

## YOU CAN GET YOUR PRAYERS ANSWERED

All of us at one time or another have wished a genie would come out of Aladdin's lamp and make himself available to us to carry out our wishes and desires. Of course, we dismiss the thought. Those are just fairy tales! Nobody really believes those old stories from our literature class.

Many and most of the old fables and fairy tales are based on the great truths of the Bible. They distort the truth and put a humanistic twist to the truth, but the underlying principle is still there.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could ask God for supernatural help in a time of need and really get it? Is it possible to really get my prayers answered? Is there such a thing as getting all my prayers answered? That is really a big order, but consider what the Bible says in John 15:7: "*If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, YE SHALL ASK WHAT YE WILL, AND IT SHALL BE DONE UNTO YOU.*" Now let us remember who said this. Jesus Himself makes us this promise. Did He really mean what He is saying? Can I really believe the Bible?

Literally Jesus is saying I can have anything I want, anytime I want it. He does, however, lay down at least two stipulations:

First, He says I must abide in Him. That means I must be in harmony with Him. I must want what He wants. I must be doing what He wants me to do.

Secondly, I must be abiding in His Word...that is I must be in agreement or in harmony with the teachings of the Bible.

These two conditions are really one in the same. Jesus is referred to as the living Word and the Bible is the written Word. John tells us that "*in the beginning was the word.*" (John 1:1) Jesus and the Bible give the same message. They agree and are one just as the Trinity or Godhead is one. To be in unity or have proper connection with Christ and the Bible is somewhat like a mother with a baby in the womb. There is connection and flow by the umbilical cord. This union is like an appliance plugged into the electrical outlet. Jesus said, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches:*" (John 15:5)

Several years ago, Jessie Poindexter, a member of my church, placed a key in my hand saying, “Pastor, Shirley and I want you to have this key.”

I remarked, “Thanks Jessie, now what does this key open?”

“This is the key to my new house trailer down at Lake Cumberland,” Jessie said. He explained that he and Shirley only got to spend a little time in their new trailer each year. He told me the freezer was full of fish and venison, the key to the bass boat outside was under the seat and I could use it anytime I wanted as long as I wanted. We only got to use the trailer and boat on one occasion, but it was there for us anytime we wanted it.

That certainly was a lot better than owning it. Jessie and Shirley had to make the payments, buy the insurance and do all the upkeep. Jessie and Shirley loved me because I had led them to Christ.

This is just what God is saying to us. He wants to share with us all the good things that He owns. Because of our relationship to Him, He has given us the “key.”

It certainly was not Jessie and Shirley’s fault that Mrs. Wallace and I did not take advantage of their kindness more than one time. They said anytime we wanted to use the trailer we could. James said in the Bible, “*ye have not because ye ask not.*” (James 4:2) It is certainly not God’s fault if we do not get our prayers answered. He has invited us to “*ask and receive.*” (Matthew 7:7)

Mr. Norm Neely, a dear friend of mine from Louisville, Kentucky, told me that when he was serving in the Army during World War II, his company was sent in to do a mop-up operation somewhere in the Philippines. The Japanese had fled the area because of the heavy bombardment and the overpowering invasion of the American forces. He said the Japanese left so hurriedly that his company found vehicles, planes, ammunition and supplies of all kinds.

Norm said one huge building was sealed with a heavy protective coat of covering and had a large padlock on the heavy doors. The young soldiers shot the locks away with their machine guns and pried the door open with crowbars. They were amazed to find the huge

building filled with Japanese yen (currency). There were billions of dollars' worth of their money. Each man took several large bills for souvenirs and then they torched the building and enjoyed watching it all go up in smoke.

Norm explained that the Japanese had plans to keep coming from the Philippines on to Siapan and Hawaii; and then to Los Angeles, San Diego; maybe then to Denver, St. Louis, Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia. This currency was to finance their war.

Six weeks later Norm said the orders come for his company to be sent to mainland Japan to serve as occupational forces. When they arrived, they found the same currency was being used in every part of Japan. These young soldiers had billions of dollars at their disposal and did not realize it.

