



NEW LIFE

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

Vol. 12 No. 41

LORD'S DAY 12 OCTOBER 2008

DOES GOD LET YOUR PRAYERS GO UNANSWERED?

By: John F. Walvoord

In my fifty years of leadership and teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary I saw many dramatic answers to prayer. But I have also seen many of my prayers go unanswered. The answered prayers have built my faith, strengthened my walk with God, and given me hope in the midst of perplexing problems. But the silence of God creates tension for me. I find God's silence difficult or sometimes impossible to explain.

Is God Really Silent?

Because of this tension, I have done a great deal of thinking and a great deal of Scripture-searching. I want to know why the same God who miraculously supplies a faculty member to the Seminary allows the family of another faculty member to experience grief and tragedy in the midst of our prayers to the contrary. I want to know why some of our needs are met so miraculously while other needs are seemingly ignored.

In the midst of these questions I remain firmly convinced that God answers prayer. This is my testimony and yours. But all of us have also experienced the silence of God. We have echoed the experience of Habakkuk, "*O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!*" (Hab. 1:2). We share David's prophetic anticipation of the experience of Christ, "*O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*" (Ps. 22:2).

The Secret of Answered Prayer

What is the secret of answered prayer? Why are some prayers unanswered? I find my answers to those perplexing questions in the Bible. The same Scriptures that assure us God will answer prayer also explain why some of our prayers are seemingly unanswered. These passages have taught me to ask four basic questions about my prayers.

Have you prayed?

The first and fundamental principle of answered prayer is faithfulness in prayer itself. Paul urged the Thessalonians, "*Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*" (1 Thess. 5:17-18). Paul exhorted the Ephesians, "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*" (Eph. 6:18a). Christ assured His disciples, "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" (Matt. 7:7-8).

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Faithful continued prayer is one key to answered prayer. As James expresses it, "*yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*" (James 4:2b). In the words of "*What a Friend We Have in Jesus*":

*O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.*

If we expect God to answer, we must be faithful in prayer. Yet there is also the wonderful principle of grace that enables God to give us more than we ask. Countless blessings are showered on the Christian every day. Paul expressed this, "*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*" (Eph. 3:20). But it all begins with faithful prayer.

Have you prayed according to the will of God?

Again and again in the Bible the truth is emphasized that prayer must be according to God's will. Prayer is not a means for us to persuade a reluctant God to do something which is against His better judgment. Prayer, rather is coming to God for the fulfilment of His will, coming to a God who delights to answer prayer.

Praying in the will of God means that the prayer must be in harmony with what God has revealed to be His plan for the world. Our petitions must be in harmony with God's holy and righteous character. What we desire from God must be to the best interest of ourselves and others, even though we may not always know what is ultimately best.

If we pray in the will of God, we can be sure that God will answer. The Apostle John wrote, "*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*" (1 John 5:14-15). These are great promises. In prayer we can approach God with complete assurance of His ability to answer us. There is no limit to what we can ask, if it is according to His will.

John goes on to say that there are prayer requests that God cannot answer because they are not according to His will and not for our best interest (1 John 5:16). James expressed it, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" (James 4:3). Selfish prayers will not be honoured by God. Prayer is God's appointed means to receive what is best for us and others and to realize what Paul called "*that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*" (Rom. 12:2b). But what infinite power and possibilities there are in prayer that is according to the will of God.

Is it God's time to answer your prayers?

Many times in the experience of those who pray faithfully, God does not say, "*No,*" but, "*Wait.*" There is a proper timing for answered prayer. Sometimes God needs to wait until we are ready for the answer, or perhaps others need to be made ready. Sometimes a delay is necessary to fit into God's overall program. Daniel learned that lesson.

For sixty years Daniel prayed for the return of Israel to Jerusalem, for the rebuilding of the city of God which lay in ruins. It seemed that there was no answer from God. Then Daniel discovered the word of the Lord to Jeremiah, which had said that there would be a wait of seventy years before the captives of Israel could return to their city (Jer. 29:10). With this information, Daniel went to the Lord in fervent prayer. His prayer is one of the great prayers...

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of Scripture (Dan. 9:3-19). When Daniel began to pray, about sixty-eight of the seventy years had already passed. In answer to Daniel's prayer - and in keeping with God's timetable - the Book of Ezra records the return of Israel to its ancient land and capital city. So delay in answering prayer does not mean that God has not heard.

