

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

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The Joy of Forgiving

There is a chorus in a song which reads: “Oh what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”* Yahshua (Jesus) made a promise to us. He said that if we ask anything in His name, we *shall* receive it so that our “joy may be full!”

23 And in that day you shall ask me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you.

24 Till now have you asked nothing in my name: ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. -John 16

What do we do with this promise when we have prayed as instructed, but our prayers go unanswered? We still have no joy or peace and we continue our struggles with pain. How can we believe the Word of God? Is it possible that God did not keep His promise?

God keeps all of His promises. Paul says they are “yes” and “Amen:”

19 For the Son of God, Yahshua the Messiah, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yes and no, but in him was yes.

20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yes, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. -2 Corinthians 1

If all of God’s promises are true, then why are our prayers not being answered? Could it be that they are not reaching Him? Is it possible that God is not even hearing our prayers?

Prayer is our means of communicating with God. Communication is an *exchange* of information where one speaks and the other hears. To effectively exchange information, we must take turns speaking and hearing. Therefore, effective prayer is more than us speaking to God. We must communicate with Him. If we first hear Him, then we can speak to Him. After He then hears us, He can speak to us through His answers to our prayers.

**What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, Coverse/Scriven, Public Domain

Zechariah reveals that Yahweh will not hear us unless we hear Him:

11 But they refused to listen, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

12 Yes, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which Yahweh of hosts has sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from Yahweh of hosts.

13 Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, says Yahweh of hosts: -Zechariah 7

Hearing and obeying are expressed by the same Hebrew word: שמע (shama). If we truly hear the Word of God, then we will show Him that we believe Him by our faith. Paul explains:

17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. -Romans 10

If we hear God’s word and believe Him, then we demonstrate our faith through some kind of action. When we believe Him, we communicate with Him in prayer. We pray in faith, even while we are still in our affliction:

10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: -Psalms 116

Like David, we ask God to bring us out of our distresses, afflictions, and pain, as we ask Him to forgive all of our sins:

17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring you me out of my distresses.

18 Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. -Psalms 25

Prayers prayed in faith get heard. When they are heard, they are answered and we are able to celebrate the grace and mercy of God:

1 I love Yahweh, because he has heard my voice *and* my supplications.

2 Because he has inclined his ear to me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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- 4 Then called I upon the name of Yahweh; O Yahweh, I beseech you, deliver my soul.
5 Gracious *is* Yahweh, and righteous; yes, our God *is* merciful. -Psalms 116

If we expect God to hear our prayers, then we must pray in faith. We demonstrate our faith when we take action based upon that which we believe, rather than on what we see. As James tells us, unless we pray with unwavering faith, we should not expect our prayers to be answered:

- 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. -James 1

Prayers offered in unbelief do not demonstrate faith. Therefore, they are not pleasing to God:

- 6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. -Hebrews 11

Many of us *say* we believe God. We claim to have demonstrated our faith by obeying His word through repentance and baptism. Thinking that *our* sins are forgiven, why do we still feel burdened? Why are we still without peace and joy in our lives? Why are our prayers not being answered? If we have still not received the fullness of God's grace, have we really believed and obeyed His word?

We may have repented of the sins that we have *committed*, but have we also repented of the sins that we have *retained*? Have we asked God to forgive us of our committed sins while we refuse to forgive others of the sins they have committed against us? If so, then we hold sin in our hearts, which expresses itself through the pains and afflictions that steal our joy.

Our refusal to forgive others puts us in direct rebellion against the Word of God. . Our forgiveness of others is not optional. Yahshua (Jesus) explains that we must *give* forgiveness in order to *receive* it:

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- 14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
15 But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. -Matthew 6

Our unforgiveness is an act of disobedience which demonstrates our unbelief in the Word of God. Our refusal to offer the grace of forgiveness prevents us from receiving God's forgiving grace. We remain unforgiven. We thereby continue to bear the burdens of our sins, as well as those of the sins that others have committed against us.

It is tempting to quote Yahshua's words out of context as we hope that our prayers will be answered:

- 24 Therefore I say to you, Whatsoever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you shall have *them*. -Mark 11

However, as we read further, we learn the answers to our prayers are conditional. We must forgive before we can be forgiven:

- 25 And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. -Mark 11

Even as we may try to rationalize our unwillingness to forgive, we remain in a state of rebellion and disobedience to God's word. When King Saul of Israel tried to rationalize his refusal to obey God's clear command, Yahweh removed His grace from him:

- 22 And Samuel said, Has Yahweh *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to listen than the fat of rams.
23 For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, he has also rejected you from *being* king. -1 Samuel 15

Like Saul, our unwillingness to obey God reveals that we have rejected His word in unbelief. By refusing to forgive, we disobey His word, insisting that we hold onto sin that must be given to God. Because we will not hear His voice, He will not hear ours. We prevent Him from giving us the joy that is available to us by His grace.

Just as God forgives without measure, we must freely and continually forgive others. Yahshua told Peter:

- 21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?
22 Yahshua said to him, I say not to you, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. -Matthew 18

When we truly forgive, we are ready to be forgiven and receive unburdened hearts that are full of joy.