

Unanswered prayer exposes true faith and strengthens resolve!

By Rev. Callender

Unanswered prayer is one of the most difficult subjects to explain but I will attempt to give an answer from the perspective of revealing true faith and trust in an all-loving God.

A relationship constitutes a form of love based on trust. When circumstances arise that seem to put a damper on a relationship we should be able to revert to trust based on the love or the character of the person with whom a relationship is established. In the case of a lack of character to some extent we can rely on God's character demonstrating selfless love to give the relationship grace. Yet, how can two walk together unless they agree?

Before we go any further, a relationship with the Lord must be a part of life for anyone hoping to tap into spiritual strength and grace concerning answered prayer. This would indicate our first prayer would need to be one of repentance by asking Jesus to be our Lord and savior. How can we go to a Father who is not ours and ask for favor? Once salvation is secured we can have the grace for a relationship toward others founded on the love we share with God. Therefore, because He will be involved in every aspect of our life, including prayer, we have confidence for a miracle or what we call answered prayer.

In our relationship with the Lord we need to remember His impeccable character. His love and thinking is far superior to ours. He knows our thoughts, He remembers everything we ever did or said, He knows everything we will do or say and everything that will happen as a result. Yet we still have free will. How our Lord has the patience to endure this is a mystery unless we understand free will was given to introduce to us the whole concept of love. Love is a decision not an impulse or an emotion. This concept of love is not only the Lord's creation but His very nature which was precipitated from the cross.

Our problem is that we do not always see God's loving hand in what He does while in pursuit of accomplishing His plan and purpose for our lives. He must do these things in us as a loving parent would once we consent through faith to being His child. All this must be held in balance with the fact that God is sovereign over the entire earth and that we are not even close to having the wisdom to understand His omnipotent plan and design. This is not to make us feel small it is just that He is so big. His wisdom extends beyond the universe. And that my friends does clash with worldly thinking.

Our loving eternal Father raises his children at times to their disapproval, not only for the benefit of the individual, but also for the family of God. This of course is easier when the children who came by faith allow love to put wheels on their faith. He has in mind, as all loving fathers do, our best long-term interest. This again has to do with free will.

Note: The child that does not know or trust their Father's heart will constantly question His motives. Subsequently the child who's only interested is in immediate comfort or gratification will rebel against their Father's action.

When we look at this scenario concerning our prayers to our heavenly Father we can understand why some prayers seem to go unanswered. Though we know that the Lord

has the ability to accomplish all things, not all know this: He cannot deny His own impeccable character though He is bound to us by perfect love. His love and action in our lives is so far above comprehension that our trust must revert back to the day of our salvation. If we are trusting God for eternal life why would we not trust Him for all things? How else are we to bind ourselves by faith to the extent of laying down our own lives? The ability to see and accept His guidance through our circumstances is trusting in the character of God's love even though our prayers seem to be unheard. To join Christ on the cross is no easy task. (death to self-will)

In the case of earthly fathers who are not committed to loving their children rebellion may result from the lack of security and trust. As parents we will all give an account for the responsibilities toward our children. Love always includes accountability.

However, a God who is willing to put Himself on a cross for the sake of love shows that His immutable character is good ground for trust. Those committed to Christ also have an advantage in their knowledge of the heavenly Father because of the indwelling Holy Spirit given through salvation and the Word of scripture. He is the assurance for our trust. When we walk in the confidence toward our Heavenly Father the Holy Spirit of God not only leads our prayers but also assures our peace in the outcome of our circumstances. This is hard to see in the moment of our tribulation but never the less true. Besides, He did not demonstrate His love to perfect children but "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us".

In the referred scriptures there is an example in the life of Job. To get the proper perspective you must read the entire book. However, in short, the Lord allowed Job to be tested to the extent of losing children, possessions and even his health unto the brink of death. In his prayer Job wanted an audience with the Lord that he might ask Him why these things were allowed to happen. Perhaps some of us may think the Lord should give an account for His actions or they themselves could give an account to the Lord thinking that they could justify their own steps before God.

