

The Joy of Answered Prayer

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Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 00] Well, good morning again and welcome to faith. We're so glad to have you with us together today. We're going to be in Psalm 66. I think I said Psalm 6 earlier, but we are in Psalm 66. We're in Psalm 6 on Sunday evening, and we're going to be looking at a song in the Psalms. This is described as one of the songs proper in Psalm 66, and we will be in verses 16 through 20.

And as we think about when we deal with others and when something happens to us, a personal testimony is what has real power, meaning it's something that happens to us. It's something that we know of which we speak. When we're talking about something that we heard or something that somebody said, you know, it carries some weight. But when we say, this happened to me and I saw this happen. It has so much more power. And when it comes to the things that God does for us, I believe we ought to be quick to share our blessings. When God does something for us in our lives, when he comes through, when he answers a prayer, when he provides something, it's something that I believe we need to be willing to shout it from the rooftop to let others know that that God is real. And the one thing that true testimonies do are they encourage others to have faith. They encourage others when, well, if it worked for so-and-so, if it worked for him, if it worked for her, well, then I guess it's something that will work in my life. We rub shoulders sometimes with people who are hurting, people who have been through so many negative things in their life.

And maybe they see you or they see someone else who has been through difficult circumstances or tragedy has touched their life. And they see that it didn't destroy them. And they are still going through life. And they're encouraged. And they see God at work in their life. And maybe they are able to witness joy in the life of a person who has been through a difficult time in their life.

And when someone says, this is how God led me through it. This is what, this is the comfort God showed me. This is how God provided for me in this time. And this is the only way. And people say, well, how in the world can you smile? How in the world can you still laugh and have experienced all of this?

And when we say it's God that gave us the power to accomplish it, it can encourage someone else to let God have their problems, to turn their life over to him and surrender their life to him.

[3 : 04] And also, answered prayer brings glory to God. When God does something, who gets the honor and the glory? It ought to be God because he is the one. He's the only one that deserves our praise. And so, answered prayer brings glory to God. We ought to be quick to share that. And the psalmist, as we're going to see in just a moment, wanted to share that, wanted to share his testimony of God answering his prayer with the entire world with, and he wanted to build the faith of his friends.

He decided to tell them here in this portion of the song about God answering his prayer. Let's take a look at Psalm 66. You have your Bibles. You may turn there. We will also have it on the screen this morning. Psalm 66, verses 16 through 20. And part of this song says, Come and hear all you who fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul. So this is an invitation for all the earth, for the whole earth, to praise and magnify God. He says in verse 17, I cried to him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear, but certainly God has heard me. He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Blessed be God who has not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me. The psalmist invites the faithful to listen as he recounts how God has heard him, how God answered his prayer when he lifted up his voice and cried out for help. So we see in this song, in this Psalm 66, that the psalmist is excited, and he wants to let others in on the joy that he has because God heard him, and God answered his prayer.

And what we see in verses 16 and 17 is praise became part of this prayer. Do we praise when we pray? As we look at the prayers in Scripture, what we find very often, there tends to be a pattern to

many of the prayers. There was a pattern to King David's prayers. There are patterns to Paul's prayers and some of the other prayers that we see in Scripture. They often begin with confession. Some of them begin with ascribing the majesty and the power to God. God, we know that you are the God of the universe. God, we know that you are the creator of God. And then there's some confession. There's thanksgiving. And then there's praise. And then they pour out their heart before God. And then they let God know what they're, that for which they're asking. And in many of King David's prayers, he ends it, even though he has been very, very raw with his emotions, he lets God know that sometimes he's upset, sometimes he's frustrated, sometimes he's angry, but sometimes he's afraid. And then he ends his prayers with, well, God, I know you've answered me in the past. And I know you'll answer me in the future.

[6 : 34] You'll come through in the future. So I'm looking forward for you to come through in this particular need that I have. So the psalmist here is making praise a part of his prayer. We see that in verses 16 and 17.

This is a Thanksgiving psalm, Psalm 66, which is specifically identified as a song. Now we know that psalms was a song book. It was a, a list of, of songs, but this one is a, would be considered a song proper. It was a song that was sung. It includes both aspects of corporate and individual praise.

