

## **Bible e-Study** /Pennies From Heaven #4

*A Penny Saved is a Penny Earned* - Discovering the value of what we keep from Old Testament models of prayer

**<sup>6</sup> Then God said to him... <sup>7</sup> Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live... Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech** Genesis 20: 6; 7; 17

**NUGGET** – We have the opportunity today to draw on the riches of the Old Testament to broaden our understanding of prayer. Keeping in mind always that our entrance into God's presence is through the blood of Jesus alone, we can look back into the Old Testament through the "lens" of the cross of Christ and learn there how deep is the practice of prayer to God the Father. It's a practice that we still use now very much as it was used then.

Today's nugget verses give us the first instance of the use of the word pray or prayer in the Old Testament. And it's a significant 2-part lesson we learn:

🍷 **God commands prayer**

🍷 **We pray for others**

So the first thing the Old Testament teaches us is that God directs us to pray. God has established prayer as something we are to do. It is not something that we thought of. We didn't cleverly decide that praying is a way to get God's attention.

No, prayer is something that God says is for us to use. In a way, prayer is God getting *our* attention. By praying to God under His direction, God gets us to recognize that we are not the source of our own solutions to things.

Prayer is something that gets our attention and focuses it on God in much the same way that when we write a letter our focus is on the person we are writing to. Why do we write e-mails or letters? It's so that the person we are writing to hears from us. We are writing to them, so our attention is on them. So also prayer gets our attention directed toward God.

The second thing from this first instance of Old Testament prayer is that we are to pray for others. Now we're not given to understand how God communicated to Abraham to pray for King Abimelech, but we are simply told that Abraham did pray for Abimelech and that God healed the king. Prayer then is also to be 'other' focused.

In this case Abraham prayed for someone whom he feared. If you read the rest of this section you see how all this transpired. ([Gen 20:1-18](#).) The point to take away is that no-one is out of bounds for us to pray for. There is no enemy, no foreigner, no stranger or 'strange' friend even that we can not pray for.

So we learn these two things: that praying for others is something God wants us to do. And, two, that by praying for others we are brought into their world. Praying for others allows us to glimpse them outside our own narrow view of them. When we are praying to God for them, just as praying focuses our attention on God, so praying for others opens our eyes to see them in a new way.

God sees us through the blood of Christ shed on the cross. And praying for others opens our eyes to see those we pray for also through the righteousness of Christ. As we gain this point of view, our view of them and ourselves is changed. We may learn from this Old Testament lesson that God wants us to allow prayer to be something that changes our view of Him and of those He created that we live with every day.

### **APPLICATION –**

1. Write down two or three sentences in a letter to God about what is happening in your day today.

2. Take a moment right now and think about who came to mind when you read “There is no enemy, no foreigner, no stranger or ‘strange’ friend even that we can not pray for” and consider how God sees them.

**PRAY** – Use the application questions to guide you into prayer.

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



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*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

### GOING DEEPER

#### ***A Penny Saved is a Penny Earned*** - Discovering the value of what we keep from Old Testament models of prayer

We've looked at the first instance of the word pray in the Old Testament in the **NUGGET** section so let's look at the other 'bookend' and see what the last instance of the word pray in the Old Testament can show us. It's a complaint to God about God's kindness! There's some irony here that's worth exploring.

Look at [Jonah 4:1-11](#). This is the end of the book of Jonah, after having gone through his several ordeals, and he is in a funk because of God's compassion. In this circumstance we see played out with Jonah some of what we've already talked about in the **NUGGET** section. What parallels stand out for you?

Here is a short list of other places between 'the bookends' where the word pray is used. Read through them and take note of the variations on the ideas of prayer giving us a focus on God and on others.

Are there surprises here?

Are there things missing you expected to see?

What stands out for you in these examples as something to emulate?

What do you see here that reflects something similar in the New Testament?

[Gen 32:7-12](#)

[Num 21:4-9](#)

[1 Sam 1:9- 2:2](#)

[1 Kings 8:22; 28-30](#)

[2 Chron 33:7-13](#)

[Ps 5:1-3](#)

[Ps 122:6-9](#)

[Is 45:18-20](#)

[Jer 42:1-7](#)