



September 6, 2009

Anticipated Answers

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (1 John 3.22). People pray to God every day for various reasons. Some pray for things that are spiritual and others see prayer as an outlet for almost anything that comes to mind from the critical to the trivial. We expect that God will hear our prayers and anticipate a response that will meet their personal need or desire. Others, not receiving the response they wanted, eventually give up and abandon the practice of praying altogether. But when should we expect a response to our prayers in a way that will aid us in our trials and endeavors? The statement that John makes in the passage cited above brings several things to light that have much to do with prayer and what it signifies in our lives. First, John states that *“whatsoever we ask, we receive of him...”*. Some take this as an absolute, that God will hear every request, no matter how menial, and will answer in a way that will guide and assist us or fill our desire. As we continue reading the verse however we see that there is more to this that we need to understand. John states that God will grant those things *“...because we keep his commandments...”*. This implies a relationship that respects and acknowledges the authority of God. Christ stated, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”* (John 14.15). Can we say that we have a proper relationship with God to enjoy this privilege if we have not accepted his will as stated in the scriptures? Do we have the proper relationship with God when we question things that are contained in his word and have not fully submitted to his will? The next statement in this passage sheds some light on the result of keeping the commandments of the Lord. John states that we will receive an answer when we *“...do those things that are pleasing in his sight”*. What is pleasing to God? Keeping his commandments. We also come to a realization, as our faith matures, that not everything that we might think is needful is necessary. Sometimes our requests may have more to do with personal want than doing the will of God. James addresses this point in his letter. *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask*

amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” (Jas 4.3). Praying to God is not an extension of our wants and perceived needs. One must be committed to doing the will of the Lord, walking in a manner that is pleasing to him. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, states, *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.”* (1 Thess 4.1-2). In order to be pleasing to God we must know what things are commanded. This knowledge comes from understanding what is contained in the scriptures. Some pray to God for guidance and understanding and never turn to the word that has been revealed to serve that purpose. As we come to a knowledge of the will of God, stated in the scriptures, we begin to see what things are needed and how our lives should be directed. In the absence of this knowledge we cannot be pleasing to the Lord because we do not know what he wants us to do. Righteousness is defined in the scriptures as doing the will of the Lord in true faith. Faith is not just what one holds to out of personal conviction but is defined by adhering to the doctrine that is revealed in the Bible. When we obey God from the heart, keep his commandments and remain faithful we have the assurance that he will hear our prayers. James tells us, *“...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (Jas 5.16). This also creates within us the acceptance that answers to our prayers will be according to His will. The answer may not always be what we want, or we may not recognize it for some time, but there will be an answer. Patience and prayer go hand in hand as we strive to understand and serve God. The Lord is not a genie to serve us. If we really want to know that our prayers are being heard we need to make sure we are doing the will of God. In other words, if we want God to listen to us, we have to listen to Him first.

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