

To Inquire of the Lord

Ezekiel 20:1-31

8/10/03

Intro

- Pray for the team returning from Africa this week.

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In chapter 20, the elders of Israel have come to sit before Ezekiel in order to **inquire of the Lord**. They wanted to have an answer to some question, or seek direction in some problem; we are not given the reason the elders have come to inquire of the Lord.

The question that the Lord brings to them instead is quite a turn, “You come to inquire of Me? I will not be inquired of by you.” He then shows them why he will not listen – they didn’t listen to God, so why should God listen to them?

We all want to have God hear our prayers, but are there conditions in our lives that will cause our prayers to be hindered? We need to have some insights into inquiring of the Lord ourselves, so we can see what God desires to see in us.

These, then, are the things that God would like to see in our lives in responding to our prayers.

I. A heart of faith

A. Believing that God is able

- Without faith it is impossible to please God.
- Without faith that God is able to accomplish what concerns us, there is no power in prayer

Illus – Michach, Shadrach, and Abednego, Our God is able to take us out of your hand, but if He does not deliver, we will still not bow down.”

➤ God wants us to ask in faith

Matt 21:22 - "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

James 1:6-7, “Ask in faith without doubting...”

Illus – In Africa, many are living in great fear because they are not convinced that the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world.

1 John 4:3-4, “Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

B. Faith that comes from walking with God

- We know there are different kinds of faith.

Illus – When the disciples could not cast out a demon, Jesus said it was because of the littleness of their faith. And then He said, “This kind only comes out with prayer and fasting.”

Matthew 17:21

- When should the fasting have begun? Certainly not at that moment.
- The point that Jesus was making is that we need a larger faith, and that faith grows as we walk with God.
- Jesus Himself is the example of a deep fellowship with God.

Luke 6:12 - It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and **He spent the whole night in prayer to God.**

- Faith comes from prayer itself, and faith also comes also from the Word of Christ.

Romans 10:17, “**faith comes by hearing**, and hearing by the Word of Christ.”

C. Faith that trusts in God’s will

- God is moved by our prayers, but He answers according to His will.

2 Sam 24:25 – “David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Thus the LORD was moved by prayer for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel.”

James 4:2b-3, “**You do not have because you do not ask.** You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it in your worldly pleasures.”

II. A heart that desires righteousness

- A. He delights in the prayers of those with a right heart
- It blesses the Lord when we pray with a heart right before God.

Prov 15:8 - The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, **But the prayer of the upright is His delight.**

B. A man of righteousness listens.

- When our hearts are attentive to His Word, His instruction, then God loves to answer our prayers.

Proverbs 1:23-25, 28

- C. The prayers of a righteous man availeth much.
- This is a verse I memorized a child. **James 5:16**
 - The opposite is also true.

Matthew 23:14, “Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”

III. A heart that is humble

A. Humble before God

- This is an important key to prayer.

Illus – The Pharisee and the tax collector

Luke 18:9-14

- Humility and repentance go together.

2 Chronicles 7:14, “and if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

B. Humility before others

- It may be amazing to some people to learn that they way we treat others has an impact on whether God hears our prayers.

Illus – The way husbands treat their wives.

1 Peter 3:7 - You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way...and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

- But it’s also important how we treat others.

C. Humble in our own hearts

- God resists the proud.

James 4:6, “**He gives a greater grace.** Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”

- True humility comes from a strong faith in God, not from thinking of ourselves as failures.

Illus – faith in God. Many people believe in their own will power to get them success. This is faith in self, not faith in God.

The football team that was playing the state champions and a wealthy businessman promised them each a car if they won...

Conclusion

God delights to answer our prayers, but God wants us to pray in faith believing, and with a right heart.

Illus – Benjamin in N. He didn’t want a relationship God, but made a point of saying that he wanted to tell the truth.

Intro

2 Sam 21:14 - They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father; thus they did all that the king commanded, and after that God was moved by prayer for the land.

Righteousness

Ezek 14:8 - "I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from among My people. So you will know that I am the LORD.

Isa 1:17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. "Let Us Reason"

Acts 10:4 -And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

1 Tim 2:8 - Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

James 5:16 **The prayers of a righteous man availeth much...**

Job 16:17 - Although there is no violence in my hands, **and my prayer is pure.**

Ps 17:1 - Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry; Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips.

Ps 66:16- 20 - **When the Lord does not hear** Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer Nor His lovingkindness from me.

Acts 2:42 - They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread **and to prayer.**

Phil 4:6 - **Be** anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Humility

2 Chron 34:27 - "Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words

against this place and against its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD.

Matt 6:8 – **Does God know what you need before you ask?** "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

1 Kings 8:26-39 - "Now therefore, O God of Israel, let Your word, I pray, be confirmed which You have spoken to Your servant, my father David.

27"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!

28"Yet have regard to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You today;

29that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, "My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place.

30"Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive.

31 "If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, and he comes and takes an oath before Your altar in this house,

32 then hear in heaven and act and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.

33 "When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy, because they have sinned against You, if they turn to You again and confess Your name and pray and make supplication to You in this house,

34 then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers.

35 "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them,

36 then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Your land, which You have given Your people for an inheritance.

37 "If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, locust or grasshopper, if their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is,

38 whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man or by all Your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading his hands toward this house;

39 then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know, for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men,

1 Chron 5:20 - They were helped against them, and the Hagarites and all who were with them were given into their hand; for they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him.