

“Has God ever refused to hear you?”

Psalm 28:1

“To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me.”

You deserve an explanation about this lesson.

I usually plan my sermon texts months in advance.

I originally intended for today’s lesson to be from Psalm 29.

When I recently looked at Psalm 29, however, I was baffled.

Why did I choose today’s title?

Nothing in Psalm 29 seems to mention God not answering prayers.

How did I come up with this subject?

The cause appears similar to a story **Gaither Homecoming Magazine** once printed.

An 82-year-old gent named Morris went to the doctor for a checkup.

A few days later, the doctor met Morris on a downtown street.

Morris was in the company of a gorgeous young lady.

“Morris, you’re really doing great, aren’t you?” said the doctor.

“Doing just what you told me to do, Doc,” said, Morris, “Get a hot momma and be cheerful.”

The doctor shook his head and said,

“Morris, what I said was,

‘You’ve got a heart murmur; be careful!’”

My “Morris” comparison relates to this: Morris and I both suffer wrinkled mental faculties.

I admit to keeping company with a gorgeous woman—the same one I’ve kept company with nearly 65 years.

And my doctor knows about Norma Jean.



Back to our topic. What happened? How did I choose a sermon title that’s not related to Psalm 29?

When I chose the title, my wrinkled eyes must have skipped to Psalm 28.

Psalm 28 begins: To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me.

The person who wrote Psalm 28 thought God wasn't listening to him.

Ever been in that position?

You ask God for something.

He seems not to hear you:

> “Dear God: Thank you for my baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy. Alex.”¹

You plead with God, beg him—even bargain with him.

> “Dear God: Please send me a pony. I never asked for anything before. You can look it up. Ryan.”

No response.

The Lord stays silent.

As though he were deaf.

He pays no attention.

I've talked to many people who've experienced God's silence.

I've occasionally felt his silence, too.

I've been angry with God because it seemed he wasn't listening to me.

Norma and I have known people so angry with God, they stop believing in Him.

His “silence” frustrates, scares, and exasperates us.

Because God didn't do what they wanted, some people stay angry all their lives



Human friendships often break over unanswered communications, don't they?

In the Gaither Homecoming Magazine, Kevin Williams also wrote of a:

“Friend who had an outgoing message on her voicemail:

‘I am not available right now, but thanks for caring enough to call. I am making some changes in my life. Please leave a message after the beep. If I do not return your call, you are one of the changes.’”

¹ This and the two following prayers were taken from a book of children's prayers. I've forgotten the author's name.

Could it be that if God isn't answering our prayers, he is making changes?

The Bible says the Lord gets to that point with us.

We expect things of God, but we don't do anything to retain his friendship.

We're like the “friends” who keep borrowing, but never repay.

What imperils our friendship with God?

Psalm 28 mentions a vital point:

- **God expects us to be truthful, loving, and forgiving toward others.**

Verse 3 tells of those “who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.”

Some of us carry lots of hate inside.

We're outwardly polite, but inwardly filled with contempt.

Norman Vincent Peale once spoke on the Lord's Prayer phrase:

“Thy kingdom come; thy will be done.”

Many recite this every Sunday.

A few say this prayer every day.

But do we mean what we say when we repeat Jesus' model prayer?

As Dr. Peale noted:

“We too have a will and too many times we would rather pray, ‘Thy kingdom come and *our* will be done.’”

“In this vein Dr. Peale . . . said:

‘I had a man that sat right down in front of me in church who was about the most miserable man I ever saw. His mouth turned down at the corners and the expression on his face was most unpleasant.

‘I'd come into church and look to see if he was there and then I'd look the other way.

‘One day he came to my office and asked, “Dr. Peale, why do all the rest of the people in this church look so happy? Are they happy or are they just putting on?”’

“Dr. Peale said, ‘I think most of them are genuinely happy.’”

“Well, I'm not; I'm just miserable,” he answered.

“Dr. Peale continued: ‘I talked to him a long

time and found his trouble. He was a businessman and in that particular city he had five competitors and they didn't get along, and he hated them. He came right out and said, "I wish every last one of them would die tomorrow. They are just no-good crooks."

"I listened," Dr. Peale said, "while he enumerated their faults and then suggested to him, "Let's talk about *you* instead of your competitors for a while. You told me you were miserable and I've been sitting here trying to diagnose your case and I believe I have it. I know what would make you happy, but you wouldn't do it."

"He demanded, "How do you know I wouldn't?""

"Dr. Peale said: "I know you wouldn't. I could tell you what would make you happy and you could get away from being miserable and you'd be just like these other people around you in church, but you wouldn't do it."

