

“Why Pray?”

Jeremiah 33:1-3

INTRO:

There is no question, we Christians talk a lot about prayer. Slogans like, *“Prayer changes things”* and *“Nothing of eternal value is ever accomplished apart from prayer”* fill plaques on our walls and are etched in the data bases of our minds. But for all of our verbiage, I am not sure that we really believe what we say. It is my observation that the church in the Twenty-first Century doesn't really believe in the power nor the importance of prayer. I base this conclusion on several bits of evidence: **1)** the popular move among some churches to eliminate prayer meetings **2)** the number of pastors who do not see prayer as important in doing God's work in His church **3)** the rampant sin of prayerlessness that pervades the lives of Christian people.

What does God say to all of this? I think the most eloquent answer is found in **Jeremiah 33**. When God speaks the words that we are about to explore, Jeremiah, His obedient prophet, is sitting in a prison cell. He is there not because he has done anything wrong, but because he has done right. He has obeyed God and proclaimed the politically incorrect message that God wanted him to preach. It is in this dark moment in Jeremiah's life that the LORD speaks once more to him and exhorts him to pray! We will look at these three verses under two heads:

I. God's Exhortation To Pray (v. 1-2)

II. God's Promise If He Prayed (v. 3)

I. God's Exhortation To Pray (v. 1-2)

A. If anyone had a reason not to pray, it was Jeremiah.

1. He did exactly what God wanted him to do. Look where it got him. Did he have health, wealth, and prosperity? No, he had a dark dungeon, an unpopular persona, and an uncertain future. At the very moment that the LORD is speaking to him, Babylon is building siege ramps to breach the city walls of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was in the guard-house because he had preached what God had told him to proclaim to the people.

2. The LORD not only gave Jeremiah an unpopular message, He also commanded him to do something that looked insane. Jeremiah was to redeem his nephew's land, which was not under swamp water, but under the feet of an invading army. What in the world was God doing. Whatever it was, it didn't make sense to Jeremiah. We can readily see why Jeremiah could be reluctant to pray. Yet, pray he did in **Jeremiah 32:17-25**, and praying was what God wanted Jeremiah to do again.

B. Understanding Jeremiah's reluctance, the LORD gives him several reasons why he should pray. The first reason is found in the very first verse. (**Jeremiah 33:1**)

“The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the prison.”

The LORD who had spoken to him before talked to Him again. God responded to prayer before and Jeremiah needed to recognize that the LORD would answer prayer again.

1. Often we are like the Children of Israel in the wilderness; we forget what God had done. In **Exodus 17:3-7**, we read:

“The people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, ‘What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.’ The LORD answered Moses, ‘Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.’ So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’”

Do you know what happened in the sixty days prior to this? The last of the ten plagues was wrought upon Egypt and they let Israel go. God delivered them at the Red Sea. He supernaturally gave them water to drink at Marah. He provided them Manna at the Desert of Sin. The LORD gave them the cloud and the pillar of fire to remind them visually that He had not forgotten them or departed from them. What more could He do? A little trouble comes along and what do these ungrateful people do? They blaspheme God and seek to destroy His leaders.

2. We don’t do things like that do we? When we find ourselves unmotivated to pray and indulging in a little self-pity as the wilderness wanders did, let us remember to remind ourselves what God has already done and what prayers He has already answered. This fact alone will motivate us to pray.

C. Another reason that Jeremiah should pray was because of the One to whom he prayed.

“Thus says the LORD who made it, the LORD who formed it to establish it (the LORD is His name).” (Jeremiah 33:2)

What is this ‘it?’ *“It”* could be *Jerusalem*, (The city that is the symbol of God’s covenant with Israel). *‘It’* also could be the *earth* (as some of the newer translations assume). *‘It’* might be *all things*. *‘It’* probably refers to the *future*.

1. The God into whose throne room we rush when we pray is not only the one who made all created things, He is also the one who creates, forms, and establishes the future! He controls what is ahead! This is the very point that Peter and John raise in their prayer with the early church when persecution came. **Acts 4:24** and **vs27-28**:

“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them. For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both

Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”

They sought the Sovereign God who created, formed, and established the future!

2. We talk to the sovereign God also when we pray. He is more than just the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Apostle Paul. He is more than the God of history. He is the God who creates the future. Tomorrow is in the palm of His hand that fact alone should supremely motivate us to pray.

II. God's Promise If He Prayed (v. 3)

A. The LORD called to Jeremiah in the dark of his prison cell and the midst of his personal storm and said to him. *“Jeremiah, call unto me.”* Then God gave Jeremiah an incredible promise if he would pray.

B. God promised that He would answer him and show him great and mighty things that he did not know. What things would God do?

1. First, He would give Judah a future. The Babylonians would conquer them, but Judah would not cease to exist. God would judge sin, but God had a future plan for Judah.

“Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me.” (Jeremiah 33:6-8)

2. A second future fact that Jeremiah did not know at that moment was that God would take care of him. When you are in prison for prophesying the invasion of your home country, you can wonder what will happen to you when the enemy comes. God provided safety to Jeremiah.

3. Finally, Jeremiah did not know that he would be vindicated by God. While his current popularity polls were not good, God's people recognized that he was indeed a prophet sent from God and preserved his book as Scripture. Now many centuries later we are still reading what God said through him.

Do we remember all that great and mighty things God has done for us because we have prayed? Do we remember how God answered our prayers and made provision for us? Do we realize that when we pray, we talk to the God who holds our future in the hollow of His hand?