

GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

By

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REPEATED PROMISES TO ANSWER PRAYER

“I know not by what methods rare, but this I know: God answers prayer.”

Prayer is one of the great themes of the Bible. It is spoken of in minute detail because prayer is the way we commune with God. One of the Christian’s greatest privileges is the opportunity to approach God directly in prayer. Over 300 times, God speaks on this subject. One reference is the words of Jesus recorded in John 14:13-14, *“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”*

Jesus said there are two parts to prayer. We ask and God acts! It is as simple as that. Jesus promised that as surely as we ask, God will act in response.

The promise of answered prayer is guaranteed through the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. If God loved us enough to give Jesus to die for us, surely He loves us enough to answer prayer in giving us all necessary things for life and godliness through Jesus. Romans 8:32 reads, *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with*

him freely give us all things?” He will!

Jesus sometimes rebukes us concerning our prayer life. He does not complain that we ask too much. Neither does He censure that we ask too often. His only rebuke is that we do not ask at all. The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle James to echo Jesus’ sentiment when he wrote, “...ye have not, because ye ask not,” James 4:2c. To ask is to receive. Jesus promises it.

Speaking from personal experience, someone has said, “*I know not by what methods rare, but this I know: God answers prayer!*” I, too, know God answers prayer. I know God answers prayer because of His repeated promises to answer.

Whose prayer does God promise to answer?

The Bible lists many types and conditions of people whose prayers God answers. God hears and answers the prayers of good men. “*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*” Psalm 34:7. God answers the prayers of good men. God hears and answers the prayers of the destitute. He supplies the need of the needy. He is the helper of the helpless. Men are inclined to turn from such people, but God hears and answers their prayers. Read Psalm 72:12, for instance, “*He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.*” God answers the prayer of the poor, the needy, and the destitute.

God answers the prayer of the outcast sinner. Luke 18:13-14 tells of God’s answer to the prayer of a publican—a sinner—who lived during Jesus’ day. The publicans were men who collected taxes from the Jews for payment to the Roman government. Devout Jews considered them traitors of their nation and rebels from their religion. Publicans were hated by the populace in general. They were shunned by “Polite” society. Their word was not received as testimony in a court of law. They were classed with harlots and reprobates—the scum of society. But when that publican cried out, “*God be merciful to me a sinner,*” God heard his cry. His prayer was answered. He went home forgiven and justified from his sin. God hears the sinner when he prays.

The scriptures assure us that God will have an open ear to the prayers of any person. The needy, the poor, the helpless, the good men, the sinner—each and all are loved of God and will be heard of God. This includes you. God will hear and answer prayer.

Read Matthew 7:7-8, “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*” What a blessed encouragement to prayer. But find a double blessing by reading the verses again emphasizing their personal pronouns. “*Ask, and it shall be given **you**; seek, and **ye** shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto **you**; for **every one** that asketh receiveth; and **he** that seeketh findeth and to **him** that knocketh it shall be opened.*” God will hear **you**. You ask and He will answer.

What are the proper subjects of prayer? Mark 11:24 answers, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them.” For what should we pray? Jesus answers, “*Talk to God about what ever you desire. Any thing which is a proper object of your desires, as a child of God, is a proper subject for your prayers.*” Any thing! What a scope of prayer!

John 15:7 repeats this truth: “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*” Again, “*what you wish*” is declared to be the proper subject for prayer. The only limitation is that you live a life of abiding in Christ and so

live subject to the Word of God. When you do, all the desires of life will be supplied by Him who answers prayer.

The subjects for prayer are expanded by the words of Jesus in John 1:13-14, “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*” Notice the emphasis on **whatsoever** as being proper to share with God in prayer. That **whatsoever** is expanded and clarified by the term **any thing**. All limitations are removed. “*What ever you desire...whatsoever ye shall ask...ask any thing in my name...*” There is nothing in your life you cannot talk with God about. Feel free to pray about everything.

I like the Living New Testament translation of Philippians 4:6, “*Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don’t forget to thank Him for His answers.*” This is good Biblical advice, “*...pray about everything.*” Jesus promises, “*If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,*” Matthew 18:19-20. **Any thing** is the proper subject of prayer.

Put all these gracious promises together, Jesus is encouraging you to pray about your home, your business, your school work, your loved ones, your personal spiritual needs, your financial needs, the outreach of the gospel, the needs of your church, your nation, the international crisis—anything and everything which is of concern for you. Anything which is of concern for you. Anything you cannot pray about should not be in your life. It is that simple. The promise is that inclusive. God is that concerned about you.