I think when we get to Heaven, we are going to experience the same thing. We will then realize what could have been! Jesus tried to tell us: "*Hither to have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive.*" (John 16:24) Remember our text: "*Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" (John 15:7)

I realize we cannot build a major doctrine on one isolated verse of Scripture, so let me spell out the conditions that tell us what it means to "*abide in Him.*"

#### I. The problem of sin must be dealt with.

Sin will short circuit my connection with the Throne of Grace. As David put it, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" (Psalm 66:18) Anytime God hears, the prayer will be answered. Isaiah spells it out plainly: "*Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid His face from you, that HE WILL NOT HEAR.*" (59:1,2) He also said, "*And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I WILL NOT HEAR.*" (1:15)

In the well known and loved passage of II Chronicles 7:14, the Bible declares, *“If my people, which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, THEN WILL I HEAR FROM HEAVEN, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”*

David speaks of *“the righteous”* or those abiding in the Lord in Psalms 34:15 saying, *“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And HIS EARS ARE OPEN UNTO THEIR CRY.”* Again he states, *“The righteous cry, and THE LORD HEARETH, and delivereth their them out of all their troubles.”* (17) David’s personal testimony is spelled out in 34:6: *“This poor man cried, and THE LORD HEARD HIM, and saved him out of all of his troubles.”*

John speaks to this promise in clear terms when he says, *“This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, HE HEARETH US. AND IF WE KNOW THAT HE HEARS US, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.”* Now that message is pretty clear. If He hears us, we get what we are asking for. Our object then is to be sure that He hears our prayer for if He does not, we will not get the prayer answered.

It is obvious that any unconfessed or unrepented spirit toward God will keep our call to Heaven from going through.

## II. My prayer must be backed by an obedient will.

An obedient Christian has the ear of God. John explains, *“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, and DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING in His sight.”* (I John 3:22)

It is quite clear that Jesus always got His prayers answered. When He prayed at the tomb of Lazarus He said, *“Father I thank thee that THOU HAST HEARD ME. And I knew that THOU HEAREST ME ALWAYS:”* (John 11:41b-42a) I am not surprised that He also said, *“I DO ALWAYS THOSE THINGS THAT PLEASE HIM.”* (8:29b)

If we can learn how to obey and please the Lord we surely could see “*great and mighty things*” that we know not. (Jeremiah 33:3) Solomon really drives this truth home by his statement: “*He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.*” (Proverbs 28:9)

III. If I am to get my prayer answered I must pray to bring glory to God.

In short, my motive must be pure. I must want things because that is what God wants. James does not pull any punches when he says you don’t get what you ask God for “*because ye ask amiss, that ye may CONSUME IT UPON YOUR LUSTS.*” (4:3) The Bible teaches us that “*whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.*” (I Corinthians 10:31)

If my prayer is for my benefit or for the good of those I am concerned about, I will not meet the conditions necessary to get action from God. The benefit and blessings of answered prayer should be the fallout or results of bringing honor and glory to the Lord.

David was careful about this condition when he prayed, “*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the GLORY OF THY NAME: And deliver us, and purge away our sins, FOR THY NAME’S SAKE.*” (Psalms 79:9)

John touched on this too and said, “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, THAT THE FATHER MAY BE GLORIFIED IN THE SON.*” (14:13)

IV. Our prayer must be by faith.

Praying would be a silly thing to do if we do not believe that God is listening. Many pray to be heard by others and, of course, they are wasting their time. Jesus taught His disciples to pray and on one occasion he said, “*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask, BELIEVING, ye shall receive.*” (Matthew 21:22) On another occasion

He said, *“Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* (Mark 11:24)

James helps us understand this truth. He wrote, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given unto him. But let HIM ASK IN FAITH, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”* (James 1:5-7)

Believing is not only the main ingredient in getting saved, but it is also the main ingredient in getting my prayers answered.

#### V. My prayer should be kept simple.

God is not impressed with long and loud praying. Jesus spoke of the hypocrites who loved *“to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets THAT THEY MIGHT BE SEEN OF MEN.”* (Matthew 6:5)

Paul stated his fear that believers might get caught up in deep theological phrases and high-sounding words. He said, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* (II Corinthians 11:3)

In the model prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray simply, *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* These seven words tell us what we need and where to get it.

Someone asked an attorney to put these seven simple words into legal language. The lawyer wrote, *“We respectfully petition, request and entreat that due and adequate provision be made this date and the date first above inscribed for satisfying of petitioners nutritional requirements and for the organization of such methods of allocation and distribution as may be deemed necessary and proper to assure the reception of and for said petitioners of such quantity of cereal products herein afterwards called bread, as shall in the judgment of the afore and petitioners constitute sufficient account,*

Amen!” I believe I like the Bible wording much better. The Lord gave the whole account of creation in just ten words. How wonderful when things are kept simple.

