

GOD HEARS

INTRODUCTION

Being the lead pastor of this church has been a real privilege for me, but as time has passed, I have started to understand the responsibility of the role of shepherd to God's flock. As a pastor, you carry a weight of responsibility and caring for your people, just as Jesus carried the weight of our sins. This has become particularly true as I have seen a number of our congregation struggling with various problems. I want you to know that I am praying for you, trusting God on your behalf, and that God's Word has the answers to your need.

This morning I want to encourage you in your distress with these facts:

- God hears you.
- God is listening and paying attention to you,
- God sees you and He cares about you.
- There is a blessedness that comes from trusting the LORD.

MESSAGE

1 Peter 5:6-11 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honour in His service] at the appropriate time, 7casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]. 8Be sober [well balanced and self-disciplined], be alert and cautious at all times. That enemy of yours, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion [fiercely hungry], seeking someone to devour.9 But resist him, be firm in your faith [against his attack—rooted, established, immovable], knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being experienced by your brothers and sisters throughout the world. [You do not suffer alone.] 10After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace [who imparts His blessing and favour], who called you to His own eternal glory in Christ, will Himself complete, confirm, strengthen, and establish you [making you what you ought to be]. 11To Him be dominion (power, authority, sovereignty) forever and ever. Amen.

GOD HEARS YOU!

Hagar ran away from Sarai her mistress because of her own doing. She had become pregnant and had despised her mistress for not having a child, so Sarai had treated her harshly as a result. Hagar ran away, found herself in the wilderness and there she cried out to God. Then she had an encounter with an angel:

Genesis 16:11(NLT) And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress.

- Even when our circumstances are our own doing, God still hears our cry of distress.

Israel was in much the same position, they were exiled because they had sinned against God, but God still heard them, and the day came when He was ready to respond:

Ezekiel 36:37(NLT) "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am ready to hear Israel's prayers and to increase their numbers like a flock.

- God is ready to hear our prayers.
- He even heard Hagar and Israel when their difficulties were their own doing!
- Not only does He hear, but He promises increase.

When we find ourselves in a difficult, wilderness type situation, we can, and must call on God to help. God is ready to hear; therefore, we need to be ready to pray.

Matthew 7:7(NLT) "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.

Turn to one another and say "you will, you will, you will".

If you feel this morning that God has not heard your cries of distress, I'm here to tell you that He is ready to hear your prayers, He has heard your prayers, and the time will come when He will bring relief.

Let us keep praying, keep seeking and keep knocking until we receive that which we are trusting God for.

GOD LISTENS AND PAYS ATTENTION TO YOU!

God does not only hear our prayers, but He listens to them!
Did you know that listening and hearing are 2 different things?

- The dictionary defines "**hear**" as "to perceive with the ear the sound made by (someone or something)."
- The dictionary defines "**listen**" as "to give one's attention to a sound", or "to pay attention, be attentive, attend, concentrate; keep one's ears open, prick up one's ears".

Husbands often get into trouble about this very thing! Our wives expect us to "listen" to what they say but often we only "hear" their voices but we are in our "empty box", so we don't "pay attention".

Some examples of the difference between hearing and listening:

Two psychiatrists meet at their 20th college reunion. One is vibrant, while the other looks withered and worried. "So what's your secret?" the older looking psychiatrist asks. "Listening to other people's problems every day, all day long, for years on end, has made an old man of me." "So," replies the younger looking one, "who listens?"

The story is told of Franklin Roosevelt, who often endured long receiving lines at the White House. He complained that no one really paid any attention to what was said. One day, during a reception, he decided to try an experiment. To each person who passed down the line and shook his hand, he murmured, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." The guests responded with phrases like, "Marvellous! Keep up the good work. We are proud of you. God bless you, sir." It was not till the end of the line, while greeting the ambassador from Bolivia, that his words were actually heard. Nonplussed, the ambassador leaned over and whispered, "I'm sure she had it coming."

But God is not like that... He hears us, He listens and pays attention.

Ezekiel 36:9 (NLT) See, I care about you, and I will pay attention to you. Your ground will be ploughed and your crops planted.

Here God was promising to bring Israel out of captivity. Even though they were there because of their own sin He still cared greatly for them and paid attention to them.

Do you feel as though when you pray it's not getting through to God? I say today, that He has been listening to you and paying very careful attention to your cry.

GOD SEES US AND CARES FOR US

After Hagar had her encounter with the angel, she realised that God saw her in her distress and so she gave Him a new name:

Genesis 16:13(NLT) Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" Thereafter she called God "El-Roi", meaning "God sees me".

God sees our circumstances and He has the answer that will help us.

Why you may ask? Because He cares for us:

1 Peter 5:7 (AMP)... casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully].

God cares for us with deep affection, He watches over us (He sees us).

- If God is watching us, then He knows where we are at.
- We can give all our worries to Him.
- He will restore us **because He loves us** and He pays attention to us.

Are we carrying anxieties or cares today, or are we handing them over to God so that He can care for us?

Do we realise God sees us? He knows where we are at and He says: "Give your worries and cares to me". In Matthew 28 He says, "I will give you rest".

THE ONE IN WHOM WE TRUST

2 Timothy 1:12b (NLT) ... for I know the One in whom I trust, and I am sure that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until the day of His return.

Paul made this statement while He was in prison, "for I know the One in whom I trust". He trusted God regardless of his circumstances.

We know Him too, He is Jesus Christ, our Saviour. We can trust Him and place our confidence in Him too, regardless of what we are going through or what difficulties lay before us because He hears us, listens and pays attention to us, sees us where we are and He cares for us.

Psalm 139:2-3 & 5-6 (NKJV) O Lord, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.

What do we need to trust Him with today? Let us do so with joy, faith and confidence. There is nothing that He is not aware of He understands where we are at!

THE BLESSEDNESS THAT COMES FROM TRUSTING THE LORD

Jeremiah 17:7(NLT) "But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.

Jeremiah lived in a time where people were trusting in the strength of their army, the strength of foreign allies and in man-made idols. But God said "Blessed are those who trust in Me". We are often tempted to place our trust in our money, our own strength and intellect, human specialists etc. God encourages us today to rely not on these earthly things but to rely on Him.

Jeremiah 17:8(NLT) They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.

When our trust is in God, we will flourish. We will be well rooted and not easily shaken. We will bear fruit even in the dry and difficult times. We will be like evergreen trees, even providing shelter for others. This is the blessedness that comes from trusting the LORD. Let us therefore place our trust in Him today and every day!

CONCLUSION

In closure, God is reminding us once again:

- God hears you.
- God is listening and paying attention to you,
- God sees you and He cares about you.
- There is a blessedness that comes from trusting the LORD.

This morning let us cast our cares upon Him and trust Him to be the help we need!