

## Believe To Receive In Prayer

By Denise Bostic

Most of us have heard of the term “unanswered prayers.” There was a popular country song written by Garth Brooks some years ago with the lyrics, “some of God’s greatest gifts are unanswered prayers...” This may be true if what we are asking for would not be good for us or God’s perfect will for our lives but what about those things that we pray for that we know are according to His will as clearly revealed in the Bible? For some Christians, having unanswered prayers has been an ongoing struggle that has left them with an array of emotional feelings such as, disappointment, worry, frustration and sometimes even resentment and anger. Sometimes people feel as though their prayers are going “nowhere” and that God is not really hearing them. These feelings can cloud our perception of God and hinder our faith in His mighty power to perform all that He says He will do. As believers, we need to know how to appropriate the promises of God by faith. We also need to cast off everything that hinders us from receiving what God intends for us to have in order to run our spiritual race with endurance. (**Hebrews 12:1-2**) In order to be able to receive answers from God in prayer, first there are some absolute essential truths that we must know.

### Know Who You Are In Christ

First, we need to believe what God says about us in His Word. We must understand that if we are born-again believers in Christ, we can have confidence in the fact that we are God’s children and that we have access into the presence of the Father because of what Jesus has done for us through His shed blood and bodily sacrifice. We can enter into His presence because we have accepted Him, received salvation and have been made *sons* of God and have been made *heirs* of God and *joint-heirs* with Christ. We can come boldly before the throne of grace and have the assurance that He is always listening to us. (**Read Hebrews 10:19-20, John 1:12, I John 5:14-15**)

It is absolutely essential that we grasp the revelation of **Romans 8:14-17** and receive it as fact if we want to obtain all that Jesus Christ died to give us. **“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...”** We need to understand that we are sons of God and that we inherit all things with Jesus Christ. When we believe and know this, it helps us to more easily appropriate those things that God has for us as His children. God has made it known through His Word that He does not want us to come to Him as cringing, fearful slaves but instead wants us to know that we have the awesome privilege of being His sons and daughters with all legal rights as heirs! When we begin to understand the truths of *who* we are in Christ, we can then begin to freely receive those things that God has promised us in His Word through heirship. Receive Freely By Grace

Many Christians know (or should know) that salvation a free gift from God but did you know that included within our “salvation package” is an inheritance given to us freely by God’s grace as well? This inheritance blessing has been given to us because we have now been made sons of God through the sacrificial atonement of Christ. (**Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 8:14-17, Acts 20:32, 26:18, Galatians 3:13,14,16, Ephesians 1:1-12, 18, Colossians 1:12**) Those things that we are asking for in prayer like salvation, healing, deliverance, financial prosperity etc. are all part of our

inheritance in Christ. God has promised these things to us and they have been written down in the Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ (The New Testament). This will was put into effect after the Testator (Jesus) died and was ratified by His shed blood. **(Hebrews 9:11-17)**

Many people lack this knowledge and are trying to work for their inheritance that God says He has given us freely by His grace. This astounding truth is a must if we want to receive what God promises us in His Word. We cannot receive the promises of God if we are performing works of the law or legalism. Our inheritance does not come to us that way and the New Testament clearly tells us this. **(Galatians 3:18)** God gave it to Abraham by promise and fulfilled the oath personally through His Son Jesus Christ. **(Hebrews 6:13-20)** Many people today are making the mistake of trying to earn their inheritance through their own works instead of receiving what Jesus has already appropriated for us by His death, burial and resurrection.

### **Rest In The Finished Work Of Christ**

We need to enter into the rest of the finished work of Christ and cease from our own works. **(Hebrews 4:9-11)** If we are not receiving the finished work that Jesus accomplished on the cross for us and are trying to obtain our inheritance through our own efforts (works) we are in reality in unbelief about all that He has accomplished for us. **(Hebrews 3:18-19)** This may seem like a shocking statement, but if we truly do believe in Jesus' sacrificial atonement for us, we will receive Him and what He has procured for us in its **complete entirety**. If we could obtain these things on our own, then Christ died needlessly. **(Galatians 2:21)** These foundational truths must be received first before we can move on towards receiving the answers to our prayers and obtain our inheritance in Christ as God's children.

