

SECRET OF ANSWERED PRAYER

I'm going to begin tonight, and for the next several Sunday nights, a series of messages on prayer. I have been very much in the last few days and weeks or so, occupied with the matter of our prayer life - God has convicted me personally of my own inadequacies in prayer and he has spoken to me anew and afresh about all that He wants to do in us and through us in prayer. And as I begin to study the Bible as regards prayers I think I begin to see more than ever before how big the subject is - and there are so many different kinds of praying, and there are so many different things that we ought to pray for. One night ~~is~~ I am going to preach on what we ought to pray for, just specific things. And one thing that we ought to pray for is that God will call more of our young people into his service. Jesus says, pray ye therefore the Lord of harvest that he would send out laborers and Jesus says that we ought to pray that the spirit of God would reach down and pick out young people and others -- older people, to use them in their services. There are so many things - and tonight, I want to talk to you about and preach to you about principles of Answered Prayer. And actually, this is a semi-repeat. About a year ago on Wed. night I discussed this passage ~~that~~ that I am going to be preaching on tonight. I didn't have much time, just hit two or three highlights and every since then I have wanted to do it again, and when we had more time and could develop it fuller into a message and so some of this may be a little familiar if you've got that good of a memory'of over a year ago on Wed. night prayermeeting.

The gospel of Luke chap. 1. We are going to begin reading with v. 11. Now this is about Z. the high priest and his wife, Elizabeth. Z. is the high priest and he is in the ~~temple~~ temple, in the altar, the holy of holies, burning incense to the Lord. This is his job, this was his duty. And as he is inside the altar, inside the temple of the Lord there, burning incense and offering up to God, a very strange thing happens. Beginning in v. 11 thru 23.

Now you know it ought to be enough to have an ~~angel~~ angel come in person and say listen your prayer is going to be answered. That ought to be assurance enough. An every time I read vs. 18 and read what Z. said to this angel, ---- all of sudden as he is going about his duties in the temple, this angel of the Lord appears and he says, listen, your prayer is going to be answered. And then Z. says, how shall I know that this is true? If a man needs any more assurance than an angelic presentation and an angelic announcement, then he must really be steeped in unbelief. Well why is it that Z. was so stubborn - what made it so hard for Z. to believe that his prayer as going to be answered? The angel said, your prayer is heard, and E. is going to conceive and bring forth a son. Now even with the angel in person telling him that this was going to come to pass Z. just couldn't believe it - why? Because, he said I am an old man - and then he got very diplomatic, you notice, he didn't say his wife was an old woman, and my wife well-stricken in years. Now that is very diplomatic. What he is saying, is: that my wife and I are long since past the age of child-bearing. It is a physical, it is a human impossibility for this thing to happen. That's why he doubted. Now - out of this account there emerges three great principles to answered prayer. Now I want us to go back and look at v. 13. The angel said thy prayer is heard Now let me ask you a question, the angel ~~said~~ says Z., I am going to answer your prayer and you are going to have a son -- ~~is~~ now that means that Z. was praying for a son, doesn't it? Yet, Z. himself says he wasn't - because he has long since been past the age of child-bearing. It may have been that 35 years ago he and E. may have prayed for a son but not in many, many years. Z. wasn't in that temple praying for a son, he had given up praying for that a long time ago, and yet the angel says your prayer is heard and you are going to have a son. What praying is he talking about - not the praying that Z. was doing at that time, but he was talking about the praying that Z. did years and years and years ago.

Because you see when he says thy prayer is heard he uses the Greek word that means in the past tense, and here's what the angel of the Lord literally said, thy prayer was heard - thy prayer was heard. And it has a little suffix on it that means to do, and here's what the angel of the Lord said: years, and years, and years, ago, it's been so long ago Z. you have even forgotten that you prayed for a son, but when you prayed, God heard your prayer and he heard it to do it. And that prayer that you offered years and years ago, God heard it at that moment and he granted it at that moment. God heard it, and did it at that moment, and now I am coming to announce to you that you are going to receive the answer to that prayer after all these years. That's why Z. was so dumbfounded and could not believe what the angel of the Lord said. 3 principles emerge from that: first of all is this; the answer to prayer is sometimes delayed, it is sometimes delayed. God does not always immediately give us what we pray for. Let me put it this way - I think, well the angel says that when Z. prayed, God heard it and answered it, he heard to do, the granting of the prayer is immediate, but sometimes the giving is delayed until later, years later. This is illustrated in the life of Z., they had prayed for a son back yonder when they were in the years of child-bearing, but they years had passed on, they had seen no visible proof of God's answer, there had been no fulfillment, and long since they had thought well, God just didn't hear, it didn't answer, God has his own reasons, but we will never a child, we will have a son. And unknown to Z. all that time was that God had heard that prayer and that God has answered it, he just didn't know about it.

