

The Persevering Heart”

Pressing on in prayer

Introduction

We need to be led by the Spirit and the Word of God, not by our flesh and logic.

1. The Issue of unanswered prayers

What experiences of God saying "no" have you had? For some people this has derailed their prayer life or at least slowed it down a lot. What is going on?

2. Examples of unanswered prayers

When He said “no” to obedient servants

a) Abraham Gen.17:17-19

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?" And Abraham said to God, "**Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!**"

But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

b) Moses (Deut. 3:23-28)

"I also pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying, 24 'O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Thine? 25 '**Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land** that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.'

26 "But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, '**Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.** 27 'Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see *it* with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. 28 'But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he shall give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.'

c) David (2 Sam.12:14-18)

However, because **by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.**" 15 So Nathan went to his house. Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was *very* sick. 16 **David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground.** 17 And the elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise

him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them. 18 Then it happened **on the seventh day that the child died**. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was *still* alive, we spoke to him and he did not listen to our voice. How then can we tell him that the child is dead, since he might do *himself* harm!"

21 His servants asked him, "**Why are you acting this way?** While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!" 22 He answered, "**While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.'**" 23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

d) **Jesus** (Lk. 22:42)

41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, 42 saying, "Father, **if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me**; yet not My will, but Thine be done."

43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.

44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

e) **Paul** (2 Cor.12:7-10)

7 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself!

8 **Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.**

9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

When He said "yes" to disobedient rebels

a) **Israelites in wilderness** (Num.14:2; 14:28-29)

Numbers 14:2 And all the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!

28 "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; 29 your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me.

b) **Israelites wanting a king** (Ps.106:15)

Psalm 106:15 And he gave them their request (for a king); but sent leanness into their soul.

3. Pesteering God

a) **Job**

Oh, that I knew where I might find him! *that* I might come *even* to his seat! I would order *my* cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. (Job 23:3-4)

b) **Widow and unrighteous judge** (Luke 18:1-8)

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.

3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

"For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men,

5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.

7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

c) **Jacob wrestling with the angel** (Gen.32)

Gen. 32:21 So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp.

22 Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

23 And he took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.

24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

25 And when he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."

28 And he said, "**Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.**"

29 Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for *he said*, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

31 Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel, and he was limping on his thigh.

4. Praying big

Dawson Trotman (founder of the Navigators) – map; what did they pray for?

In Argentina – praying for map, laborers: How many do you want?

- praying for \$ for Merlo: ask me for more!

Moving mountains. What is this all about?

Matthew 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this **mountain**, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Matthew 21:21 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this **mountain**, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done."