In this article, ten points will be addressed that we can put into practice that will help us to gain a better understanding through the Word of God as to how we can receive or accept the answers to our prayers. It is my hope and prayer that all who read this article that are having difficulty in receiving answers to their prayers will begin to experience tremendous change and know the joy of having God move mightily on their behalf!

#### **1. Walk by faith and not by sight.**

We need to believe God over what we see happening in our natural circumstances. We must have faith in God. What is faith? God has given us His definition of what faith is so that all of His people can live and walk by it. **"What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. God gave his approval to people in days of old because of their faith."** **(Hebrews 11:1 NLT)** Did you hear that? Faith must be in operation in our lives and is our "evidence" or "proof" that we believe that God will do what He says! The old saying, "seeing is believing" does not apply in God's world. He wants us to have confidence and trust in Him that He will bring to pass whatever we believe Him for first in our hearts before we ever see it with our natural eyes.

God approves of people that have faith in Him and His ability to answer prayer in a powerful way. In fact, without faith, it is impossible to please God and expect Him to release answers on our behalf. In this same "faith" chapter in Hebrews it says, **"So you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him."** **(Hebrews 11:6 NLT)** God will reward us with answers to our prayers if we believe that He is all-powerful and all capable to bring change to our situation. We must have more faith in God and what He says instead of letting our circumstances dictate to us how we will believe. The Apostle Paul wrote, **"For we live by faith, not by sight."** **(II Corinthians 5:7 NIV)** When we are walking by faith instead of what we see, we are releasing God to move on our behalf and just as those in the faith that have gone on before us, we too can have God's approval because we believe in Him! We can follow in

the footsteps of those who walked in righteousness before us. It is written: **“The just shall live by faith.” (Galatians 3:11 KJV)**

## **2. Place our faith in God and not our emotions.**

We have all been created in the likeness of God therefore we have emotions like Him and for good reasons. If we did not have emotions, we would have no capacity to feel love or any of the variety of emotions given to man. There is a big difference between the Almighty and mankind though. God, in His perfection, does not let His emotions rule the decisions that He makes whereas people, in our imperfections, can make the mistake of doing just that. There are times that our emotions are not entirely trustworthy. Sometimes, our emotions can tell us something other than the truth. We should trust in God and the knowledge of His Word over our emotions. He is trustworthy and faithful to perform all that He has promised us that He will do. We must know that God desires (even more than we do) for us to receive answers to our prayers and benefit from the results of what we believe Him for.

We should not allow our natural circumstances or emotions to dictate how we believe but instead we need to keep our faith in God and trust that He is at work in the Spirit on our behalf. We must literally live by what God says. **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)** Understand that before the answers to our prayers are made visible to us in our world, God is first working in the realm of the Spirit. Every answer to prayer that is manifested in the natural is a result of that which has been first released from the heavenly realm. We can believe that God is at work before we ever see the answers come into our natural world. Because faith believes for what we do not yet see, it is inevitable that when you believe by faith that sometimes there will be others who will not share in your faith. It is then that we must hold on to our faith and guard our hearts with all diligence.

## **3. We must not listen to or receive the unbelief of others.**

Unbelief tears down our faith and hinders us from receiving what we so desire from God. The Lord cannot work where there is unbelief in Him and His supernatural abilities. Jesus Himself could not do many mighty miracles in His hometown of Nazareth because of their unbelief. **(Matthew 13:53-58)** According to the Bible, one believes with his or her heart. **(Romans 10:8-10)** Because what we believe is within our hearts, we are admonished in God’s Word to guard our hearts. **“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23 NIV)**

According to the Bible, unbelief prevents God from releasing to us what He desires to give us. Not only does this prevent our receiving answers, but it is also considered by God to be sinful or evil. We are warned in the book of Hebrews not to have an evil heart of unbelief. Using the unbelief of Israel in the wilderness as an example, the writer warns: **“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” (Hebrews 3:12 KJV)** The NIV Translation says, **“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”** God could not bring that generation of Israelites into the land that He had promised them because of their unbelief. If anyone has unbelief after God has given proof that He is real through the displaying of His mighty power, it becomes tantamount with sin or evil. The writer of Hebrews shares this story with New Testament believers in Christ to warn of the dangers of unbelief. This may seem like a paradox to think that believers in Christ could be in unbelief, but this can happen when we choose to believe someone or something instead of God.