When does God promise to answer prayer? Isaiah 65:24 replies, “*And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*” God moves to bring an answer to your prayer while you are still praying, and even before you begin to pray. This truth is further emphasized in Mark 11:24, “*Therefore, I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them.*” The grammatical form is such that it means to ask with an outstretched hand. He inspires immediate expectation in the hearts of His children.

Remember that God is a Father. He delights for His children to come to Him with requests as we delight for our children to come to us. It is His joy to give that our joys may be full. He will not delay. Your prayer is inspired by His Holy Spirit. He will lead you to ask for nothing which He will not give. Ask in faith and expectation. His answer is not always in the way you expect, but His answer is always there.

“I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer. I know that He has given his word, which tells me prayer is always heard. And will be answered, soon or late; And so I pray, and calmly wait. I know not if the blessing sought, Will come in just the way I thought; But leave my prayers with Him alone, Whose will is wiser than my own, Assured that He will grant my quest, Or send some answer for more blest.” I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer.

BIBLE RECORD OF ANSWERED PRAYER

“I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer.”

How do I know God answers prayer? I know God answers prayer because of recorded instances in the Bible which tell how He has answered the prayers of His people. Let us examine

some instances of answered prayer.

God answers prayer which asks for the supply of physical needs. Approximately 3,000,000 people followed when Moses led the Hebrews in their great Exodus from Egyptian bondage. They traversed a dry and barren area on their journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai. Their reserves of water ran low. Finally, they came to Marah, where there were springs of water, but could not drink of that water because it was bitter. Moses “cried to the Lord,” and the Lord showed him a tree which, when cut and cast into the water, purified it so that it was fit for consumption, Exodus 15:23-25. Only a little later, the food supply ran low. Again, Moses prayed and God sent the manna and the quail about the camp that there might be food to eat, Exodus 16. God knows we need these physical supplies. He delights to answer prayers of request when we have need. God answers prayer which asks for supply of physical needs.

God answers prayer when you are seeking His will for your life. Judges 6 recounts the call of Gideon to be a judge and deliverer of the Hebrews from their oppressors. Gideon was so surprised that God would select a common man like him that he asked for proof that the ambition in his heart was truly of God. Gideon asked God for a sign, saying, “*Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand...*” verse 37. God answered the request for a sign. The next morning the fleece was not only damp with dew; Gideon wrung a bowl of water out of it. Again Gideon prayed, “*...let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.*” Again, God made it as Gideon asked.

It is not always advisable to ask God for such signs. But where one is honestly seeking God’s will, and makes such a prayer to God, God will answer.

God answers prayer when men earnestly seek His divine presence. King Solomon built a beautiful temple in Jerusalem to be the house of God among the Hebrew people. He brought stones from quarries at great distance and huge cost. He imported cedar from Lebanon. He secured the service of the most skilled artisans to do the work of building. Doors were overlaid with gold. Intricate carvings decorated the temple walls. It was by far the most expensive and beautiful building in the city of Jerusalem. But it was empty without the presence of God.

Solomon prayed a great prayer in which he besought the Lord to be present in the house built for His name. Suddenly, the king was aware of what he was asking. He cried out, “*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?*” I Kings 8:27. But God delights to answer prayer when men earnestly seek His divine presence. He replied to Solomon’s prayer, “*I have heard thy prayer and thy supplications, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually,*” 1 Kings 9:3. Then the Holy Scripture reads, “*Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house,*” II Chronicles 7:1-2.

God delights to answer the prayer of any one who seeks His presence. He promises, “*Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart,*” Jeremiah 29:13. We seek Him through prayer. God will answer your prayer for His presence.

God answers prayer in regards to life and death. Hezekiah was a good ruler over the little Jewish Kingdom of Judah. His country was invaded by the far superior military forces of the

kingdom of Assyria. The land of Judah was over run. Finally, Jerusalem was put under siege. The enemy sent a messenger to demand unconditional surrender and to blaspheme the name of the God of Judah.

Hezekiah resorted to prayer, saying, *“O Lord God of Israel...thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth...O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save us..., that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only,”* II Kings 19:15-19. God answered by the mouth of His prophet, Isaiah, *“I will defend this city, to save it..., ”* 19:34. And so it came to pass that very night that a plague struck the camp to the Assyrians. Their numbers were so decimated that they withdrew from the land of Judah and returned to their own homeland. God answered prayer for protection.

