

***“All believers, come here and listen, let me tell you what God did for me. I called out to him with my mouth, my tongue shaped the sounds of music. If I had been cozy with evil, the Lord would never have listened. But he most surely did listen, he came on the double when he heard my prayer. Blessed be God: he didn’t turn a deaf ear, he stayed with me, loyal in his love.” Psalm 66:17-20 (MSG)***

We are looking at another section of Psalm 66 today. Today we are seeing the psalmist singing for joy at how faithful the Lord is. How He listens to our prayers and answers them.

The psalmist is rejoicing, just as we as Christians should be every day, about the goodness of God. We know that we have a faithful God - though sometimes it is difficult to transfer this from being something we just know in our heads and to truly believe it. Although I have chosen to write about this section of the Psalm as an encouragement, I also wish to discuss more that just the happy knowledge that we are not alone and God hears us. That is something we learn early on in our Christian lives and, perhaps that's all you need to be reminded of today, but for many of us we need to be more than given a pat on the back and reminded God hears us.

Now on to the heart of the subject. The psalmist makes no pretence that there is more to the faithfulness of God than the mere ask and receive that many of us hope for. We see in this small section of Psalm 66 where we are told that the Lord listened because the singer is not 'cozy with evil'. Let's take that apart a little shall we?

What exactly does being cozy with evil mean? Well, of course there are the obvious things like choosing to do evil things like adultery, commit murder and steal things, but being cozy with evil is much more than the outward expressions like this. When Jesus takes the teaching of 'an eye for an eye' and 'love those who love you and hate your enemies', turning them on their head by saying to turn the other cheek, give more than you have been sued for and loving your enemies by praying for them (see Matthew 5:38-48), we see something greater than what the world teaches. It is easy to love those that are like us, those that fit into our own cliques within the church or workplace, but it is much harder to be free of harbouring thoughts about them that make them seem lesser than us because they like different things or follow a different belief system. Perhaps they have wronged us somehow and now we can't stand to be near them, or worse, we gossip about the person behind their back. These are ways of being cozy with evil. Also being neutral in a situation that demands a side to be taken is being cozy with evil. How often do we just sit back and watch the poor person struggling to eat or keep warm and do nothing to help? How often do we sit back when someone is being bullied and we don't step in to help - even by just going up to them afterwards to check they're OK...we don't always have to put ourselves in harms way to help. How often, too, do we make the choice to continue in our own set ways and get angry with people who may be trying to suggest a better way of doing things? Even if it isn't actually better we should try to be polite, and if not admit our mistake afterwards and tell them we didn't mean to snap.

So, yes, God always hears our prayers, but He also wants us to come to Him with our hearts purified so that He can listen to our requests. Requests of things may be exactly what God wishes to give us, but equally if we are asking out of selfishness or other wrong reasons, the answering of that prayer may do us more harm than good.

### **Pray;**

Father who hears us when we call to you, please assist us to purify ourselves so that when we come to you with our hearts desires they are born of a pure heart. Please forgive us for the things we hold onto that mean that our lives aren't pure, all the ways we become cozy with evil. Please help us to learn where we have become cozy with the evil temptations of this world without even realising it and teach us to put these things away to become more like you. Amen.