

The Heart Prayer that Pleases God

But 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
(Hebrews 11:6).

How can you know that you are pleasing God when you pray? Do you struggle with believing that He will answer your prayers or are you afraid that His answer might be different from your desires?

When God told Solomon to ask for anything, he asked for wisdom and the scripture said that *it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing* (1 Kings 3:10 NAS). James said that if you lack wisdom, ask God, but only ask in faith believing that you will receive the guidance you ask for (James 1:5-8 emphasis mine).

When a disciple asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He gave them a sample prayer much like the one He gave in His Sermon on the Mount (Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:9-13). In the Luke passage, He goes on to emphasize that persistent prayer is pleasing to God (Luke 11:5-13). Don't give up. Continue to pray until you get an answer.

Hebrews 11:6 gives us the basis for all prayer that is pleasing to God. **Faith** pleases God. Both of the examples above were pleasing to God because they were prayers based in faith. Solomon acknowledged his total dependence upon God for guidance to lead His people. Jesus emphasized that all that we have, including provision and proper relationship to others, is given to us by our Father in Heaven. The Message paraphrases Hebrews 11:6 this way, *It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him.*

How can you be sure that you are praying a prayer that pleases God – a prayer of faith? Do you really believe that God cares enough about you to respond to your prayer? Are you willing to adjust your desires to God's will, acknowledging that He knows best, has a plan for your life, and will bring about those answers to your prayers that will bring glory to Him and fruit for you? Complete trust in God accepts His answer even when it was not the answer you desired. The apostle Paul prayed three times for God to remove a *thorn in the flesh*, but accepted His answer, *My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Do you trust Him enough to accept whatever answer He has to give – knowing that He knows all about your circumstance and will do what is best?

The answer lies in what you truly believe about God (Hebrews 11:6). Can you trust Him? What has your experience revealed to you when you have trusted Him? Has He

ever let you down? If you think He has, examine your heart. Were you relying on His power and strength or yours or maybe even someone else?

It is your *heart* that God observes. See 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 44:21, Psalm 51:10, Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 4:23, Proverbs 17:22, Jeremiah 17:10, Matthew 5:8, Matthew 6:21, Mark 12:30, John 14:1, Romans 8:27, Romans 10:10, Ephesians 3:17, Philippians 4:7, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 10:22. Read through these passages. Note that according to God, your heart is the core of your being. You can say one thing, but believe another. You can believe something in your head, but not experience that belief in your heart. James 2:19 states that *you believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble.*

Although most translations render Psalm 19:14 as *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight*, I believe that what the NLT adds is appropriate: *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer* (emphasis mine). He is delighted when we want to please Him. A heart prayer of faith pleases God.

Reflect on the scriptures below. In your own heart, do you truly believe that *He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him* (Hebrews 11:6)?

- *For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His* (2 Chronicles 16:9 NAS).

Examine this passage about Asa king of Judah. Notice that when Asa relied on the Lord, God delivered him from the Ethiopians (2 Chronicles 14:9-15), but subsequently, Asa relied on man (king of Syria, 2 Chronicles 16:7-10) and not God. What does this passage tell you about trusting God sometimes and not others? Are there times you trust God and then others when you wonder if you can really trust Him? What makes the difference for you? What does God mean by *those whose heart is completely His*?

Compare the beginning of Asa's life with the end (2 Chronicles 14-16). What a sad picture was this life that started out in faith but did not continue to trust God. Although Asa began with reliance on God, his heart was not completely His. A pleasing faith in God is a faith that does not waver in trust in God's provision, goodness, and sovereignty.

- The heart of Psalm 119 is acknowledgment that God's ways and His commandments are for our good. Yes, we are under grace, but the boundaries that God set in His commandments were created for our benefit. Jesus said, *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15).

I cry out with my whole heart; Hear me, O Lord. I will keep your statutes (Psalm 119:145).

Examine the prayers of the psalmist and promises in Psalm 119 made by God to those who trust Him with their whole heart. A few of them are listed below. God's guidance is highlighted in yellow and man's obedience (faith and trust) is highlighted in blue. Obedience to God is evidence of trust in Him (James 2:14-26). On your own, finish the exercise. Practically every verse in this psalm contains a prayer for guidance or a promise from God.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord! (v.1)

Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart (v.2).

They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways (v.3).

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You (v.11).

I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways (v. 15).

Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law (v. 18).

My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word (v. 28).

I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me (v. 30).

I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart (v. 32).

Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end (v. 33).

Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart (v. 34).

Establish Your word to Your servant, who is devoted to fearing You (v. 38).

And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts (v.45).

This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life (v.50).

I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word (v. 58).

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes (v. 71).

The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver (v. 72).

Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments (v. 73).

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (v. 105).

Consider how I love Your precepts; revive me, O Lord, according to Your lovingkindness (v. 159).

Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble (v.165).

My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness (v. 172).

I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my delight (v. 174).

Are your prayers pleasing to God? Is your heart totally devoted to Him? If not, ask Him today to help you make Psalm 119:111 a reality in your life: *Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart* (Psalm 119:111).

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