

# The Promise of Answered Prayer, Part One

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
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Isaiah 30:19

(Holman Christian Standard Bible)

***For you people will live on Zion in Jerusalem and will never cry again. He will show favor to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears, He will answer you.***

One of the greatest things to occur in a church is for prayer to become exciting. When a church discovers prayer, then it has found its heart. Prayer is the heart of a church. It is the organ from which its lifeblood flows. When prayer becomes the heart of a church, it is then God's will begins to happen. The French mystic, Fenelon, said, "True prayer is only another name for the love of God." Oh, a church may exist without prayer, but it does not live as God intended. Its life will be artificial, contrived, ritualistic at worst, and at best a shadow of what it should be. A church without a vibrant prayer life will only limp and not run.

The question is how would we characterize a "vibrant prayer life"? It is when prayer and faith come together. Amazing things take place when prayer meets with faith. It has found its soul mate. Prayer was never meant to exist without faith.

Without faith, prayer is a body without life, a religious exercise that will not move a mountain or anything else but perhaps the pride of him who prays. Faith and prayer are God's Siamese twins in the spiritual kingdom. And when prayer and faith come together, prayer is no longer a religious exercise, a reciting of words, a litany of holy clichés; it is the soul set free to join God in His holy work and will. And when God's will is believed through prayer, it comes to pass. Always.

In this promise of God's revival of His people in Babylonian captivity we see the vitality of prayer. God has pledged Himself to Israel to bring them back to their homeland with great blessings. Yet, He shows that His work always involves His people's prayers.

It is right that we pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a way that we have never experienced before. It is proper that we join God and through the act of prayer say, "Amen" to what

He has promised us. In the end, that's all prayer is—it's saying "Amen" to what God has said He would do.

Someone may ask, "Why should we pray if God has promised?" We know God cannot lie, therefore it must come to pass, so why pray? A logical question. I would like to answer that with a question. Was the Day of Pentecost a sovereignly predestined event? Answer: yes, of course it was. But what were the 120 doing during those ten days waiting for this sovereign, predestined, foreordained and decreed event? Acts 1:14 answers, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication . . ." They prayed, they waited, but not passively saying, "Jesus has promised to give us the Holy Spirit and therefore there is nothing for us to do." No, we've already seen in this series of messages that that kind of waiting is not biblical waiting. Rather, they prayed and prayed in faith because they had a promise. It was the promise that fueled the prayer. They prayed in faith because they had a promise. We will hopefully get into that more next week.

This gives us a principle to see throughout this message this morning—prayer is not overcoming reluctance in God to get something. Prayer puts us in a position to receive what God wants to give us. Prayer that is joined to a promise is the act of receiving that promise and not trying to make the promise happen. Prayer is not about trying to keep God honest. But, unfortunately, this is how many view prayer. Most Christians, sadly, have never matured to understand that faith is not overcoming reluctance in God, it's actually overcoming the reluctance of our flesh and putting ourselves in a position to receive what God has said is already ours.

That's what I want to show you in the message this morning. May the Holy Spirit illuminate it for us, and unction me to do so.

He says in our text, "He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you."

The first point I want to direct your attention to is pivotal for you to understand. All the other things I'm going to say are built upon this truth:

## **I. GOD DESIRES TO ANSWER PRAYER**

All of us would say, “Oh yes, amen.” But I do not believe that most of you believe that God truly wants to answer your prayer. Oh, the blessed desire of God, who delights in giving you your heart’s desire when your desires are His desires. He is more willing to answer our prayers than we are to pray them. He eagerly waits in the secret place for our arrival, but we pass by the door of the closet of prayer in a hurry to other pursuits. If we really believed we could accomplish more on our knees than on our feet running to the next scheduled activity we would pray more. Only if we believed that God our Father wants to answer our prayers we would pray more. I’m convinced there is subtly, perhaps even unknown in your heart, a disconnect between praying and God’s joyful giving and answering.

The Lord wants to answer prayer that is in accordance to His will. That’s the only condition. But my friend, I want to ask you a very personal question—why would you want anything but His will? Isn’t that the difficulty? Most of the time we pray for the silly things we waste our life pursuing. We don’t pray according to the will of God and this is why we don’t see many prayers answered. We are praying for the silly things we are wasting our lives upon. The Apostle James called it praying amiss.

*James 4:3 —“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*

Listen to the text again.

