The Grounds Upon Which Our Prayers Receive Answers

By George Müller (1805 – 1898)

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

The promise uttered here by the mouth of our precious, adorable Lord Jesus Christ, with regard to prayer, is as full, as large, as deep, as precious as we could only wish it, and if it had been left to us, beloved in Christ, that we should make a promise for ourselves regarding prayer, I do not know how we could have enlarged it more than it is given to us here.

We should in childlike simplicity seek to lay hold of this Word; for that is FAITH – to lay hold of the Word of God; and to receive what God says to be true without questioning it, just resting on it.

Many persons think that faith consists in particularly deep feeling. This is a great mistake. He has the strongest faith who most is able in childlike simplicity to receive the Word of God as the truth of God, and to rest on that Word, to be assured that God will act according to His Word (1 Thes. 2:13).

The man and the woman who are able thus to receive the Word of God – thus to rest on it – these are the strongest in faith. And that is just what we have to aim at continually – that we are satisfied with the Word of God, that we receive the Word of God, and that we say to ourselves: "It will be so – simply because God has said it."

Compare Scripture with Scripture

Such a promise, as this in Matthew 7:7-8, we should take to heart, so to speak, press it to our bosom like a good old friend, and say: "My God and Father will surely act according to this, His Word, for His Holy Child Jesus has given it as a promise to the church."

But although this Word of promise is so large, so full, so deep, so precious, yet we have at the same time to compare Scripture with Scripture in order that we may yet obtain further instruction, that our hearts may yet be further enlarged, in order that we may be more firmly established, and that we may yet more clearly see what is in the mind of God regarding this passage.

Compare, for instance, a word regarding prayer, as we have it in the Epistle of James, where we read thus in the third verse of the fourth chapter:

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Such a word as this is not to be left out, but to be compared in connection with the

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promise regarding prayer.

James refers to such who called themselves Christians, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who were without prayer, as we have it in the latter part of the previous verse: *"...Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not."*

There were some who did not pray at all. Then there were others who did pray, but they did not pray the right way. *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."*

Here the question naturally is asked, "What have I to understand by asking amiss?" The Holy Ghost in what follows explains the meaning of asking amiss: *"That ye may consume it upon your lusts."* That is, if persons ask for things for the gratification of their carnal mind, that they may enjoy themselves, that they may strengthen the old evil, corrupt nature in them, then they ask amiss, and they have no warrant from Scripture to expect their prayers will be answered.

But if this be not the case, if we ask for the glory of God, then we do not ask amiss. Now this seems the first and primary point with regard to prayer, and this should be always present to the minds of the children of God with regard to prayer. *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Cor. 10:31).

Not Our Worthiness – but His!

Another deeply important point is that we put aside all expectation on the ground of our own merit and worthiness – that we instead plead the merit and worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the ground to have our prayers answered. As the New Testament generally expresses it, we ask *"in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Col. 3:17; John 15:16).

Now, just as the sinner cannot get to heaven on the ground of his own merit and worthiness, but can expect to be admitted into the presence of God only on the ground of the merit and suffering of our precious, adorable Lord Jesus Christ, by faith in His name, so we, the children of God, in coming to God in prayer, have to put aside all thought of our own supposed merit and worthiness.

We have to disown ourselves, have to cling and cleave alone to Jesus Christ, have to appear before God as such who are united to the risen Jesus Christ, who hide themselves in Him, who, so to speak, put Christ forward and come hiding themselves in Him, and ask God that, on the ground of the merits and worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ, God would be pleased to answer their prayers.

Now here is our comfort: The precious Lord Jesus Christ is worthy to receive everything at the hands of God His Father, who is willing to give it to Him on the ground of His mediatorial work because of the perfection of His services, because of His spotless holiness.

If thus we approach God in prayer, then we have the fullest reason, so far as that point is concerned, to expect an answer to our prayer.

***"Ye Ask – I Will Do"* (John 14:14)**

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Another deeply important point is that we exercise faith in the power of God, and faith in the WILLINGNESS of God to answer prayer. Very few of the children of God question the power of God; the temptation generally is more frequent with regard to questioning the willingness of God to answer our prayer. He can do it, we allow, but is He willing to do it?

Now, here we say to ourselves, God has given the choicest gift He had to give them, even His only begotten Son, and He has given us the promise that as He gave Him in the way of grace, so He will, in the way of grace, give us everything with Him (Rom. 8:32).

Upon the word of promise we should rest and therefore say, "Not only God can give it, but will give it as assuredly as I ask for the glory of His name, as surely as I plead the merit and worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ, so assuredly will He give me – for Christ's sake, and with Christ, that which I ask at His hands."

I lay stress on this because I have seen, during the years I have known the Lord Jesus Christ, that whenever I was able in prayer – to believe that I would receive what I asked for – it was sure to come! (Mark 11:24).

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:22-26).

"...All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22).

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

Consider how it is with you when you pray, whether you believe that you will receive, whether you exercise faith in the power and willingness of God to answer prayer. If you will so believe, you will receive! If this be wanting, then you have to ask for faith first, to ask that God shall help you to believe!

Now suppose all these three points be united – suppose we ask that which is for the glory of God; suppose we plead the merits and worthiness of Christ; suppose we ask in faith – then comes another deeply important point:

God does not always give us a promise with regard to the time when our prayers will be answered. We have just quietly to continue in prayer until God gives the answer.

Here Is the Secret

Thousands and tens of thousands of prayers I have had answered during the years I have

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known the Lord.

"But," you ask me, "when were they answered?" Thousands upon thousands of prayers were answered immediately, but very many after days and weeks only; others after months only; still others after years only.

Here God works in His own way because He is God, and He will ever and ever let us see that He is God, and that we are His creatures, and that He acts as He pleases.

Now the point is whether we are willing just quietly to wait until God's time has come. He has promised that He will answer, if the requests are according to His will.

"...This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

I am praying now for two individuals for thirty-three years next November. While I have had tens of thousands of answers to prayers, yet in this instance I am praying for the conversion of these two persons, and they are not yet converted. Therefore, you see, while God answers prayers, He tries the faith greatly. [Note: These two men were saved after George Müller's death.]

All this I relate for the encouragement of my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, that if they patiently wait on God, the blessing will come. And oh! When the blessing comes, it is all the sweeter, all the more precious the longer we have to wait.

Upright and Sincere

While on the one hand God is ready, notwithstanding our infirmities, our wickedness, our failing, to answer our prayers, yet He does expect from us honesty, sincerity, and uprightness of heart, and He does not answer our prayers while we live in sin (Isa. 59:1-2; Mark 11:22-26).

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). *"...If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanseth us from all sin.... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:7, 9).

We must be upright and sincere. The warfare against the natural evil tendencies must be carried on, and we must not allow ourselves to live in sin. Should the latter be the case, we have no warrant to expect answers to our prayers.

"Above All That We Ask" (Eph. 3:20)

What we have to do is to wait on God. Therefore be encouraged to wait on God and expect great things from Him, and you will find that neither your waiting on Him nor your exercise of faith will be in vain, but God will in the end give far more abundantly than you expected; BEYOND OUR LARGEST EXPECTATION WE SHALL RECEIVE.

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Read Ephesians 3:20; Psalm 27:14; 62:5; 130:5; Isaiah 30:18; 40:29-31; Lamentations 3:25; Habakkuk 2:3.

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