

“Knowing God’s Answer!”

1 John 5:14-15

Intro. – The following are true events, only the names have been changed to protect not necessarily the innocent, but those who were involved.

Joe Blow desperately needed a second car, at least he thought so. Joe let the Lord know through prayer what his need was. After praying for the matter, Joe went out and bought a real cream puff because of a *inner feeling*. He concluded from this *feeling* that this was the car the Lord gave in response to Joe’s prayer. The car?! Well, it turned out to be a royal lemon. Joe’s response? Why Lord?!!

Harry Doe was praying for the Lord’s guidance in choosing a life’s mate. While he was praying for this particular matter the phone rang. On the other end was a girl calling to ask Harry about an assignment. Harry immediately decided this was the Lord’s answer to his prayer by putting into this girl’s mind the idea of calling at that precise moment. So, immediately, Harry started a courtship with this girl, proposed marriage, and was crushed later when it became crystal clear she was NOT the girl for him. Harry’s response? Why Lord?!

Doesn’t it amaze you to see the number of *mistakes* and dumb things for which the Lord gets blamed? These two accounts help to illustrate what I mean. Such instances as these, however, do NOT show the failings of God. Amongst the things the God of Creation cannot do and that is FAIL! What these two accounts do show is man’s ignorance; ignorance in the whole matter of prayer. Returning to our text, we learn that prayer is NOT a device we use to impose our will upon God, nor is it a means of *changing God’s mind*; rather, prayer is the prescribed method given to us in seeking God’s will. Every true prayer is based on the idea of: *Your will be done*. It’s upon this basis God promises His response. Yes, God’s answers to our prayers are never failing. Where the trouble comes in is our ignorance concerning prayer, particularly in recognizing answers to prayer.

Purpose: to better know God’s answer to our prayers

We each offer prayers concerning all facets of life... How do we know God’s answers to these prayers? We will be considering three matters we must understand in order to know God’s answers to our prayers:

I RECOGNIZE GOD’S UNIVERSAL WILL

- our text gives a conditional clause upon answer to prayer: “...if we ask according to His will...”
 - 2 areas of God’s will which must be *distinguished*:
 - 1) unrevealed will (specific will) for each person
 - 2) revealed will (general will) = God’s desire for all = area called general/universal will of God
- A. God Desires All to Repent
1. 2 Peter 3:9 “*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*”
 2. In other words the Lord will find no delight in sending unforgiven sinners to Hell...
 3. No special feeling or experience is needed to know the decision God wants us to make concerning His Son and His Son’s Church.
- B. God Desires All to be Holy
1. 1 Peter 1:15-16 “*But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’*”
 2. Peter goes on to give an inspired account of what “holiness is:
 - a. 1 Peter 1:22 “*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.*”
 - b. 1 Peter 2:1-2 “*Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.*”
 - c. 1 Peter 3:9 “*Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult...*” – 2 wrongs don’t make a right...; instead, we are called upon to *bless them who curse us*.

Now, to put this all together; we can say that God's universal will is actually all the positive and negative commands in the N.T. Any answer of prayer will NOT go contrary to His universal will. Thus, the need we have in knowing God's Word is essential in understanding God's answer. Put another way, apart from understanding God's universal will, knowing God's answer is impossible!

II RECOGNIZE GOD'S WISDOM

- the wisdom of God is to be a desire we have for our new life *in Christ*... This then should be our motivation for asking what we do:

A. This Wisdom Defined

1. James 3:15-17 "*This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*"
2. Contrast wisdom from above to earthly/natural, demonic = pure vs. impure... right vs. wrong...

B. This Wisdom Illustrated

1. Illustrated best in the person of Christ...
2. On what basis did Jesus do what He did? What was His motivation?
 - a. did He flip a coin or use a magic eight ball?
 - b. did He go into a trance waiting for the answer to flash into His mind?
 - c. did He consult a palm reader... horoscope... or flip His scroll open putting His finger randomly at a spot...

What motivated Christ's actions? Again, it was this wisdom from above which leads to fulfilling God's universal will!

C. This Wisdom Applied

1. Is our request without ulterior motives?... *Why* we have requested something is more important to God than *what* we have requested...
2. Does our request promote something worthwhile without violating God's righteousness? Does our request give honor and praise to our Father, His Son, and His Spirit?

The point is simple. We not only need God's wisdom to be properly motivated in our prayers, but we also need God's wisdom to recognize and accept God's answer!

III RECOGNIZE GOD'S MEANS

- how God answers prayer, the means He uses is another vital facet of knowing God's answer
- it's at this point want to point out that it was Jesus who directed us to use our sanctified thinkers rather than expect miraculous answers...
- with this in mind we now consider the three basic means through which God answers prayer which can best be summed up in the word PROVIDENCE. Thus, God answers prayer:

A. Through the Bible

1. God's final and complete revelation (that which is *perfect* as stated in 1 Corinthians 13:19), that which is our sole source of authority in matters of faith and practice.
2. This Holy *Book* is the book with the answers; thus, want to know God's answers – study His Word!

B. Through Others

1. Brothers and Sisters in Christ will be used by God to help give His answer
 - a. Proverbs 11:14 "*Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.*"
 - b. as *instruments of righteousness* we might be used of God in answer to prayers of the sick...
2. Those who are not Christians – people make circumstances and because of passages like Romans 8:28... firmly believe God answers prayers even through those who make up our circumstances...

C. Through Ourselves

1. It has been said that prayer can be dangerous. How so? you ask. God may answer prayer through you.
2. We've been given a mind
 - a. to be used to accept and apply principles found in God's Word...
 - b. to reason through the circumstances that surround us...
3. We've been given abilities (gifts – not miraculous but nevertheless gifts from God)
 - a. Romans 12:4-6 reveal that each member of the Body of Christ has differing "gifts"...
 - b. finding AND using our gifts/abilities is another example of how God might answer prayers through ourselves.

Thus, God's means of answering prayer is done providentially. His purposes are carried out by man. Might we see what a privilege it is to be His servant!

Conclusion: Often people get the idea that God is playing "hide and seek" when it comes to answering prayer. This is hardly the case. God's will for our lives is not a detailed map. Nowhere in Scripture will you find the exact occupation... mate... or kind of car you ought to drive... Instead, the Bible is like a compass – giving us the direction our lives must take. Realizing this, we can then seize these principles we have just covered and can better appreciate our text which assures us an answer if we but pray according to His will. May we then seek His answer from the proper source and may we seek it in the proper manner! May we know God's answer!!