Over in Mark chapter 11 in v. 24 there is a tremendous prayer promise that Jesus makes and it relates to this same thing that we are talking about. Jesus is saying ---- now the word receive is in the past tense and here is what Jesus is saying: when you pray believe that you have already got it and you shall receive it. That is literally what He is saying. When you pray for something, believe that God has already given it to you, believe that you have already received it and you shall have it. You know that doesn't make much sense - believe that you have already got it, and you shall get it. That is exactly what he is saying. Dr. R. A. Torrey, a great Bible preacher of another generation, said for years he worried about the grammar of that and then one day he decided to quit worrying about the grammar and just claim the promise and God blessed him for it. You know if we would just sometimes quit worrying about some of these things - how can some of these things ~~be?~~ be? - and quit trying to make something complicated out of something that is beyond us anyway - and just accept it, and as Jesus said, when you pray, believe that you receive it - even though you don't see it, even though it is not granted at that moment, even though God doesn't place it in your hands, believe that you have it and you shall have it. You see God answers immediately, but sometimes the fulfillment of that doesn't come until later.

Well, you say, how am I to know when to stop praying for something. Well when God lays something on your heart to pray for, you pray and pray and pray for that thing until one of two things happens -- you pray either until God gives it to you and you see it visibly or until God comes to you with the assurance that He is going to give it to you.

Now you know last night, my wife had gone to bed and it was late and I was anxious about the service ~~this~~ this morning as I am anxious about every service but, very anxious about this, and so I said, I am going to pray about this, I'm going to get this thing settled - and so I began to pray about the service this morning, prayed that God would bless the service, and prayed that God's spirit would move -- so after awhile, I said, Lord, I want X you to tell me right now - whether or not you are going to bless the service in the morning, and if you are not going to bless the service and if it is going to be a dead service and a powerless service, I want you to let me know, but if you are going to bless it, I want you to give me peace about it. I want to know if you

are going to bless it - I have been praying for it and I want to know if you are going to bless it. Now he didn't speak to me out of a whirlwind, or didn't write across the ~~xxxx~~ ceiling words or letters of fire, but all of a sudden there just came in my heart perfect peace about that, and I said, well thank you, Lord, and I just go up and went to bed. I didn't pray any more about the service because when I got up off my knees, I knew that God had heard my prayer and I knew that God was going to bless our service this morning and He did. I felt the presence of the Lord in our service this morning and God moved and God saved people and God worked in people's hearts.

When God lays something on your heart to pray for, you pray for it either until God gives it to you or until he gives the assurance that he is going to give it to you. And there is no joy to compare with praying about something and all of a sudden you just feel peace about it and you know that God is going to do it. And you say, well thank you Lord. That's what Jesus is talking about in Mark ch. 11 - when you pray for it, believe that you have already got it. And I tell you that victory was ~~xxx~~ won last night, not this morning. And this is the way all victories are won. Marshall Fouch (?) the ~~X~~ great French general said that all victories in the battlefield are won the night before at the planning table. SS teacher you win the victory in that SS class long before you ever get into that class on Sun morning. If you wait until Sun. morning to get the victory, you have waited too long. What a difference it makes going into an exam at school unprepared and unready and just ~~hoping~~ hoping that every thing turns out all right - hoping that the teacher asks the right questions - what a difference it is when you have studied and when you have crammed and when you have filled your mind with facts and brother you have no doubt in your mind but that you ~~xxx~~ have prepared the best you can. You kids know what I am talking about -- I tell you, the most miserable feeling in all of the world is not to be prepared when you go in for an exam. Boy, I know, I have done it a million times -- you know, just go by luck, go by a wing and a prayer, just hope, boy, that God remembers you and gives you an extra portion of grace and has mercy on you, ~~and~~ everyting else, and the teacher has memory failure and everything - you just hope and pray that everything will turn out all right. What a difference it is -- when you ~~xxx~~ are prepared when you go in. That's why some SS teachers don't get much joy out of teaching their class, because they go in every Sunday morning not knowing whether or not God is going to bless them, not prepared. I don't believe in lost people praying through - a lost person doesn't have to pray through to be saved, the minute he turns his heart over to Jesus, God will save him. But I tell you Christians have to pray through. And I am convinced in my own heart that a lot of preachers and a lot of deacons and a lot of SS teachers and a lot of Chistians in general could live victorius lives every day if they would just go to the Lord on their knees about it and say, God, I'm going to stay here until you answer and give me assurance about it.