God answers prayer for Christians who are in trouble. The early Christian movement encountered great opposition. Believers were rebuffed, arrested, imprisoned, and even killed. The early chapters of the book of Acts (3-8) tell of three great periods of persecution, each increasing in severity over the previous, which broke over the early church.

In one such instance, the Apostle Peter was arrested and put in prison. He had done no wrong. Herod, the political ruler, had put him in prison as a political move to please some of the influential Jews. The Bible recounts, *“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him,”* Acts 12:5.

In the nighttime, the angel of the Lord came to Peter in prison, woke him and led him out into the streets of the city. Peter went immediately to the place where the Christians met and found them praying for him. God answered their prayer. He hears the prayers we offer in behalf of believers who are in trouble. Let us pray much for those who are in any trouble.

God answers prayer for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit—blessed third person of the divine trinity—has been in the world engaged in a special ministry: He indwells each person who trusts Jesus as Savior. But there is a distinction between the presence of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. God nowhere commands us to seek His presence, but He does command us to seek His fullness.

Using an analogy of a loving parent giving food to his child, Jesus says, *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* Luke 11:13. An illustration of God’s answer to a prayer for spiritual fullness is recorded in Acts 4. Following arrest and trial for preaching in the name of Jesus, the Christians prayed for boldness in their continuing witness. The Word of God records, *“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness,”* Acts 4:31. God heard their prayer and answered just as He will fill you with the Holy Spirit in response to your prayer today.

These five illustrations are but a little glimpse of the many, many instances recorded in the Bible where God answered prayer for specific things with tangible and definite provision. If you believe the Bible, you believe that God answers prayer. Do not argue with His promises and pray.

An aged minister was asked what changes he would make if he could exercise his ministry over again with the knowledge he now had. His reply was, “O sir, I would pray more. I would pray much more.” Take courage from this study to set your heart to pray more, to pray much more.

I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF ANSWERED PRAYER

"I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer."

Yes, I know God answers prayer. There are three great reasons why I have this assurance.

First, I know God answers prayer because of His repeated promises, recorded in the Bible, which assure us that when we call He will answer. We are absolutely sure that what He has promised, He is able to perform, Romans 4:21. He is faithful who promised, Hebrews 10:23. Jesus Christ is the surety of God's word, *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us,"* 11 Corinthians 1:20. The poet expressed the idea exactly in writing, "He has never broken any promise spoken; He will keep His promise to me."

Second, I know God answers prayer because of recorded answers to prayer in the Bible. God answers prayer for physical needs, for guidance, for His presence, for protection, for deliverance, for the Holy Spirit's fullness, and many other petitions. This was a divine purpose in these answers to prayer being recorded in Holy Scripture: *"...they are written for our admonition..."* I Corinthians 10:11. Answers to prayers were recorded that we might be encouraged to pray and expect God to answer today.

Third, I know God answers prayer because of the personal testimony of many reliable witnesses who declare God answered specific petition for them. Let us pursue this witness further.

The Bible abounds with personal testimonies of God's answer to the specific individuals. You remember the lovely story of Hannah, a wife who had no children. She besought the Lord that He would give her a son. Sure enough, in due time the child was born. She named him *"Samuel"* for the name means *"I have asked him of the Lord."* Hannah testified, *"For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him."* God gave her exactly what she asked for in prayer. He not only gave her a child, but a male child as she asked. Concerning her son, Hannah vowed, *"I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."* I Samuel 1:27-28. Ask Hanna. She will testify in truth that God answers prayer.

The Psalms abound in references to petitions offered to God. They also bear testimony that God answered the petitions, which were desired of Him. Hear this testimony of David, *"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles...I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."* No wonder he exults, *"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together,"* Psalm 34:6,4,3. Here is a further testimony from the writer of Psalm 116, *"I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech then, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou has delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling,"* verses 1-B. Ask the Psalmist, "Does God really answer prayer?" He will answer the emphatic "Yes!" That is the unanimous testimony of the Holy Bible.

Call on a New Testament apostle for testimony, "John, what is your experience regarding

God's answer to prayer?" He replies, "*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. Again, John declares. "*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.

Further testimony is available, but it is not needed. The Bible presents repeated declarations by reliable witness that God has answered prayer for them. There is nothing like the witness of personal experience. Yes, God does answer prayer.

