

The ANSWER to Unanswered Prayer

Why doesn't God intervene and answer your prayers?
How can you be SURE of getting an answer? Do you
know the SEVEN conditions God has set?

by Roderick C. Meredith

HAS GOD gone "way off" somewhere? Why do the polished prayers of the preachers and politicians seem so empty and futile? Why don't they get RESULTS?

The fundamental reason why the prayers of most people—yes, even ministers—are not being answered today, is that they do not really know the true God. They think of God as a sort of vague, far-off, indefinable something. They know not the true God who is the active, law-giving RULER of the universe. They seem to forget that God reveals Himself in His word, the Bible, and that He shows us the kind of God He is—that God informs us how we should OBEY Him, and what He has PROMISED to do for us.

Believe the Bible

Can we take God's word as His? Does God mean what He says in it?

Jesus thought so. He said, "Thy word is TRUTH" (John 17:17). The apostles constantly taught and acted as if God's word were literally true.

Who is right? Are you going to follow the differing ideas of men, or do you want to obey Jesus and live by every word of God (Mat. 4:4)?

To get RESULTS in your prayers, you should believe in the God of the Bible. Believe His word is truth. And be willing to act on God's word and His commands.

Free yourself from the hidebound traditions of this confused world and its "churchianity." Seek the true God in prayer. Study God's word to find out His commandments and His promises. Then, take God at His word!

The Bible reveals seven basic conditions which you should fulfill to be certain of answered prayers.

What are they?

Seek God's Will

In James 4:1-4, the apostle showed that the children of this world—fighting and warring as they do—fail to receive help because they often neglect to ask God's help. And when they do, it is only to ask for their own selfish ends.

To ask selfishly is to "ask amiss." You can expect no answer to such a prayer.

To get an answer, follow Jesus' example when He said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). But can you know God's will? "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

STUDY God's word as Paul commanded Timothy (II Tim. 2:15). Then you will begin to think more as God thinks. You will come to know what God's will is in every circumstance. If you believe and know that God is love, that His will is for our good, then you will want to pray according to God's will.

You need not always have a specific promise in the Bible to know that something is God's will. Through experience and guidance, you will learn how to apply the principles of God's revealed will to any situation which may arise.

The point is that you must pray according to God's will to receive an answer. "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 hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (I John 5:14-15). God's word reveals that by fulfilling this condition you KNOW that God will answer your prayers!

Asking according to God's will is the over-all, fundamental condition of answered prayer. All other conditions could be grouped under this one because they are the specific points of God's will in regard to prayer. The following six, together with and magnifying this first condition, will ensure answered prayers.

Believe God

Most people do not realize that a lack of faith is simply a disbelief that God will keep His promises or back up His word. Have you ever thought of it that way?

God has promised to heal His children through the prayers of His ministers (James 5:14). If you doubt this promise, you are making God a liar!

Real FAITH is not an emotional "feeling" that you generate by thinking certain thoughts over and over. You don't "talk yourself into," or "think yourself into" real, believing faith. Godly faith is simply your willingness—through God's help—to quietly, patiently trust God to perform His word. Abraham had that kind of faith. The apostle Paul wrote of him: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20-21).

Abraham relied completely on God to perform His promises. Do you?

If you lack real faith, ask God to give it to you. Faith is one of the gifts of God's Holy Spirit.

James was inspired to write that a man must have faith to receive answers to his prayers (James 1:5-7). A man who wavers will not receive an answer. "For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (v. 7).

God has made hundreds of promises in His word which we can claim. Healing is just one of them. When you are sick, do you obey God's command to "call for the elders of the church"? Or do you rush to the phone and call the doctor?

Do you completely TRUST God to keep His promise to heal, or do you trust in the painful, costly, and sometimes fatal method of doctors with their drugs and knives?

If you really believe God will heal, then trust Him to do it! Faith without works is dead (James 2:20). To have answered prayers, you must have faith—and you must act on that faith!

Be Fervent

It is common in our day for parents to teach their children memorized prayers. The father often mumbles a hurried, routine prayer of thanks at the table. The minister either reads or recites from memory an eloquent prayer which sounds very impressive.

Is God impressed?

The "fruits" show that God rarely

hears such prayers, for they are usually *not answered*.

This is so because people don't put their *hearts* into their prayers (Hosea 7:14). They don't "cry out" to God with their whole being as the ancient prophets did—and as Christ did when He prayed.

