

Lamentations 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

Analysis

Prayer seems futile: "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer" (gam ki-ez'ak va'ashavea satam tefilati, גַם פִּיאָזָעַק וְאַשְׁבַּע שָׁתָם תְּפִלָּתִי). The verbs za'ak (זָעַק, "cry out") and shava (עָזַב, "cry for help") indicate desperate pleading, yet God "shuts out" (satam, סָתַם) prayer. This echoes Psalm 88:14: "LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?" And Jeremiah 11:11, 14: God refuses to hear Judah's crisis prayers after years of ignoring Him. The image is of a door shut, a barrier blocking access. This terrifies because prayer is the believer's lifeline. Yet the shutting isn't arbitrary—it follows persistent covenant breaking. Proverbs 1:24-28 warns: "Because I have called, and ye refused...then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer." Isaiah 1:15: "when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." God's refusal to hear isn't contradiction of His promise to answer prayer, but temporal judgment teaching that presuming on access while living in rebellion is impossible.

Historical Context

Scripture records several instances of God refusing to hear prayers. 1 Samuel 8:18 warns that when Israel demands a king and suffers under monarchy's burdens, 'the LORD will not hear you in that day.' 1 Samuel 28:6 states that God answered Saul 'neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets' after Saul's persistent disobedience. Micah 3:4 warns: 'Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them.' During Jerusalem's siege, people who had ignored Jeremiah's warnings for decades suddenly sought God desperately, but Jeremiah 11:11-12 records God's response: they will cry but He won't listen. This isn't capricious cruelty but

consistent principle: those who treat God as irrelevant except in crisis shouldn't expect Him to function as emergency responder. The technical term is 'judicial hardening'—God gives people over to their chosen rebellion (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Yet this very verse's existence in Scripture shows prayers can still be offered. The lament itself is prayer, keeping channel open even when seeming shut.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God shutting out prayer challenge popular views of prayer as automatic divine access regardless of the pray-er's life or obedience?
2. What's the difference between God sovereignly delaying answers (testing faith) versus God refusing to hear (judging persistent rebellion)?
3. How do James 4:3 and 1 Peter 3:7 show that effective prayer requires right relationship with God and others?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה	אַךְ	אַזְעַל	וְאַשְׁר	שְׁתַת	תִּפְלַתִּי
H1571	H3588	H2199	H7768	H5640	H8605
Also	when	I cry	and shout	he shutteth out	my prayer

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 22:2 (Parallel theme): O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Job 30:20 (Parallel theme): I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not.

Job 19:7 (Parallel theme): Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.