There are many testimonies of people who have lived since Bible times that God has answered specific petitions, which they asked of Him. You see, God is still in the business of hearing and answering prayer. Look, for example, at the experience of George Mueller. This great Christian of a generation ago is a classic example that God answers prayer today. Mr. Mueller was responsible for the operation of a home for homeless children. There was no organization backing this project. Yet, he supported hundreds of children through the years by telling the Lord of their needs. He testified that at times there was no food for the next meal. He would take the need to God in prayer, telling no men, and by the time preparation should begin on the meal there would be something to cook.

Even those who do not share our faith in the Lord Jesus recognize that He answers prayer. John Knox prayed for the conversion of his native Scotland. So fervent were his prayers that the unbelieving queen said she feared the prayers of John Knox more than all the armies of the kingdom. Yes, God answers prayer today just as he did long ago.

Sometime ago, I took a "prayer survey" in the congregation where I was serving the Lord as pastor. I asked such questions as, "How often do you pray?" "How much time do you spend in prayer each day?" "How do you relate Bible study to your time of prayer?" Questions such as these revealed the prayer habits of my congregation.

One question I asked was, "Have you ever had a definite answer to prayer?" Every Christian in the congregation answered, "Yes." Another question was, "How long has it been since you received a specific answer to a petition?" Many answered, "In the last year," or "in the last six months," or "in the last thirty days." But I was frankly surprised at the number who replied, "I have received a definite and specific answer to a petition in the last twenty four hours."

I know God answers prayer today because I have experienced answers to the petitions I have desired of Him. Recently, a quite serious problem arose in my personal life. I besought the Lord concerning it. It was such a weight that it affected my sleep, my study, and even my prayer life. One morning I was at work in my study. The burden was so great I could not concentrate. So laying my work aside, I knelt down again and took the matter before my Father. As I prayed, the weight was suddenly lifted. Somehow God seemed to say, "It is well, I will undertake. Concern yourself no further about it." The burden did not return. About two weeks after, information came that the situation was clear and all was well. God answered the petition just as he had given me assurance about it days before. Yes, God does answer prayer today.

He will answer your prayer. Here is a promise recorded in Psalm 145:18. "*The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.*" The New Testament echoes this truth in Romans 10:12, "*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*"

Call. He will answer. You will be able to testify from personal experience, as has another: *"I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer."*

ASKING AND SEEKING FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

"I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer."

There is no statement which provides so much comfort and cheer with which to face the uncertainties of life than this: "God answers prayer." Such a truth delivers us from a formal and mechanical approach to prayer. It teaches us that prayer is no mere collection of pious expressions in eloquent language. On the contrary, prayer is conversation with a personal God, who is our Heavenly Father, in which we share with Him every concern of our hearts. No wonder the disciples, having heard Jesus pray, came to Him with the request, *"Lord, teach us how to pray."* In response to their entreaty, Jesus gave the Model Prayer and further instruction in how to pray. This instruction is recorded in Luke 11, Matthew 6 & 7 as well as other passages in the Gospels. Let Jesus encourage you to pray as you hear His words:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will be given him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Matthew 7:7-11.

Consider for great insights into effective prayer as presented in these words of the Lord Jesus. Prayer is personal involvement. Prayer is not something detached and unrelated to you. Prayer is a person-to-person encounter. It is you, a human person, sharing with God, a divine person. Examine the personal pronouns used in these verses. "You" or "your" occur seven times. "He, him, his" are found eight times. God is addressed as **"Your Father which is in heaven."** In real prayer, you are personally involved with God.

Flee from that prayer spirit which is detached and formal. Shun any form of prayer, which is artificial and ritual. Prayer is the soul's sincere desire. It is personal communion with God. Never be content with any thing short of this. Prayer is the most personal of all your religious relationships. Jesus teaches that there is no real prayer apart from personal involvement with God.

Prayer may be offered on different levels. Jesus' teachings indicate there are three different types of prayer. There is a prayer which is simple petition. It is indicated by the term "Ask." There is a prayer which is urgent and fervent. It is indicated in the term "seek," There is a prayer which is hot with importunity. It is indicated by the term "knock." At different times a believer will experience each of these levels of prayer.

Ask.--Let us "ask" for an answer to prayer. Our asking is based on God's ability to do. Ephesians 3:20 asserts that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Examine that amazing statement. God can do all we ask. He can do all we think but do not have faith to ask. He can do above all we ask or think. He can do abundantly above all we ask or think. He can do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. He can do it according to His power which is already working within us. Ask. God is able to answer.

