

Will God Ever Answer My Prayer?



David Wilkerson November 1, 1979

Have you ever asked that question? Is there one special matter you have been praying about for a long time, with no apparent answer in sight? Are there times when you wonder if the answer will ever come? Have you honestly done everything you know to do? Have you fulfilled every requirement of prayer? Have you wept, fasted, and fervently petitioned God in true faith? - And yet nothing seems to happen? If you must answer yes to all of the above questions, you are in good company. You are not some strange kind of Christian suffering chastisement from the Lord. The delayed answer to prayer is one of the most common experiences shared by even the saintliest of God's children.

I thank God for ministers and teachers who preach faith. So do I! Thank God for teachers who stir my soul to expect miracles and answers to all my prayers. Perhaps the church has become so faithless and unbelieving, God has to explode on us with a new and fresh revelation of His powerful promises. There is much new teaching today on "Making the right confession." Also, God's people are being urged to think positively and affirm all the promises of God. We are told to rid our lives of all hidden grudges - make all our wrongs right, even back to our childhood. It has been taught lately that most of our unanswered prayers, our lingering illnesses, our inability to move God on our own behalf is a direct result of mishandling our faith. As one faith teacher put it, "Faith is like a faucet; you can turn it off or on."

It all sounds so simple. Do you need a financial miracle in your life? Then simply rid your life, we are told, of all the hindrances, grudges, and unbelief - confess to having already received the answer by faith, and it will be yours. Do you want that divorced husband to return for a reconciliation? Confess it - imagine it is happening - create a mental image of a beautiful reunion - and it is all yours. Is there someone you love at death's door? Then put God on notice you will not take no for an answer; remind Him of His promises; confess healing - and it will happen, so it is taught. And if your prayer is not answered; if the husband stays away months on end; if the sick loved one dies; if the financial need turns into a crisis - is it suggested it is all your fault. Somewhere along the line, you allowed a negative thought to block the channel. Or, you had a secret sin or unsundered grudge. Your confession was unscriptural or insincere. One faith teacher wrote, "If you didn't get the results I did, you aren't doing everything I did!"

I am not being facetious. I believe God answers prayer. Oh, how I do believe that! But my office is receiving tragic letters from honest Christians who are totally confused and despondent because they can't seem to make all these new prayer-and-faith formulas work. "What's wrong with me?" writes one troubled lady. "I've searched my heart and have confessed every sin. I've bound demonic powers by the Word of God. I've fasted; I've confessed the promises - yet, I have not seen the answer. I must be spiritually blind or I'm doing it all wrong."

Believe me, there are thousands of confused Christians all across this nation who are condemning themselves for not being able to produce an answer to a desperate prayer. They know God's Word is true, that not a single promise can fail, that God is faithful to all generations, that He is good, and that He wants His children to expect answers to their prayers. Yet, for them, there is that one prayer that goes unanswered - indefinitely. So they blame themselves. They listen to the tapes of teachers and preachers who speak so powerfully and positively about all the answers they are getting as a result of their faith. And they hear the testimonies of others who have a formula all worked out and who now receive all they ask of God. Then they look at their own helplessness, and

condemnation overwhelms them.

Let me bear my soul to you on this matter of unanswered prayers. First of all, I respect and love all the teachers and ministers of faith and positive confession. They are great men and women of God. We desperately need to be reminded of the power of faith and proper thinking. It is all very much scriptural, and those who resist or deny such teaching have probably never taken the time to hear what is truly being taught. But there is one major problem. The faith bandwagon is rolling along full speed on wheels that are not balanced. And if it keeps rolling in the direction it is now going, without balance, it will get sidetracked, and many trusting people will get hurt. Already some are giving up because they have come under bondage to teachings of faith that suggest all unanswered prayers are a result of human error. In other words, if it didn't work for you - you did something wrong - so keep doing it until you get it right.

You cannot feed your faith only on self-serving promises of healing, wealth, success, and prosperity any more than you can grow healthy and strong eating only desserts. Faith comes by hearing "all the Word" - not just preferred portions.

What about Bible truths that speak of suffering that teaches obedience? As Jesus did, we learn obedience by the things we suffer (Hebrews 5:8). There are as many scriptures about suffering as there are about faith.

Our faith should not be afraid to investigate Bible passages that deal with God's delays, His seasons of silence, and even His sovereignty - when He acts without giving man an explanation.

Paul warned that faith should not stand alone. He said, "Add to faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, temperance, patience, etc." Faith without patience and virtue and self-control becomes self-centered and unbalanced.

All diseases are not caused by demons or evil spirits. Most are caused by a lack of self-control, gluttony, and bad habits. This belching, bloated generation stuffs itself on mountains of junk food, desserts, and poisoned beverages - then, when the body is weakened and stricken with disease, we run in panic to God's Word for a quick panacea. We will do anything to be healed - except practice self-control and temperance. And even though God, in His mercy, will often overrule our self-indulgent ways and heal our bodies, we need to invest our faith in some self-control.

