

Calling on the Lord

Many commentators say that it is impossible to know for sure all that is implied by the words, "*Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*" (Gen. 4:26). However, there may be a clue in the difference between the name of Seth's son Enosh, frail man or mortal, and that of the Lord, self-existent or eternal one. Even though people had witnessed Abel's death and others, (Genesis 4:8, 23), they became arrogant. Making a living, learning to cultivate crops, build cities, and get along with others led them to consider themselves able to do whatever they desired. But Seth and Enosh, the ones to carry the promise given to Eve (Genesis 3:15), the ones through whom Noah, Abraham, David, and Jesus would come, seem to make the first of many changes in communicating with God.

Genesis 1, 2, and 3 describe the creation and the first sins of people. As described in chapter 4, Abel's sacrifice only mentions conversational exchanges between man and God (Genesis 4:6-15), not prayer from man to God. With Genesis 4:16-24, we read that Cain departed from the presence of the Lord and his descendants developed many crafts and occupations. There is no mention of Cain or his descendants talking to God. With Verse 25, the narrative returns to Adam, his son Seth and grandson Enosh. Here, a contrast with Cain's departure from God appears. The statement that "*people began to call upon the name of the LORD*" (Genesis 4:26 ESV) is an expression that generally means people recognized the authority of and obeyed the one mentioned. If that idea is applied here, people began to believe in and serve God as He commanded. It also indicates man's desire to talk to God.

Among Enosh's descendants, we find Enoch, who walked with God and was taken by God (Genesis 5:22-24). Later Noah is listed as one who "*found favor in the eyes of the LORD*" (Genesis 6:8) when the rest of the world's population were consumed by sins. Again, we do not find prayer mentioned. We see people devoted to, walking with, and submitting to the authority of God. These descendants of Seth separated themselves from Cain's descendants by serving God as He directed them. The Cainites laid the foundation for this world's kingdoms by building cities and developing worldly arts and business. The Sethites, calling on the name of The Eternal God, laid the foundation for the Kingdom of Heaven. That kingdom, established by the son of Mary and the Holy Spirit, exists today.

The first indication that people prayed to God is in a dream-conversation between God and Abimelech, king of Gerar. Abraham had told the people that his wife, Sarah, was his sister. Abimelech, thinking she was an available lady, took her to be his wife. God came to him in a dream and told him his life was forfeited because he took another man's wife. Abimelech complains that he had been told a lie and has not defiled Sarah. God tells Abimelech, "*Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live*" (Genesis 20:7). Abraham obviously knew how to intercede on behalf of another through prayer.

Abraham's servant knew how to pray when he went to find a wife for Isaac. He prayed, "*O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham*" (Genesis 24:12-14). As the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob expanded into the nation of Israel, we see them approaching God, calling His name, and expressing their hearts' thoughts and desires. The servant knew God as "the God of my master Abraham." Isaac knew God as his God and interceded (prayed) for Rebecca to have a child (Genesis 25:21). The Hebrew word, 'âthar, is usually translated as entreated. Is there a difference between interceding, entreating, and praying?

Looking at 1 Timothy 2:1 in various translations can give us an idea of what "calling on the name of the Lord" means.

- **The KJV** reads: "*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.*"
- **The ASV** reads, "*supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings.*"
- **The NASB** reads, "*entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings.*"
- **The ESV** reads, "*supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings.*"
- **The Contemporary English Version** paraphrase reads: "*First of all, I ask you to pray for everyone. Ask God to help and bless them all, and tell God how thankful you are for each of them.*"

By searching out each word's meaning, we find that all are forms of talking to God in prayer.

- **Supplications or entreaties**, indicates a begging for something, most usually for others.
- **Prayers**, refers to long emotional talks with God.
- **Intercessions or petitions**, describe a coming together or speaking for someone. The Greek word is only used twice in scripture (1 Timothy 2:1, 4:5).
- **Thanksgiving** is exactly that, telling God how thankful we are for Him, His Son, the church, and all that we have.

As we show all respect and give God praise in our prayers, let us also use all of these forms when we pray for ourselves, others, and the church. Remember, Jesus taught us to begin our prayers by calling on "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9).