

How to Get Your Prayers Answered

By Dr. Roger Sapp

There are many good Christians who pray daily with diligence and with discipline but seem to struggle to get their prayers answered by the Father. On the other hand, there are a few ordinary Christians who pray much less but seem to receive many more answers by Him. Many of these ordinary Christians often receive from the Lord without asking specifically for anything. Jesus Christ describes the situation of those praying a great deal without answers by saying:

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.

Matthew 6:7-8

Simply repeating yourself many times in prayer does not produce answers. Praying more does not get an answer. More hours spent in prayer does not get the Father to hear or answer a single prayer. Jesus tells us that the Father already knows what we need. In other words, we need not think that the Father is not hearing or aware of our needs or prayers about our needs. He hears the first time we pray. *So what is the problem? Why do some get many answers with few prayers and other experience just the opposite?* In one word the problem could be called *qualification*. Some properly *qualify* themselves to receive answers from the Father. Others, probably the majority of Christians, improperly *qualify* themselves.

Obviously praying more does not qualify you to receive answers from the Lord according to what Christ says above. Some probably at this point would suggest that obedience to the Lord qualifies us to receive answered prayers from the Father. However, we must reply that those who think this probably get few answers to prayer also. It will become clearer as we go on in this article why obedience does not qualify us for answered prayer.

We could create a long list of things that do not qualify us but perhaps a few things will suffice to make the point. Church membership and attendance does not qualify us. Having submitted human relationships with leaders does not qualify us. Reading, studying, meditating, memorizing and confessing the Scriptures and the promises of the Father do not qualify us. Standing in faith on the promises of God does not qualify us. Sharing our faith with others does not qualify us. Giving, in itself, does not qualify us to receive financial blessings from the Father or anything else. Working hard in the Church does not qualify us to receive from the Father. The Father's plan for our future expressed in personal promises and prophetic utterances does not qualify us to receive a single answer from the Father. Having children to raise for the Lord does not qualify us to receive healing, financial blessings or anything else. There is nothing wrong with

any of these things. They are just not what the Father requires from us to answer our prayers for healing or anything else.

A few years back, I began to receive an email from a woman who was encouraging prayer. In each email, this woman was teaching about prayer. However, it struck me that she didn't seem to know why the Father answers our prayers. *How did I know this?* It was because of how she used Jesus Christ in her teaching on prayer. She only used Him as an example of someone who prayed. I once sent her an email to ask if she thought that there was a relationship between the Christ's sacrifice at the cross, His resurrection and answered prayer. She did not respond to my email. The bottom line in her teaching is that she was encouraging people to pray more often and longer. She seemed to think that this would produce answers. Apparently, it did not occur to her that she was presenting the Father as a person who needed to be convinced to answer our prayers. This is a common unscriptural and unbelieving idea. You will hear it expressed often by those who get very few prayers answered. Sometimes it is expressed like this:

We had 500 people on a prayer list praying for that healing and the person died. Therefore, it must have not been the Father's will to heal them.

The false idea presented here is that if we can get more people to pray more, then the Father will be convinced to answer our prayer. Ideas like these have a great deal of unbelief in them. They seldom get an answer from the Father. These people are trying to qualify for an answer by a greater volume of prayer as if there was some sort of quota that must be reached to convince an unwilling God. Thankfully, the Father has revealed Himself as more than willing to answer our prayers.

We do not qualify for an answer from the Father by anything that we can do including prayer, fasting, Bible study, church attendance, submission or any other spiritually oriented activity. We simply cannot qualify for answered prayer because of religious works of any type. We cannot qualify because we are obedient, Christ-like in character or living in a sacrificial way for others. We cannot qualify because we have children to raise for Christ or a ministry to fulfill. We cannot qualify because we have clarity about the will of the Father for our future. None of these things about ourselves will qualify us for an answer from the Father. Qualifying for receiving answers from the Father does not come because of anything that we can do or anything that we can be. It is not about us at all. It is all about Jesus.

There are two things that we must be clear on to receive consistent and reliable answers from the Father. First of all, we must know what the will of the Father is for ourselves and others. We cannot qualify ourselves for receiving answers if we do not know what the will of the Father is concerning those matters. Praying "if it

be Thy will" cannot receive an answer from the Father. We must know the will of the Father before we pray.

It is rather easy to determine the will of the Father if we are looking in the right place. We must look to Jesus to obtain clarity about the will of the Father. We qualify because Jesus shows us what the Father will do for us. The will of the Father is perfectly expressed in Jesus Christ. The Father is like the Son in all matters concerning His will. Jesus heals all who come to Him in the multitudes. This expressed the perfect will of the Father concerning healing. Jesus, on several occasions, demonstrates the Father's willingness to do financial miracles such as the Feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000. Jesus demonstrates the Father's willingness to be involved in matters of provision by a supernatural miracle of turning water into wine. On another occasion, Jesus produces tax money for Himself and Peter through a supernatural event. The disciples knew the will of the Father because Christ has demonstrated it to them repeatedly. When they prayed, they qualified themselves for an answer because they knew it to be the will of the Father. This is, of course, very different than how many Christians seek to discover the will of God today. They are looking for a divine sign or a specific feeling to determine the will of God. They don't have answered prayers like the disciples experienced because they don't know the will of God in the same way that the disciples knew it through the ministry of Christ. They are trying to discern the will of God in a way that the disciples would have never considered doing. As a result the majority of Christians today are still uncertain about the will of God and therefore unable to pray in faith. We must learn the will of the Father through the Son.

