



Network for Revival Prepare 27 April 2021

Persist in prayer

We looked in previous issue of *Prepare!* at the amazing promises of God to answer our prayers. Jesus said:

- “If you believe, you **will** receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Mt 21:22).
- “I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you receive it and it **will** be yours” (Mk 11:24).
- “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it **will** be done for them by my Father in heaven” (Mt 18:19).
- “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I **will** do it” (Jn 14:14).
- “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it **will** be done for you” (Jn 15:7).

John adds: “If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him” (1 Jn 3:21-22).

Yes, we have to pray in faith (Mt 21:22; Mk 11:24) and in the name of Jesus (Jn 14:14). We need to ensure we are in a close obedient relationship with the Lord (Jn 15:7 cf 1 Jn 3:21-22), so that we pray in harmony with the Lord’s will. Also it is important to agree in prayer with another person/other people where appropriate (Mt 18:19). But if we are fulfilling those conditions, why do we need to persist in prayer? Why doesn’t God just answer the prayer of faith?

Jesus certainly encourages persistence in prayer. He tells the story of the persistent person disturbing his friend at midnight to get food for a visitor (Luke 11:5-8). Similarly he tells the story of the persistent widow who kept nagging a judge to give her justice (Luke 18:1-8). When he says “Ask and it **will** be given to you; seek and you **will** find; knock and the door **will** be opened to you” (Mt 7:7), the Greek original shows that he uses the present continuous tense “keep on asking ... seeking ... knocking).

There are Christians who follow the “Name it and claim it” approach. They name before God what they are praying about then ‘claim it’ on the basis of his promises. I prefer to say to the Lord that I “receive” (by faith) what I am praying for (assuming I know I am fulfilling the spiritual conditions). That is based on the Lord’s promise in Mk 11:24 “I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you receive it and it **will** be yours”

But how does “receiving” the answer to your prayer by faith square with persisting in asking for it? Here are some thoughts on this issue:

1. **God seeks to strengthen our faith through persistence.** He is training us. If we don’t immediately see the answer to our prayer that is a challenge. Are we going to persist in faith or to give up when it seems God is not answering? We honour the Lord when we persist in faith, despite delays in the answer. We are showing we really trust him despite the delay. We are saying to him “I know you have said yes to my request and I’m going to continue to trust you until I see the answer.” Do we really believe God has promised to bring revival?
2. **God seeks to deepen our holiness through persistence.** We may be mistaken in thinking we are in a truly obedient relationship with the Lord, which Jesus says is a condition of our receiving the answer (Jn 15:7). So the Lord intends to answer our prayer but he may need to remove a hindrance in us. Even if that is not the case, he can deepen our holiness through the challenge of persistent prayer.
3. **God has agreed to answer our prayers but the spiritual battle required may not be over.** God could, of course, bring immediate victory. But sometimes that is not the way he works. The devil strongly opposes the coming of revival. The battle will continue for some time.
4. **God uses our persistent prayers to defeat the enemy.** God could do everything without using our prayers but he has decided to work through them. Similarly, Jesus and the Holy Spirit pray continually in heaven. God has made prayer foundational. God could defeat the devil immediately but, instead, he is inviting us to share in the battle to bring certain defeat to the devil. He is encouraging our persistent prayer to bombard the devil. The answer is

certain but the process is also important. So the battle is not to convince God to agree to our request but to defeat the devil's attempts to prevent the answer being revealed.

5. **God knows the right time to answer the prayer.** In his wisdom he allows delay.

There will be occasions when the Lord wants us to persist in thanksgiving for his as-yet unseen positive answer, rather than to persist in asking for the answer to be revealed. Obviously, that can only be discerned in prayer, so that we avoid jumping to conclusions.

It follows that we need to persist in prayer for revival, so that our faith will be strengthened and our holiness deepened, but also in order that the enemy may be overcome, so that God's certain promise of Revival can be manifested at the right time.

RELEVANT QUOTATION FROM DUNCAN CAMPBELL

"The revival did not begin [in Lewis] by my going there. God was moving and moving mightily before ever I thought of going to Lewis. This is where and how it began: A number of men and two elderly women there were made conscious of the desperate need of their parish; all human effort had failed and had left them baffled. They realized that their one resource was to fall back upon God. Oh, how true it is that despair often is the womb from which real faith is born. When man comes to the end of himself--to the end of all human resources--he has reached the beginning of God. That was where I had arrived, and that was where the men of Lewis had arrived. So they entered into a solemn covenant that they would not rest nor cease from prayer until He made "Jerusalem" a praise on the Island. According to the report given me by the minister of the parish you find men waiting through the night in confidence that God was about to manifest His power. You find two elderly sisters on their faces before the peat fire three nights a week pleading one promise, I say one promise: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." A promise made, as they declared, by a covenant-keeping God who must ever be true to His covenant engagements. So they waited and the months passed and nothing happened; until one morning a young man in the company read the portion of Psalm 24 that we have read, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart"--the Word of God speaks about heart purity--" He shall receive the blessing of the Lord." Looking down at his praying companions, and speaking in Gaelic, he said: "Brethren, it seems to me just so much sentimental humbug to be praying as we are praying, to be waiting as we are waiting here, if we ourselves are not rightly related to God." And then he prayed, 'Are my hands clean, is my heart pure?' He got no further. At that moment there came to them a realisation of God, an awareness of his presence that lifted them from sphere of the ordinary into the sphere of the extraordinary. Three of them fell prostrate on the floor: they realised at that moment that they were now moving, not in the field of the natural, but on the plane of the supernatural. Revival had come and the power that was let loose in that barn shook the whole community of Lewis." *Duncan Campbell, Price and Power of Revival, p. 60*

God bless you,

Tony

PS. You may be interested in articles I have written on other subjects:

DEVOTIONAL

"God won't forgive us if we don't forgive everyone" (see [God Won't Forgive Us If We Don't Forgive Everyone](#))

EVANGELISTIC

"Is Christianity true? 1: Jesus rose from the dead"

This brief article looks at 9 theories that he didn't and shows they are all incredible. See [Is Christianity True? 1: Jesus Rose from the Dead](#)

"Is Christianity true? 2: The amazing influence of Jesus"

A brief article about how Christianity has transformed civilization. See [Is Christianity True? 2: The Amazing Influence of Jesus](#)

"The Faith of an atheist"

A critique of atheist Richard Dawkins showing he is a man of faith – in evolution! See [The Faith of an Atheist – Christian Teaching Resources](#)