

YOUTH PRAYS-GOD ANSWERS!

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 17:

God Always Answers

"GOD DID NOT answer my prayer!" exclaimed an earnest Christian after we had finished one of our classes on the Prayer of Reception.

"I have served as an educator for more than forty years," began a minister of wide experience, "and I know God does not answer every one of my prayers." This statement was made after he heard several of our studies on the topic of "The Prayer of Reception."

"Sometimes God says, No," declared another sincere child of God. And he continued, "I know He says, No."

These statements are not merely partly wrong, but the atmosphere surrounding them is too negative. I never like to tell people, "God says, No." I feel that this is likely to give the wrong impression of our loving heavenly Father.

Rather, I like to explain it this way: God answers every sincere prayer of faith. Always. He always keeps His promises. Always. "The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal." Education, page 258.

"We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." 1 John 5:15. In the light of this and other similar Scriptures, we can agree with the following statements from a great Christian writer: "When we have learned to do this [take God at His word, and fulfilling the simple conditions], we shall know that our prayers are answered." The Desire of Ages, page 200.

"Every saint who comes to God with a true heart, and sends his honest petitions to Him in faith, will have his prayers answered." Testimonies, Vol. 1, page 120.

"Your faith must not let go of the promises of God.... if we could look into His plan, we would clearly see that He knows what is best for us, and that our prayers are answered." Ibid., pages 120, 121.

"I saw that every prayer which is sent up in faith from an honest heart, will be heard of God and answered.... and it will often exceed his expectations. Not a prayer of a true saint is lost if sent up in faith, from an honest heart." Ibid., page 121.

Surely we may rest assured that the way to approach our heavenly Father is the way of faith, expectancy, and hope.

There is, however, an important law of God to which we need give study. And this is the law of choice. Every child of God will receive an answer to his sincere prayer of faith in exactly the way he himself would choose, could he, like God, see the end from the beginning. To know that my heavenly Father follows carefully this rule in answering our prayers is, to me, a wonderful solace. I am frank to state that my vision is limited, blurred. I cannot see, as God does, the end from the beginning. Therefore, I make it

a practice to pray with this thought in mind, "Dear Father, I know You are giving me exactly what I am asking of You, or something better, much better." This takes--for me at least--the negative atmosphere from my communication with my Lord.

This eliminates the negative, the doubting, the skepticism that Satan would throw around our praying hearts. God is in process of answering every one of my prayers. Yours, too, dear honest, faithful child of God. He is not looking down His nose to any trusting, obedient, believing child of His and saying, NO! Period! "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Proverbs 15:8.

Many times through the years I have heard a sick saint of God whisper weakly, "I know God can heal me." Sometimes I reply with a kindly expression on my face, something as follows: "Do you also know God wants to heal you?" Then I develop the thought in mind. It is this: If God merely can heal me, but does not want to, then this is worse than as if God could not heal me but wanted to. I would prefer any day for a person to want to aid me, hindered only by his inability, than for a person to be able to do so and deliberately turn me down. I believe that statements like the ones offered by the sick, "I know God could heal me," are often the type which create around us an atmosphere favorable to doubt. I do not believe we should make such remarks.

It would, as I understand it, be much better, were we to say, when desperately ill, something like the following: "I know God wants to heal me. I know He has the physical power to do so. But I do not know whether God can heal me and still do for me that which is best for me personally." Or, "I know God loves me. I am certain of this because of Calvary. So I am confident that God is only interested in my very best good, and the good of my loved ones. I also know that God is doing for me exactly what I myself would choose to have Him do, could I, with heavenly vision, see the end of time from its beginning. Therefore, I do not feel it is a question of what God can do or what He wants to do for me. It is rather a question of what is best for me personally. What does God see I myself would choose, if I could see all things as He sees them? I am, therefore, confident that God's power to heal is limited only by His deepest love for me and my own eternal happiness. I know He is doing for me exactly what I would say, 'Dear Lord, do for me,' could I see all things as they really are. I know this because, 'The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal.' Education, page 258."

From the very first of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the evil one has sought to picture God as a despot. When Jesus came to earth the first time, "The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken.... To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan." The Desire of Ages, page 22.

"Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception." Ibid., page 24.

So, as we are ill, or harassed by questions hard to answer, let us communicate to those around us more than such statements as, "I know God could solve my problem, but I do not know whether He will." Such statements surely must bring great delight to the forces of darkness. Let us rather declare with holy assurance, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32.

Therefore, let me begin a new communication, both to God and to my fellow men. Let me give a clear, ringing testimony to the effect that God's answers to my prayers are, as I obey Him, exactly what I myself would choose, could I, like my wonderful Father, see the end from the beginning. Let me say, "He

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is willing, but He is not able to do some things I ask, simply because if He were to do these things, He would not be the loving God which the Scriptures picture Him to be."

Every part of God is love. Even His discipline is that of love. Permissiveness is not love. Permissiveness is actually often cruel. Permissiveness often either leads, or permits, another to do those things which hurt his own soul, body, or mind—or all three. God is too loving, too kind, too wise to deal in permissive love. Every act of His is one of eternal love and blessedness. His object in every action is the good of His people, the happiness of His saints, and the eternal pleasure of all who trust in Him. So when we pray for the sick, or the dying, let us remember to "commit" our "way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5. Let us obey the command: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Verse 4.

With the above in mind, we can know that these desires are the desires we ourselves would have, could we but see the end from the beginning. Oh, how my soul cries out, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107:8.

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, prayed that her son would not die, God answered her prayer. He answered it exactly as Mary herself would have requested, could she have read the whole plan of salvation clearly.

When I stood at the bedside of a fellow minister, praying that he might be brought back to life, God did not see fit to restore his life that day. However, when I get home to glory I shall understand clearly the details of why God answered my prayer in the way that He did. God could not have done anything else and be a God of love. He could not have brought that fellow-minister back to life. He wanted to. Really. But God saw certain circumstances that my limited sight could not understand. So I was comforted. I never but once remarked to a friend, "God did not answer my prayer." And I was later sorry I made that remark. Why? Because God did answer it. But He answered it the way I would have desired Him to answer it, could I have seen and understood, what He saw and understood.

Quiz 17

1. True or false: Every prayer sent up in faith from an honest heart is answered. _____.

2. What fact about answers to sincere prayer is a wonderful solace to realize? _____

_____.

Note: "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him." *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 224, 225. (See also, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 479; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 578.)

3. What eliminates the negative atmosphere, the doubting, the skepticism which Satan would throw around our praying hearts? _____

_____.

4. What type of statements are often the type which create around us an atmosphere favorable to doubt, and why? _____

_____.

5. Complete: It is not a question of what God can do or even what He wants to do for me, but rather a question of what is _____.

6. What can we say that is better than saying, "I know God could solve my problem, but I do not know whether He will." _____

_____.

7. Complete: He is willing, but He is not able to do some things I ask, simply because if He were to do these things He would _____ be the _____ which the Scriptures picture Him to be.

8. True or false: Love is permissiveness. _____.

9. True or false: Permissiveness is often cruel. _____.

10. Thought question (true or false): Earthly parents who do not give their children everything they desire are selfish and do not love their children. _____.