

PRINCIPLES OF ANSWERED PRAYER
LUKE 1:6-20

INTRODUCTION

I. PRINCIPLE OF DEDICATION. (1:6 – 9)

⁶Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. ⁷But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

⁸Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

A. Zechariah and Elizabeth were dedicated.

1. They did not receive the son they requested but they continued to serve the Lord.

a. Some would ask is this fair?

b. The answer is, "No it is not fair."

1) But if God were fair in our thinking of fairness we would all go to hell.

2) We had better keep that in mind.

B. Zechariah and Elizabeth were dedicated with an "even if not" kind of faith.

"But {even} if {He does} not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." (Dan 3:18) NAS

Illustration

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were dedicated regardless what the earthly king did.

I love those words in verse 18, "But {even} if {He does} not, . . .".

Application

Zechariah, and Elizabeth had a faith and dedication that said we will serve “even if” He does not do what we ask.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF DESIRE. (1:13)

¹³ *But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.*

A. Desire is a principle of prayer.

1. Zechariah and Elizabeth desired a child.
2. This is a proper desire and scripture encourages this.

Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart. (Ps 37:4)

B. When we have selfish desires God May Give Us What we Want.

⁶ *But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. (1 Sam 8:6-7) NAS*

Application

We must check our desire.

Do we want what the Lord wants or what we want?

If we delight our self in the Lord He will direct our desires.

III. PRINCIPLE OF DELAY. (1:13)

¹³ *But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.*

Note the phrase:

“... *your prayer has been heard.*”

1. When was it heard?

In the midst of his service and self-giving.

2. What Can that teach Us?

That God responds to us in unexpected places and times.

3. When our prayers are heard,

God empowers us to serve in extraordinary ways.

A. God Delays to Answer Better for God’s . . . Purposes.

1. When Does God Need a John the Baptist?

He needs a John the Baptist for later, with the coming of Jesus.

But God is getting the scene ready for the perfect time.

a. Look at Abraham and Isaac.

Abraham didn’t think he would have an heir.

He had to wait many years before Isaac was born.

b. God takes the Route of Greatest Glory.

He wasn’t going to let Abraham do this natural way.

God was to show His glory in a non-natural way.

c. Do you remember when Jesus delayed on purpose.

⁶ *Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. (John 11:6)*

Truly he who wants to know God and his glory must set his mind to it,

¹² *Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ¹³ But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. (Dan 10:12-13)*

B. God Delays to Answer Better for Man's . . . Pleasure.

1. An Impossible Situation “Old Man.”

Your old and your wife is old and barren.

2. Not just any boy but a special boy.

But God says that this boy will

...turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (John 1:17)

C. God’s Delays may allow me to pray for the Future.

Note again the phrase:

“ . . . your prayer has been heard.”

Now look at these verses of scripture.

⁸ *And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Rev 5:8) NAS*

³ *And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. (Rev 8:3-4)*

Look also at the words of Jesus.

"I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; (John 17:20)

Illustration

A preacher said to a dying man,

"They have asked me to pray for you to get healed.
Can you tell me how added life for you will glorify God?"

Application

We need to be fully aware of these principals of God's delays in prayer:

Dedication

Desire

Delay

John 1:6-20

⁶Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. ⁷But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

⁸Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. ¹⁴He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. ¹⁶Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

¹⁸Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

¹⁹The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."