

PRAYING IN FAITH

The idea for this article is not original with me. It is adapted from a sermon by David Eldridge, evangelist for the Samaria church of Christ in Cookeville, TN. I thought he made some excellent points that I'd like to share.

The Bible says that we should "Pray without ceasing" (1Th.5:17). Those prayers can be "effective" (Jm.5:16) – or, by implication, ineffective. One thing that is necessary to make our prayers effective, is to pray in faith (Jm.1:6). In fact, if we don't pray in faith, we need not expect an answer from God (v.7)! But what does it mean to pray in faith? What kinds of things are involved in this admonition? Let's examine some of them here.

We must believe in the effectiveness of prayer. In other words, we must believe that prayer works! Sadly, some only see prayer as "emotionally therapeutic" – i.e. it makes you feel better, but it produces no real results. If that is your concept of prayer, then you are not praying in faith! By contrast, the Bible speaks of "effective" prayers that "avail much" (Jm.5:16). *In other words, prayer can make a difference!* Prayer is much more than a mental exercise; it is a God-given tool by which we can bring about real and meaningful change in our lives! If you do not truly believe that, then why pray?

We must believe in the power of God to answer. When God told Abraham that Sarah would have a child, she laughed because she was past the age of childbearing. But God rebuked them and said, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gn.18:10-14). What about you? Do you believe that some things are too hard for God? I realize that God no longer empowers men to work miracles (1Cor.13:8-10). But let us not underestimate the power of God to intervene in our lives, and do amazing things! If God has no power to answer, then why bother to pray? If God cannot change the course of the weather, or heal disease, then why ask? The Bible says God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ep.3:20). Do you believe that?

We must believe that God cares enough to answer. The Bible encourages us to cast "all your care on Him, *for He cares for you*" (1Pt.5:7). To illustrate God's care for us, Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" And "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (Mt.6:26, 28-30). If you do not believe that God cares enough to answer, why pray?

We must believe that God's answer is sufficient. By this I mean that we must accept whatever He decides. While God does answer the prayers of His children, sometimes that answer is not what we want! Sometimes, He answers, "Yes" (Jm.1:5). Other times, His answer is, "No" (Lk.22:41-42). Still yet at other times, His answer is, "Wait a while" (Lk.23:34; cf. Ac.2:36-38). *But whatever His answer may be, we must accept it as sufficient!* God is our Father, and He knows what is best for us. Consider the reaction of Paul when God said, "No," to him: "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' *Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (2Cor.12:7-10). Paul had faith to accept the Lord's "No." Can you do that?

May we let God be God, and never put limitations upon Him (Ps.78:41-42). Let us trust in His power to answer – *and let us trust in whatever answer He gives!*

--Lanny Smith