*“He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you.”*

Here in this promise the answer is guaranteed. This is very different than James’ “amiss praying.” When we pray for the things God wants because we want them too, He always answers. Every time.

If you’re already sizing up this message, you’ve figured out that the issue is praying according to the will of God and when you do He is sure and quick to answer. That’s the guarantee of this text.

Unfortunately, we don’t believe God really wants to answer prayer. Let’s not even concern ourselves with praying according to the will of God, let’s hurdle this obstacle built within our hearts

after years of praying and finding very few answers that has conditioned us to believe that God really doesn't want to answer our prayers. We find words like our text most difficult to truly wrap our hearts around and embrace. This is why prayer seems so difficult—we don't believe God. We've been conditioned to not believe.

Recently a man I have been praying for came and confessed that he doesn't really trust God. Well, I had told him that but finally he said God had shown him. I said to him, "Now we're getting somewhere. Now that you're honest we can precede to the next step." And I'm asking you to be honest with yourself today. Do you really trust God to answer your prayers? Would you not agree with me that when you pray there is a degree of hesitancy and uncertainty? Most of the time it's a prayer you hope God will answer. You hope you're praying according to His will and with the right kind of fervor so as to provoke and answer.

We've been conditioned not to believe God. Let's face the facts if we are to proceed in our ability to pray with faith.

If we've been conditioned to not believe, what has conditioned us?

**The first conditioning is a wrong view of prayer.** We wrongly see prayer as overcoming reluctance in God in order to get answers. We see it as a way to convince God to come along and join us in our enterprise, our will, rather than we joining Him in His enterprise and will. We think God's will is always contrary to ours and we must convince Him, or, similarly, God will not answer our prayers until we overcome some threshold test of sincerity and fervor. In other words, God is not going to answer this request until I show Him I'm really serious about this. So prayer is like climbing over a mountain of opposition in God and once you pray enough and with enough desire, then God will give you the answer. That is an unbiblical and faulty view of prayer.

Prayer, in this view, becomes an internal struggle because we see God reluctant and not eager to answer prayer, especially our prayers. This is where we really struggle—we don't believe God wants to answer our prayers.

If you don't believe me, then why have you said to yourself in the past, *You know, I've prayed about this but if I get so and so to pray that will help. Maybe I need to call the pastor and get him to pray, because I know God listens to him.* My friend, I've got news for you—God loves me no more than

He loves you. He loves you no less than He loves me. You have the same position with God as the man who wrote this text, as the apostles. He loves you as much as He loves Peter or Paul. He loves you as much as He loves Martin Luther, George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, George Muller and any saint that you can think of today. They don't have anything over you as far as God's heart or attention.

God is eager to have a relationship with you and to work in your life so that when you pray He can answer and therefore you will bear much fruit and He will be glorified. That's how Jesus said prayer was to work in your life.

Never will I forget when this truth became shockingly real to me, because I, too, had been conditioned by the church to believe prayer was this threshold where I've got to overcome some reluctance or prove to God that I am worthy of His answer.

Several years ago, about 1:30 in the morning, Karen and I were awakened by the phone. Stan McDonald called and apologized for waking us but asked if Karen and I could come over and pray. "Camillia is in a bad way tonight and we just need somebody to come and stand with us in prayer."

We got dressed and went over to their house and sat on the floor in their living room. I began to pray, then the next person and the next until all four had prayed. I remember praying like I had prayed much of my life, up to that point, trying to climb this threshold with God. I prayed so fervently to show God we were really serious and to try to get Him to hear us. It was as if it was a spiritual tug-of-war. Doesn't prayer sometimes feel that way? I was tugging as hard as I could and so were the other three. While they were praying the Spirit of God spoke to me and said, "Why are you praying as if I don't want to do this? I want this more than you do. Why do you think I have you here praying? Trust Me. I'm a loving Father."

Everybody finished praying and I prayed again. This time there was no tug-of-war. This time my prayer was, "Lord, I believe You. I believe that You are going to do something tonight that is life-changing and will forever be remembered and have eternal impact." I began to rejoice and then Stan prayed and his prayer was completely different. Then Cindy prayed and this time she prayed with confidence God was at work. Finally, Karen prayed and she began to pour out praise and gratitude for what God was going to do. All of us were praying, not tugging on God trying to con-

vince Him to cross over to our side, we were on His side and we found out He already wanted to give us what we were asking.