They give no time for His plan of wisdom is manifest. I personally have been tested not to the extent of Job but enough that my weak faith allowed me to lose what I thought was years of my life even after my commitment to Christ. However, there were things in me that had to be exposed before I could fulfill my purpose. God answers prayer nevertheless His purpose takes precedence over our satisfaction. How can a child who only sees to the extent of their physical and emotional senses understand an infinite God? I was a young boy when God called me to service. Satan immediately added a circumstance to my life to destroy confidence throwing every life directing decision into question. I spent 38 years going my own way and years in anger because of so much rejection including broken marriages before I gave my life to the Lord. I had a beautiful time with Him with many answered prayers and beautiful miracles but training had to begin. My weaknesses needed to be exposed and strengthened. Consequently, I am now in my 60's and finally starting to walk in my calling. The Lord does not revoke His call. I prayed that I could do something right before I die. I must add that the Lord blessed me with some fabulous children.

The more I learn about God I realize our own perspective is too small and our vision too short to understand all that He does. In the case of Job I believe that God wanted to exalt him among men. Exaltation can bring a person into the place of arrogance which could destroy them and their righteous witness before others. In Job's case, I believe God was also giving a foreshadow of the Christ to come. God did restore Job to an even

greater place and position among men. Some scholars believe he became the richest man in the world. I believe that Job's exaltation could have been the reason for his afflictions. There is also another possibility.

God did make Job's accusers go to him to intercede with God for their forgiveness. They judged Job saying his afflictions were a result of a sinful life. God's vindication of Job is a type of Christ as our intercessor. He also was wrongly accused of sin but Christ now intercedes for us. Therefore remember this; when you are a showpiece of the Lord or have a purpose of great significance given by God you will be targeted and tested not only by your enemies but those who call themselves friends. People are at times used by Satan who is ultimately the enemy of God targeting the witness in you. Subsequently, God cannot be held guilty if He wants to perfect you for a greater purpose. I refer to you, Singular, because I want it understood that our Heavenly Father as a good parent does not compare His children one to another but deals with each of us according to the dictates of our personalities, temperaments and needs.

Greater purpose always determines the Lord's action in our lives!

The Lord does not give us the responsibility of a great task until He has perfected our faith and character to do it. Sometimes He may use our pain to chisel out a champion for His name. This may sound like God is a cruel taskmaster for His glory but this is where kings walk and also where we share in the rewards of Christ. The Bible says that our mind cannot conceive the glories that await the faithful.

However, to walk in this glory we cannot give ourselves to Him half-heartedly, but, we must commit all into His hands even as Christ did for us at the cross!

Everyone should do a study on humility to help understand God, not only in the time of blessing but also in crisis. (Read Daniel Chapters 1 thru 5) (Esther)

God had exiled the children of Israel from their land because of their idolatry. In the book of Daniel, the remnant in exile was under God's watchful hand even while being chastised.

The book of Esther contains intercession with God for the exiles through humility while punishing the arrogant for the sake of His children.

The next example I bring is to show the weightiness of prayer and the responsibility that comes with an answered prayer. From the book of Kings, I give as an example of a dying man's prayer. His name is King Hezekiah and his call on the Lord to add years to his life. He asked the Lord to remember his faithfulness in doing His will. The Lord grants an answer to the King's prayer by adding fifteen years to his life.

However the events that follow bring destruction to the Nation of Judah because of God's answered prayer. During the years added to King Hezekiah's life, he fathered a son named Manasseh. When Manasseh became king, he did so much evil that he became an abomination to the Lord. Not only for his own sin but he also lead the people of Judah astray to the extent that the nation was cursed by God and marked for destruction. The Lord would not relent even when the grandson of Manasseh, King Josiah, tried to make things right.

This brings up some interesting questions concerning answered prayer.

