

Are You “Word” Focused or “Problem” Focused?

Part 6

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. (Prov. 1:28-31)

1. Guaranteed answered prayer is dependent upon whether one is Word-Focused or problem-focused.

- a. Notice that the reason for God not answering prayer in the passage above is due to the seeker rejecting His Word.

- b. There are two other passages that amplify our understanding of this issue:

- 1) *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.* (Hosea 4:6)

- 2) Failure to get know God and His Word is what destroys us. When we fail to do our part we have no right to blame God. Hosea makes this clear when he says, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” (Hosea 13:9)

- 3) *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.* (Psalm 81:10-16).

- c. God desires to answer prayer, but we must adhere to His Word. God’s people must learn to be Word-Focused in their praying and not problem-focused if they want to see answers.

2. Failing to Pray in line with God’s Word often leads to blaming and complaining:

- a. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* (Heb. 11:6)

b. *And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. (Num. 11:1)*

c. Notice the contrast in the two passages. Faith *pleases* God and opens the way for us to be rewarded by Him. Complaining, on the other hand, *displeases* Him. Therefore, complaining is a lack of faith and a sign of unbelief:

1) *Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness (Psalm 106:24-26)*

2) Verse 26, if not understood by the idiomatic way that the Hebrew language is used can make God appear here to be vindictive. However, God is often said to “overthrow” or “destroy” His people when His people push Him away, forces Him to withdraw His protective presence and leave them to their own destruction.

3) Some other English translations render this with more clarity: “*Because of their attitude, He swore, ‘I’ll leave you where you fall in the desert’*” (The Voice); “*So He swore to them that He would let them die in the desert*” (New Life Version); “*So he swore to them that they would die in the desert*” (New Century Version).

d. In reality, complaining opens the door to the devil:

1) Numbers 1:1 says, “*and the fire of the Lord burnt among them*”

2) *And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord... While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee (Job 1:12, 16)*

e. The New Testament also comments on this incident:

1) *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (1 Cor. 10:9-11)*

2) Neither should (may) we continue putting the Lord [= Christ or Yahweh] to outrageous tests (or: try-out the Lord; put the Lord to the proof, out of [personal motives]) just as some of them tested and tried [Him] – and were being destroyed (loosed-away) by the serpents, day by day. (Jonathan Mitchell New Testament)

3) Neither should we give way to sexual immorality as did some of them, for we read that twenty-three thousand fell in a single day! Nor should we dare to exploit the goodness of God as some of them did, and fell victims to poisonous snakes. Nor yet must you curse the lot that God has appointed to you as they did, and met their end at the hand of the angel of death. (Phillips New Testament)

4) “But not we might pressure out the Christ, just as some of them pressured and by the snakes were destroyed. But not grumble, just as indeed some of them grumbled and were destroyed by the destroyer.” (Reynolds, Paul R. **Word study Greek-English New Testament**, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999, p. 618)

5) “They would have the promise of grace to keep them only when they were in the way of their duty, and using all proper precautions. To go beyond this, to place themselves in needless danger, to presume on the grace of Christ to keep them in all circumstances, would be to tempt him, and provoke him to leave them.” (Albert Barnes, Notes, explanatory and practical, on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, p. 131)

- f. “God is repeatedly said to have destroyed Israel; but we also read, ‘O, Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.’ Here God was not the destroyer; for He is expressly termed Israel’s help. Every day’s experience teaches us that afflictions come not singly, but in battalions. And why? But that, so soon as the shield of Truth is removed, the blows of the Adversary, ‘who loveth to oppress,’ fall thick and fast. Nor is it until God again interposes, ‘by lifting up a standard against the Enemy,’ that trials cease. In Job’s case, God’s protecting hand was withdrawn, and immediately stroke followed stroke with a malice and rapidity worthy of the god of hate and of cruelty. God ‘does not willingly afflict,’ but the sins of men drive Him from them, and immediately the Enemy strikes, either with his great sword, or with his minor powers, which are many; for we read of ‘all The Powers of the Enemy.’ His name is Destroyer; and when God’s shield is removed, his aim is to destroy.” (Charles Edwards Fraser Tytler, *New View of the Apocalypse*, pp. 68-69)

3. Complaining rather than claiming God's promises often brings us the results of our complaints:

a. Num. 14:26-30

b. *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "How much longer are these wicked people going to complain against me? I have heard enough of these complaints! Now give them this answer: 'I swear that as surely as I live, I will do to you just what you have asked. I, the Lord, have spoken. You will die and your corpses will be scattered across this wilderness. Because you have complained against me, none of you over twenty years of age will enter that land. I promised to let you live there, but not one of you will, except Caleb and Joshua.' (Num. 14:26-30; Good News Translation)*

c. The Lord made a promise concerning the land. God's people complained about the seeming unsurmountable problems of possessing the land. They focused on the problems instead of God's promises.

d. The result was that the words of their mouth came to pass. When we complain instead of pray God's Word then we open the door for failure.

Conclusion to part 6: Though God never promised a problem free life, He has certainly given us numerous promises meant to deal with any problem that we may confront. God's people must learn to pray based on His promises rather than complain about the hardships in their lives. God will reward our faith but complaining opens the door for Satan to bring destruction.