There should be no place given in our hearts to unbelief after all that God has done for us in our lives. Should we find unbelief in our hearts, repentance is necessary and then we

are to turn from that to live according to faith in Christ instead. We must also reject the unbelief of others and not let it infect our lives or cause our faith in God to be hindered.

It can be difficult and grieving to our spirits when others do not see or believe as we do, but we must still trust in the Lord. Each believer can be at different levels of faith but we are to operate according to the level of faith that God has given us. **(Romans 12:3,6)** The most important thing is that we believe according to the will of God. When we believe according to His will, there is great power in coming into unity with God and what He says.

#### 4. Believe God and His Word and pray according to His will.

It is very important when we pray, to pray according to God's will. According to the writings of the Apostle John, if we do this, God will always hear us. **"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-whatever we ask-we know that we have what we asked of him."** *(1 John 5:14-15 NIV)* This is so powerful! Not only will God hear us but also we can have full assurance that we will receive what we have asked God for! God is faithful, trustworthy and able to make good on all of His promises!

#### 5. Do not let doubt keep us from receiving answers to our prayers.

When Jesus walked this earth and in His ministry, He was always looking for faith in people and asking them if they believed that He could bring to pass what they were asking for. Why? It is because Jesus knew that not only could unbelief hinder their receiving but also that doubt could do the same. James, the Apostle of the Lord knew this as well for he wrote, **"But when he asks, (in prayer) he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does."** *(James 1:6-8 NIV)*

We must make up our minds. Either God is able to give us what we ask for or not. If we doubt God, we will not be able to receive from Him. Why? Jesus explained the power of our words but also teaches us that we must not have doubt in our hearts when we speak or pray. **"Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt, in his heart, but shall believe that those things shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."** *(Mark 11:23, 24 KJV)* There is power in the words we speak for **"The tongue has the power of life and death..."** *(Proverbs 18:21)* Whatever we speak out of our mouths or believe in our hearts will be what we receive, whether for good or evil (sinful). Double-mindedness makes us unstable and prevents us from receiving what we are asking for. Being single-minded in believing prayer is very important if we want to receive from God. God is pleased with our faith in Him and will grant us our requests when they are according to His will.

#### 6. Trust God more than man or external means.

God's Word tells us to not put our trust in the arm of the flesh (man) but instead to put our trust in God. **(Jeremiah 17:5)** What does trust mean in this context? In the Hebrew it means: *to hide for refuge, to trust, be confident or sure-be bold. To flee for protection, to confide in-have hope, make, refuge, and trust.* [982, 2620, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible] God does not want us to look to man for our hope, confidence and refuge, but only to Him. When we put God first, we are putting Him in the highest place of honor and respect before everyone and everything.

He also does not want us to put our trust in ourselves either. **Proverbs 3:5-6** teaches us, **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (KJV)** When we place our trust in God and look to Him instead of relying on our own reasoning, God can impart His wisdom to us to help us walk in the paths of righteousness. We must first place our trust in and look to Him for provision and let Him provide in the way He chooses. If we put our trust in man apart from God, we will usually suffer disappointment but if we put all of our trust and confidence in God though, He will never disappoint us!

## **7. Take dominion of your faith!**

Did you know that people do not have dominion over your faith (or what you are believing God for) unless you allow them to? Paul even declared that he (as God’s Apostle) did not have dominion over the faith of believers (in Corinth). **“Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand.” (II Corinthians 1:24 KJV)** In the NIV it says, **“Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.”** No man is lord over our faith but the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul told the Corinthians that that he was not lord over their faith, but instead worked with them to increase their faith.