1. What was King Hezekiah's responsibility to the country during the years added to his life?

2. What was Hezekiah's responsibility toward Manasseh born during those years?
3. Should the Lord have ignored the prayer of Hezekiah for healing knowing what was going to happen to the nation under Manasseh?
4. What was the responsibility of the people in praying for their leadership?
5. Since this took place over a period of fifty plus years why did the people walk away from God and not teach their children that the leadership of the nation had turned to evil and that they should pray for God's salvation?
6. Where they slowly desensitized into accepting this evil by not keeping a prayer vigil according to God's guidelines?
7. Why did the people so quickly forget their Lord who has revealed Himself by delivering them from death at the hand of the Assyrian army?

Surely they remembered that the Angel of the Lord took out 185,000 of the Assyrian army knocking at the gate of the city to destroy it!

I'm sure the entire nation knew of the miraculous sign that God gave Hezekiah by the retreating shadow (II Ki 20:8-11) to show His faithfulness. There is only one way "I know" for a shadow to retreat. The earth must stop spinning then for a time spin in the opposite direction, stop again and continue its normal spin.

1. What should these events do for our faith? Do we believe the Lord's Word to be true? Indeed the Creator of all things has the power to do with His creation what He wills yet He deals with us through love!
2. Do our prayers include our children and the affect they will have in the world?
3. Are we teaching our children about the Lord and how to pray?
4. How big are our prayers and do they include all who will be affected if our prayers are answered?
5. Do we pray according to the principles of God's word or do we pray from the dictates of our own desires?
6. Do you believe your prayer can produce a miracle? I can confidently tell you that the prayer of salvation does.

I was driving down the road one day quietly praising the Lord in my heart when the Lord spoke very clearly, to my heart, that He answered my prayer. I asked "what prayer Lord"? I must have thousands of them out there. Then I heard this answer "Ha Ha you died" Immediately it came to my mind just prior to my salvation I was praying for death. My life and circumstances became so odious to me that I wanted to die and asked God to grant this.

I praise God that He answers according to His wisdom and not mine. My prayer was the open door the Lord used to bring an opportunity for my salvation. It was the fourth time God called me to Him and He later assured me if I hardened my heart again, I would not have come and been eternally lost. My death however was to self (self-will) not to my body and to the damnation of my soul. I thank God for the opportunity to raise my children and to write this teaching.

The first purpose in writing was for my children and it may well have been the Lord's purpose to reach those reading this through me. I am in awe and humbled at the prospect of this being true. Also the Lord's little chuckle shows me the joy He gets out of mending a broken heart and showcasing His great wisdom in the manner of my answered prayer. He did not reveal all this until years later.

We must not fail to understand the enormous responsibility attached to an answered

prayer. Again being personal, you also must know that you have an enemy that will fight against your prayers therefore take this advice. Trust the Lord enough to answer your prayer according to His good will and purpose. Being persistent in prayer because it stabilizes our faith and gives the hope that we need to endure now and usher us into eternity. I like a scripture in Hebrews that says: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". I understand that prayer is talking with my Creator. And I know that prayer can make the substance of our faith an eternal reality.

Remember, the greatest seemingly unanswered prayer that ever benefited mankind went like this: "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will." (The prayer of Jesus before His crucifixion)

In the Gospel of John, chapter 17, you will see a prayer of Jesus and for it to be answered He had to give His life.

PRAY THIS:

Lord I reject the wisdom of this world that brings much pain to so many. I ask for the grace of Jesus Christ and the light of His wisdom that I may see the kingdom of God. I ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit that my heart may be afire with the Love and power of God to overcome, Amen!

References I used:

John 1:14 (NIV),	John 10:30 (NIV),	John 17:15(NIV),
Job 2:3 (NIV),	Job 31:35-37 (NIV),	Job 38:1-5 (NIV)
Job 42:1-6 (NIV),	II Ki 20:1-3 (NIV)	II Ki 20:10-11 (NIV),
II Ki 21:1 (NIV),	Ps 75:7 (NIV),	Matt 26:39 (NIV)
Rom 5:8 (NIV),	Phil 4:6 (NIV),	Daniel Chapter 4(NIV)