Never will I forget that. Prayer is not about tugging with God. Prayer is not about trying to make something happen, including God's promises. Often we pray with this attitude, *I will make what God has promised happen*, but prayer doesn't make it happen. God makes things happen. All believing prayer does is put you in a position to receive it. I'll share more about that by the end of this message.

**The second thing that conditions our unbelief in God's willingness to answer our prayer is our track record of unanswered prayer.** How many of you have a track record of prayers that haven't been answered yet? You've quit praying for those things, haven't you? Many more prayers seem to go unanswered than answered; that's the cold hard fact that needs to be faced this morning if we are going to see a change in our prayer lives. We try and fail and give up. We are conditioned to believe through those failures that God is reluctant to answer prayer.

I can prove that most people believe God isn't eager to answer prayers. All I have to do is say Sunday, five o'clock. At Oak Grove Baptist Church on Sundays at five o'clock there is a women's prayer meeting and a men's prayer meeting. I'm not saying this to condemn, I'm just proving my argument. If we really believed God answered prayer and was eager to do so we could not wait to get to a prayer meeting and pray with other believers. We would be eager and it would be a most exciting time.

Let me tell you another time: Wednesdays, six o'clock. Most Wednesdays I don't preach, we just pray because we believe prayer is the heart of the church and that God responds to us when we pray by faith in His will. Things then happen. If you really believed God was eager to answer prayer, you would be there.

Every day in your home with your family, do you pray? Do you pray personally, or do you pray "runabout prayers"—prayers offered up as you runabout your daily tasks and schedules? We really don't believe God wants to answer our prayers and that's why we're conditioned not to pray or not to pray as we ought to.

On that basis, I want to share with you three reasons why God wants to answer your prayers. All found in the Bible.

## **II. GOD DESIRES TO ANSWER PRAYER FOR HIS REPUTATION SAKE**

I. His reputation would surely suffer if He didn't keep His word and answer.

If He didn't answer He wouldn't be a promise-keeping God. God has said, "When you pray according to My will, I will answer it. When I hear it I will answer you." "When you cry," the text says, "He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry. When He hears it, He will answer you."

If God didn't keep His word we could say He is not worthy to be worshipped, followed or served. God has more to lose by not answering your prayers than you do.

God's entire reputation, renown and glory would be gone, shattered and destroyed if He didn't keep His word and answer prayer. For that reason alone He is excitedly ready to answer when we pray.

2. Therefore, He is glorified in answered prayer.

We've heard this morning people sharing testimonies of answered prayer. We look to God and say, "God, this is awesome! You are good, You are kind, You are gracious—we didn't deserve this and yet You've done this! This is amazing." And therefore God has been glorified here today. He answers prayer for this reason: He's gracious. He does not answer because we deserve the answer.

If God answered prayer based upon my deservedness I would never, ever receive an answer. Never.

Some of you are praying for your children to be saved. You're crying out to God for them but the root of your prayer is faith in you not in God. *If I pray long enough and hard enough God will hear me. If I do the right things God will hear me. If I pray the correct way, if I live in such a way then God will say yes and He'll do what I'm asking.* Friends, God is not going to save your children because you

are good or because you deserve it. If you're waiting for that day, they will perish in their sins and burn forever. God will not save our children because we deserve it, He will save them because He's gracious.

You are asking Him to work in your own life in different ways. Some of you want to be saved, some of you need God to answer financial or physical needs and you're thinking "I've got to get all my ducks in a row, I've got to live the right way, I've got to make sure my prayers are accurate, I've got to make sure I read the Bible everyday." Friends, God doesn't answer because we're worthy, He answers because He's gracious. And when He answers our prayers, it's His grace that's magnified because if I deserved the answers then who would be the one worthy? Me.

### **III. GOD DESIRES TO ANSWER PRAYER FOR THE JOY OF HIS CHILDREN.**

God wants to answer our prayers because He wants you to be joyful and happy.

1. He delights in our joy and in blessing us.

Some of you are still struggling in this area of your life to see God in this light. You see God so just, and He is, so right, and He is. But His justice and rightness is fueled by His love. His justice is an administration of His love. He is right because He is love. He cannot rejoice in evil. God, because He is right and loving, is a Father who is altogether overjoyed to make you joyful.

Jesus said, "If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more Your heavenly Father gives good gifts to them that asks Him?" Why did He say that? Because it's the state of God's character—He is that loving. God delights in bringing you joy just like you delight in making your children happy, only infinitely more.

