

BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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ISSUE 5

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From the President's Desk,

If I were driving through the town or city where you live and decided to get something to eat, where would you tell me to go for a good meal? Now I am willing to wager that you have two or three places in mind that serve good food. If I were to ask you why you recommended those places to eat, you no doubt would share how you have enjoyed their food or service and have no reservations about recommending them to me. If I then asked if you could give me directions to the restaurant, you would more than likely give me directions to get there.

The scenario I am describing is not that strange. To be honest we do it all the time. As we converse with others we share our experiences, recommendations, and opinions about so many things, even where to get a good meal. Whether you realize it or not, what you do regularly is testify to others about your experiences, whether good or bad. We gladly share what we think based on the experiences we have encountered.

A simple definition for the word testify or to offer testimony is to "make a statement based on personal knowledge and belief." This is done in our justice system and we do it every day. We make statements based on our personal knowledge and beliefs, we give testimony.

In a recent conversation with someone, I was asked my thoughts on what is going on today with the virus and with the discord in our society. In our

conversation, I acknowledged that we are living in strange and uncertain times but I was resting in the hope I have in the Lord. I then went on to share with this individual how I came to know Christ and that God gives me hope and peace. I simply testified to what God had done in my life recounting in our conversation how I came to know Jesus Christ as Savior. In other words, I shared the gospel by sharing my testimony.

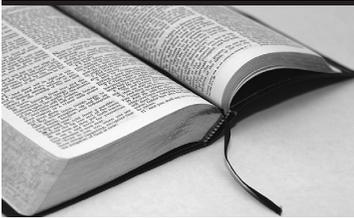
Many people struggle with sharing the gospel with the lost for fear of not knowing what to say or how to address tough questions that might come up in a conversation. When you share your testimony, you tell your story with the gospel as the focus. No one can argue with you because it's your story and it's the peace and hope you personally have in Christ. Questions are sure to arise, and when they do, if you don't know the answer, simply say "I don't know but would like to think about it and get back to you."

In our world of uncertainty and distrust, people are looking for answers and we can point them to the only One who can offer such hope and peace. We have the answer and we can testify what Christ has done in our lives and give them directions to the Savior. I pray that you will have the opportunity to share your story with someone who is looking for the hope and peace that only the Lord Jesus Christ can give.

Testifying for Christ,

Dr. Robert E. Nix

President, Berean Bible Institute



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QUESTION: Does God answer prayer today?

ANSWER: Yes, God answers prayer today. However, He does not necessarily answer our prayers as we expect Him to. In fact, it is not only possible, it is highly probable that we do not even recognize many of His answers to our prayers when they are given because they don't line up with what we asked for or expected God to do. Note carefully what the Scriptures reveal to us about prayer and the ministry of the Holy Spirit today. *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered"* (Rom. 8:26).

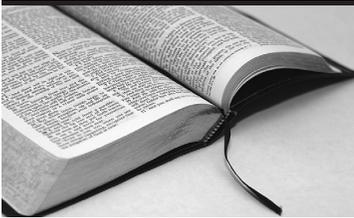
And what does that mean? I believe it means what it says. We simply do not know what we should pray for. None of us have it all together on what to pray for, so we need the Holy Spirit to intercede for us, which He does by editing our prayers and bringing them to our Heavenly Father with groanings *"which cannot be uttered"* (Rom. 8:26). We simply are unable to properly express them. The Holy Spirit adjusts our prayers so that our requests and longings of the heart are *"...according to the will of God"* (Rom. 8:27). That the Holy Spirit brings our prayers to the Father with *"groanings"* speaks of the trials and frustrations of life. All of creation is under *"the bondage of corruption"* caused by sin (Rom. 8:21). There is an agony of heart and soul that affects all of creation. All of mankind is adversely affected and yearns for deliverance from this evil sin-cursed world we live in. *"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"* (Rom. 8:22; Gal. 1:4). Sinful mankind is continually trying to undo the curse of sin and create a utopian world system of his own making so that he can live as he pleases unencumbered by any restrictions or demands of the Creator, that he might be his own god. But generation after generation has come and gone and he has always failed and will continue to fail because mankind, who was created by God, is attempting to do so by changing *"the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man..."* (Rom. 1:23). In effect, his feeble efforts amount to man idolizing and worshipping

