



THEME: CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Bible Study 2: Answered Prayer – “Create in me a clean heart.”

INTRODUCTION When we come to the whole issue of answered prayer we see that one of the important issues that we need to understand is that answered prayer is conditioned on our desire to live a life that is morally pure and holy. The reason for this is that the core essence of prayer is spiritual and therefore as we come before a Holy God there needs to be moral and spiritual purity. The word holiness means in its basic form set apart from the common things of life and set apart for God’s special purpose and use. It also has the meaning of both moral purity and moral rightness before God. These ideas that direct consequences on the ongoing experience of answered prayer. Read – 2 Chronicles 7 v 14 – 15, Psalm 34 v 15 – 17, Psalm 55 v 22, Proverbs 15 v 29, James 5 v 16 – 18

DISCUSS – Do you think holiness is important to answered prayer if so why?

How do you think cultivating a consistent holy life will help the experience of prayer?

What do you think practical holiness actually looks like in everyday life? (what ingredients make it up?)

TEACHING SLOT – God reveals Himself as Holy.

The simple concept here is a holy people, approaching a Holy God, offering holy prayers through the Holy Spirit. We see that scripture declares that the One True God is a Being who’s very essence of character and action are Holy. In all His behaviour and responses He is full of perfect love, goodness and justice. In every sense the Lord is revealed to us as perfectly complete and whole in who He is. The Lord is completely self existing and completely faithful to Himself in morals and behaviour. Because the Lord is morally pure He will not get His hands dirty with the moral sin and decay of humanity. Yes Jesus has taken our sin into His body upon that tree and once and for all atoned for that sin, BUT now the call of God is to put off the old nature with its sins and corrupted desires and to put on and live in the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is an abomination to Him and He will not look upon or answer the prayers, or have fellowship with those who live in a state of hardened or unforgiven sin, because this is a great offence and revulsion to Him.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS– Revelation 4 v 2 – 11, Hebrews 12 v 14, Matthew 5 v 8,

TEACHING SLOT – Holiness has at its heart:- love, submission and conformity to God

At the heart of our response to the Lord is a full and complete loving submission to His will and ways. This means that our will is submitted, humbled and yielded to Him as we look for His purposes to be fulfilled in our lives and relationships. The Lordship of Christ cannot in any practical or spiritual way be made manifest in our lives until there is this core and heart felt submission to God. The reason why this is important is that it is the Holy Spirit who guides and leads our prayers. He is the One who lays on our hearts both the heart of God and the faith that sees the heart of God made manifest. In every real sense a hardened sinner has no ongoing conception of anything of a Spiritual nature and therefore will pray in the flesh. When this happens our prayers are left unanswered. Ongoing sin in every sense limits our spiritual abilities in the Lord. True prayer that prevails with the Lord is based upon an understanding of our dependence on the Lord and a willingness to subdue habits of sin. It implies that we are more the confident in the One who has spoken by His Spirit a Spiritual work into existence. We as God’s people need to own the way the Lord has marked out for us and be willing to walk in that way.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:- Galatians 5 v 16 – 17, 1 Corinthians 2 v 10 – 16, (holy Spiritual Wisdom as against the flesh.)

TEACHING SLOT – A growth in holiness.

It may seem impossible that we can be holy before God. But we need to understand that at the core of His covenant promises is that He will make His people holy and develop holiness by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This journey of growing in the holiness of God is called sanctification. The good news here is that as we put our trust in Jesus the bible makes it clear that we are united with Him in many ways. As we bind ourselves to Jesus in faith we share in an adopted holiness that comes through His perfect sacrifice. This enables us to have fellowship with God. Then through faith in Him we see how the Holy Spirit uses our choices and our will to take us on a journey to transform us into people who share the likeness of Jesus. This includes being a holy and morally right people. In every sense as we co- operate with the Holy Spirit and live by God’s word, as we make the right moral choices daily, we grow in the holiness of the Lord and move into a place of answered prayer.

DISCUSS – How do you think we can cultivate holy behaviour before God?

What do you think will be hard about living a holy life?

Why do you think the Lord conditions answered prayer on the background of holiness?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:- Psalm 51 v 10

TEACHING SLOT – A willingness to change and grow.

In this repentance Psalm of David we see some important issues related both to holiness and answered prayer. David recognises that active sin can and does grieve the Holy Spirit and it results in an eroding of the joy that we have in being the Lord’s. The cry of His heart found in verse 10 calls upon God to create within him a right spirit. This word and idea found in “right,” actually means “consistent and steadfast in a right spirit.” It is not just a cry in the moment but a committed will response to both the sin that he finds within his own desires and His absolute belief that the Lord is ABLE to transform, purify and internally strengthen him against sinful desires and lusts. What we see here is a both a willingness to change and a complete confidence in the Lord to enable and empower that change to take place. He looks for the Lord to take his weak, fickle and unstable character and release both a purging of sin / guilt and a spiritual scrubbing and pounding that will purify his heart and intentions. We see both a confidence and a dependence on God which are at the heart of any prayer of faith that will be answered. He does not just offer good intentions to the Lord but focuses his heart, his will, his confidence in the one who can do all things and will do all things for those who believe. For one of the conditions of answered prayer is, “BEING HOLY AS I AM HOLY.” (1 PETER 1 VERSE 15)