God is not against you. *But if He isn't against me, why am I suffering so?* We'll get to that in a few minutes but I want you to hear me now. I will not go on the record indicting God for not being good to you even if you're suffering today because He delights in your joy and in your blessing.

2. If God answered prayer only because of His own glory, then it would be difficult to see He was kind and good. Isn't that true?



There are some theologies that say God does everything for His own glory. Period. Well, the Bible puts a comma after that statement and it says He also does it for our sake. God enjoys filling your cup. God enjoys your soul delighting in His goodness and therefore He desires to answer prayers.

#### **IV. GOD DESIRES TO ANSWER PRAYER FOR THE WELLBEING OF HIS CHILDREN**

Not just for their joy and happiness but for their wellbeing.

##### **A. Physical Wellbeing Within God's Will.**

God desires to answer your prayers that deal with your physical condition that deal with your health, wealth and ability to survive in this material world within the perimeters of His will.

There are some who tell us we must never bring physical needs to the Lord in prayer, and that high advancement in the kingdom is for those who never pray for themselves. Rubbish! Translated: garbage—rotten garbage. That is not the Scriptures. That contradicts the lives of the saints and it contradicts Jesus who tied our seeking the kingdom with our physical needs being met.

*“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.”*

What are “all these things”? “What you shall wear,” “what you shall eat,” “what you shall drink,” all of these things will be added to you.

Jesus said the kingdom of God's glory and its advancement is tied to your physical wellbeing. How can that be so? Because in God's sight much of the natural is spiritual. In other words, the physical comes out of the spiritual. The Bible says that all that we can see came from that which is invisible, making the invisible the most important. The origin is spiritual therefore your physical body and all of its needs, the relationships you have and all of those needs, has spiritual implications and ramifications.

God wants to work in the natural realm in order to teach us about the spiritual realm.

Why did He give you a material body? Why didn't He make you like the angels, just spirits without the natural body? Because He wanted our material body to teach us spiritual truths. Why did He make a material world and put us in it, why didn't He make us to dwell in heaven like the angels? Because He wanted to put you in a material, physical realm to learn about the spiritual realm. There are things in the material realm that teach us about the spiritual realm that even angels are inquiring about. They can't relate to the material things, being spiritual beings only. But you're spiritual and physical and can transcend both realms.

God will answer prayers concerning our physical well-being within the perimeters of His will for us because the Bible says God desires us to prosper in body as well as soul.

*3 John 2 — "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."*

Before you begin to say you're hearing a little Benny Hinn or Joel Osteen, let me clarify something. Just because Joel Osteen or Benny Hinn says it doesn't mean it's all wrong. I've always said that every heresy rides the back of a half-truth. We have allowed the Joel Osteens and the Benny Hinns of the world to move us away from the Bible because we're afraid to claim any promise that sounds material and unspiritual. I'm not going to let Benny Hinn cheat me out of physical blessings.

If God wants to give me a house, as He's promised Karen and I, I'm going to receive it and you can call me *charismatic* for praying and believing that. Fine. "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." I'm going to say that all the day long as I'm sitting in my new home.

Just because there are people who take some truth and go too far with it, as these men do, doesn't mean the seed upon which their poison germinates isn't truth. We have seen God over and over in our lives give us physical blessings. The van we're now driving was given to us by God as I've explained to you and, in fact, the van before that was given to us. The last two vehicles I've driven I didn't have to pay for—God gave them to us. Why? Because I needed them. He promised to meet my needs. If I'll just seek His kingdom He'll do what I need Him to do.

I can be busy about God's kingdom and not worry about those things because my Father told me He will do this.

Now, please listen. I told you I would get to this.

There are times when God will appoint a thorn instead of a throne. Sometimes His hand gives us sorrow instead of singing, scarcity in place of substance, and struggle instead of success. There are times when God brings you through long seasons of physical suffering and spiritual agony.

But when these more difficult things come let us know they are our Father's will, and not His judgment; they are His good and not His bad. It is this knowledge that helps us to face them bravely and with joy. God is not being unkind, He's not being evil to you. He's actually loving you.

## **B. Continual Spiritual Wellbeing.**

Jesus said it's better for you to enter into heaven maimed than enter into hell whole-bodied. So, if I have to go through the valley of cancer in order to teach me something about God and to strengthen my faith and conform me to His image, then it's for my good and I can be joyful in the valley of cancer.