The answer is sometimes delayed for what reason only God knows. The answer is sometimes delayed.

The second principle emerging from this about prayer is - God sometimes answers our prayer better than we asked him for. He delays in order that he might answer it better. There have been a lot of times I have asked God for something in prayer and God has answered my prayer, not exactly as I asked him to, but he did it better.

Now -- let's say that 35 years before or 20 years before - or 15 years before, Z. and E. had been praying that God would give them a son. Now let's just suppose that God had given them that son, that God had answered that prayer at that moment, what would they have had? Well - they would have had a son that they loved. But would you have ever heard of him, no? Would ~~xx~~ his name be in the sacred writ? No. Would men write books about him? No. Would preachers preach sermons about him? No. You see if God had answered that prayer when Z. wanted it to be answered, he would have cheated, impoverished them. God waited that he might answer it better, and he answered it better in that now you have their son -- not just another boy ~~X~~ in the streets - but he is the forerunner of the Messiah. A contemporary of Jesus. The last OT prophet, and the only prophet to ever see his prophecy come true. You know I find myself, more and more, asking God for something, and then saying, now, Lord

if you've got a better way to answer this than I am forming it, well I want you to do it. I can look back on my life and some things that I prayed for in years past, and I just thought I would die if God didn't do it the way I wanted him to do it and he did not do it the way I wanted him to, and I can -- looking by on the perspective of time I can see that God answered my prayers and he answered them a lot better. My wife and I were talking about this yesterday afternoon - a period in our life that we went through - a period of hell, of ~~misery~~ misery, and I prayed and prayed and prayed that God would meet our needs and that God would solve the problems and he didn't do it. ... Well he did and I just didn't know it. He answered that prayer a much better way. And I feel I am a better Christian, and I would not be at this church today as pastor of this church, if God had answered the prayer the way I wanted him to answer it.

20
I hope she doesn't mind me telling this -- at the WMU meeting last week Linda Taylor was talking about this -- she said for years and years and years. I prayed that Tommy would become Church of Christ, and I became a Baptist. And I said, God answered that prayer better! God has a better way of answering prayer. This is what Jesus was praying about in the G. of G. -- Jesus there on his knees, He could see what was going to take place. He talked about the cup, and you know what was in the cup don't you -- all of the sins that you and I commit or ever will commit, everything. It is hard for us to understand why he would shrink from that - because you and I don't shrink from sin. But here is the holy, spotless, pure son of God, never known sin in any way -- now on the cross he is not only going to bear sin, he is ~~literally~~ literally going to become sin, and he looks at that cup and he says, Oh, Father, if it and then ----- but nevertheless ----- you see what Jesus was saying -- Father, here's what I am praying for, but if you've got a better way to answer this prayer, and it is a better way. Sometimes God answers our prayers but he answers them differently than we expected him to, and he always does it in a better way. God never does anything without a good reason and anything God does in my life, he does it for my well-being and my ~~welfare~~ welfare, and he does it better.

All right, third principle of answered prayer: Not only does God delay his answer, not only does God answer it better, not here, to me, is the whole secret of God answering our prayers -- God answers prayers when they are XX LINKED WITH DIVINE NECESSITY (twice) -- with the purpose of God, with the glory of God.

You know the reason that God answered that prayer at that particular moment? Because needed John - God needed a forerunner, God needed to answer that prayer. God answered that prayer because he needed to answer it. It was necessary in his work, it was necessary in divine planning and in his purpose to answer that prayer, to carry out what he wanted to do.

