

Sunday, February 25, 2024 am

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (6)

How God Answers Our Prayers

We have been considering God as the primary source of our prayers. That is where effective prayer begins and for our prayers to be effective, we need to understand that. Thus far, we have addressed how God has granted us ACCESS to Him through His grace ultimately realized in Jesus, how God is ABLE to answer our prayers because of who He is, and we have devoted the past 2 lessons to discussing how God answers prayers today – providentially (within natural means).

In this lesson, I want to address the various ways God can answer our prayers.

I. God is faithful

- a. Before discussing the various ways God answers our prayers, I want to spend a few moments addressing the faithfulness of God.
- b. The Bible tells us plainly that God is faithful.
 - i. 1 Corinthians 1:9, **God is faithful**, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 10:13, *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*
 - iii. 2 Thessalonians 3:3, *But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.* Spoken of Jesus Christ, who is deity and possesses all the characteristics of Godhood. (Thus, what is said of Him, can also be said of the Father).
 - iv. Numbers 23:19, *“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (As Balaam prophecies to Balak)*
- c. God is faithful means that He “will NEVER violate His own character, purpose, or word. He is consistent with Himself.”¹ (Deuteronomy 7:9 – He is *“the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”*). Romans 10:11, *For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”* (Isaiah 28:16).
- d. This is demonstrated through the accounts of Bible history. We find continually that God made promises and fulfilled them, according to His purpose and in His own ways and time.
 - i. Sometimes, His fulfillment involved centuries of time (cf. Genesis 15:13ff), but He accomplished His will.
 - ii. In the lives of various Bible characters we find this again. Consider Abraham as God promised to give him a son when he was 75 years old. It did not happen for 25 years, but it DID happen.
 - iii. David’s throne was preserved (2 Samuel 7), in spite of the wickedness of His descendants, up to the point of its ultimate and spiritual preservation in Christ Jesus (Luke 1:32).

¹ McDaniel, Marshall. *Devoted to Prayer*. One Stone Press, 2019. p. 47.

- iv. Paul would write of His faithfulness in 2 Timothy 3:10-11 where he notes that the Lord delivered him out of various trials he faced. 2 Timothy 4:17, at his defense he was alone, “but the Lord stood with...” and strengthened him
Jude 24-25, Psalm 119:90, 33:4
- e. We are promised in scripture that He is able to preserve us (if we live with that desire as our focus) - 1 Thessalonians 5:23, *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 2 Peter 2:9 notes that He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. Jude 24 notes, *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,*
- f. In this life, man often disappoints us – leaders fail, business are sometimes dishonest, people lie and break their promises, and sometimes people let us down by being disloyal. But God and His word to us is something we can always depend on.
- g. His faithfulness ought to govern our conduct - Jeremiah 17:7, *“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord.”*
- h. Because we know that God is faithful, we pray to Him. Psalm 143:1, *Hear my prayer, O Lord, Give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, And in Your righteousness.* Hebrews 10:23, *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

II. **Ways God answers our prayers**

- a. Be reminded that God does and wants to answer our prayers – 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:16, 1 John 5:14-15, 1 Peter 3:12, etc.
- b. But we must also understand that as God works today, He may choose to NOT become involved in a particular set of circumstances. As we have noted, God does not micromanage our lives (removing our free will). Often (probably most of the time), He lets life take its course and we deal with whatever comes our way. ALSO, a previously noted, we ought not to expect God to perform a miracle for us or make us the exception to life (cf. James 4:3).
- c. Sometimes He answers, “Yes” – granting what we request.
 - i. Psalm 3:3-4, as David is delivered from the rebellion of his son Absalom later in life, *But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill.*
 - ii. Hannah was barren and she prayed to the LORD (1 Sam. 1:10-18). He gave her Samuel (and others after that). 1 Samuel 1:27, *For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.*
 - iii. Acts 4:28-33 – they prayed for courage and were granted it immediately.
 - iv. Acts 12:5, as Peter was in prison awaiting execution by Herod, prayers were offered on his behalf and he was delivered.
 - v. While these involved miraculous intervention, God can just as powerfully answer everyday prayers.
 - vi. Of course, there are parameters to that – it must be according to His will (1 John 5:14) and we are striving to please Him (1 John 3:22). This will be emphasized at a later time.
 - vii. The point is God CAN answer our properly offered prayers in the affirmative.
- d. Yes, but not the way you expect

- i. Often times when we make requests, God may answer but in a different way than we were expecting or wanted. We must understand with this that His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). He does not always answer our prayers the way we expect or want.
 - ii. Remember Naaman who was leprous (2 Kings 5). He was expecting Elisha to appear to him and make a great show, but he didn't even come to the door. Instead, he was told to dip in the Jordan river 7 times. UNTIL Naaman obeyed God's way, he was not healed.
 - iii. James 1:2-4 calls for us to count it all joy when we fall into various trials knowing that the testing of our faith can produce patience. Romans 5:3-5 elaborates on this noting that tribulations can produce perseverance, character and hope. WE need to factor this in when we pray to God.
 - iv. Sometimes God's answer will be affirmative, but totally different. Consider: IF you ask for patience, the best way to learn patience is to deal with trials; If you ask to learn to love your neighbors (or brethren) – prepare to be tested by some of your neighbors (or brethren); If you ask for increased faith – expect to have your faith tested as noted above.
 - v. So understand, God's answer, WHILE BEST, is often not the way we expect it and at times it is not comfortable.
- e. No!
- i. Sometimes, God says no to our prayers.
 - ii. Recall the prayer of Jesus in the garden – Luke 22:39-46. God answered, “No!” but He did give him strength by sending an angel to strengthen Him (NOTE: Here's an example of God answering DIFFERENTLY than expected, but still No!)
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul's thorn in the flesh. The Lord clearly answered, “NO” but also told him, “My grace is sufficient for you.” Paul ACCEPTED His answer.
 - iv. Understand, even when He does not answer our prayers, it might be because He knows what is best. Therefore, when pray, NEVER go to God demanding he give you what you want the way you want it. OR, as previously noted, He may simply choose to be “hands off” in a given circumstance.
 - v. Also, don't go looking elsewhere for the answers. It is possible that a supposed answer is not from God at all.
- f. Wait
- i. Sometimes, God will answer but not at the speed we want it.
 - ii. Luke 18:1-8 gives a parable about persistence in prayer and not losing heart. Vs. 7 describes how God answers prayers, “though He bears long with them...”
 - iii. Ephesians 6:18 calls for us to pray always with perseverance (not giving up).
 - iv. Abraham had to wait 25 years for God to give him his promised son, Isaac.
 - v. I have known of preachers who needed support to move overseas, who made plans even though the support was not there. But just as they prepared to move, it came through.

And thus we can see there are different ways that God can answer our prayers, but in all of them, we need to see that He knows what is best. His answer, or lack thereof, is something we may not understand, but it does not change the fact that His ears are open to the prayers of the righteous. There is much more to be said about our part when it comes to prayers, but for now we conclude by knowing what God is able to do. Are you living so that God will answer your prayers? Think about it.