On the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus needed strength from God for the coming ordeal. He needed to get really close to God. He knelt down and began to pray that *God's* will, not his own, would be done. "And being in an agony he prayed more *earnestly*: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). He prayed *earnestly*—with all His heart.

In James 5:16, we read, "The effectual FERVENT prayer of a righteous man availeth much." We have to pray *fervenly, earnestly, zealously*, if we expect God to hear.

Put your *whole heart* into your prayers!

Fear and Humility

Modern man has a cocksure, self-sufficient attitude and thinks he can get along fine without God. He neither fears God nor respects God's word as an *authority* in his life. He is vain, egotistical, self-important.

Is it a wonder that God fails to answer the prayers of such men?

The very *first* prerequisite to a knowledge of God is to fear Him and respect His word. "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10).

Carnal man needs to realize that he is only *dust* and shall return to the dust unless and until he receives the Spirit of God, which is the begettal to eternal life. Eternal life is a *gift* from God (Rom. 6:23), not something we already have. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then *vanisheth away*" (James 4:14).

We need to *fear* God, realizing that our lives are in His hands. We should be humble, realizing that any gifts or talents we may have are ours *because God gave them to us*.

When we can approach our Creator in *that* attitude—respecting His power and authority over our lives—then He will hear our prayers.

When Christ was in the human flesh, even He feared God as we should. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that *he feared*" (Heb. 5:7). When we fully realize our own *helplessness*, then we will cry out to God as we should.

Peter wrote "be clothed with *humility*: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth

grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5).

The attitude of *humility* and *godly fear* is vital in prayer, and at *all times*.

Be Persistent

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus spoke a parable to teach us that we should always pray, and never give up hope. He showed that even an unrighteous judge would finally hear the pleas of a widow who *kept coming to him*. So we should keep praying to God, *even though He doesn't answer right away*.

God has made many promises in His word. But He has *nowhere* said that He will perform them at the *time*, or in the *way* that we choose. Sometimes it is very good for *us* not to have our prayers answered immediately. God is building patient *faith* into our characters.

James was inspired to write, "the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). If God doesn't answer your prayers immediately, exercise *patience* and keep praying until He does answer.

Don't nag at God. He has supreme wisdom to know *when* and *how* would be best to answer your prayers. But if you have prayed as you should, He *WILL* answer. God *always* keeps His promises! So be *persistent*. Keep praying in faith, and God is *bound* to perform His part.

Obedience

A sixth condition of answered prayer is one which is neglected and violated consistently by most professing "Christians." This hinges directly on the before mentioned fact that very few people today really know the true God. People do not look to God as the *AUTHORITY* in their lives. Instead, they make a "god" out of this world's society and its customs, traditions, and religious practices.

God inspired Paul to write, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to *obey*, his servants ye are to whom ye obey" (Rom. 6:16). If you obey the ways of sin practiced in this world, you are putting this society and its pagan customs *in place* of the true God!

God wants more than "lip service." He requires *OBEDIENCE!*

If you haven't learned to fear the true God and accept His word as the *authority* in your life, then you don't even really *know* God. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a *liar*, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

How can men persistently refuse to keep God's commandments, and then expect Him to answer their prayers? Peter answers, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12).

Sin is simply breaking God's law (1 John 3:4). God will *not* hear the prayers of those who persist in sin—in evil. If people would obey God, they would get *answers* when they pray. Then God wouldn't seem so far away, so unreal—as He probably does to most of *you!* Think it over. Then *do something about it*.

Does God ever hear the prayers of the unconverted? Yes, He does. God himself has blinded the eyes of many to the truth at this time (Rom. 11:7-8). It is His *responsibility* that they don't know the truth yet. So God does sometimes hear and answer the prayers of those who *obey as far as they know*.

The lepers and cripples who came to Jesus to be healed didn't know all of God's truth. But they did realize that Jesus was sent from God and could heal. And *they acted on what they knew*.

So it is a matter of your *heart* or *attitude*. If you come to God in a humble, repentant spirit and are determined to obey Him *to the best of your knowledge*, He will hear your prayers. But this is *no excuse* for anyone who knows the truth to disobey God!

True Christians can have a special confidence that God *will answer* their prayers *if* they are *OBEDIENT*. "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 3:22).

