

# Weekly Encouragement

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Incorporated non-profit in New Jersey, USA

## Your Prayer has been Heard!

By Rev. Peter Eng

Photo courtesy of Thundafunda



*"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." (Luke 1: 13).*

Was Zechariah praying for a son?

It was unlikely. It was more likely that Zechariah was praying for the redemption of God's people.

Why?

(1) Zechariah found it hard to believe he would have a son in old age. "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." ([Lk 1:18](#)).

(2) Gabriel clarified for us that Zechariah had serious doubts about the angel's message. "... you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." ([Lk 1:20](#)).

(3) Zechariah was in the midst of interceding for the people of Israel, and it was unlikely that it was the time for personal prayer requests ([Lk 1:9-10](#)).

(4) When John was born, Zechariah's first words were "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, / for he has visited and redeemed his people" ([Lk 1:68](#))

[Greek lovers only: prayer = deēsis: "request" with reference to people; when it used with reference to God, it naturally means a "request" of petition in prayer; (cf. proseuchēs)]

What does it mean for us that Zechariah was not praying for a son but got one?

We can get caught up with the emphasis that our prayer must be specific. There is no deficiency in specific prayer. As the Holy Spirit of God gives us hope, or burden us with a passion, we should pray with

specificity in faith. But we must not denigrate the sincere general prayer that has little to do with our immediate or felt needs. God is able to answer our prayers for his will to be done on earth and add a blessing to us beside!

Zechariah's prayer for God's purposes to be fulfilled was not some petition that was disconnected from his personal life. God was about to answer his prayer for the redemption of God's people, but he had an additional personal blessing for Zechariah and Elizabeth. They would have a son who would participate in God's redemptive plan. Zechariah's petition for God's redemption produced a son for which he did not ask.

"Thy will be done on earth..." we recite. When our recitation comes with heart, that petition wings its way to God's throne. And in a mysterious sovereignty that we will never comprehend, God is pleased to give us the wherewithal to live out our purpose in life, and in so doing, to play a critical role in fulfilling his will on earth.

How we pray is always secondary to prayer itself. God hears the eloquent and fumbling prayer; the specific and general prayer; the long and the short prayer; the official and the personal prayer. Perhaps the only prayer he does not hear is the one said without heart.

God knows our spiritual desires buried under the cares of daily life. But it is

surely not too much for us to include a petition that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" a petition beyond our immediate concerns; a sincere petition that can unlock God's additional blessing for us.

**Note: The ESV is used unless indicated otherwise.**

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**Rev. Peter Eng** is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.