

Prayer- Can sin, words, or doubt hinder my prayers?

Prayer (Defined)- *Conversation between God and man.*

What about sin and doubt?

God's response to a prayer of petition. **James 1:2-8** (pg. 847)

- Trials are a testing of our faith. (3)
- God wants us to be strengthened so that we do not lack anything. (4)
- If we lack something, especially wisdom on how to handle a test, we are to ask. (5a)
- God is generous, and he responds **without finding fault!** (5b)
- Belief versus doubt is important in prayer—should not **expect** to receive anything. (6a)
- A person who operates in doubt is unstable and not of a single mind. (8)

Jesus' merciful response to unbelief in petitions. **Mark 9:17-29** (pg. 706)

- This man cried out to Jesus for help, and Jesus simply said believe! (23)
- Man acknowledges some belief and some unbelief. (24)
- Jesus heals the boy but said that this situation required prayer! (29)
- Jesus also shows mercy in helping his doubt!

What about our words?

Prayer of a "righteous" man. **Luke 18:9-12** (pg. 732)

- Self-assessed that he was good thus deserving. Reality- so close but so far.
- His theology is that God's favor in prayer is contingent upon our goodness in our right words, actions, and disciplines. Reality- God was seeing through the smokescreen and looking at his heart.

- He presumed that prayer effectivity is based on the pecking order of your goodness compared to someone else. Reality- if there is a pecking order, you need to be fighting for the back of the line as Christ says that the first will go last and the last will go first! **Matthew 20:16**
- Impressive prayers are a means to elevate oneself among others. Reality- Prayer is vertical not a means to impress others horizontally.

Prayer of a “lesser” man. **Luke 18:13**

- By not looking up he is acknowledging the holiness and superiority of God.
- His self-assessment is humble and accurate.
- God is exalted, and he lowers himself.

God’s response to two different prayers. **Luke 18:14-17**

- Humility is esteemed in prayer.
- God elevated the one who trusted in him to do so and not the one who chose to do it for himself.
- God desires a “childlike not childish” approach to him. Wiersbe

Conclusion

1. Sin, doubt, and words can have effect upon our prayers with God, but they are not the ultimate cause or effect of God’s response.
2. God is not starting from a position of finding fault. Rather, he positions himself as a loving father who is merciful and is guiding his children towards maturity and strength.
3. God values... the sincerity and honesty of a person’s heart in prayer. Honesty in doubt. Acknowledgement of being a sinner in need of grace. Belief in God’s character and in his power to accomplish that which is according to his good purposes—even when his ultimate decision hurts! So, cry out to him and trust his response.