thing. Forgive us for being so slow and so unbelieving. And we pray that you would revive our hearts so that we will start to pray.

[39 : 41] So we ask that you would do it for our good. We pray for those who are struggling and unbelief. And they're unsure of what's going on in their own hearts.

I pray that you would draw them to yourself and save them. They would begin to drink in and taste and see how good and how good you are.

How good you are in Jesus Christ. How beautiful you are, Holy Spirit. How kind you are, Heavenly Father. that you would honor yourself in saving sinners.

Put your people on praying for them, Father. Put us on it and let us not be taken away until we see sinners saved. We ask it for Jesus' sake and in his name.

Amen.