**Does God Answer Every Prayer?**

(by Clem Thurman)

**Question**: *“I believe that when we pray for something, in faith, God will give it to us. If we are sick, we can pray and God will heal us. He is able to do all things. So, the question is: ‘Does God Answer Every Prayer?’”*

**Answer**: I fully agree that God will hear and answer our prayers: ***“We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do His Will, him He heareth”*** (**John 9:31**). When His children pray, God answers: ***“For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears unto their supplication”*** (**1 Peter 3:12**). The apostle John writes, ***“And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight”*** (**1 John 3:22**). For one who believes God, there can be no question that He hears and answers our prayers.

But to believe that God answers prayer does not mean believing that God will give us whatever we ask of Him! Do parents always give the child what he or she wants? God answers our prayers in a variety of ways – “Yes,” “No,” “Later,” or “Here is something else.” There are numerous examples of all of these in the Scriptures. You see, God gives us what we NEED. And that is quite often different from what we think we need. Too many think of prayer as some kind of divine “faucet” that we can use to obtain blessings from God. It is not. Inherent in every prayer must be the attitude shown in the prayer of Jesus, ***“Not My will, but Thine, be done”*** (**Luke 22:42**). As James wrote, ***“For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that”*** (**James 4:15**). Will prayer always heal the sick? The apostle Paul wrote of the illness of Epaphroditus, his fellow-worker, ***“For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him”*** (**Philippians 2:27**). On the other hand, the same apostle wrote, ***“Trophimus I left at Miletus sick”*** (**2 Timothy 4:20**).

Surely Paul had prayed for both men, but one was healed and one was left sick. Maybe the best example is Paul, himself. He refers to a physical affliction he has as a ***“thorn in the flesh.”*** We are not told what the affliction was, but he reveals his attitude toward it: ***“Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My power is made perfect in weakness”*** (**2 Corinthians 12:8-9**). Paul sure didn’t get what he prayed for!

God often answers our prayers as He did with Paul. We don’t always get what we ask for. If simply praying for the sick meant automatic healing, there would be no need for doctors or hospitals, and the loved ones of Christians would never die! But the Lord plainly said, ***“They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick”*** (**Matthew 9:12**). And again, ***“It is appointed unto man once to die…”*** (**Hebrews 9:27**).

When we minister to those who are physically ill, and pray for them, we are doing just what **James 5:13-16** teaches us. And while the prayer of faith will “save” the sick, it won’t necessarily make him or her physically healthy. Saints still get sick and die, just as did the apostles and their families. So, let us do what we can to restore and maintain health, pray to God for His blessing of healing, and trust in Him to do what is best for His people. And best of all, let us learn to accept whatever answer He gives us.

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Hiring a Preacher

(Selected)

 A church was in need of a preacher. One of the elders was interested in finding out just what kind of a preacher the church wanted. In order to do this he composed a letter as though it had been received from a preacher and read it to the committee selecting a new preacher.

 *“Gentlemen: Understanding that you need a preacher, I would like to apply for the position. I have many qualifications that I think you would appreciate. I have been blessed to preach with power and have some success as a writer. Some say that I am a good organizer. I have been a leader in most places I have gone.”*

 *“Some folks, however, have some things against me. I am over fifty years of age. I have never preached in one place for more than three years at a time. In some places I have left town after my work caused riots and disturbances. I have to admit that I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any wrongdoing. My health is not too good, though I still get a good deal done. I have had to work at my trade to help pay my way.”*

 *“The churches I have preached in have been small, though located in several large cities. I have not gotten along too well with the religious leaders in different towns where I have preached, and I am sure that they will not recommend me. In fact, some of them have threatened me, taken me to court, and even attacked me physically. I’m not too good at keeping records. I have been known even to forget whom I have baptized. However, if you can use me, I shall do my best for you, even if I have to work to help with my support.”*

The elder read this letter to the committee, and asked if they were interested in the applicant. They replied that he would never do for their church. They were not interested in an unhealthy, trouble-making, contentious, ex-jailbird; and were insulted that his application had even been presented! But one of them did ask the preacher’s name and the elder replied, *“The Apostle Paul.”*