I know a godly Christian family that had a wayward son. For many years they prayed for that boy, but there was no answer. Long after the parents had gone to glory, God wonderfully touched that son and restored him to Himself. The prayers were answered, but in God's time. God is never late and never early in answering prayer.

Is Your Prayer to the Glory Of God?

The most searching question we face in prayer is whether our petition is for our own selfish interest, pride, or attainment, or whether it is really to the glory of God. Answers to prayer must always honour God and bring glory to Him. This is one reason prayer must be offered in the name of Christ. Christ assured His disciples, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you... And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."* (John 15:7, 16b; cf. John 14:13-14).

God delights in honouring His Son. He loves to recognize what His Son has done on the cross to open the floodtides of grace for the believer. Prayer that is offered in the name of Christ and to the glory of Christ is prayer that God can answer. Praying in the name of Christ is a recognition of His infinite person, His deity and majesty. It is recognition of His power to do anything He wills to do. It is recognition of His grace that makes it possible for Him to answer the prayers of imperfect believers. Answered prayer also honours God's promised word, for God cannot lie.

But prayer which glorifies God requires that the person who prays be one whom God delights to honour. We must do some heart-searching to be sure that there is no hindering sin in our lives. As the Psalmist prayed, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* (Ps. 139:23-24). As the Psalmist expressed it elsewhere, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:"* (Ps. 66:18). The Psalmist goes on, however, with the reassuring word, *"But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer."* (Ps. 66:19).

Answered Prayer Is Not a Reward for Perfection!

Prayer is not a reward for perfection, but rather is God honouring His servants who earnestly seek to please Him. James writes, *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* (James 5:16b). John expressed it, *"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."* (1 John 3:21-22).

God has promised to answer prayer according to His marvellous grace, according to His infinite power, and in keeping with His infinite love and faithfulness. When prayers seem to be unanswered, we must first ask ourselves if we have met the four conditions for answered prayer. Then we can continue to be faithful in prayer. Our attitude can be one of implicit confidence that He *"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,"* (Eph. 3:20).

As we praise Him for His faithfulness, seek His will and glory, pray faithfully, and wait patiently until God's time, He will answer us.

(adapted from Grace B-P Church bulletin dated 6 April 2008)

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON
CHURCH THEME: WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR
AND TREMBLING. (Philippians 2:12)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 12/10/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 19/10/2008</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Yeong Lee Wei and Isabel Ng to our morning worship service last Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	John Poh	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	Mark Chen	
<i>Message:</i>	The Foolishness of God	The Kinsman Redeemer	
<i>Text:</i>	1 Corinthians 1:18-31	Ruth 3:6-13	
<i>Organist:</i>	Grace	Anthony	
Evening			NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Chairman:</i>	John Poh	Jonathan Kim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairpersons & Musicians Workshop – 19 Oct: Please take note that Mark will be conducting a workshop for chairpersons & musicians after lunch. • Pray for those who are sick: Douglas (knee pain), Maria (ankle and joint pain), Constance (left heel pain) • Pray for Journey Mercies: Douglas (Ghana), Jee, Yanning & David (S'pore) • Pray for those who are seeking employment: John, Hubert, Constance. • Those serving on the Lord's Day: Please gather behind the pulpit area at 10.30am for prayer.
<i>Preacher:</i>	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	Mark Chen	
<i>Message:</i>	No Cunningly Devised Fables	He That Winneth Souls Is Wise	
<i>Text:</i>	2 Peter 1:12-2	Proverbs 11:23-31	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Mark	Grace	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 12/10/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 19/10/2008</i>	
<i>Ushers</i>	Daniel / Evelyn	Josh / Sharon	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Hui Min	Hui Min	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Constance	Maureen	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	No Bible Study	No Bible Study	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 17 Oct	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Led by Mark	
Sat 18 Oct	4.00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Jonathan	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering:	£417.30	Lunch: £41 YAF: £33.15	
<u>Memory Verse</u>			
<i>Last Week (October 08 Wk 1): Psalm 139:23</i>			
I Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:			
<i>This Week (October 08 Wk 2): Psalm 139:24</i>			
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.			
<u>I Know Not</u>			
I know not how that Calvary's cross			
A world from sin could free;			
I only know its matchless love			
Has brought God's love to me.			
I know not how that Joseph's tomb			
Could solve death's mystery;			
I only know a living Christ,			
Our immortality!			