

Answered Prayer (Continued) 1

by E.M. Bounds

E.M. Bounds emphasizes the certainty and specificity of God's answers to prayer, urging believers to persistently seek Him with faith.

Scripture: John 16:23

Topics: "Prayer", "Faith in God's Promises"

Description

E.M. Bounds emphasizes that God has committed Himself to answer our prayers as outlined in His Word, which serves as both the foundation and inspiration for prayer. He illustrates that Jesus Christ's teachings assure us that whatever we ask in His name will be granted, urging believers to approach prayer with confidence and expectation. Bounds highlights the importance of persistence in prayer, moving from mere asking to seeking and knocking, and reassures that God will provide exactly what we request, not something lesser. He draws parallels between earthly parents and our heavenly Father, emphasizing God's readiness to fulfill our needs. Ultimately, Bounds encourages believers to trust in God's promises and to pray without ceasing, as the early church did, knowing that God is faithful to answer.

Transcript

GOD has committed himself to us by his Word in our praying. The Word of God is the basis and the inspiration and the heart of prayer. Jesus Christ stands as the illustration of God's Word, its illimitable good in promise as well as in realization. God takes nothing by halves. He gives nothing by halves. We can have the whole of him when he has the whole of us—His words of promise are so far-reaching, and so all-comprehending, that they seem to have deadened our comprehension and have paralyzed our praying. This appears when we consider those large words, when he almost exhausts human language in promises, as in "whatever," "anything," and in the all-inclusive "whatsoever," and "all things." These oft-repeated promises, so very great, seem to daze us, and instead of allowing them to move us to asking, testing, and receiving, we turn away full of wonder, but empty handed and with empty hearts.

We quote another passage from our Lord's teaching about prayer. By the most solemn verification, he declares as follows:

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing; Verily, Verily, I say unto you: Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Twice in this passage he declares the answer, and pledging his father, "He will give it to you," and declaring with impressive and most suggestive emphasis, "Ask, and ye shall receive." So strong and so often did Jesus declare and repeat the answer as an inducement to pray, and as an inevitable result of prayer, the apostles held it as so fully and invincibly established, that prayer would be answered, they held it to be their main duty to urge and command men to pray. So firmly were they established as to the truth of the law of prayer as laid down by our Lord, that they were led to affirm that the answer to prayer was involved in and necessarily bound up with all right praying. God the Father and Jesus Christ, his Son, are both strongly committed by all the truth of their word and by the fidelity of their character, to answer prayer.

Not only do these and all the promises pledge Almighty God to answer prayer, but they assure us that the answer will be specific, and that the very thing for which we pray will be given.

Our Lord's invariable teaching was that we receive that for which we ask, and obtain that for which we seek, and have that door opened at which we knock. This is according to our heavenly Father's direction to us, and his giving to us for our asking. He will not disappoint us by not answering, neither will he deny us by giving us some other thing for which we have not asked, or by letting us find some other thing for which we have not sought, or by opening to us the wrong door, at which we were not knocking. If we ask bread, he will give us bread. If we ask an egg, he will give us an egg. If we ask a fish, he will give us a fish. Not something like bread, but bread itself will be given unto us. Not something like a fish, but a fish will be given. Not evil will be given us in answer to prayer, but good.

Earthly parents, though evil in nature, give for the asking, and answer to the crying of their children. The encouragement to prayer is transferred from our earthly father to our heavenly Father, from the evil to the good, to the supremely good; from the weak to the omnipotent, our heavenly Father, centering in himself all the highest conceptions of fatherhood, abler, readier, and much more than the best, and much more than the ablest earthly father. "How much more," who can tell? Much more than our earthly father, will he supply all our needs, give us all good things, and enable us to meet every difficult duty and fulfill every law, though hard to flesh and blood, but made easy under the full supply of our heavenly Father's beneficent and exhaustless help.

Here we have in symbol and as initial, more than an intimation of the necessity, not only of perseverance in prayer, but of the progressive stages of intentness and effort in the outlay of increasing spiritual force. Asking, seeking, and knocking. Here is an ascending scale from the mere words of asking, to a settled attitude of seeking, resulting in a determined, clamorous and vigorous direct effort of praying.

Just as God has commanded us to pray always, to pray everywhere, and to pray in everything, so he will answer always, everywhere and in everything.

God has plainly and with directness committed himself to answer prayer. If we fulfill the conditions of prayer, the answer is bound to come. The laws of nature are not so invariable and so inexorable as the promised answer to pray. The ordinances of nature might fail, but the ordinances of grace can never fail. There are no limitations, no adverse conditions, no weakness, no inability, which can or will hinder the answer to prayer. God's doing for us when we pray has no limitations, is not hedged about, by provisos in himself, or in the peculiar circumstances of any particular case. If we really pray, God masters and defies all things and is above all conditions.

God explicitly says, "Call unto me, and I will answer." There are no limitations, no hedges, no hindrances in the way of God fulfilling the promise. His word is at stake. His word is involved. God solemnly engages

to answer prayer. Man is to look for the answer, be inspired by the expectation of the answer, and may with humble boldness demand the answer. God, who cannot lie, is bound to answer. He has voluntarily placed himself under obligation to answer the prayer of him who truly prays.

To God your every want

In instant prayer display;

Pray always; pray, and never faint;

Pray, without ceasing, pray.

In fellowship, alone,

To God with faith draw near;

Approach his courts, beseech his throne,

With all the power of prayer.

The prophets and the men of God of Old Testament times were unshaken in their faith in the absolute certainty of God fulfilling his promises to them. They rested in security on the word of God, and had no doubt whatever either as to the fidelity of God in answering prayer or of his willingness or ability. So much so that their history is marked by repeated asking and receiving at the hands of God.

The same is true of the early church. They received without question the doctrine their Lord and Master had so often affirmed that the answer to prayer was sure. The certainty of the answer to prayer was as fixed as God's Word was true. The Holy Spirit dispensation was ushered in by the disciples carrying this faith into practice. When Jesus told them to "Tarry at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high," they received it as a sure promise that if they obeyed the command, they would certainly receive the divine power. So in prayer for ten days they tarried in the upper room, and the promise was fulfilled. The answer came just as Jesus said.

So when Peter and John were arrested for healing the man who sat at the beautiful gate of the temple, after being threatened by the rulers in Jerusalem, they were released. "And being let go, they went to their own company," they went to those with whom they were in affinity, those of like minds, and not to men of the world. Still believing in prayer and its power, they gave themselves to prayer, the prayer itself being recorded in Acts, chapter four. They recited some things to the Lord, and "when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

Here they were refilled for this special occasion with the Holy Spirit. The answer to prayer responded to their faith and prayer. The fullness of the Spirit always brings boldness. The cure for fear in the face of threatenings of the enemies of the Lord is being filled with the Spirit. This gives power to speak the word of the Lord with boldness. This gives courage and drives away fear.

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