It starts off with a corporate praise, begins with a call in verses one through four, with a call for all the earth to praise and to worship God. And then the psalmist celebrates God's work. We see that in verses five, verse six, and verse seven, specifically the Red Sea crossing. We see the psalmist extolling the praise and the virtues of God because what he has done for Israel, he's awesome and is doing. Verse five said toward the sons of men. He turned the sea into dry land. So he's celebrating the works of God. And then the corporate call to praise continues as the psalmist describes God's deliverance and protection in verses eight through 12. And then verses 13 through 15, he moves to individual thanksgiving. And what he's doing here is he is declaring his intention to fulfill the goals that he's made before God. And he will perform the sacrifices that God expects and that will be accepted by God. And then the psalm again invites others in verses 16 through 19, or he invites them to listen to his personal testimony of God's deliverance. So we start off with the call to the earth to praise. He then ascribes the the mighty works of the majesty of God. He brings to mind all of the mighty works that God has done. Then he begins to come back into the personal worship, personal praise, personal thanksgiving, what he will do for God. And he ends it inviting all of the earth here. God has done for him his testimony of God's deliverance testimony of God's protection. We see that in verses 16 through 19. And then he concludes in verse 20 with thanking God God's covenant love for his fast covenant love. And you and I are able to experience that today because as New Testament believers in Christ, if you have trusted Christ as your Savior, if you are trusting him for your salvation, the Bible says we have been grafted in to Israel. And so we are part of that new covenant. God takes everyone, Jew, Gentile, and he forms to one body, the body of Christ.

And so we are able to experience that kessed, that covenant love of God. And that's what it is talking about in verse number 20 when he talks about, blessed not turned away my prayer or his mercy from me. We look at this 16 where he is back to, to for the earth to hear his testimony. Come and hear all you who fear God. Come around and I'm going to tell you what is done for me. I will declare he has done for my soul. And in verse 17, I cried him. He said, this is what I did. I cried to God with my mouth and he was extolled with my tongue. The drama begins to unfold here. He says, I cried out with mouth and with my tongue, I extol the majesty and the praise and the glory of God. Now think what is the writer of this, the writer of this Psalm? What has the Psalmist been through? So many different things. Could he be joyful and extolling God when he's been through troubling times, when he's been such perplexing problems and he is able to praise God? Well, that comes from the joy of answered prayer. God protected him. God delivered him. And even when he was in the middle of it and it took maybe months or years to be delivered, he will trust in God. And he looked at the big picture rather than, well, God, why are you not delivering me today? Well, maybe deliverance will come a week from now, a month from now. But God provides the grace to go through the difficult period. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Psalmist was saying. Well, as we were studying that last week on Sunday evening, we think about, think of the 23rd Psalm, you know, we think about the valley of the shadow of the shadow of death, think about a very, very dark period. But in keeping with Psalm 23, yea, though I, he says, I don't have

any wants. I am filled. I am walking past the cool, still waters. But the shepherd led the sheep wherever the sheep went. So if the sheep were in a dark, fearful valley, it was the shepherd that led them there. Because he was leading them eventually on to better pasture.

[12:24] So when we are following God, when we are following Jesus, and we are doing what he wants us to do, when we are being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we may go through some difficult times.

But know this, that as we follow him, the Bible says, that everything that happens to us, he will work it out for good. All things work together for good to them who love God, and who are the called according to his purpose. So think about that. When you're going through a difficult time, it may be you're thinking, well, this is the worst part. I've never experienced anything so bad. Life is horrible. Life is terrible. If you are a child of God, all things work together.

Not just some things, not just the great things, not just the things when God answers your prayer in the affirmative, but even when God answers your prayer with a no. Know this, that God knows best. You are parents. Did you ever have to tell your children no? What happens to children who are never told no? They grow up spoiled. They grow up entitled. They grow up obnoxious. Right? They're the ones that you don't like.

The people that you don't like because they grew up thinking that everything was handed to them, and they deserved everything. But yet, as a Christian, very often Christians think, how dare God tell me no? Didn't the Bible say that God would answer my prayer? Yes, the Bible says that.

[14:09] But it didn't say he would always answer with a yes. And so God answers our prayer, and sometimes the no is to protect us. Sometimes the no is it's not time yet.

But know this, that God hears our prayer, God answers our prayer, and so how could he be praising God while facing such perplexing problems? Well, he focused on what did we see in verses 5 through 7? If you got your Bibles and you look at verses 5 through 7, come and see the works of God.

