

210221 David Prays Seeking and Expecting the Lord's Answer 38/7 February 21, 2021

Dear Friends,

For most of my ministry of some sixty-six years, I have heard people, sincere, devoted believers, debate the question, "Does God really answer prayer?" "How can He answer our prayer requesting Him to do something for us and still work according to His will?" At the heart of this confusion lies a failure to distinguish between God's character and His actions, His conduct. What you do only alters your character if you do something that contradicts your character. If you enjoy a reputation for speaking the truth, for never telling a lie, but then you tell a lie, you contradict your character and blacken your reputation. However, if you enjoy a reputation for telling the truth, and you choose to remain faithful to that reputation, even when not telling the "Whole truth" might be more comfortable for you at the moment, you remain faithful to your character. You do not change. If you speak the truth in certain words today, and you think it appropriate to speak the same truth tomorrow, but in different words because of a different context of your conversation, does the fact that you spoke different words, though with the same meaning, mean that you "Changed"? Of course not.

Think about a real situation that we shall soon hopefully face. We reach that joyful day when we can safely and comfortably return to personal gatherings at church. Do you choose to arrive on time that first day? Or do you choose to arrive early to give you time to visit with your church family before the service begins? Or do you choose to arrive late? When you choose to arrive at church in no way alters who you are. So by what twisted logic do we conclude that, if God responds to our prayers, even by doing something that is wholly in harmony with His moral character, that he has "Changed"? The logic is errant, and the idea contradicts every passage in the Bible on prayer, especially those multitude of passages that remind us of the Lord's teaching us to ask with the expectation of receiving our request, as well as the many passages that document prayers offered and answered by the Lord granting what was requested.

A sincere suggestion. The next time someone asks you if God "Really" responds to, "Answers" our prayers with real concrete actions, study these Bible passages on prayer, and be prepared to answer with conviction, and not timidity, "Yes! God answers prayers. How many Bible lessons do you want me to give you that specifically document, in inspired Scripture, exactly how God intervened in human history and altered events in response to the prayers of His people?"

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

David Prays Seeking and Expecting the Lord's Answer

TO THE CHIEF MUSICIAN UPON NEHILOTH, A PSALM OF DAVID.

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. ([Ps 5:1-3](#) KJV 1900)

Follow me down an imaginary path for a moment. You have a friend whom you've known most of your life. As you reflect over your relationship through the years, you realize that, despite your asking for his help or favors, he has never once lifted a hand to help you. He promised many times, but never delivered. He never changed his plans or what he was doing to help you. What kind of "Friend" is this person?

If you have wrestled with the imaginary dilemma of God never altering one single event in answer to your prayer, despite telling you to ask Him, and even promising to answer, how is He any different from your false friend? And, if you know that He never changes anything or responds at all to your requests of Him, why bother to keep asking? I am increasingly persuaded that this errant and

dishonoring idea of God may well explain why so many believers are so slack in their prayer life. How many clear and simply stated passages must they ignore—and contradict—to continue living with this false idea about their God? The list is long, very long. Consider just a couple.

1. In Jesus' model prayer, ([Lu 11:3-4](#)) how many action verbs did Jesus insert into that model, verbs that specifically petition God to do something? Would Jesus teach us to ask for Him to do something in this model prayer, if He knew that He would do nothing in response? Ponder each of these verbs, specifically what they ask the Lord to do for us. "**Give,**" "**forgive,**" "**lead,**" "**deliver.**"

2. In the same lesson, notice Jesus' emphatic words, "**And I say unto you, 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. (Lu 11:9-10)**" If God never responds in action to our prayers, Jesus was deceitful in speaking these words. Are we so desperate to avoid the comforts of Scripture in favor of our own errant thinking as to lay such a charge at His feet? Please! No!

In this lesson, Jesus goes into repeated details regarding a caring, devoted father who will go out of his way to give his children what they need, concluding His teaching with, "**How much more shall your Heavenly Father give....**" How much can God give and still do nothing?

3. **Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (Jas 4:3)** Notice; James did not write that you ask and receive not because God refuses to change anything for you, but that you asked with bad motives.

4. I wonder. If we read the gospels and make a list of every person Jesus healed, how many of those people would agree with you, that God really doesn't alter anything in response to prayer? Not one of them!

Take the time to read the whole of [Ps 5](#) carefully. Not only does David praise God in his joyful faith-confidence that God will hear his prayer, but he also praises God for answered prayer. If God never responded to a single request that David prayed, do you think he would have prayed this prayer? That this sentiment would appear so strongly in inspired Scripture?

Look into your own private and very personal world. When you quietly, privately go to the Lord in prayer, do you go to Him with the joyful confidence that David expresses in these verses? Or do you go to Him tentatively, as a rejected orphan who expects nothing to change?

