

GOD ANSWERS PRAYER IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Philippians 4:15-19

Introduction: Prayer....every Christian has prayed, and hopefully continues a prayer life but how many of those prayers have been answered according to the desires of the one praying? Does God hear prayer? Does God answer prayer right away? Does God grant what is asked in prayer? "*...Your Father, who hears in secret, will reward you...everyone that asketh...seeketh...knocketh...receiveth, findeth, it is opened...*" said Jesus. There is one thing for certain about prayer, God answers prayer in different ways.

I. GOD MAY CHANGE THE SITUATION ABOUT WHICH ONE IS PRAYING

1. In *Acts 12:5-17* Peter is in prison, in the inner cell, chained between two soldiers with other soldiers on guard outside the cell doors, and in the courtyard by the iron entrance gate.
 - Peter is asleep as probably are the guards.
 - Yet, God got Peter out in answer to prayers by Christians who knew Peter's situation but were not sure how, when or if God would hear their prayers.

2. In *Acts 4:23-29* the Church was in great distress and prays concerning the much persecution, asking for courage, boldness.
 - In answer to their prayer, God brings Saul, their greatest persecutor, to Jesus and he becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, one of those he was on his way to persecute. (*Acts 9:26*)

3. In *Acts 16:19* Paul and Silas are in the prison in Philippi and even though in chains and the lowest dungeon/cell, they begin to pray and sing.
 - The place began to shake and the chains fell off, the cell doors opened and the head jailer asks "what must he do to be saved..." He and his whole household became Christians.

4. Every Christian knows that through prayer:
 - Right decisions are reached.
 - Finances are provided.
 - Solutions present themselves.
 - Obstacles are overcome or just disappear.
 - Attitudes suddenly change.
 - Surprising, humbling things happen to change one's weak faith.
 - Over and over again, prayer has proven itself to be God's way of changing things.

5. Prayer is the request of Christian hearts to the heavenly Father in whose hands are all the corners of the earth and all the powers and resources within it.
 - God, the maker and ruler of the earth, who stepped into history through His Son, Jesus Christ remains mighty and free within His own world.
 - Life and its situations, things and their laws, people and their decisions all remain subject to God.
 - Prayer offered to almighty God as He bids can well change one's situation to one's surprise.

II. GOD MAY SHOW HOW TO CHANGE THE SITUATION WHILE ONE IS PRAYING

1. In most of our prayers we give God instructions, "do this or do that" and God's answer is: "DO IT YOURSELF!"
 - Often we pray that God will do what He has already commanded us to do.
 - Evangelize and feed the world.
 - Unite His people, bend their stubborn wills.
 - Often we ask for things to be given to us as "gifts" when His Word has already made it clear that His gifts come under certain conditions.
 - The right answer to some of our prayers is often a command.
2. Joshua prayed earnestly, sincerely, even broken-heartedly at Ai because Israel had been soundly defeated by the Canaanites. (*Joshua 7:6-12*)
 - God answered Joshua: "...*Arise (get up) why have you thus fallen on your face? Israel has sinned...*"
 - God then gave Joshua instructions on what to go look for and what judgment was to be given.
3. Moses pleaded with God about their situation - the Egyptian army behind them and the Red Sea before them and the desert on either side of them and no where to go.
 - God answered Moses: "...*Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward...*" (*Exodus 14:15*)
4. Peter came to Jesus about what they needed to do to pay the due taxes. (*Matthew 18:24-27*)
 - Jesus told him to go fishing and in the fish he caught he'd find the tax money needed.
 - Jesus told Peter in a sense to "go and earn/work for the thing you are asking for."
 - Prayer is never a substitute for obedience, effort or thinking.
 - Prayer is not to take the place of plain duty/work.

III. GOD MAY LEAVE THE SITUATION AS IT IS AND CHANGE THE ONE PRAYING

1. Paul is the example here.
 - Lying in prison, frustrated, chained to a guard, apparently of no more use to the Lord.
 - He prayed, the Philippian Church was praying, all concerned about the waste of Paul's life, talent, and his great faith.
 - Paul realized he had an opportunity to witness there where he was, chained to a guard that was changed every so often, so he had more than one guard he could witness to, so he sized the opportunity.
 - Paul could also write (*Philippians 1:12-26*).
 - All that Paul wrote while in prison makes up most of all his writings which he might not have written had he not been in prison with the time to write.
 - Paul realized that he could be used there where he was.
2. Paul also had earlier prayed for the Lord to remove a physical problem he called "a thorn in the flesh."
 - He learned, after not having it removed, that God's grace was sufficient for all things and resigned himself to keeping that physical problem.

- Paul's outward circumstance remained unchanged, but his inward self changed to accept whatever God wanted Paul to have or not have.

CONCLUSION:

1. Prayer is communicating with almighty God through the name of Jesus Christ.
2. Prayer is asking God to do things for us.
3. God answers prayer in different ways:
 - He may change the situation one is praying about.
 - He may show the one praying how to change the situation when he/she is praying.
 - He may leave the situation as it is and change the one who is praying.
 - God hears our prayers and will answer them as He sees fit.
4. For us, it should not matter HOW God answers our prayers, knowing He hears and understands is enough.
5. Talk with God as often as He wants to listen to you. How often is that?