himself. As believers, we also long for that day when the creation will be restored, but our hope is not founded on the exaltation of man, but on the cross of Jesus Christ our Savior and it is assured by the Holy Spirit who seals and indwells us as a guarantee of our redemption and resurrection (I Cor. 1:18; Rom. 8:23-27). God also guarantees that whatever trials and troubles we endure in this life will in the end work out for our good and to His glory (Rom. 8:28-30). So, how does God answer prayer today? God is not limited as to what and how He answers prayer. He tells us that He *"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us"* and *"in everything by prayer..."* we are to let all our *"requests be made known unto God,"* and to *"pray without ceasing"* (Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:6; I Thess. 5:17). I do not find any limitations on what God wants us to pray for. Our circumstances, situations, needs, and whatever else might cause us to be anxious are all legitimate prayer subjects.

We are told that being *"justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 5:1). Furthermore, by faith we have a continuing access to God's grace *"wherein we stand"* (Rom. 5:2a) whereby we *"rejoice in hope of the glory of God"* (Rom. 5:2b). That is to say, being justified in Christ we can rejoice in the assured hope of being glorified with the Lord Jesus Christ in the future. This is an amazing truth that far too many believers fail to appreciate.

Not only are these things so, but, furthermore, we are to *"glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us"* (Rom. 5:3-5).

When the inevitable troubles of life come upon us it is very easy to become downhearted and depressed, especially if we begin to doubt God's goodness and concern for us. And yes, even true believers can fall into the trap of self-pity. In hard times it is all too easy to start thinking such things as *"if God loves me why doesn't He deliver me from [whatever it is that has come upon me]; I don't deserve this; this is too*



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much for me to bear; it is not fair for me to suffer like this; etc., etc.” And all too often we begin to question whether or not God is able to answer our prayers, or if He even hears them or cares about us.

The truth is that we do not like to go through the trials of life and we try to avoid them. And when they overcome us, we desperately want to be delivered from them. Nevertheless, these questions are answered in the Scripture passage we have been looking at. By God’s grace, we are to endure our tribulations, whatever they might be, rejoicing in them because we know God loves us and is using them to prepare us for eternity (read and reread Rom. 5:1-5). God uses our troubles to teach us patience which gives us the spiritual fortitude to endure them. In turn, the experience of patiently enduring tribulations when we are overtaken by them, whatever they might be, produces the character qualities of Christ in us which causes our trust in Him to see us through every ordeal we face. That, in turn, increases our confidence in Him to do for and in us all that He has promised to do and that we will never be ashamed or disappointed in Him because He failed us in any way because *“the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us”* (read Rom. 5:1-5 again with Rom. 8:16-19; II Cor. 4:13-18). I believe that what God desires of His children is that we simply trust Him in all things. I think that the following poem reflects the teaching of Scripture on how God works in and through us during the hard and trying times of our lives in relation to prayer.

He Asked

He asked for strength
that he might achieve;
he was made weak
that he might obey.

He asked for health
that he might do greater things;
he was given infirmity,
that he might do better things.

He asked for riches
that he might be happy;
he was given poverty
that he might be wise.

He asked for power
that he might have the praise of men;
he was given weakness
that he might feel the need of God.

He asked for all things
that he might enjoy life;
he was given life
that he might enjoy all things.

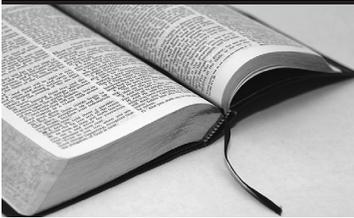
He had nothing that he asked for,
but everything that he had hoped for.

His prayer is answered.
He is most blessed.

[The author of this poem is unknown to me. I clipped it from a church bulletin about 35 years ago and put in my file. Editor]

QUESTION: What are we to pray for in the Dispensation of Grace?