I got an email this week that there had been a special prayer meeting while we were on vacation for a lady at First Baptist in Lone Oak who is in the fourth stage of terminal cancer. The doctors have sent her home and said there is no more they can do. The elders and pastors of the church decided to have a laying on of hands service and invited people. I read her appeal and she said, "If it's God's will He'll heal me. But I know this, if it's not, He is good and He is helping me to endure." Now see that is spiritual wellbeing.

God has promised spiritual blessings. He has promised the removal of everything that would keep you from growing into becoming like Jesus. Everything. And He's given you everything to be like Jesus.

*2 Peter 1:3, 4 — "as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*

There it is. God has given us promises to believe in order for us to participate in sharing His

divine nature. Very few Christians see this. God has a Book of promises and on top of the thousands of promises in Scripture, God, in His kindness, will come to you from time to time and make you personal promises. What a great God! What a loving Father, kind and benevolent. God will make you those promises not just to comfort you and give you sustenance but to make you share in His divine nature. We're so happy as Baptists to say, "Well, I'm saved and filled with the Spirit and I've got a place in glory, that's it." God says, "It's true, you've received my divine nature, you have the Spirit of God. But to participate in that divine nature I've given you promises. If you can believe Me for what I have promised you will receive those promises and the result will be your faith grows and you become more like Jesus in the process."

Answered prayer is God's process of making you more like Jesus. That's why God's desires to answer your prayer.

One of God's most important promises is the promise to remove anything in your life that will hinder you growing in Christ-likeness.

He will rid your heart of those things as quickly as a gardener will rid his garden of its weeds.

When we came back from vacation I noticed all of our squash had died. It was on the last leg anyway; the squash bugs had taken over. But I noticed something else had taken over. While the squash was healthy and growing, the leaves were large and blocked the sun's rays from penetrating. The grass and wheat seeds had been kept down to a minimal, but, now the leaves were gone, the weeds were in glorious form. I noticed in the weeds was a sprig or two of crabgrass and at the end of the shoot were the little tiny seeds. I said to myself, "I'm on vacation but I can't let this happen because next year's garden will be much more difficult." The seeds would all fall back into the ground and I'll till them into the ground and guess what I'll have plenty of next year? Weeds.

So for two hours in the hot sun I labored, pulling weeds with my hands and uprooting as much as I could get out of that space because I knew if I didn't the weeds would be back next year only more productive and more prosperous.

If I, a man, would invest two hours in the hot sun, pulling on my hands and knees grass and weeds to keep a garden plot clean, how much more will your Father pluck up every root of sin and unbelief and lust in your heart? It's His business, not yours, to keep that heart clean and He has

promised to do so and you can count on Him. We are to cooperate with Him, but in the end it's not me who will cleanse my heart, it's God who cleanses my heart and my place is to believe Him for that. My faith in that promise causes me to receive that promise.

But why must sometimes these blessings only come through prayer?

My question must be carefully dissected. First, I said, why must *sometimes* these blessings only come through prayer, which means sometimes they come without prayer. Oh, praise the Lord! For if my blessings depended upon my prayer life, I wouldn't be very blessed. There are some blessings God just gives you that you don't even ask for. He's just that good.

How many of you went to bed last night and prayed you would wake up so you could be here this morning? Some of you are wise enough, or in that stage of life, that you might have prayed that. But those of us who are younger don't think that way, do we? We take it for granted. Yet God still did it.

How many of you prayed this day for daily bread? Very seldom do we pray for that. Now and again God takes us through a valley of shriveled up sustenance but very few of us experience that.

There are a lot of things God just gives us that we don't even ask for. But sometimes there are blessings He will only give you in response to prayer. Why is that?

The Father who watches us in the light of day and in the dark of night knows you externally and internally, better than you know yourself. He knows exactly how to bless you in order to help you not hurt you. How wise a Father He is who knows just the right amount of blessings to give me without praying and withhold the blessings I need and only give them to me when I pray and believe Him for it.

If God gave me every blessing without prayer, do you know what would soon happen? I don't even want to think about it. That ugly, terrible, monstrous head of pride would consume me more than it does now. Some blessings come only through prayer to create dependency and cooperation.

### **C. Faith Creates Dependency.**

That's why some blessings can only come through prayer. Some would argue and say that it is our needs that create dependency. Surely, they are created to do so, but they seldom do. This is one of the life lessons I've learned. Seldom does having a problem or a need create dependency upon God. Most of the time it doesn't, otherwise the sinner would be the most dependent person upon God for his needs are great.