The New Testament faithfully affirms this faith-filled approach to our prayers.

*Let us therefore come **boldly** unto the throne of grace, that we may **obtain** mercy, and **find grace to help** in time of need. ([Heb 4:16](#), emphasis added)*

In one of the most comforting, assuring verses in the Bible, inspired Scripture builds its whole foundation on the clear conviction that our God cares and does respond specifically and decisively to the prayers of His people. He is touched by our struggles against our own weakness, so He faithfully responds to help us with His strength. Does that change anything in our lives? It changes everything in our lives! Praise God, it changes things.

The Biblical "Filter" to prayer, "*According to His will,*" does not imply that everything that occurs is in some mysterious way, "According to His will," so God can't possibly alter anything and remain immutable, unchangeable, illogically—and unbiblical—confuses God's character with what He chooses to do or not do. You are an honest person, so you choose to tell the truth, to pay your debts, and to generally live your life according to the dictates of your character. In many instances, you may remain faithful to your character by doing "A" or "B," both actions that agree with your character. You may pay your mortgage today or tomorrow. You may drive to the bank and hand them a check for your

payment, or you may put that same check in the mail. Either way, you honor your moral character. And what you did didn't change you, did it? To avoid asking the Lord to do anything whatever, on the false premise that you are asking Him to change His character confuses God's character with His actions. It also presumes a fatalistic idea that everything that happens is "According to the will of God." Consider how alien to Scripture this idea truly is.

*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things **ought not so to be.*** ([Jas 3:10](#); emphasis added)

Can we honestly believe that God wills something to occur that God, in His inspired Book, tells us "*ought not so to be*"? If God thinks it ought not to be, why didn't He will it simply not to be?

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, **is not of the Father, but is of the world.*** ([1Jo 2:16](#); emphasis added. If it is "...not **of** the Father," it cannot be "According to His will!" But it occurs)

*For **this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.*** ([1Th 4:3-5](#))

If you believe that God's will is always done in every detail, why have you not faithfully, at all times and under all circumstances, abstained from these sins and learned the "How" of controlling your personal appetites and actions? In this lesson, God's will is simply stated as action that we choose to take, that harmonizes with what God has taught us by His law written in our hearts. "...**that ye should,**" expresses a moral obligation which the Lord teaches us, not an absolute that He micromanages us to always do without exception. God's will doesn't do the learning or the abstaining for you. His will teaches you right choices and actions. Your will decides to listen and obey or to rebel and disobey. You are not a puppet dangled and controlled on the strings of a cosmic Puppeteer. You are a responsible, well taught child of the King. You may choose to live according to His will in these details, details in which we are clearly taught in Scripture what our Father teaches and expects us to do, not what He pulls strings and does for us. God's will, in Scripture, is a revelation of God's moral character (As in the Ten Commandments, [Ex 20](#)), "*Thou shalt...*" or "*Thou shalt not...*" And, in other Bible contexts, God's will is a revelation of His eternal saving purpose in Jesus, which He shall surely perform. ([Joh 6:39](#); "*And this is the Father's will which hath sent me...*") Jesus freely—morally, according to His moral character—chose to obey the Father's will. We shall enjoy eternity with Him because He so obeyed. You and I are not so faithful in always doing the Father's will. However, if everything that occurs was "According to the will of God," even your sin would be "According to His will." How easily the blackest of sinful and dishonorable ideas can slip into our thinking, and always distort our sound thinking, and our knowledge of God. We must faithfully guard our minds against this compromise.

And, finally, if we are limited in prayer to merely asking God to do "According to His will," why did Paul teach us to build our prayers around our requests?

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving **let your requests be made known unto God.*** ([Php 4:6](#); emphasis added)

If you errantly believe you cannot truly pour your heart out to God in prayer, lest you ask for something not "According to His will," spend long study time with this verse and its context, along with Jesus' extended lesson on prayer in [Lu 11](#). If an earthly parent knows how to **give** "Good gifts" to his child, "How much more" our Heavenly Father knows how to **give** truly "Good gifts" to us, which means He also knows how to gently, and in love, deny our request when we ask foolishly for what is not good for us.

How many positive requests did David include in his prayer in [Ps 5](#)? “*Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness,*” “*make thy way straight before my face,*” “*Destroy thou them,*” “*let them fall by their own counsels,*” “*cast them out.*”

When David opened the Psalm with “*Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation,*” clearly he intended to ask the Lord to do some specific things that he would name in his prayer. How many Bible passages do we need to learn how the Lord has taught us to pray? ***And to expect from Him when we pray?*** Lord, help us to listen more to You and to Your words in Scripture, and less to the empty words that flood our minds from man.”

Elder Joe Holder