However, knowing the Father's will is not enough to get an answered prayer. We can know what the will of the Father is in matters and still not get an answer because we might be trying to qualify ourselves by our own righteousness. We cannot qualify by wonderful spiritual works and good character. We might be trying to fulfill conditions to receive an answer. We may be trying to "*cross every t and dot every i*" in our attempt to get an answer. This is the wrong focus and this will not produce an answer from the Father. This focus is upon us rather than upon Jesus. This focus can be best described as legalism. It is the attempt to make ourselves righteous so that the Father will answer. This focus on ourselves is also called *self righteousness*.

Self-righteousness is a serious problem with Christians. Most Christians are familiar with the positive side of self-righteousness. The positive side would be described as feeling good about yourself as a result of your positive evaluation of your obedience, behavior, works and attitudes. Many would understand that spiritual pride and arrogance are related to self-righteousness. However, many Christians have not thought about the negative side of self-righteousness. This could be described as feeling bad about yourself because of your negative evaluation of your disobedience, poor behavior, sinful activities and less than Christ-like attitudes. This focus on your sinfulness is also self-righteousness.

Both attitudes, positive or negative, are the wrong focus. It is important in getting your prayers answered that you do not maintain either a negative or positive focus on your own righteousness. Therefore, an important principle of answered prayer could be stated at this point:

The Father is not giving answers to those who are obedient, righteous and Christ-like because of their righteousness. The Father is not withholding answers from those who are disobedient, unrighteous and not Christ-like because of their unrighteousness. Answered prayer has nothing to do with our righteousness or our unrighteousness.

How do we know that this is true? We know this by observation of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. He heals the righteous and the unrighteous. He does not draw any distinctions between the good and the bad in the multitudes. *Then, how do we qualify for answered prayer?* As we have already stated, first of all, we must know what the will of the Father is in the matter that we are praying about. We must see ourselves coming to Jesus in the same way with the same response from Him as the multitudes. Otherwise we cannot pray in faith and genuinely expect an answer. We also know that this is true experientially because of seeing Jesus Christ heal many unrighteous persons over the past decade. Unrighteous people who receive an answer from the Father are often transformed in positive ways by the answer.

Secondly, we must qualify ourselves on the basis of what Christ has done for us at the cross. When Christ declared at the cross *It is finished...* from the Father's perspective, the work was done for all humanity. There is nothing that we can add by our own righteousness. There is nothing that is taken away by our unrighteousness. We simply look to Christ's righteousness to receive from the Father. The righteous and the unrighteous can come boldly to the throne of grace to receive mercy and help in time of need. We receive blessings from the Father because of what Christ has done. We receive nothing because of what we have done.

Father is drawing no distinctions between the righteous and the unrighteous concerning answering their prayers. We can all receive because of what Christ has done. We do not receive because of what we have done or what we are doing. Our human righteousness does not qualify us for an answer from the Father. Likewise, our sinful human unrighteousness does not disqualify us for an answer from the Father. Thankfully, the Father is not measuring our righteousness to determine whether or not to answer our prayers.

Receiving from the Father is all about Jesus and not about our righteousness at all. The Father answers our prayers because of what Jesus has done. Therefore, we can get amazing answers from the Lord when we are having a hard time with how we feel about ourselves and others by asking on the right basis. We can get off *the* roller coaster of our own righteousness and stand firm on the never

changing Rock of Jesus Christ. We can experience ongoing answers and stability in our walk with the Lord by looking to Christ alone. We can qualify for all times and all situations for answered prayer by faith in Christ. When we add persistence in prayer to knowing the will of the Father and qualifying ourselves because of what Jesus has done, difficult situations and difficult people will yield to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Getting answers from the Father is not difficult when we pray on the right basis. We must put aside our righteousness and our unrighteousness and come to Jesus expecting Him to receive us as He did the mixed multitudes. Father will help us with all matters of unrighteousness if we come to Him. Forgiveness and transformation are available by coming to Christ. We come knowing that Father wants to help us because we are greatly loved and because of what Christ has done at the cross because of that love.

In closing, we recommend a simple but profound prayer and confession that many have used that receive answers from the Father.

This answer (healing, changed family matter, financial blessing, etc.) belongs to me because of what Jesus has done.

Blessings in Christ,

Roger Sapp
www.allnationsmin.org