

Going Deeper with the Sermon
Kevin Isaiah 58 "prayer and action"

Prayer is a statement of dependence on God. It is an acknowledgement that I can't but He can. I really appreciated being reminded last week that we do not have because we do not ask. But does all this mean as long as I pray nothing else matters.

In Isaiah 58 a picture of a frustrated people emerges. We are introduced to a people who have sought God through prayer and fasting, but they haven't seen any answers ... 2-3

There may be many reasons why God doesn't answer prayer but Isaiah highlights one ... 3-4 Isaiah relays the hypocriticalness of their praying and fasting, that they fast & pray they exploit their workers and quarrel among each other.

This isn't the first time Isaiah says something like this ... 1:15-17

These people's prayers aren't being answered because of disobedience. Yes they are praying. They are even fasting. That's not the problem; the issue is that these people are living an inconsistent lifestyle. Their actions betray a disregard for God's will, let alone God Himself.

Isaiah leaves us in no doubt as to what God wants ... 6-7

And notice the impact of the prayer which emerges out of a life of obedience ... 8-10

What emerges here is that in some very real way there is a link between on the one hand our obedience to God; our actions, and on the other hand prayer.

God isn't interested in rituals or us merely going through the motions. We need more than bent knees and closed eyes. We need open, broken humble, dependant, thirsting, believing hearts, and above all we need an overwhelming concern that God's will should be done.

Saul ... 1 Samuel 15 ... To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Jesus highlighted this same idea ...
Matt 23:23-24
John 15:7-17

Don Francisco ...

"I don't care if you pray for miracles
I don't care if you speak with tongues
I don't care if you said you love Me
In every song you've sung
It doesn't matter that your sacrifice of praise
Is loud enough to raise the dead
The thing I need to ask you is
Have you done the things I said?"

Do you love your wife?
For her and for your children
Are you layin' down your life?
What about the others?
Are you livin' as a servant to
Your sisters and your brothers?
Do you make the poor man beg you for a bone?
Do the widow and the orphan cry alone?"

There is another dimension that we need to consider if we are thinking about prayer and action. Prayer doesn't absolve us from action. It isn't a replacement for action. In fact it leads to action.

Matt 9:35-38 ... 10:1-5

So what is God saying to us in all this?

He is saying:

"I want your obedience"
"I want you to pray"
"I want you to act"

Questions for reflection

1. Reflect upon the people of Israel as Isaiah records them, how are they being inconsistent in their prayer life and every-day life? What should have they done differently?
2. Give an example of modern-day inconsistencies in prayer and behaviour?
3. Out of the last three statements of Gods wanting our obedience, wanting us to pray and wanting us to act; which are you finding the hardest at the moment?
4. Is there something that you have sense God is asking you to act on?