Jesus said the heathen “*think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*” (Matthew 6:7)

We are all glad that when Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink in the water, he did not pray some long formal prayer, but cried out, “*Lord, save me.*” This short right-to-the-point prayer was just what was needed, and it got quick results.

VI. Prayer must be offered in earnest in order to accomplish its purpose.

Formal, written or memorized prayers will not set God into motion. James spoke of “*the effectual fervent prayer.*” (5:16) It “*availeth much,*” he continued. The bedtime prayers, “Now I lay me down to sleep” will accomplish very little. Dr. Hal Webb used to say, “Now I lay me down to sleep; I tuck my feet beneath the sheet” ...snore ...snore. That praying will not make things happen.

VII. Prayer must be made with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Our Bible teaches that, “*if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.*” (Matthew 18:19) Now that might be referring to a man and his wife agreeing together in prayer for their family. It might be two women or two men who covenant together to beseech God about some mutual burden or need. I think it could also be stating that if I can be in agreement with the blessed Holy Spirit and we go together to God’s throne, He will hear and answer the prayer being offered.

Since the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus and the Bible are in total agreement, all I need is to agree with them and God will be pleased to make it happen. Paul explains that “*The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we*

*ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26)*

If I should see a 1957 pink convertible Cadillac with leopard seat covers, a big hood ornament of Texas steer horns on the hood, big fins on the rear fenders, a big ooga horn on the driver’s side and I go to prayer and ask God for that car, I doubt He will give it to me. In fact, I am sure that the Holy Spirit will not agree that I need it. However, if I ask the Lord to provide me with some suits to attend Bible college, that would be a different story.

When the Lord called me to preach, I was overjoyed; and then I realized that I would have to sell our new home that we had only lived in for one year. I also would need to quit my job at General Motors. Both of these were very tough calls.

My wife was scared. My folks said I had lost my mind. My in-laws told me flat out that if they had known I was going to make such a decision, they would not have agreed to the marriage with their daughter.

I did quit General Motors; we did sell our house and traveled 730 miles away; and I enrolled in Bible College at Tennessee Temple University.

I was in bad need of some suits to wear to classes. I prayed on Wednesday for suits. I prayed again on Thursday and then reminded God again about my suits on Friday. On Saturday I worked my bus route all day and didn’t pray or even think about suits. On Sunday a classmate, Bob Coburn, invited me to bring Jan and the kids to his home for Sunday dinner. He explained that his wife had gone to visit her mother and he was lonely. He also said he had been a chef in the Navy and was going to cook a big meal for us.

He started talking about biscuits and gravy, mashed potatoes, fried chicken, and he had even baked a big pie. We were so tired of beans and popcorn. It had really been tight. One fellow said they had 1000 things to eat at their house—999 beans and one piece of corn bread. It was just about that bad at our house. Another fellow said he ate beans for breakfast and drank water for lunch and swelled for supper. I pretty well know how it felt.



When we got to Bob's house, the meal was ready and very delicious. We really "pigged out" as my boys used to say.

After the meal, Bob asked me to come into the bedroom and see something that the Lord had given him. He opened the door to his closet and there hung eight beautiful new suits. "Where in the world did you get those beautiful suits?" I asked. Bob explained that his brother owned and operated a clothing store in South Carolina; when he had visited him the week before, his brother had given him these eight beautiful brand new suits.

"What size suit do you wear, Brother Tom?" he asked.

"That size right there," I declared pointing to the eight suits. He handed me one and asked what I thought of it. "It is beautiful," I answered. He handed me another and another.

"I want you to have those three suits" he told me. They fit perfectly. The Lord knows my size.

I realized immediately that I had prayed for three days and the Lord gave me three suits. I should have prayed for four or five days. I also remembered that I had obeyed the Lord by selling our house and quitting my good job to do the Lord's bidding. I received my answer because I had obeyed His commandments and had been pleasing in His sight.

God is looking for those who will be willing to abide in Him and allow Him to work through them to accomplish His purpose.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were on "praying ground"? Then we could do as Jeremiah the prophet taught us, "*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*" (33:3)