A man, whether Christian or not can sense his need, feel it deeply, and not depend upon God.

Just because you've got a need doesn't mean you're automatically going to cast yourself upon God.

Faith is what works the dependency in our hearts. And faith is always demonstrated in prayer that believes God. The human heart will never cry out until it believes God will respond, otherwise it is only wishing God will help. Prayer without faith becomes a plea of "I don't know what else to do so I'll give God a shot." You may pray to God but that doesn't mean you're praying in faith. It's faith that creates dependency. There are some things that God will withhold from us individually and from our church, even souls being saved and added to our number, until we depend on Him through faith. God will even withhold souls' salvation from a church in order for us to be dependent upon God for that blessing.

We may pray for God to save, but until faith is enjoined with our praying our prayers are a shot in the dark.

Many of God's children have settled to receive only what God in grace gives without prayer. *God's been good to me, I've got heaven to look forward to and I can live with that. I'll just limp until I get to the gates of that city.* You're not living the abundant, overcoming life. You are not willing to be utterly dependent on God for all things so that you could receive all abundance. You still want control. That's what this whole thing boils down to—control. You still want some control over your life.

Another response to our neediness is self-effort to fix the need. We think prayer is a way to display our spirituality by saving the day and working out our own deliverance. Sometimes prayer is done with an attitude of making the deliverance happen rather than believe the deliverance has already been given. This is that wrong view of prayer again.

Prayer is not overcoming reluctance in God to get something. Prayer puts us in a position to receive what God wants to give us and what He said was already ours. Prayer that is joined to a promise is the act of receiving that promise and not trying to make the promise happen. This is something very few Christians ever learn. How can I teach you in four or five minutes? I can simply give you the principle and I want to do so by illustration.

Now and again Karen and I will get a coupon from a department store like a JC Penny or Khol's that says come in and get \$10 off anything in the store. Now, being the frugal good steward that I am, I read that and think *Hmm, if I go into JC Penny and find something that costs just \$9.99, I can get it for free.* Now, I know the reason the department stores do this, they want to get you in because they know if they can get you in the store you'll spend a lot more and they'll make money. But they haven't met Michael Durham.

You may call me tightfisted or a tightwad but I call it good stewardship. I take my \$10 gift certificate that says I have \$10 off anything in their store and I'll find a shirt or a pair of socks or a tie that's on sale for \$9.99 and I'll walk up to the cash register and I'll hand them the item and my certificate and I end up walking out of there paying absolutely nothing.

As I approach that counter with the coupon I am absolutely certain I am going to get this new shirt for nothing, why? Because I have the name of JC Penny and company behind it. They've put it in writing stating this is what they'll do and I believe it. I don't doubt them. Their whole marketing scheme would fall if they wouldn't keep their word; I know it's honorable. So I walk up to the counter and I lay down that coupon proudly and the lady rings it up and says, "Is there anything else you would like to get?"

"No, this is all," and I have full assurance it will be honored.

But let us suppose that Karen and I are on our way to JC Penny to redeem our \$10 coupon and we get there, get out of the car and walk into the store and I say, "Sweetheart, you brought that coupon, right?"

She replies, "I thought you got it?"

"Well I thought you brought it," I answer.

We discover nobody brought it. This isn't too hard to suppose because it happens now and again. Here's my dilemma. Do I get back into the car, drive all the way back here, get the coupon then drive all the way back to the mall, especially now the traffic on I-24 is so bad? Or do I go in to the store carry out my plan and hope that the checkout clerk will be merciful and let me get my free shirt without the coupon?

Again, let's suppose I try it without the coupon. I walk in, find my \$9.99 item and walk up to the counter. As I'm walking up to that counter I don't have the guarantee, I don't have the coupon, but I think within myself, *You know what, she might just do it if I act sad enough, if I look humble enough, if I say the right words, then she might just take mercy upon me and go ahead and let me have the item.* I'm not for certain but it's a shot.

I walk up and the first thing I say to her is, "Boy, that's a pretty dress you have on today."

"You know, a funny thing happened, I forgot my coupon. I apologize, I'm really forgetful. I'm getting older, I don't know if you can tell, but as I get older I forget things and I forgot the coupon, but would you please take compassion on me? I'm a preacher, by the way, and we in the ministry aren't wealthy, you know."