So how can we praise God in the midst of perplexing problems? Don't focus on your focus on the power of God. Because in verses 5 through 7, he says, come and see the works of God.

He is awesome in his doing toward the sons of men. He turned the sea into dry land. They went through the river on foot. Therefore, we rejoice in him. He rules by his power forever. His eyes observe the nations.

Don't let the rebellious exalt themselves. So what the psalmist is doing here is rather than dwelling on his problems, he's focusing on God and his power.

[15:21] So that is how he can do it. He's focusing on God rather than on his problems. He prayed earnestly. He prayed continually. Well, consider Paul and Silas in the New Testament as they were going through a difficult time.

We see that in Acts chapter 16, verses 25 to 31. But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and the prisoners were listening to them.

Yes, Paul and Silas were in prison at this time. And you think, well, maybe they deserved to be there. They were there because they were telling everybody about Jesus. And the religious leaders didn't like it.

And so they said, put them in jail because they are talking about Jesus. And so here they did. They find themselves in the prison and the prisoners were listening to them.

And verse 26, suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

[16:23] And the keeper of the prison, awake and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners that fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice saying, do yourself no harm for we are all here.

Then he called for a light, ran in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Why would the jailer ask that question? Obviously, because he had heard these two missionaries telling the other prisoners about how they could be delivered from their sin, how they could have a brand new life through Christ.

And the jailer was listening to this. And then he experiences, he witnesses this awesome miracle. And then he goes in and drops to their feet and says, what do I need to do to be saved?

What do I need to do to be right with God? Verse 31. And so they said, what was the answer? Go to church. No. Go sacrifice.

[17 : 33] No. Go and be good. Go help a little old lady across the street. Go buy Girl Scout cookies. I mean, just, no, he didn't do any of that.

He said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Delivered from the penalty of sin. And so when we trust, this word belief is more than just, oh, I believe there's a Jesus. I believe there's a God and Jesus is the Son of God.

There is more to salvation than simply believing a truth. Because the Bible says, even the demons believe and they tremble in fear.

The demons know that Jesus is the Son of God. The devil knows that Jesus is God. The demons know that Jesus died on the cross to save humans from their sin.

[18 : 32] They know that. Actually, they know more than we do. Because they were there. But belief does not save them.

It is trust in what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary. Believing that Jesus is God. Believing that Jesus died on the cross in our place. Believing that His death was sufficient to pay the penalty for our sin.

And believing that when the Bible says, call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be saved. believe that when the Bible says, salvation is by grace through faith.

Not of works. It's the gift of God. It's the gift of God. Not of works. Lest any man should boast. That's saving faith. And so He says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

You and your household. So these two missionaries prayed and praised God. And their prayer brought down an earthquake that freed them. The jailer was convicted of his sin and then he was converted.

[19 : 40] And what we are seeing is praising adds power to praying. So what the psalmist was doing in Psalm 66 is he's praising God. He's praying to God, but he's praising Him.

All too often, what we tend to do is we tend to make out our laundry list of prayers like it's our shopping list and we go before God.

We're doing whatever we're doing. We stop what we're doing and we side off, we read off our laundry list of prayers to God and then we go back about our business. Is that any way to have a relationship?

How would it be if that's all your children ever did? How would it be as husband and wife or as friends?

Would you consider someone a friend if every time they saw you they would say, this is what I want. A, B, C, and D and I'd like to have it here by Wednesday. And then they walk off.

[20 : 41] It's like, that's not a friend. That reminds me of that commercial where the neighbors come out and talk about insurance or something and the neighbor says, well, hey, go ahead and take care of this and Blanny walks off.

I mean, no, that's not the way friendship works. And I don't think it's the way our relationship with God works. And so we come and we praise God. God, it's so great to be here with you and thank you for your awesome power.

I praise you for what you've done. Thank you for what you've done in my life. And Lord, this is things that I'm asking you for. And God, I also thank you for having answered my prayer in the past. And I'm looking forward to you answering this prayer. That's praying and praising. And I believe that's what brings the power. So what we see first is he invokes praise into his prayer.

And then, verse 18, we see that there's something that could have prevented his answer or the answer to his prayer. And it's sin. Sin could have prevented the answer to the psalmist's prayer.