ANSWER: There are some who have promoted the idea that prayer is to be categorized and believers are only to pray for those things that are strictly spiritual in the present Dispensation of Grace we are living in. Their claim is that God does not answer prayer for anything in the physical realm today. While there are distinctions between what God has promised concerning how He will answer prayer during the present Dispensation of Grace and the prophetic Kingdom program, it is simply not true that we are restricted in any way in regard to what we may or may not pray for. So, while we are encouraged to pray for certain things, we are not under a mandate to specifically pray for anything. What we are told is to pray always (Eph. 6:18a; I Thess. 5:7). To pray *“in the Spirit”* (Eph. 6:18b). To pray while *“watching*



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thereunto" (Eph. 6:18c), that is to be on the alert, to be prepared and watchful, looking out for Satan's attacks (see Eph. 6:10-17). And to persevere in prayer and supplication *"for all the saints"* (Eph. 6:18d). Note that while the Apostle Paul requested that the Ephesians pray for him to have a bold and effective ministry, he did not demand it (Eph. 6:19-20). We are not under law, but under grace. In other words, there are certain things we should pray for, but there is no ordinance commanding us to. However, there are blessings that we receive when we pray.

We are told to not let anything cause us undue anxiety, but to *"be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, that the peace of God may guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (see Phil. 4:6-7).

Two things should be emphasized here. First is that we are to pray *"with thanksgiving"* (Eph. 6:18; I Thess. 5:17-18). Second is that we are to pray about anything and everything that might cause us to be anxious with worry. *"Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in everything"* we are to pray (Phil. 4:6). There are no exemptions. Yes, we are spiritual beings, but we are, for the time being, living in physical bodies in a physical world. Some might deny it, but our physical circumstances affect our spiritual attitude. Things like the death of a loved one, the loss of one's job, a serious illness, and the list could go on and on, can cause major stress in a person's life that leads to despair. Prayer is a major channel of blessing by which we learn to put our trust in the Lord in all things, that our faith *"...should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"* (I Cor. 2:5; see I Cor. 1:18, 21; I Cor. 2:1-5). What greater blessing could we experience than the peace of God when things go bad in this chaotic sin cursed, topsy-turvy world we live in.

NOTABLE PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE

"Deborah"

There are two women named Deborah in the Bible, which in Hebrew means "a bee." The first is identified by name in Genesis 35:8, where we learn that she was Rebekah's nurse and that when she died she was buried below Bethel (Hebrew=House of God) under an oak tree at a place called Allon-Bachuth (Hebrew=oak of weeping). She came with Rebekah when Rebekah left her father's house and went to Canaan to marry Isaac (Gen. 24:59), and she lived the rest of her life in Isaac's house.

The other Deborah lived during the time of the Judges, and she was a judge of Israel and a prophetess (Jud. 4:4-5). In her capacity as a judge, she held court between Ramah and Bethel in the tribal area of Ephraim under *"the palm tree of Deborah"* where *"the Children of Israel came up to her for judgment"* (Jud. 4:5). She became a judge of Israel at a time when Israel was once again doing *"evil in the sight of the Lord"* and, consequently, the Lord had given them over to the oppressive domination of the Canaanites under a powerful ruler named Jabin and the captain of his army, Sisera (Jud. 4:1-2). After being severely oppressed for twenty years by the Canaanites, *"the Children of Israel cried unto the Lord"* (Jud. 4:3). The Lord responded to their plea for deliverance from the Canaanite oppression by telling Deborah to inform a man from the tribe of Naphtali named Barak that the Lord wanted him to raise an army from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and attack Sisera's army. Barak refused to take part in this war unless Deborah joined him on the battlefield. She agreed, but let him know that the honor of victory would not be his, but would be given to a woman, and so it was. When Sisera was fleeing after being defeated in battle by Israel, a woman named Jael offered him assistance and lured him into a trap. While Sisera was sleeping, Jael killed him by driving a tent stake into his head (see Jud. 4:6-22).

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