

BIBLICAL PRAYER (48)

There are many Biblical illustrations we may cite that show that prayer can change personal circumstances, and we will cite a few here:

Biblical Illustration #1 - Joshua 10:12-14

In this text, God had promised Israel that she would defeat her enemies (10:8). As the day wore on, Joshua realized that he was running out of time to get the job done, so in a remarkable request to God, he asks that God would give him more time and more light to accomplish this objective. God answered the request and the battle was won.

It must be kept in mind that God did many unusual miracles for the nation Israel all throughout the O.T. economy. She was and continues to be His very special nation. Having said this, it may be pointed out that:

- A. This prayer was very consistent with the revealed will and Word of God (10:8).
- B. This prayer was made by a very righteous man (Deut. 31:23; 34:9; Joshua 1:1-9).

There is no question that this was a very unique miracle to Israel in the conquest of her land. This miracle is in the same vein with the parting of the Red Sea, which occurred for the purpose of taking the nation Israel from bondage to the Promised Land. In fact, **verse 14 makes it very clear that this was a totally unique event aimed at Israel.** It is doubtful that God would grant more light during a day so some military skirmish could be won.

However, the same principle is still operative today. God can and will change personal circumstances through prayer. Our warfare today is not so much physical, but spiritual (i.e. Eph. 6:12). A believer who finds himself faithfully serving God has every right in the midst of warfare to ask God to allow more light of understanding in darkness. To ask God for victory, to rely on God for victory and to ask Him to enable you to defeat the enemies is a very legitimate prayer. Asking God to grant you more time so you may grow in knowledge of the Word of God is a wonderful prayer. The believer who is guiding his life according to the revealed will of God can expect to see God move in some powerful and victorious ways.

Biblical Illustration #2 - II Kings 20:1-11

Here is one of the more dramatic answers to personal prayer that is found in the Bible. This episode is discussed also in **II Chronicles 32:20-26** and **Isaiah 38:1-22**.

It is quite obvious that Hezekiah was really and literally and physically sick to the point of death. **In the Bible, there are at least ten reasons why a person may get sick:**

- 1) Because we have a limited, finite, imperfect body that breaks down. **Philippians 2:25-30**
- 2) Because we live in an imperfect environment that causes various sicknesses. **I Timothy 5:23**
- 3) Because Satan may attack a believer, trying to get him to turn from God. **Job 2:3-10**
- 4) Because God can use a sickness to help us depend more on His grace. **II Corinthians 12:7-10**
- 5) Because God may heal a person of a sickness to bring glory to Himself. **John 11:1-4**
- 6) Because God may use sickness to help direct us to accomplishing His will. **Galatians 4:13-14**

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- 7) Because some don't heed medical counsel and take healing medicine. **I Timothy 5:23**
- 8) Because some heed medical counsel but do not pray. **II Kings 20:2-7;**
II Chronicles 16:12-13
- 9) Because God may use sickness as a judgment for sin. **I Corinthians 11:30; James 5:13-18;**
Revelation 2:22-23
- 10) Because God may use sickness to take a believer home. **Hebrews 9:27; II Kings 13:14-20**

Now when it comes to the serious sickness of Hezekiah, there are two possibilities as to why God permitted him to become sick:

(Possibility #1) - It was God's appointed time for Hezekiah to die;

(Possibility #2) - It was God's judgment against him for his pride that was not giving God His due glory (**II Chronicles 32:23-25, 31**).

Regardless of the reason, Hezekiah did the right personal thing when Isaiah informed him that he would die - he went straight to God in prayer. As we analyze this prayer of Hezekiah, there are certain key observations we want to make:

Observation #1 - When he learned that he would die, he immediately prayed to God personally and privately. **II Kings 20:2**

Observation #2 - When he prayed, he prayed with full confidence that God was able to answer His prayer. **II Kings 20:2**

Observation #3 - When he prayed, he prayed with a knowledge that his life was lined up with the Word of God; he was not living a secret life of sin. **II Kings 20:3a**

Observation #4 - When he prayed, he prayed very emotionally and tearfully.
II Kings 20:3b

It is not just the crying or weeping that moves God, it is a crying or weeping of a very righteous, godly man that moves God. Hezekiah loved God's written Word and lived it (**i.e. Proverbs 25:1**).

Observation #5 - His prayer was answered directly and immediately by God. **II Kings 20:4-6a**

It is very clear that God is the one who controls the length of a person's life and Hezekiah believed that when he prayed.

Observation #6 - His prayer was answered for God's purposes. **II Kings 20:6b;**
II Chronicles 32:31

Observation #7 - God healed Hezekiah in conjunction with medical treatment. **II Kings 20:7**

This passage certainly does suggest that God can and does move and change personal circumstances in direct connection to prayer.

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One thing that needs to be pointed out from the story of Hezekiah is that there are many students of Scripture who have observed that had Hezekiah envisioned what would happen during those additional 15 years of life, he would have realized that it would have been the better ideal for him to die when God first informed him that he would.

During the final 15 years of Hezekiah's life, Hezekiah had a son born to him named Manasseh, who became a total abomination to God (**II Kings 20:18-21:18**). It is recorded that Manasseh finally repented (**II Chronicles 33:1-19**), but during the majority of his life he totally reversed every godly thing that his father, Hezekiah, had accomplished. Although God permitted Hezekiah to live more years of life, Dr. Hebert Lockyer says: "It might have been better for Hezekiah had he died when the divine announcement reached him. There are occasions when God grants our request, but with it comes leanness of soul" (*All The Prayers of the Bible*, p. 80).

I personally know of both a Christian man and a Christian woman who had a mate die and they wanted God to lead them to a new mate and God answered the prayer, and in both cases it would have been better had God not answered their prayers. I knew a minister who prayed for a new ministry and God answered the request and gave him a new ministry and it turned out to be a disaster. He would have been better off staying the ministry God had given him rather than praying for a new one. I knew a man who had a good job, but began to pray for a different and better job and God answered his request and gave him a different job with much more responsibility and remuneration. The job devastated his spiritual life and when his time is finally up, he would have been better with the old job that enabled him to faithfully serve God. We must be very careful for that which we pray.

We also need to point out that in the O.T., God came to many men and informed them that it was time for them to leave this world and there is no hint that any of them prayed and asked God to grant them more years of life:

- 1) This was true with Jacob, also called Israel. **Genesis 47:27-31**;
- 2) This was true with Joseph. **Genesis 50:22-26**;
- 3) This was true with Moses. **Deuteronomy 32:48-52**;
- 4) This was true with Joshua. **Joshua 23:1, 14**.