There are times in the Bible when God could not, or did not, answer - no matter how many times it was asked for - no matter how great the faith or how positive the confession. Paul was not delivered from the affliction that buffeted him, though he prayed diligently for an answer. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me..." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

God wanted to see the work of grace completed in Paul first. He would not permit His child to become puffed up with pride. He would not rejoice in a deliverance - but in learning how God's power could be his in times of weakness. But look what it worked out in Paul, proving God was right in not answering his request: **"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).**

Was Paul lacking in faith? Full of negative thoughts? Wrong confession? Why didn't Paul preach the message we hear so much today - "You don't have to suffer infirmities, poverty, distresses, suffering. You don't have to put up with necessity or weakness. Claim your victory over all suffering and pain..."

Paul wanted more than healing, more than success, more than deliverance from prickly thorns - he wanted Christ! Paul would rather suffer than try to overrule God. that is why he could shout, "I glory in my present situation - God is at work in me through all I suffer. In and through it all, I know my present suffering cannot be compared with the glory that awaits me."

We abuse our answers. We become ungrateful, and we so often turn our deliverance into disaster. That's what happened to Hezekiah. God sent a prophet to warn him he was to prepare to die, saying, "Thou shalt die, and not live." Hezekiah wept, repented, and begged God for an additional fifteen years. God granted his prayer. He was given a new lease on life. the very first year into his reprieve, he compromised, exposing Israel to the enemy kings. He brought disaster upon his family and his nation.

There are other times God refuses to answer our prayer request, because He has "a better way." He will answer, all right, but we will not recognize it as such. We will see it as rejection - but, through it all, God will be doing His perfect will. You find this principle at work when Israel was being led away captive to the land of the Chaldeans. "What a disaster," they cried. "God has rejected our prayers; we are forsaken. God has turned a deaf ear to us." Those who were left in Jerusalem became puffed up in thinking God had heard their prayer and blessed them by permitting them to stay. But those who stayed behind were totally destroyed by sword, famine, and pestilence - until they were all consumed (Jeremiah 24:10).

But those who were taken captive were told, "You have been sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for your own good..." (Jeremiah 24:5). They never did recognize God at work, preserving a remnant, but those who were "saved through suffering" were returned to rebuild the land.

Some of My Prayers Have Not Yet Been Answered

The Bible says, "Honest confession is good for the soul." I confess to you that I have not yet received answers to two prayers I have been praying about for years. Already I hear somebody say, "Brother David, don't do that! That is negative! That is a wrong confession. No wonder you haven't received those two answers yet!" I am more amused than hurt by such comments. I refuse to ignore the facts. The facts are that I have earnestly prayed about these two matters - I have laid hold of every promise in the Bible - I have confidence that God is able to do anything - I have given my blessed Lord mountain-moving faith! Yet, the years roll by, and I have not yet seen the answers. Thousands of my prayers have been answered. I see answers to my prayers every single day of my life. God does the miraculous in my behalf, at every turn in my life. But still, those two prayers have not yet been answered.

I'll let the experts on prayer and faith try to analyze the reasons for these unanswered prayers - but, as for me, I am not one bit worried about it. I've been all through the self-condemning bit. I've had quite enough of blaming myself for not receiving the answer when I wanted it. God is bringing a balance into my faith! My positive confession is being rechanneled in the right direction. And, oh the joy and freedom when your faith in God no longer depends on just getting answers. What a release when your faith focuses only on Jesus and receiving His holy character. Will My Prayers Ever Be Answered?

I believe in Holy Ghost timing. In God's own time, all our prayers will be answered - in one way or another. The trouble is, we are afraid to submit our prayers to Holy Ghost scrutiny. Some of our prayers need to be purged. Some of our faith is being misspent on requests that are not mature. We are so convinced that if our request is "in accordance to His will, we should get it." We simply do not know how to pray, "Thy will be done!" We don't want His will as much as those things permitted by His will. The only test we require of our prayers is rather self-centered: "Can I find it in God's catalog of things permitted?" So we search all through God's Word and cleverly lay out all the reasons why we should be granted certain blessings and answers. We match the promises to tailor our specific requests. When we are convinced we have a good case and have garnered enough promises, we march boldly into the presence of God as if to say, "Lord, I've got an iron tight case - in no way can You turn me down. I've checked my faith. I've got Your Word on the matter. I've done everything according to plan. It's mine! I claim it! right now!"

Is that all that faith is about? Simply a tool to pry out of God benefits of promises? A challenge to His faithfulness? A test of His word? A key to unlock God's blessing room? It seems to me we are marching into God's throne room with our faith banners waving, armed with an arsenal of promises, ready to violently claim all that is due us. all the while, we picture our approving Father congratulating us on unraveling the mystery of faith and therefore entitling us to the bounties of heaven.

Until God restructures our desires and ambitions, we are going to keep on squandering our precious faith on things created, rather than the Creator. How craven and corrupt our faith becomes when it is used simply to acquire things. What a tragedy that we should boast that our faith produced for us a new car, an airplane, a financial bonanza, a new home, etc.

