

Psalms 66:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

Analysis

Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me. This concluding doxology celebrates answered prayer, attributing it to God's mercy rather than personal merit. "Blessed be God" (barukh Elohim, בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהִים) is the appropriate response to experienced grace. Barukh (בָּרוּךְ) means blessed, praised, adored. The passive form indicates God is worthy of blessing, deserves praise, merits worship. Throughout Scripture, experiencing God's faithfulness produces blessing God—ascribing to Him the honor, glory, and praise He deserves. Paul frequently erupts into doxology when contemplating God's grace (Ephesians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3).

"Which hath not turned away my prayer" (asher lo-hesir tefillati, אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הִסִּיר תְּפִלָּתִי) uses sur (סוּר), meaning to turn aside, remove, depart. God didn't reject the prayer, didn't turn it away, didn't dismiss or ignore it. The negative "not" emphasizes what God refrained from doing—He didn't refuse audience, didn't close His ear, didn't turn away from the petitioner. The imagery suggests prayer approaching God's throne, and rather than being turned away at the door, it was received, heard, and answered. This contrasts with verse 18's warning that regarding iniquity causes prayers not to be heard. The psalmist's prayer was heard because his heart was right, not harboring cherished sin.

"Nor his mercy" (vechasdo, וְחֶסֶדּוֹ) introduces the reason prayers are heard: God's chesed (חֶסֶד), His covenant faithfulness, steadfast love, loyal kindness. This is God's committed, unwavering, gracious devotion to His covenant people. Chesed is

the love that doesn't abandon, the faithfulness that doesn't fail, the mercy that doesn't run out. Throughout Scripture, *chesed* characterizes God's relationship with His people—rescuing them from Egypt, forgiving their rebellion, restoring them after exile, sending His Son to redeem. God hears prayer not because petitioners deserve it but because He is merciful, faithful to covenant promises, loyal in love.

"From me" (me'iti, מֵעִתִּי) personalizes the mercy. God's *chesed* isn't abstract theology but experienced reality. The psalmist testifies: God has not withdrawn His mercy from ME personally. This isn't presuming on grace but gratefully acknowledging experienced faithfulness. The verse structure creates parallelism: God didn't turn away

1. my prayer or
2. His mercy.

The two are connected—God's mercy explains why prayer was heard. God hears prayer because He is merciful, not because we deserve hearing. This maintains proper theology of grace: answered prayer results from divine mercy, not human merit. We approach God's throne boldly not based on our righteousness but based on His mercy made available through Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16). The psalmist's confidence in prayer rests on God's covenant faithfulness. Because God is merciful, prayers are heard; because *chesed* never fails, we can confidently approach Him with every need, knowing He won't turn us away.

Historical Context

The conclusion of Psalm 66 creates *inclusio* (bookend structure) with its beginning. Verse 1 commanded all lands to make joyful noise to God; verse 20 models that joyful response by blessing God for answered prayer. The psalm moves from summons to worship (v.1-4), to recounting God's mighty acts (v.5-12), to personal vow-keeping and testimony (v.13-19), to doxology (v.20). This structure reflects Israel's worship pattern: call to worship, rehearsal of God's works, individual testimony, and concluding praise.

The emphasis on God's *chesed* (mercy/steadfast love) as the foundation for

answered prayer reflects Israel's covenant theology. God bound Himself by oath to love, protect, and hear His people. This wasn't earned but graciously given. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God proclaimed His name: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6-7). The word translated "goodness" is *chesed*. This divine self-revelation became Israel's confidence: God's character guarantees He will hear His people's prayers.

Throughout Israel's history, they tested this promise. When enslaved in Egypt, they cried out, and God heard (Exodus 2:23-25). When surrounded by enemies, they prayed, and God delivered. When exiled in Babylon, they sought God, and He restored them. Each generation discovered anew that God's *chesed* endures forever—the refrain repeated 26 times in Psalm 136. This experiential knowledge of God's faithful mercy formed the foundation for confident prayer. If God had not turned away previous generations' prayers, current believers could trust He wouldn't turn away theirs.

For Christians, God's mercy finds fullest expression in Christ. God "hath not turned away my prayer" becomes "hath not turned away Christ's intercession for me." Jesus stands as high priest and mediator, ensuring believers' prayers reach the Father (Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:1). God's mercy hasn't been withdrawn because Christ satisfied justice's demands, enabling mercy to flow freely to all who believe. Christian confidence in prayer rests on Christ's finished work—we approach God's throne of grace boldly not based on our merit but based on Christ's merit credited to us. The God who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all will also freely give us all things (Romans 8:32). If God gave His greatest gift (Christ), we can trust He won't withhold lesser gifts needed for life and godliness.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does attributing answered prayer to God's mercy rather than personal merit affect your approach to prayer?
2. What is the relationship between keeping your heart free from cherished sin (v.18) and experiencing God's mercy that hears prayer (v.20)?
3. How does understanding God's chesed (covenant faithfulness) provide confidence in prayer even when you're aware of your own failures?
4. When has God demonstrated that He has not turned away your prayer or withdrawn His mercy from you?
5. How should experiencing answered prayer lead to blessing God (giving Him praise) rather than focusing on the gift received?

Interlinear Text

בָּרַךְ וְיָ	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	אֲשֶׁר	לֹא	הֵסִיר	תְּפִלָּתִי
Blessed	be God	H834	H3808	which hath not turned away	my prayer
H1288	H430			H5493	H8605
וְלֹא חָסַד וְיָ					
nor his mercy					
H2617					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 68:35 (Blessing): O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.

Psalms 51:11 (Parallel theme): Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Psalms 22:24 (Parallel theme): For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