Now I want you to try to get hold of this concept, because this will revolutionize, I believe, your prayer life -- Linking our prayers with divine necessity -- I do not believe God will answer any prayer, or bless any life that is not linked with divine necessity. This is why we are commanded to pray in whose name? -- the name of Jesus -- not our own name. This is why the Bible says our sins forgiven us for Jesus' sake, for His sake, not for my sake. You remember when the thief -- the two thieves were on the cross - and that one thief on the cross said, if thou be the Christ, save thyself and us, and Jesus didn't even answer him --- it's the only time recorded in the word of God where Jesus ever refused to help somebody that asked him for help -- Anytime anybody every came to Jesus and asked him to help, or asked him to save a life or anything, Jesus always answered. But when the thief dying on the cross said if thou be the Christ save thyself and us, Jesus didn't even answer him. Why didn't he answer that man's request - why couldn't he spare that thief's life. Because if had spared that thief's life all the way would have been accomplished is that man would have had X number of years more to live in sin -- That thief wasn't repentant, that thief wasn't going to trust Christ as Saviour and turn his life over to God. All he wanted was the salvation of physical life. He wanted to be set free, not from his sins, but from those nails that bound him to that cross. And if God had answered that request and

that man had been given ten more years of life it would have been ten more years of life lived in the service of sin and satan. That's why he didn't answer it. You know sometimes we pray that God would fill us w/ the HS - why? so you will feel good. God won't answer that kind of prayer.

Over in Acts ch .4, God filled the early Christians w/ the HS and this is what they prayed for - they said, Lord grant unto thy servants that with all boldness ---- They linked their prayer to divine purpose and divine necessity, they said, Lord all we want to do is just to be able to witness of Jesus and glorify Jesus, and God filled them.

You know ~~in~~ sometimes people say, I want you to pray, this man is deathly sick, this man is in serious condition, I want you to pray that God would save his life and restore his health to him. And I'll be frank with you, sometimes I don't know whether God would honor that kind of prayer. I mean if this man's life is restored to him, and God gives him back his health and gives him 10 more years of life - is it going to be 10 more years of life, lived outside the will of God?

You know sometimes we pray that God would give us a raise in pay - or God would give us a job, why? Let's say here's a man that doesn't do right w/ God now about his financial matters - he doesn't look upon his possession as belonging to God -- he looks upon them as belonging to self, and what if God does give him a raise? -- he is just going to multiply his rebellion against God.

Are you linking your praying to divine necessity? You see what I mean? Sometimes a wife prays that God will save a lost husband - why do you want God to save your lost husband? Well, so he'll be a better husband - so he'll be a kinder husband. I had a woman to say one time - My husband takes his paycheck and spends it on liquor and I want God to save him so he won't spend his money on liquor -- God won't answer that kind of prayer. Do you want your husband saved for the glory of God?

You know sometimes parents worry about their children - and they say, Oh Lord, take care of my children - don't let my children stray. Why do you not want your children to stray? - So they won't give you as many gray hairs? And so they -- and here comes a child --- saying, Mom, God has called me to the FM field - and we say, oh, no, don't waste your life. You see what I am saying, so much of our praying is for selfish reasons and ~~XXXXXX~~ selfish motives. When the Bible says that we are to pray in the name of Jesus we are to pray according to his will, what God is saying there is if you want God to answer your prayers - you must link your prayers to divine necessity. Is it necessary for God to answer this prayer? Will God get glory out of this? Will this glorify God? Will this honor Jesus? I think it would good for us to re-examine our prayer life and to analyze the things that we are praying for right now. Why are we praying for them? Examine the motive. God answered this prayer at this time because of divine necessity -- he had to do it, he needed it.

And I believe when I bring to God a petition and I bring to him a need and a request and I can link that to divine nec. and I want God to answer not for my own selfish reasons, but I want him to get honor and ~~gl~~ glory out of it, I believe God will answer that kind of prayer.

This leads us to something else, if the only prayers that God will answer or those prayers linked to divine nec. - it just naturally follows that the only life that God will bless is the life that is linked to divine necessity.

Now I want to ask you this evening - what is your life linked to? What is it tied to? Is it linked to God's glory, or to my own selfish desires?

6 *Secret of Answered Prayer*

to divine necessity. When I look upon my life as nothing else except an instrument for God to get glory from. And whatever it takes in my life, whatever you want to do in my life, with my life in order that you may be glorified, this is what I want. My only desire is that God get glory from my life every day. Linking my life to divine necessity - if it is not, God will not bless it.

Is your life tonight linked to divine necessity? Is your life tonight anchored to God's purpose and to God's glory. If it isn't I wish you would make it so.