

A Biblical Formula for Answered Prayer-Part 2

- I. To Ask IN Jesus' Name
- II. To Pray In The Spirit

Ingredients Numbers Three And Four

I. Pray in obedience,

By the way, you learn that all of these things were *in* something. First of all, in the Name, secondly, in the Spirit, thirdly, in obedience. It is foolish to pray and to ask God to answer your prayer if you are not obeying. Trust and obey, for there's no other way.

David knew better than to try to pray when he was disobeying the lord. He says in Psalm 66 verse 18, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" Now, if I'm cherishing sin, in my heart, suppose I have some unconfessed, unrepented-of sin. I've got that sin right down here in my heart and I have regard to it.

Now, the Bible doesn't say *if* I have sinned the Lord will not hear me, The Bible says if i *regard sin in my heart*, the Lord will not hear me.

Now, there's my sin right there. We Baptists say, well, nobody is sinlessly perfect, everybody has his vice, and this one is mine. So, we've got some little sin down here in our heart. We have regard for it, we love it, sweet little fellow, nice sin, and we just have regard for that particular sin.

And then we have the audacity, the nerve to come to God and say, "*Now, God, here's what I want you to do for me*, as we hold dearly onto that precious sin. Do you think God is going to hear that prayer? If God *were* to hear that prayer what would God be doing? God would be encouraging us to sin. How can I pray to God and ask God to do something for me when I harbor in my heart that which nailed His darling Son to the tree?

David said "*If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.*"

The Bible says, "*If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

David knew better. Isaiah I knew better. Open your Bibles to the book of Isaiah. Let me show you here. Look in chapter 1 and begin to read with me in verse 13. These verses are worth turning to, they are worth marking.

Isaiah is speaking to the people of his day, he's speaking for God and God says,

“Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. ¹⁴ “I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ “So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are ^{lfj}covered with blood. ¹⁶ “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil.”

God says there's coming a time when you'll spread forth your hands, you'll come to church, you'll give your offerings, you'll go through your programs and God says “they are repugnant to Me, away with them. I don't want it.”

Dear friend, how we insult our God when we pray without obeying our dear Lord. Turn to the book of Isaiah, the same book, chapter 59 and look with me in verses 1 and 2.

*“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear.” **That means God is not handicapped and God is not deaf,** “but your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear.”*

As you ask God to answer your prayers,

Number one, you must ask, am I in the Name?

Number two, am I in the Spirit?

Number three, am I in obedience,

Am I obeying the Lord?

Ezra knew better than to try to pray without being in obedience. He said in Ezra chapter 9 and verse 6, ...”*And I said, ‘O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens.’”*

Ezra said, oh God, how can I look at you, how can I pray to you, dear God, for anything except repentance and humiliation, dear God? I dare not ask you anything until we get our hearts right with you.

James knew better.

James said in James chapter 5 and verse 16,

"Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

The question is if David knew better and Isaiah knew better and Ezra knew better and James knew better and John knows better--the Apostle John says in the book of First John chapter 3 verse 22,

"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him because we keep his commandments and do those things which are pleasing in his sight."

I'm not saying, dear friend, that when you obey God, you *earn* the answer to your prayers. It is grace all the way, but I'm saying to you that you cannot harbor unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your life and expect to have power with God in prayer.

You must pray in the name.

You must pray in the spirit.

You must pray in obedience if you want your prayers answered.

Sin will keep you from praying. Prayer, however, will keep you from sinning.

Number one, in the name.

Number two, in the spirit.

Number three, in obedience.

Number four,

II. Pray In The Will Of God.

Your prayer must be in the will of God.

First John chapter 5 and verse 14. Turn to it, it's worth turning to, it is certainly worth marking if you've not already marked it in your Bible.

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us, and if we know that He heareth whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him."

Now, we must ask in the will of God. Well, how are we going to know the will of God? Well, in order to know the will of God, we must want the will of God. You see, to know what God wants me to do, I must want to do what God wants me to do.

