

Answered Prayer

by E.M. Bounds

The sermon emphasizes the importance of answered prayer, highlighting its role in bringing us into constant and conscious communion with God, awakening gratitude, and establishing a relationship with the unseen.

Scripture: Psalm 34:17, Jeremiah 33:3, Matthew 7:7-8, Luke 11:9-10, John 14:13-14, John 15:7, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 4:3, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Faith in God", "Power Of Prayer"

Description

E.M. Bounds emphasizes the transformative power of answered prayer, asserting that it elevates prayer from mere routine to a dynamic force that aligns with God's will. He argues that unanswered prayers stem from improper requests and that true prayer is validated by its responses, which serve as evidence of a genuine relationship with God. Bounds highlights that prayer is not an end in itself but a means to receive God's blessings and grace, reinforcing the necessity of seeking answers to our prayers. He concludes that the assurance of answered prayer is rooted in God's faithfulness and the promise of Jesus, who guarantees that prayers offered in His name will be fulfilled.

Transcript

IT is answered prayer which brings praying out of the realm of dry, dead things, and makes praying a thing of life and power. It is the answer to prayer which brings things to pass, changes the natural trend of things, and orders all things according to the will of God. It is the answer to prayer which takes praying out of the regions of fanaticism, and saves it from being Utopian, or from being merely fanciful. It is the answer to prayer which makes praying a power for God and for man, and makes praying real and divine. Unanswered prayers are training schools for unbelief, an imposition and a nuisance, an impertinence to God and to man.

Answers to prayer are the only surety that we have prayed aright. What marvelous power there is in prayer! What untold miracles it works in this world! What untold benefits to men does it secure to those who pray! Why is it that the average prayer by the million goes a begging for an answer?

The millions of unanswered prayers are not to be solved by the mystery of God's will. We are not the sport of his sovereign power. He is not playing at "make-believe" in his marvelous promises to answer prayer. The whole explanation is found in our wrong praying. "We ask and receive not because we ask amiss." If all unanswered prayers were dumped into the ocean, they would come very near filling it. Child of God, can you pray? Are your prayers answered? If not, why not? Answered prayer is the proof of your real

praying.

The efficacy of prayer from a Bible standpoint lies solely in the answer to prayer. The benefit of prayer has been well and popularly maximized by the saying, "It moves the arm which moves the universe." To get unquestioned answers to prayer is not only important as to the satisfying of our desires, but is also the evidence of our abiding in Christ. It becomes more important still. The mere act of praying is no test of our relation to God. The act of praying may be a real dead performance. It may be the routine of habit. But to pray and receive clear answers, not once or twice, but daily, this is the sure test, and is the gracious point of our vital connection with Jesus Christ.

Read our Lord's words in this connection:

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

To God and to man, the answer to prayer is the all-important part of our praying. The answer to prayer, direct and unmistakable, is the evidence of God's being. It proves that God lives, that there is a God, an intelligent being, who is interested in his creatures, and who listens to them when they approach him in prayer. There is no proof so clear and demonstrative_ that God exists than prayer and its answer. This was Elijah's plea: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God."

The answer to prayer is the part of prayer which glorifies God. Unanswered prayers are dumb oracles which leave the praying ones in darkness, doubt, and bewilderment, and which carry no conviction to the unbeliever. It is not the act or the attitude of praying which gives efficacy to prayer. It is not abject prostration of the body before God, the vehement or quiet utterance to God, the exquisite beauty and poetry of the diction of our prayers, which do the deed. It is not the marvelous array of argument and eloquence in praying which makes prayer effectual. Not one or all of these are the things which glorify God. It is the answer which brings glory to his name.

Elijah might have prayed on Carmel's heights till this good day with all the fire and energy of his soul, and if no answer had been given, no glory would have come to God. Peter might have shut himself up with Dorcas' dead body till he himself died on his knees, and if no answer had come, no glory to God nor good to man would have followed, but only doubt, blight, and dismay.

Answered prayer is the convincing proof of our right relations to God. Jesus said at the grave of Lazarus:

Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

The answer of his prayer was the proof of his mission from God, as the answer to Elijah's prayer was made to the woman whose son he raised to life. She said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God." He is highest in the favor of God who has the readiest access and the greatest number of answers to prayer from Almighty God.

Prayer ascends to God by an invariable law, even by more than law, by the will, the promise, and the presence of a personal God. The answer comes back to earth by all the promise, the truth, the power, and the love of God.

Not to be concerned about the answer to prayer is not to pray. What a world of waste there is in praying. What myriads of prayers have been offered for which no answer is returned, no answer longed for, and no

answer is expected! We have been nurturing a false faith and hiding the shame of our loss and inability to pray, by the false, comforting plea that God does not answer directly or objectively, but indirectly and subjectively. We have persuaded ourselves that by some kind of hocus pocus of which we are wholly unconscious in its process and its results, we have been made better. Conscious that God has not answered us directly, we have solaced ourselves with the delusive unction that God has in some impalpable way, and with unknown results, given us something better. Or we have comforted and nurtured our spiritual sloth by saying that it is not God's will to give it to us. Faith teaches God's praying ones that it is God's will to answer prayer. God answers all prayers and every prayer of his true children who truly pray.

Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,

Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;

Gives exercise to faith and love,

Brings every blessing from above.

The emphasis in the Scriptures is always given to the answer to prayer. All things from God are given in answer to prayer. God himself, his presence, his gifts and his grace, one and all, are secured by prayer. The medium by which God communicates with men is prayer. The most real thing in prayer, its very essential end, is the answer it secures. The mere repetition of words in prayer, the counting of beads, the multiplying mere words of prayer, as works of supererogation, as if there was virtue in the number of prayers to avail, is a vain delusion, an empty thing, a useless service. Prayer looks directly to securing an answer. This is its design. It has no other end in view.

Communion with God of course is in prayer. There is sweet fellowship there with our God through his Holy Spirit. Enjoyment of God there is in praying, sweet, rich, and strong. The graces of the Spirit in the inner soul are nurtured by prayer, kept alive and promoted in their growth by this spiritual exercise. But not one nor all of these benefits of prayer have in them the essential end of prayer. The divinely appointed channel through which all good and all grace flows to our souls and bodies is prayer.

Prayer is appointed to convey

The blessings God designs to give.

Prayer is divinely ordained as the means by which all temporal and spiritual good are gained to us. Prayer is not an end in itself. It is not something done to be rested in, something we have done, about which we are to congratulate ourselves. It is a means to an end. It is something we do which brings us something in return, without which the praying is valueless. Prayer always aims at securing an answer.

We are rich, strong, good, and holy by answered prayer. It is not the mere performance, the attitude, nor the words of prayer, which bring benefit to us, but it is the answer sent direct from heaven. Conscious, real answers to prayer bring real good to us. This is not praying merely for self, or simply for selfish ends. The selfish character cannot exist when the prayer conditions are fulfilled.

It is by these answered prayers that human nature is enriched. The answered prayer brings us into constant and conscious communion with God, awakens and enlarges gratitude, and excites the melody and lofty inspiration of praise. Answered prayer is the mark of God in our praying. It is the exchange with

heaven, and it establishes and realizes a relationship with the unseen. We give our prayers in exchange for the divine blessing. God accepts our prayers through the atoning blood and gives himself, his presence, and his grace in return.

All holy affections are affected by answered prayers. By the answers to prayer all holy principles are matured, and faith, love, and hope have their enrichment by answered prayer. The answer is found in all true praying. The answer is in prayer strongly as an aim, a desire expressed, and its expectation and realization give impetus and realization to prayer. It is the fact of the answer which makes the prayer, and which enters into its very being. To seek no answer to prayer takes the desire, the aim, and the heart out of prayer. It makes praying a dead thing, fit only for dumb idols. It is the answer which brings praying into Bible regions, and makes it a desire realized, a pursuit, an interest, that clothes it with flesh and blood, and makes it a prayer, throbbing with all the true life of prayer, affluent with all the paternal relations of giving and receiving, of asking and answering.

God holds all good in his own hands. That good comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ because of his all atoning merits, by asking it in his name. The only and the sole command in which all the others of its class belong, is "Ask, seek, knock." And the one and sole promise is its counterpart, its necessary equivalent and results: "It shall be given---ye shall find---it shall be opened unto you."

God is so much involved in prayer and its hearing and answering, that all of his attributes and his whole being are centered in that great fact. It distinguishes him as peculiarly beneficent, wonderfully good, and powerfully attractive in his nature. "O thou that hearest prayer! To thee shall all flesh come."

Faithful, O Lord, thy mercies are

A rock that cannot move;

A thousand promises declare

Thy constancy of love.

Not only does the Word of God stand surety for the answer to prayer, but all the attributes of God conspire to the same end. God's veracity is at stake in the engagements to answer prayer. His wisdom, his truthfulness and his goodness are involved. God's infinite and inflexible rectitude is pledged to the great end of answering the prayers of those who call upon him in time of need. Justice and mercy blend into oneness to secure the answer to prayer. It is significant that the very justice of God comes into play and stands hard by God's faithfulness in the strong promise God makes of the pardon of sins and of cleansing from sin's pollutions:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God's kingly relation to man, with all of its authority, unites with the fatherly relation and with all of its tenderness to secure the answer to prayer.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is most fully committed to the answer of prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." How well assured the answer to prayer is, when that answer is to glorify God the Father! And how eager Jesus Christ is to glorify his Father in heaven! So eager is he to answer prayer which always and everywhere brings glory to the Father, that no

prayer offered in his name is denied or overlooked by him. Says our Lord Jesus Christ again, giving fresh assurance to our faith, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." So says he once more, "Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Come, my soul, thy suit prepare,

Jesus loves to answer prayer;

He himself has bid thee pray,

Therefore will not say thee nay.

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