

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, April 11, 2010 – 6:00 PM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

The Prayer of God - Genesis 12:1-7

Introduction: The Bible is a divinely inspired record of God's self-disclosure to humanity. In its pages we can discover who God is and what He is about. In a very unique way, God's call of Abraham was the beginning of this process by God, for not only does the Bible call Abraham the father of the Hebrews, but the "*father of the faithful*." So, from the point of God's calling upon Abraham, the Bible is a progressive explanation of what God did, thereby revealing Himself to humanity.

Now, when most people are asked what prayer is, they'd probably say, "*it's talking to God*." But prayer is much more than that. Prayer is also God talking to us. Prayer is more of a dialogue than of a monologue. It is talking and listening rather than just us talking.

So, with that truth in mind, I've entitled this message "*The Prayer of God*" because we pray to God in search of answers and with an expectation that He's going to respond.

In our text tonight is the account of the call of Abraham. It is a record of one of the great prayers of God and reveals that prayer is a dialogue in which God communicates with us. The first thing I want us to see is that:

1. Prayer is Divinely Initiated (1)

Now this may surprise us to think this way because we have been conditioned to believe that prayer is something we do on our own initiative. As we have a need, or a confession, or a praise, a thanksgiving, or an intercession, we come to God, right?

However, we see in our text that prayer is not initiated by us, but by God Himself. It is God who developed the concept of prayer and who moves us to pray, and who creates within us the hunger for communion and fellowship with Him.

Vs. 1 says, "*The Lord had said to Abraham...*" In Acts 7:2-3, there is a commentary on this. Stephen said that it was God who took the initiative in communicating His divine will to Abraham. He said, "*...The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.*" **Acts 7:2-3 (NIV).**

So, the whole thing was God's idea. God appeared, began the dialogue, and issued the command. He prayed to Abraham, and therefore Abraham prayed to Him.

So, we can see the same pattern today. Just as a parent would want to have a conversation with his or her children, God wants to "*talk*" with us as His children. And God initiates our experiences with Him through the power of His Holy Spirit. The second thing we notice about this "*prayer*" is its content:

2. Prayer is a Direct Call and Command (1)

"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."
Genesis 12:1 (NIV).

Now again, we have been conditioned to think of prayer in terms of us asking or demanding of God. (Give me this. Give me that. Do this for me. Show me, etc.) But here, God is calling and commanding Abraham to do something. He tells him to leave his country and leave his people. Both commands carry the idea of separation. God called Abraham to separate himself from what he knew and was comfortable with. He had a plan for him, and that plan could never be fulfilled as long as he remained where he was. So, God called for Abraham to separate himself from his environment. We know that it wasn't a total separation from his people because Abraham took his father with him part of the way and his nephew Lot went with him all the way. But the point is, there had to be a separation from his environment or there could not be the possibility for God's plan to be fulfilled.

This is a significant aspect of prayer that we must understand. As we come to God with our requests and demands, we would be wrong to believe that there was not something God would have us to do in the area of separation before that request was fulfilled. **Luke 12:51 (NIV)** tells us that Christ is the great divider. He said, "*Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.*" So if we would truly be His disciples, we must give Him our undivided loyalty and love.

As Jesus was traveling one day, someone came to Him and declared that he would follow Him. Jesus

responded by saying, “*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.*” Then he turned and said, “*Follow Me.*” But they began to offer excuses...let me bury my father, let me say goodbye to my family, and so on. Jesus then said, “*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*” **Luke 9:57-62 (NIV).**

God issues a divine and direct call and command to His followers...separate yourself from the world, so I can use you. Separate yourselves from the familiar and the comfortable so you won't have any divided loyalties.

Now, along with the direct commands of God are the accompanying promises of God. The third point is:

3. Prayer Involves Distinct Promises (3-4)

In every command of God...there is either an implied or a distinct promise that goes along with it. Now the problem we have is that sometimes, we would rather claim the promises of God without meeting the conditions, but the commands and the promises are always tied together.

Here, God gives Abraham five promises:

1. “*I will make of you a great nation.*”
2. “*I will bless you and make your name great.*”
3. “*You shall be a blessing.*”
4. “*I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you, I will curse.*”
5. “*In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”

Notice that these are not only promises that are conditional on Abraham's obedience, they also contain a commission. God called Abraham and his descendants by His own sovereign grace for His own redemptive purpose, and He planned to use them to be a blessing for the whole human race. God wanted to do something through Abraham...to bless his people by revealing Himself as the redeemer-God, the Healing-God, the Almighty-God, the only God.

Notice too, that God didn't choose Abraham because there was anything special about him, or as a reward for something he had done. He simply chose Him that he might be fruitful and productive...the same reasons He calls us. It is not because of anything special about us. There was nothing special about Paul, but God called him and he listened and obeyed. There was nothing special about any of the disciples, they simply heard the call and responded. There's nothing special about me, but God called me to preach and minister, and I obeyed.

So, God's promises are given as a condition to our response. This leads us to the last thing to consider about this prayer of God.

3. Prayer Demands a Response (4-7)

Abraham responded to God's command with obedience. In effect, Abraham answered the prayer of God with a resounding “*Yes.*” Verse 4 says, “*Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him.*” He heard, he considered, he obeyed. He moved as he was able to place his trust and confidence in the Lord to provide for him and back up his promise.

We would do well to follow Abraham's lead and hear what God is saying to us. We need to hear God's prayer to us about the sin in our lives and the separation He wants us to make from it. That's called repentance. He wants us to hear His prayer about the direction He has for us, and He wants us to hear His precious promises He has for us as we obey Him. How do we hear God?

- 1. Through our reading and studying God's Word.**
- 2. Through waiting and listening for His prayer to us.**
- 3. Through the leading and prompting of the Holy Spirit.**
- 4. Through the wise counsel of Christian friends**

Obedience was Abraham's response to God's prayer. This should also be our response when God clearly speaks to us through His Word and the Holy Spirit's leading. When we do, we can expect God to respond to us, backing up his promises.

In verse 7, we find God appearing again to Abraham and reaffirming and adding to His promise by saying, “*To your offspring I will give this land.*” So, we can't lose when we obey God and take Him at His word. That's just like our God. He will keep on blessing and blessing as we respond to Him with our obedience and faithfulness. And as we respond to Him with obedience, He will send revival in our heart and in our church.