Am I certain or uncertain of what she will do? I'm uncertain because I don't have the certificate. So what do I do? I resort to flattery, praise, false humility, and begging.

How many of us are just like that in our prayer lives?

We don't have a promise because we're not living according to the Word of God and therefore the will of God. But we think, *You know, there may just be a chance that God will hear this.* So we walk up to God and what's the first thing we do? What we've been told to do—"enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise."

"Lord, You're so good! You're just wonderful. You are so awesome!" We begin with flattery. We call it worship but it's flattery. Then we try put on false humility, "Oh God, You know how weak and needy I am. I know I don't deserve any of your kindnesses." Next, we beg, but we call it petitioning, "Oh, God, I appeal to Your good graces. Would You please do this for me? Finally, we really try to nail it by ending it, "In Jesus' name."



When the answer does not come, we say prayer doesn't work. The problem is you're not praying in faith. Your prayer is a wish, a shot in the dark. God has said He doesn't answer this kind of praying. "When you pray, believe that you will receive them and you will have them" (Mark 11:24).

When you have a promise from God you can go before Him boldly and say, "This is Your will and Father, I want what You want. Therefore, give it to me. It's mine. Thank You, Lord."

Some of you are afraid to pray like that because you see God in a very wrong light. But that's the way to pray.

Let me give you one more example and I'll conclude.

About a month and a half ago I met with Florin and told him I was going to start praying about the money for our new vehicle. "I'm going to make the need known," I told him. "Here's what I need you to do—go and find the vehicle you think you need and find out how much it will cost and let me know."

He asked me to clarify what I wanted him to do.

"I want you to go out and find how much you think it's going to cost you for a new vehicle that will serve the ministry's needs and let me know the amount. I'm going to start raising support. If we're going to ask God, we've got to be specific. He told us to bring Him our needs. If we just say *We need a new car*, who knows what we'll end up with. Let's bring Him our needs. That's what faith does. Faith says, *This is what I need, and here is what You have promised.*"

He looked at me and grinned that grin of his and said, "This is strange. I've never done this before."

I reassured him, "Don't worry about it, just do it."

He did and came back and gave me a figure.

Friday I got to meet with him. I said, "I've got some news for you. God has given us \$24,200 on a new vehicle."

He stuttered, “Twenty four...?”

“I didn’t say \$2,400, Florin. I said, ‘Twenty-four thousand two hundred dollars,’” I answered.

He repeated it back to me to make sure he heard me correctly, then he just sat there in a long pause. This sheepish grin came on his face. “How did that happen?”

“Brother, we prayed and God is answering our prayers. Did we not pray? Did not God say, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you’? We’ve been praying *God, this is for Your kingdom, for Your good, You have promised.*”

It’s not that God doesn’t want to do it; He wants me to believe that He is that good and that He wants to do it, as well as, that He can do it. And if I believe it I will receive it. That’s the truth, and Benny Hinn didn’t come up with it. That’s Jesus’ words not some prosperity heretic. That’s the word of God.

We wrongly see our needs existing before the supply and prayer becomes the means to create the provision. No, prayer is the way to get a hold of the provision.

The word *provide* is from the Latin. It has the prefix *pro* meaning “before.” The second part of the word comes from a Latin word, *videre*, means vision. Therefore, *provide* literally means to “see beforehand.” God sees beforehand what you need and He’s already created the answer before the need ever arose. The greatest testimony to that is in the Lamb of God.

Think with me for a moment. Do you not think that on that fifth day when God made all the animals, including the sheep, the day before He made man, that He knew He was going to have to kill the lamb and take its hide in order to clothe a sinful, fallen man? He provided the lamb before the sin ever arose to teach us something—that before the foundation of the world the Lamb of God, the need for your soul and eternal destiny, was already provided. Jesus was going to come and die for us. The provision was created before the need.

That’s the way it always works. God gives us promises so you can participate in His provision and nature and when you believe His promises, wanting them the way He wants them for you,

you receive.

God was getting His people ready there in Babylon to receive and the evidence they were ready to receive all God had for them was when they prayed in faith. They wanted what God wanted and they got it. When you want what God wants, then the promises are easy to believe. God was waiting on His people in captivity to want what He wanted for the reasons He wanted and when they got there He answered. Now, He is waiting on us. He's waiting for you to want what He wants and to believe what He wants for you. The moment we believe, He will pour you out a blessing. Amen.