We "ask" in assurance of God's willingness to answer prayer. Jesus raised a valid

question in asking, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” Matthew 7:11. God is our Father in Jesus Christ. He is as willing to give good things to us as we are to give good things to our children. We ask as a child. He answers as a Father. The only requirement upon our “asking” is that we ask in faith. We ask with confidence in God. We ask with full reliance upon God. We ask expecting an answer from God. Never grow faint hearted. Keep on asking; He will keep on giving.

Seek.—Let us “seek” for an answer in prayer. Seeking is an intensification of asking. You see it demonstrated in the experience of Jesus as He prayed in Gethsemane. Luke 22:44, “And being in agony he prayed more earnestly...” There are some instances when simple asking seems not sufficient. Sometimes the burden is so heavy, the need so great, the answer so urgent, that we plead earnestly with God. This is a proper way to pray. God honors earnest prayer promising through the prophet Jeremiah, “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart,” 29:13.

“Seeking” enlarges the scope of “asking.” It is more extensive and intensive. It leaves no stone unturned. A prayer seeking revival, for instance, will stir us to read, study, memorize and meditate on God’s word; to discipline our life; and to renew our personal devotion. Each of these are “prayer in action” as we seek anew the face of God. It is proper to “seek” with greater earnestness as we deal with God.

Knock.—Let us “knock” for an answer in prayer. Sometimes it seems you “ask” and “seek” But the doors are still closed. What do you do then? Jesus said, “Knock.” Knocking suggests importunity—a need which will not take “no” for an answer.

Insistence in prayer is not for the purpose of overcoming reluctance on God’s part. Quite the contrary. Isaiah 30:18 announces that God waits that He may be gracious to His people, to exalt them and have mercy on them. We think we wait for His answer. The truth is, He waits for our prayers.

Seeming delay in answer to prayer may be but a test of sincerity. To quit because prayer is not immediately answered is an indication of lack of earnestness.

Seeming delay in answer to prayer is likewise a test of faith. An unbelieving heart is soon discouraged. Psalm 27:14 gives this wise admonition, “*Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.*” While you wait, pray. Importune with an insistence which knows our only hope is in God. Ask, seek, knock. God will give the answer.

Prayer must be offered in view of our relationship with God. When I was in the university, we had occasional “religious convocations.” Often prayer would be offered by someone of a philosophical frame of mind. He would address God as “Thou Great Unknown,” or “Thou Great First Cause,” or “Thou Great Unmoved Mover.” Jesus never taught us to pray that way. He said, “*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father...*” Matthew 6:9. God is a Father. Approach Him as a child would approach his loving father.

Luke 11:5-8 recounts a story Jesus told of a man who had unexpected guests drop in late at night. He had no food in the house to offer them. So, he hastened down the street to a friend’s house and asked to borrow bread. The friend hesitated. It was most inconvenient to arise and get bread for his neighbor. Yet, because of the insistence of the man in need, he gave him all he asked for. Jesus told the story to lay upon our hearts the truth that God is more than a friend. He is our Heavenly Father. He will give us all we need when we ask.

Pray with certainty of an answer. Jesus said, “*Ask and it shall be given YOU; seek, and*

YE shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened unto YOU; for EVERY ONE that asketh receiveth; and HE that seeketh findeth; and to HIM that knocketh it shall be opened.” Memorize this passage. Encourage your heart with it when you come to God with your petitions. God will answer your prayer.

Exercise yourself in the blessed ministry of prayer. Soon your experience will inspire you to say with the poet: *“I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer.”*

COVENANT PRAYING AND ANSWERED PRAYER

“I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer.”

God has promised to answer the petitions presented by His believing children. To assure our faith, He has repeated this promise by precept and example. The Holy Bible contains scores of passages which speak to this truth. One of the wonderful expressions of God’s promise to answer prayer is recorded in Matthew 18:19-20:

“Again I say unto you, 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. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I and in the midst of them.”

What an amazing promise. It is amazing that so small a number may be involved in prayer—“two of you.” It is amazing that so many subjects may be dealt with in prayer—“ask.” It is amazing that the answer is so certain—“it shall be done.” It is amazing that so august a Person answers prayer—“my Father which is in heaven.” It is amazing that Jesus is personally present when prayer is being offered—“there am I in the midst of them.” This amazing promise is given for you and me. Let us claim it and pray.

Many promises of answered prayer are given for individuals to claim and use as basis for prayer. This promise is given for two or more to claim and see for unified prayer. You and another can claim this promise, pray on the basis of its assurance, and see an answer to prayer. You must have a deep concern to claim this prayer promise. This promise is not intended for flippant attitudes nor passing interests. Real prayer arises from a full heart. Get a spirit like Jesus who wept over the unbelief of the city of Jerusalem, Luke 13:34. Have a concern like that of the Apostle who testified of great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart because his brethren in the flesh were not Christians, Romans 9:1-3. The promise of Matthew 18:19 may be claimed only by one who bears a true spiritual burden for another.