Use Christ's Name

The seventh condition of answered prayer is the correct use of Christ's name. This is a greatly misunderstood subject, and the use of Christ's name is often abused.

After Jesus had been with His disciples for over three years, and had taught them *God's will* and how to obey it, He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing *in my name*: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). These verses give us the privilege of employing Christ's name—asking by His authority—when we pray to God. But most people misunderstand *how* we can ask "in Jesus' name."

When our government sends an Ambassador to another country, he is given *authority* to carry out certain business *in the name* of the United States Government. He can act *in the name* of our government because it has conferred on him the *authority* as its chosen representative to carry on certain business on its behalf. His authority is *limited* to do only what the government has specifically authorized him. If he exceeds his delegated authority, his actions are *null* and *void* and will *not* be backed up by this government.

That is the *way* we are to ask things "in Jesus' name." Christ has given His ministers the duty of performing certain functions in His name—or *by His authority*. We can rightfully ask for things "in Jesus' name" only when we know that it is His will—that His *authority* stands back of it.

Just rattling off the words "in Jesus' name" to a prayer that is contrary to God's will and Christ's will is of *no avail whatsoever*.

Those who abide in Christ and are God's children have the privilege of praying in Christ's name. Jesus explained, "If ye abide in me, and *my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

Yes, Jesus' *words* must abide in you. You must ask according to *His will*. You must abide in Him—*belong to Him*. "Now if any man hath *not* the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). And God gives His Holy Spirit to them that OBEY Him (Acts 5:32).

So to pray in Jesus' name, you must at the same time be *yielding* to His will to the best of your knowledge. "In Jesus' name" means *by His authority*. You are praying through Him as your High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16).

Christ—our High Priest—was tempted in all points like we are (v. 15). He understands our weaknesses. It *is* His revealed will to give us of His Spirit (Luke 11:13) and to help us live a more abundant life (John 10:10). You need to *study* God's word to know the

principles of His will, that you may ask by His authority.

Praying in Jesus' name is a great privilege. Use Jesus' name *correctly*, and your prayers will be *answered* because of the *authority* conferred through Him.

Action Will Follow

If you faithfully conform to these seven *conditions of answered prayer*—with God's help, you may then have *absolute confidence* that God will hear and answer your prayers. You will be changing, growing closer to God each day. You will be actively seeking and doing His will.

This intimate contact with the Creator of Heaven and Earth will give you a peace of mind and quiet confidence that *nothing* can destroy. But your confidence will not be in *self*, but in the greatest POWER there is. In *every* trial and problem, you have the right to call on the Supreme Power—the active, living God who reveals Himself in the Bible.

God has inspired an example of how He heard and *answered* even the prayers of an unconverted man *because* that man was in a *right spirit*, and had *obeyed* what he knew. In II Kings 20:1-11, we read the account of how king Hezekiah was about to die and sought God's deliverance.

God's own prophet, Isaiah, had told Hezekiah that he would die. But Hezekiah knew that God was an all-merciful God, and that he had obeyed God the best he knew how and could.

So Hezekiah "wept sore" and be-

sought God's intervention (v. 3). He put his *heart* in his prayer!

In *spite* of the fact that He had previously told Isaiah that Hezekiah would die, God heard and *answered* Hezekiah's fervent prayer! He added *fifteen years* to Hezekiah's life!

What a *result* of prayer!

But was that all?

No indeed. Hezekiah did not *doubt* God's power to *intervene* and *act* as this world does. He made a *further* request that God would give him a special sign that he would be healed (v. 8).

God's servant, Isaiah, gave Hezekiah the choice of the sign—the shadow would either go forward ten degrees, or backward ten degrees. Hezekiah said it would be *harder* for the shadow to go backward ten degrees. "And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord: and *he brought the shadow ten degrees backward*" (v. 11).

Because of Hezekiah's faith, obedience, and fervent prayers, God Almighty not only *healed* him and added *fifteen years* to his life, but *He actually caused the sun to reverse itself in the heavens!*

This was *not* an "optical illusion." God's miracles are *real!* "For with God NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE" (Luke 1:37).

If you believe that God's word *is truth*, this should inspire you to *pray* as never before! Pray for God's *work*, for God's *servants*, for His people everywhere. Ask in *faith* for your own needs. *Rely* on God in every trouble. He is a God of *power!*