[21 : 49] In verse 18, let's look at that. Verse 18, he says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. So the psalmist is declaring that if he had been living an unrepentant, sinful life or desired sin, then God would not have heard him.

We see also that in Proverbs 28, 9, where sin impedes or sin impinges upon the answer to our prayer. God will not hear us.

God will not answer us if we harbor sin in our life. But because the psalmist said he was innocent, God heard his cries, God heard his prayer, and God delivered him.

If you want to do some extra reading, also Psalm 17, verses 3 and 7, talks about that same concept of sin being part of our life.

And it would be a roadblock to answered prayer. We see this emphasized in Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2. Isaiah 59, one says, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

[23 : 08] But this is what the prophet was saying to God's people. But your iniquities, your sin, is what he's telling God's people. Your sin, your iniquities, have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

So that's why confession, I believe, is a very important part of our prayer life. And we may be, we may do just as David did. Search me, and try me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me. To ask God's Holy Spirit, let me know if there's any unconfessed sin in my life. Let me know if there's anything that I don't even realize that I did. Holy Spirit will do that too.

Oh, and when you did this or when you said that, you know, you did it out of jealousy or you did this or you did this out of pride or whatever, and we can say, oh, okay, yes, I was wrong.

God, forgive me. And then it gives us an opportunity to go maybe to a person that we've wronged and apologize to them and ask for their forgiveness. So I believe that confession is a very, very important part of prayer.

[24 : 22] It's a vital part of effective praying. Now, what about, how do we take care of that? Well, 1 John 1, 9. 1 John 1, verse 9, where John says, if we confess our sin, what does confess mean?

To admit, to say the same thing. Literally, it means to say the same thing as you were wrong. Oh, yes, I was wrong. To confess means to admit our guilt, admit that we did something.

And so when we confess, we come to God and say, God, I know that what I did was against your character. I know that what I did was contrary to your word.

I disobeyed you. So confession is merely just coming before God and coming clean and saying, I did it. And not coming up with an excuse.

We're so prone to do that, aren't we? We apologize sometimes to people and then we rationalize and try to justify why we did what we did. No. I was wrong. End of story.

[25 : 29] And that's how we confess. I was wrong and we received. Notice what he goes on to say. If we confess our sins, he, God, is faithful and just to forgive our sins.

Let's stop there for a moment. How could God be just to forgive sin? I thought God was a God of justice. Well, he is.

He is a God of justice. God hates sin. God cannot even allow sin in his presence. So how can God be just in dismissing sin?

Well, we go back to Calvary. We go back to the cross where Jesus, the Bible says, him who knew no sin became sin for us.

He, Jesus, vicariously took our sin upon himself. The sinless, spotless, the Bible calls him the Lamb of God referring to the Old Testament sacrificial system.

[26 : 32] So, this sinless Lamb of God, Jesus, takes upon himself our sin, the whole, every sin the sinfulness of the human race. It's placed on him and, in effect, what Jesus is doing is, Jesus is taking the penalty.

He is doing our time. He is taking our punishment and because he is God, because he is eternal, he was able to satisfy an eternal penalty in that time he spent on the cross and in those three days in the grave.

And, Bible says that on that third day he rose again by the power of God. It showed that God was satisfied with that penalty being paid.

So, if we confess our sins, Bible says God is faithful, he will do it, and he is just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Isn't that awesome? Think about it. It's something to know that my sins are forgiven, but then for the slate to be wiped clean. No remembrance.

[27 : 47] The Bible says that God will separate our sins from us as far as what? The east is from the west. And if you know anything about geography, you know, if we circumnavigate the globe north to south, eventually we get to the north pole and we're going to be going south and we consistently change direction even though we're going the same direction.

But you go east and you keep going east, and guess what? As far as you can go and as long as you can go, you're still going east. And so, east and west never meet. So what the writer there is saying, God will separate us, our sins from us, and we'll never be held accountable for them again when they're covered under the blood of Jesus Christ.

So, not only does he forgive us, but he wipes the slate clean. And it's like a complete expungement. I mean, it is, it's gone. It's not anywhere. A legal expungement today, it's gone. It's not on our record, but it's still on our record somewhere. And it can be used against us eventually. Somehow, someday, maybe. The way God does it is, it's literally, it disappears. I mean, it is gone. [29 : 08] And so, he says, he cleanses us from all unrighteousness. And then later, let's look, see how David speaks of this later in Psalm 103. Psalm 103, 1 through 12.