If I were to walk up to you right now, I mean, point blank, face to face look you right in the face and say, "There's something God wants you to do, that is, I'm absolutely certain that God wants you to do it." And you knew that I knew what God wanted you to do and I would ask you, will you do it? What would you say? Well, you'd say, well, I sure would like to hear what it is first.

Now, not that you're doubting me, let's just suppose that you know that I know. Now, grant it, I may not know God's will, but just suppose that I do. So, in this case you know that I know and I walk up to you as God's appointed authority and I say to you, "There is something God wants you to do. Will you do it?" And I dare say if I know a lot about Baptists, they'd say well, tell me what it is, I'd like to hear first.

Do you know what the answer should be if you know that God wants you to do it? Yes, I'll do it. Tell me what it is. Amen. Yes, I'll do it. Tell me what it is.

There should be full and instantaneous obedience to the will of God even before the will of God is known, so that when God reveals it, we will do it. You see, we don't have to worry about His will. His will is best. Romans chapter 12 and verse 2 says that it is good, it is acceptable, it is perfect. So Prayer is not bending God's will to fit our will, it's not talking God into doing something that God ordinarily doesn't want to do. Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.

The reason that many people pray and their prayers are not answered is they're not praying in the will of God. In James chapter 4 and verse 3 the Bible says, "*You ask and receive not because you ask amiss, that you might consume it upon your lust.*" The word amiss means that you're asking with the wrong intent.

Now, that doesn't mean that you cannot ask for personal needs. God's honor is fulfilled when your personal needs are met. But you cannot ask for selfish needs. So many people have misunderstood the Bible when the Bible says in Psalm 37 verse 7, "*Delight yourself also in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.*"

Does that mean you can have anything you want? Well, yes and no. Look at it carefully. I'm not trying to say there's fine print, but His promise is not made to anyone except to the person who delights himself in the Lord. And your delights determine your desires and therefore God is safe to make this promise.

"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart" –

Not the frivolous things, He will give you your heart's need, the thing that your heart desires and longs for. That's not a pink Cadillac and a swimming pool. What your heart desires, what

your heart needs, and a heart that is in love with God is going to have its needs met.

So many times people say, *"Well, the Bible's promises are not true."* They take a promise like Matthew chapter 7 and verse 7 where Jesus says, *"Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you."* They say, well, I asked and I didn't get it. I sought, I didn't find it. I knocked, it wasn't open to me. So, THEY SAY, the Bible, therefore, is untrue.

Well, friend, any text without a context is a pretext and if you will read Matthew chapter 7 I'm going to tell you something here that's going to be astounding. Are you ready—pay attention. It follows Matthew chapter 6. See, isn't that profound? So listen, Matthew chapter 6 is a part of this whole thing. And Jesus says in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."* And **then** He says, *"Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you."*

To whom? To that person who is seeking God first with all of his heart. But seek first the kingdom of God. God is not your heavenly bellboy, a glorified Santa Claus to wait upon you hand and foot. But when you say to Him, *"Oh, God, with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, as much as in me is, oh God, I want your will, and I seek first your kingdom,* God says, I'm going to take care of you child. I'm going to take care of you.

God says, you put my business first and I'm going to make it my business to take care of you. And you can come to Me and ask and I'll hear you. You can come to Me and seek and you'll be found. You can come to Me and knock and I am going to open the doors to you.

So, listen, we must pray in the will of God. And the way to pray in the will of God is to be surrendered to that will, to want that will, to listen to that will, to get in the Word of God.

Jesus said, *"If you abide in Me and My Word abides in you, then you can ask what you will and it'll be done unto you."* Why? Because now what your will and what He wills is the same, you are in Him and He is in you. His Word is in your heart and you delight yourself in Him. You seek Him first, His kingdom. And you find yourself not talking God into doing things that He ordinarily would not want to do, but you find yourself receiving those blessings that God has foreordained and planned for you to have.

So, you must pray in obedience and the will of God, those are the 3rd and 4th ingredients to answered prayer.