The Bible speaks much about our burdens. Galatians 6:5 states that under some circumstances each person must bear his own burden. Galatians 6:2 suggests that under other circumstances we may bear one another’s burdens. Psalm 55:22 announces that under all circumstances, we may cast our burdens on the Lord and He will sustain us. If you are deeply disturbed about a situation which needs God’s help, claim this promise and pray. But do not respond to this promise unless you have a burden.

You must covenant with another to claim this prayer promise. This is not a promise to be claimed by an individual. There are many such promises in the Bible. But this particular promise is for two or more to share. Jesus said, *“If two of you shall agree...where two or three are gathered...”* This prayer promise is reserved for corporate prayer.

Whom may you claim as your prayer partner? Any person who trust Jesus and believes the word of God can join with you. Husband and wife may claim the promise together. Brother and sister may join in prayer upon this affirmation. You and your pastor or your Sunday School

teacher may claim the pledge. Any two believers in Jesus may pray on the basis of what God has promised in Matthew 18:19-20.

It is not necessary that the two who agree to ask God for a certain thing must always be together when they pray. They should come together to pray as often as possible. Jesus promises His presence “where two or three are gathered together” in His name. But many people who claim this promise pray when they are geographically separated. For instance, you and your prayer partner may agree that you will each pray at 10:00AM each day. Wherever you are, you pray at that hour. Your partner in prayer prays wherever he is. You are together in spirit. Then, as often as you can actually be together, you spend time in prayer as well.

The covenant is not only to pray together. It is a covenant to pray until the answer is received. Like Jacob who wrestled with the angel, resolve that you will not stop until the blessing has come. Even if it is long before you see the answer, keep on praying. Jesus taught us that “*men ought always to pray and not to faint,*” Like 18:1___. Covenant to pray until the blessing comes.

You must believe that God will honor this petition and answer your prayer. There is no substitute for prayer. But prayer must be offered in faith. Hebrews 11:6 states that “*without faith it is impossible to please God...*” The Epistle of James teaches that we must “ask in faith, nothing wavering.” The man who wavers will receive your faith then claim the promise. “According to your faith” may be written across all your prayers.

Ask with confidence. God is faithful. Jesus 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. Do not doubt God until He gives you a reason to doubt, and you will never doubt Him at all.

You must be committed to Christ to claim this prayer promise. Jesus does not promise that we can ask for anything—good or bad—and he will give it. Quite the contrary. There are some things asked for a selfish purpose, which He does not give. James 4:3 tells of such a case, “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*” On the other hand, it is the “*effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,*” James 5:16. Psalm 66:18 reads; “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*” Therefore, cleanse yourself from all known sin and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any sin you do not recognize. Be clean. Pray God has vouched His integrity to answer your prayers.

You must spend time in prayer to claim this promise before God. There is no substitute for talking with God. Resolves, desires, faith are all good, but they cannot take the place of praying.

God urges, “*Call unto me and I will answer thee...*” Jeremiah 33:3. The calling must come before the answering. Jesus said, “*Ask and ye shall receive,*” Matthew 7:7. The asking must precede the receiving. Jesus promises, “*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do tat the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it,*” John 14:13-14. Again, the asking must preface the doing. It has always been so.

I know this promise is valid because it has been demonstrated in my life. When I was a young lad, I took up the habit of smoking. When I was saved and God called me to preach, I kept the habit. The Lord led me to serve Him as pastor of a church in western Oklahoma. After moving to that field, I became convicted about this habit. I quit smoking in public, quit carrying a pack of cigarettes in my pocket when I went inside the church house, and otherwise tried to adjust enough to relieve a pricking conscience. Finally, I admitted to God that the conviction was from Him, committed the habit to Him, and quit. About two weeks afterward, a good

deacon in the church said to me, “Pastor, you have quit smoking, haven’t you? I replied, “Yes, the Lord convicted me and I have quit.” “Well then,” he replied, “I will tell you that Brother Hodges (another deacon) and I felt the habit was a hindrance to your witness for Christ in our community. We covenanted together on the basis of Matthew 18:19 that the Lord would deliver you.” I hastened home and read Matthew 18:19, “*Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*”

Here is my testimony from personal experience. “I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer.”