"He fumed, "Dr. Peale, I will do it. Now, tell me what it is."

"Dr. Peale answered:" "Well, it's this. Every night get down on your knees and say your prayers and call all of your competitors by name and ask God to bless them and give them more business next year than he gives you."

"He stormed back, "I'm not going to do anything of the kind."

"Well, I told you that you wouldn't do it."

"Yes," he said, "and I told you I would, didn't I? But I think you took advantage of me and played a trick on me." So he went on out.

"Dr. Peale said: "I watched him as the weeks went by and I could see the transformation in his face. One day he came back to my office,"

"Dr. Peale, your prescription works all right. I had lunch with three of them today and I'm going to have lunch with the other two next week. They are pretty fine fellows. I had no idea they were that fine."

"But, he said," 'Dr. Peale, I've got a confession to make. For a long time after I went away from your office before, when I got down and said my prayers and asked God to bless each one of them, give them more business than he gave me next year, I stopped right there and opened my eyes and looked up and, said,

"God, you know I don't mean one single word of *that*." 'But I got to where I did. I'm still praying for them and I'm happy:'" ²

If the Lord doesn't seem to hear our prayers, we must check our innards for hate.

> **"Dear God: If we come back as something, please don't let me be Jennifer Horton, because I hate her. – John."**



Paul gave this prescription to Christians in Ephesus: "Watch the way you talk. Let

² As quoted in *Iron Shoes* by C. Roy Angell, pp 52, 53. I confess that I had a hard time correctly placing all the quote marks in this section.

nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift. Don't grieve God. Don't break his heart. His Holy Spirit, moving and breathing in you, is the most intimate part of your life, making you fit for himself."³

**Did you catch what Scripture says here?
"God's Holy Spirit moving and breathing in you"?**

Most Christians are mixed up about holiness.

Confused about churches and holy places.

We speak of going to church

Read the Bible from cover to cover.

You won't find where a building is ever called a church.

The church is the assembled people of God.

The church is not a building.

Many think church buildings are holy places.

They aren't.

All church buildings are man-made structures.

They're brick, wood, glass, and mortar.

In the case of some modern buildings, lots of steel.

But there's nothing sacred or holy about a building

From time to time, there are sacred objects in it.

³ Ephesians: 4:29, 30 *The Message* by Eugene Peterson

I’m not referring to the communion set, or the collection plates, crosses or other symbols you might see.

There are sacred things here, though.

“What in this building is holy?” you ask.

The Christians in Corinth, Greece seemed confused about holiness, too.

Paul taught them about what was sacred.

They forgot.

He told them again.

The Corinthians used sacred things for illicit sex—pretty vile stuff.

To my knowledge, none of you does that.

We forget, however, what truly is sacred.

The subject confuses many Christians.

This building and its furnishings aren’t holy.

Yet today it contains sacred objects:

“Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place (a temple), the place of the Holy Spirit?”⁴

The body God gave you and that Christ died for is sacred.

This building isn’t.

We don’t get up in the morning and go to a holy place.

We walk, talk, eat, and sleep in a temple of God.

When you meet friends for coffee or dinner tomorrow—wherever you might be, God’s holy temple will be there—in you.

That’s why Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

“Don't you see that you can't live however you please? squandering what God paid such a high price for. The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.”⁵

And he told the Christians in Ephesus:

“Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).”

⁴ I Corinthians 6:19 *The Message* by Eugene Peterson

⁵ *Ibid*, vss. 19, 20

Wherever we go, the Lord intends us to be His walking, talking, forgiving, and loving sacred temples.

Your body is a holy temple of His Spirit.

No building is the church or is holy.

We gather in buildings as a family to praise God and encourage one another.

When assembled, we become the church.

Wherever we are, we're temples of the Holy Spirit, meant to be sacred.

We praise God and we thank Him.

We forgive others as God forgave us in Christ.

If we aren't using our bodies to glorify God, he might take his Spirit away.

If our prayers aren't getting through, here's what we check first:

- **Do we carry grudges?**
- **Are there people we refuse to forgive?**
- **Are we taking our temples to places unfit for them**

This week, we can have real breakthroughs in our prayers.

Remember, you are meant to be a temple of God's Spirit.

Forgive others.

Pray for God to bless your enemies.

You'll feel the calming, refreshing presence of God's Spirit in you.

- **You'll be bolder in prayer.**
- **You'll be happier and more fulfilled.**

And God won't turn a deaf ear to you.

He'll gladly hear your prayers.

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