It is good and right if others are helping you to increase your faith in the Lord and His Word but no one can tell you what to believe, that is for the Lord alone to judge. We will all give an account of ourselves to God one day. **(Romans 14:10-12)** All Christians are at various stages of faith; we do not all have the same knowledge of the things of God at the same time. Your faith may be stronger than mine, therefore, you can believe for greater things and vice versa. One’s faith may be weaker than another’s but whatever we do, we do unto the Lord. **(Romans 14:1-12)** The Lord, in His love and patience, gives us time to grow up in Him.

Of course this passage of scripture is regarding people’s personal convictions about physical things such as days, food and drink. Paul makes it clear that these things do not hold the place of importance that spiritual matters do in God’s Kingdom. It is more important that we walk in love, righteousness, peace and joy. **(Romans 14:17-18)** There are many things that are clearly revealed truths, commands and promises of the Lord that we can and should receive. We should not ask God or believe Him though for things that go contrary to His will as revealed in His Word. But when you ask and believe God for those things that are according to His will, no one has power over your faith and what you will believe God for. Take dominion over your faith to believe God and receive what He has promised in His Word!

## **8. When you pray, believe that you have already received the answers to your prayers.**

Jesus teaches us through His word of the certainty of our being able to receive in prayer if we have faith in God. **“Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (Mark 11:22-24 NIV)** Notice that Jesus tells us when to receive our answers and it is at the time that we ask for it in prayer! This is so contrary to what most Christians think and believe! Many times, we say that we received the answers to our prayers only when we see the manifestation in our natural world but Jesus teaches us that we are to first receive in our hearts as though it is done! Why? It is because it is in our hearts where faith resides, this is where we believe God and this is also where we receive from God. This is true faith, believing that we have already received the answer before we ever see the answers come into fruition! This is what the ancients were commended by God for! **(Hebrews 11:2)**

## 9. Sometimes we must “step out” in faith.

Many times when Jesus was going about healing and delivering people in His earthly ministry, people were oftentimes required to take a step of faith by *doing* something. Jesus would give such commands as “**Arise and take up your bed and walk**” (**Mark 2:9**) or “**Go, wash in the pool of Siloam**” (**John 9:7**) or “**Go show yourselves to the Priests.**” (**Luke 17:14**) There are times when we are praying and asking God for something that He will require us too, to step out in faith.

When we take the step of faith that God directs us to, we are showing God that we really do believe Him. For instance, if someone is paralyzed and is praying to God to be able to walk, God may tell him or her to rise up and walk. If you are praying and asking God for finances, He may have you give to someone else who is in greater need. (**Luke 6:38**) If God asks you to go and pray for someone to be healed, you need to obey and expect that God will heal that person. Faith in God many times requires *action*. Just as the Apostle James said, “**Faith without works is dead.**” (**James 2:17**) When we pray, do we put God’s word into practice? We must not only pray but the Holy Spirit may be leading us to *do* something. We must be open and sensitive to His leading. At other times, God may not want us to *do* anything but may want us to “stand still” and let Him do the work!

## 10. You may be the answer to your prayers!

Did you know that sometimes God might want you to be an answer to prayer? For example, suppose that you are praying for someone’s salvation. The Lord might send you to give them the Gospel and lead them to Him! Or suppose you are praying for a family that is in need of food, God might send you to supply their need. You may be praying for someone who is sick and God might send you to lay hands on him or her so He can heal them. You may be praying for someone to be delivered from demonic oppression or possession and God might send you to cast out devils so that they might be free. A dear friend of ours said it so wonderfully as he stood before a local congregation: “God wants us to put some legs on those prayers that we’ve been praying!” In other words, sometimes it is not enough to just pray for others; there are times that we must also GO in obedience to the Lord in order to be a part of the answers as well!

When we live by God’s Word, whether written or spoken, we will have tremendous results. When we apply what we learn, we will see significant changes in our daily walk with the Lord. When we pray in faith, we give God many opportunities to show Himself strong, bring glory to His name and pour out blessings upon us. When we receive in prayer, we are also able to reap the benefits of God’s blessings that Jesus paid such a high price for us to have. When we are praying and God asks us to step out in faith for Him, we can truly become an instrument in the hand of God to be His answer to someone else’s prayer. May God bless you, work mightily through you and increase your faith more and more to receive His wonderful promises!