

September 21, 2020

Many Christians are easily discouraged when their prayers are not answered in the way they want. Two common statements many people make is “God did not answer my prayer.” “I prayed the other day and God still did not answer me.” There are a number of problems with this line of thinking. Among these is the idea that unless the prayer is answered the way we want then God did not answer. Remember, “No” is still an answer. So is “wait”. Another problem is the timing of the answer. We expect drive through answers to our prayers. God’s timing is not the same as ours. A third problem is failure to persist in prayer. Sometimes we must pray relentlessly. More importantly, we must pray expecting that God will answer our prayers as we have prayed. This of course is assuming that one has prayed according to the will of God. Let us read from 1 Kings 18:41-46.

41 Now Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.” 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees. 43 He said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go back” seven times. 44 It came about at the seventh time, that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’” 45 In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

When you pray do you expect God to answer your prayers? Or do you pray and then get up and go about your business as if nothing has

changed at all? One of the great problems with Christians today is they do not live as if they expect God to answer their prayers.

I have four lessons from Elijah's prayer. First, pray expecting God to answer. We know Elijah prayed expectantly in that he told King Ahab to go eat and drink, that is celebrate, the drought is over, because it's going to rain. Jesus teaches us to pray expecting our prayers will be answered as we ask. Listen carefully to the Messiah's words, "All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you" (Mark 11:24). Jesus is teaching us to expect positive answers to our prayers.

The problem is many of us do not really believe God will answer our prayers. Some think God is too busy with other people and more important issues. There is nothing more important to God than you! After all God loves you so much that He sent His only begotten Son so that all who would believe in Him would not die but have everlasting life! (John 3:16). Others simply believe prayer is just a waste of time. I assure you prayer is never a waste of time.

Next we must pray with humility. Elijah bowed himself before God as a response to God from a humble heart. God tells us that He will not hear our prayers unless we pray with humility. Not the pretense of humility but genuine humility that comes from a broken and contrite heart. We read these words God spoke to Solomon and are recorded by the Chronicler, "When My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). The word of God makes it very clear to us that humility is an essential ingredient for a successful prayer. I also doubt that the one who is proud in their heart will ever truly turn to God in prayer.

Number three, pray with importunity. Many prayers remain unanswered because we give up. We don't see the desired response immediately and we quit. We pack it in and then cry about God not caring for us. Elijah sent his servant seven times to go and look for the storm clouds. He did not give up. What if Elijah said after the first look to the sky, "I don't see any clouds. I guess God isn't going to answer my prayer for rain." Elijah did not give up and neither should we.

Remember Daniel, who prayed and fasted for 21 days before he received an answer to his prayer (Daniel 10:10-13). Remember how the angel from God told Daniel that his prayer was answered from the first day, but the angel was delayed in coming because of the spiritual battle that was taking place. So too are our prayers sometimes delayed in being answered. Recall, too, the parable that Jesus spoke regarding the old woman and the unrighteous judge (Luke 18:1-8). How the unrighteous judge was wearied of this old woman continuously pestering him for justice so that in the end the judge granted her request. How much more then will our righteous, holy, and loving God be quick to answer our prayers?

Fourth, act in faith. Elijah told Ahab to hurry and leave so that his chariot would not be caught in the heavy shower. There was not going to be just a little sprinkle of rain. Oh no. There was going to be a real gully washer of a storm. The storm clouds were gathering and the sky was growing black, the wind was beginning to howl.

We must learn to live by our faith as well. Paul teaches, "We walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Often the world tells us that things are impossible and there is nothing we can do to change things. This is probably true for those who live in the world. But my God is able to do the impossible. He is waiting to do the impossible in your life as well; if you will only ask Him for help.

What impossible situations are there in your life today? Situations that seem as if there is no answer. Perhaps, you are in a bad relationship and there is no apparent way out. Ask God for help. Perhaps, there is not enough money to pay all of your bills and buy food to eat. Ask God for help. Whatever your problem or situation might be, God can help. God wants to help. Let Him help as we pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank You for answered prayer. I know that often my prayers are not answered the way I desire but, the answer is perfect for me. Help all of us to accept the answers You grant to us as we pray to You through Jesus, our Lord, amen.

Pray from your heart always seeking God's answers.

Until the nets are full