Faith is a form of thought - albeit positive, divine thought. But Jesus warned us not to give one thought to material things. "Only Gentiles (heathen) seek these things." How very clear Jesus is on this matter saying, "Therefore...Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:25, 32).

Even the wicked prosper at times - and it can't be said that faith produced it. God rains His love and blessings on the just as well as the unjust. Show me a prospering Christian, and I'll show you a reprobate prospering even more.

I abhor the idea of teaching Christians how to use faith to become prosperous or more successful. That runs contrary to the teaching of the lowly Nazarene who called on His followers to sell out and give to the poor. He warned against building barns and deplored the consuming hunger for worldly goods. He had no time for those who stored up treasures here on earth. He taught that His children should not become entangled with the deceitfulness of riches, but that faith should cause us to set our affection on things above.

How can it be that all the teaching we have today about faith, Jesus should say, "...nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" 9(Luke 18:8). Could it be Jesus does not consider the modern brand of faith to be faith at all? Is our so-called faith so self-serving, it is becoming an abomination to the Lord? No matter how many scriptures are quoted to support it, self-serving faith is a perversion of truth.

Compare much of the materialistic faith so prevalent today with the faith described in Hebrews 11! The things hoped for by these great men and women of God could not be measured by any worldly standard. The substance they sought was not money, houses, success, or a painless life. They exercised their faith to win God's approval of their lives. Abel's faith focused only on righteousness, and God gifted him with it. Enoch's faith was so God-centered, he was translated. His faith had but one single motive - to know and please God. Faith to Noah meant "moving with fear" to prepare for the coming judgment. How that man would weep if he could ever witness the madness of materialism that grips our generation.

Abraham exercised his faith to keep reminding himself he was a stranger on this earth. His blessing pact on this earth produced only a tent in which to dwell, because he put all his faith in that city whose builder and maker is God.

Some who had a reputation for having great faith 'received not the promise' (Hebrews 11:39). Those who did "obtain promises" used their faith to work righteousness, to gain strength in times of weakness, and to put the enemy to chase.

Were some of them not living in faith? Did God refuse to answer some of their prayers? After all, not all these prayer and faith warriors were delivered. Not all lived to see answers to their prayers. Not all were spared pain, suffering, and even death. Some were tortured; others were torn asunder, wandering about destitute, afflicted, tormented (Hebrews 11:36-39).

These were great men and women of faith who suffered cruel mockings, beatings, and imprisonment. They were not afflicted and tormented because of a lack of faith or a wrong confession - or because they harbored a grudge or ill will. Couldn't men of faith produce more than goatskins for their backs? Couldn't they have risen up in faith to claim that one great promise that no plague could come near their dwelling?

Oh, my dear friend, the world was not worthy of these saints of faith, because they had the kind of faith that crushed every claim of the flesh. Their faith had a single eye; they considered all the blessings of God as eternal and spiritual, rather than earthly and now.

Yes, I know the faith chapter closes saying, "God has provided some better thing for us" (Hebrews 11:40). But how shall we define that better thing God has prepared for those who have faith today? Better health benefits? Better goatskins? Better financial arrangements? better times of ease and prosperity? Better old-age benefits? Bigger barns, filled with all we need to retire in style?

No! I say God has provided for us something better in His only begotten Son. He came to earth as man to show us an even greater, single-minded faith - and that is, "to do the will of the Father." We should be spending more time getting into Jesus than trying to get something out of Him. We should not be praying that God make things happen for us - but to us.

Those who are so exercised in their faith for healing, for financial blessings, for solutions to problems - should, instead, focus all their faith on obtaining the "rest in Christ." There is a faith that rests not in answered prayer but in knowledge that our Lord will do what is right for us.

Don't worry about whether God is saying "Yes!" or "No!" to your request. Don't be downcast when the answer is not in sight. Quit thinking of faith formulas and methods. Just commit every prayer to Jesus and go about your business with confidence. He will not be one moment early or late in answering. and if the answer we seek is not

forthcoming, let us say to our hearts, "He is all I need. If I need more, He will not withhold it. He will do it in His time, in His way, and if He does not fulfill my request, He must have a perfect reason for not doing so. No matter what happens, I will always have faith in His faithfulness."

God help us if our faith serves the creature rather than the Creator. God forgive us if we are more concerned about getting prayers answered than in learning total submission to Christ Himself. We do not learn obedience by the things we obtain but by the things we suffer. Are you willing to learn obedience by suffering a little longer with what appears to be unanswered prayer? Will you rest in His love while patiently waiting for the promise, after that you have done all the will of the Father?

Jettison your theology and get back to simplicity. Faith is a gift, not a diploma. Faith should not be a burden or a puzzle. The more childlike it is, the better it works. You need no seminar or textbook - you need no guide. the Holy Spirit will lead you closer to Jesus - who is the Word - by whom cometh faith.

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