A little bit lengthy, 12 verses, but let's go ahead and begin with verse number one. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things. so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will he keep his anger forever.

[30 : 17] He has not dealt with us according to our sins. Aren't you glad of that? You ever jokingly said to someone who said something out of the way and you're saying, well, I better move because you might get struck by lightning.

If God did and gave us what we deserve the moment we deserve it, none of us would be here this morning. And so he says, he has not dealt with us according to our sins nor punished us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. And here it is. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. God has taken care of our sin in Jesus Christ. So this morning, if you are here and you are not sure if you are right with God, if you are not sure that you have a relationship with him, if you are not sure if you are a part of the family of God, it is as simple as admitting to him that you know you're a sinner.

And acknowledging that Jesus is God, he died on the cross in your place, and the penalty that he paid is sufficient to pay for your sin, your sin debt, and to say, God, I surrender myself to you.

[31 : 51] I want to be a part of your family, and I'm trusting what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary in my place. Father, thank you for saving me. That is all it takes.

Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved and will receive what the psalmist is referring to about our transgressions being removed from us as far as the east is from the west. So those who want their prayers answered as a follower of Jesus Christ. Now here's the thing. Just because we come to know Jesus as our Savior doesn't mean that we become perfect. we still live in a sin-cursed world. We still are human beings with a propensity to sin. We have a sinful nature.

But when we do sin, if we confess, if we are quick to confess and keep short accounts with God, then we'll be restored, our fellowship will be restored, and our sin and our fellowship with him and our prayers will not be hindered.

[33 : 05] And then, thirdly, God's answer in David's or in the psalmist's song here proved that his prayer had been answered. Verses 19 and 20.

But certainly God has heard me. He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God who has not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

So the psalmist rejoiced that God had heard his prayer and answers to our prayer prove the importance to pray. God is still in the prayer answering business.

Answers to prayer prove that God hears our prayers and answers to our prayers prove that God is revealing his mercy to us.

And the psalmist's point is clear. God's people went in need to purify their hearts as David did and said, God, show me if there's any sin in my life.

[34 : 11] Cleanse my heart. And then as we pray, then our prayers will not be hindered. He will answer, not withhold his prayers from us. And then when we tell others about that answered prayer, it will encourage boldness in others and for them to pray as well.

So, in conclusion, what are our next steps? Do you have your connection cards? This is our homework. As we think about this week and as we go through life, first of all, let's pray with confident expectation.

Pray confidently as I've heard it said. If it's dry and you pray for rain, bring your umbrella. That shows that you're expecting rain.

So, if we pray and expect something, that is letting God know that we trust him. But if we pray and say, well, you know what, I don't know I'm going to get that. Well, that's a divided mind.

That's, well, maybe, maybe not. Maybe, maybe not. So, let's pray confidently. Let's pray expecting God to hear and answer our prayer. And then secondly, when God does answer your prayer, let's share the joy of answered prayer.

[35 : 28] So, that's your homework. If you see, if you have something to praise God for, praise God to others. Tell somebody else this week about what God has done in your life.

They may look at you sideways and going, what planet are you from? But it doesn't matter. Because we're still extolling the power and the majesty and we're praising God.

So, let's share the joy of our answered prayer and then let's build the faith of those that we love by sharing our answered prayer. Because answered prayer will build the faith of others.

So, as we think about this Psalm 66, we think about David inviting the earth to praise God. As we see him reminding them, reminding them about the power of what God has done in the past and what God can do in the future, let's continue to shout out what God is doing today.

Let's not rest on the past. Let's trust God for the future. Let's pray. Lord, this morning as we've come together, we thank you for what you are going to do in our lives.

[36 : 44] I thank you for each family represented here this morning. And I pray that you may powerfully bless each life here today. May we be able to extol your virtue and your praise to everyone around us.

And Lord God, may we be able to share a personal testimony of what you are doing in our lives with others.

God bless you. We thank you for what you are going to do in us and through us. And I pray that you would continue to bless us. Thank you for each one here this morning.

Lord, I pray that as we meet together again, may you keep us, may you protect us until we come together again in the body of Christ.

Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.