

Lamentations 3:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.

Analysis

A painful lament about unanswered prayer: "**Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.**" The Hebrew sakota ve-anan lakh me-avor tefillah (סִכּוֹתָ וָעָנָן לְךָ מֵעֲבוֹר תְּפִלָּה) uses striking imagery. God has covered (sakah, סָכַךְ, "to screen, cover") Himself with a cloud (anan, עָנָן) so that prayer (tefillah, תְּפִלָּה) cannot pass through (me-avor, מֵעֲבוֹר).

The cloud imagery recalls both positive and negative biblical associations. God's glory appeared in clouds (Exodus 16:10, 1 Kings 8:10-11), but clouds also obscured His presence (Exodus 20:21, Psalm 97:2). Here the cloud functions as a barrier, blocking prayer's access to God. This reflects the covenant curse of Leviticus 26:18-28, where persistent disobedience leads to God hiding His face and not hearing prayers.

Theologically, this addresses the crisis of apparently unanswered prayer during judgment. Isaiah 59:2 explains: "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." The barrier isn't God's unwillingness to hear generally, but the obstacle sin creates. Yet Lamentations 3 moves toward hope—verse 55-56 declares, "I called upon thy name, O LORD...Thou hast heard my voice." The cloud is real but temporary. Christ would ultimately tear the veil separating us from God (Matthew 27:51, Hebrews 10:19-22).

Historical Context

The experience of prayer seemingly not passing through God's cloud would have been agonizing for exilic Israel. Throughout their history, prayer had been central to covenant relationship. Solomon's temple dedication prayer (1 Kings 8:27-53) repeatedly appeals to God to hear prayers offered toward His house. The temple's destruction raised the question: Can prayer still reach God without the temple?

Jeremiah experienced this barrier personally. God explicitly forbade him to pray for the people: "Therefore pray not thou for this people...for I will not hear thee" (Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14, 14:11). The sin had become so grievous that even intercession was prohibited. Ezekiel 8:18 records God's determination: "though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them."

Yet this wasn't permanent abandonment. Daniel 9 shows that prayer did eventually break through—Daniel's confession and intercession in Babylon led to angelic visitation and prophetic revelation. The cloud disperses when repentance is genuine. James 5:16 later teaches that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"—implying that unrighteousness blocks prayer's effectiveness.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does this verse teach about how unrepentant sin creates barriers between us and God, even blocking prayer?
2. How should we respond when prayer seems to hit a 'cloud' and not reach God—despair, or examine our hearts for hidden sin?
3. In what ways did Christ's death tear the veil/cloud separating us from God, granting permanent prayer access (Hebrews 4:16)?

4. What is the relationship between this verse and passages promising God always hears His people's prayers (1 John 5:14-15)?

Interlinear Text

סָכַף וְתָה	בָּעָנָן	לֹא	יַעֲבֹר
Thou hast covered	thyself with a cloud	H0	should not pass through
H5526	H6051		H5674
תַּפִּלָּה:			
that our prayer			
H8605			

Additional Cross-References

Lamentations 3:8 (Prayer): Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

Zechariah 7:13 (Parallel theme): Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

Psalms 97:2 (Parallel theme): Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

Jeremiah 15:1 (Parallel theme): Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.