

## Keys to Answered Prayer

### Exodus 32:1-15

#### Introduction

**EX.** Listen to part of this email from missionary David Allen from Thailand in Dec. 98. "My condition is quite serious now. My body is beginning to break down... I am in constant pain and have to take pain killers regularly.... They have found two foreign parasites, but no one has ever seen them before or can identify them.... I feel I am in a very dark valley right now."

Parasites had invaded this missionary's body the year before and his health was fading quickly. Doctors were unable to help and gave him only a very short to live.

Nazarene Missionary presidents and churches around the world were contacted to pray and thousands of people began to pray. Offers began to come in from all over the world to help from doctors, research scientists and other medical professionals. But missionary David Allen said they were unnecessary because, in his words, "From the time the prayer...began to cover the world...every test taken to find parasites came back negative." God answers prayer!

God answers prayer. But have you ever noticed that it seems like God answers some people's prayers more consistently than He answers other people's prayers?

I assume just about everyone here prays. But I know that many of us would like to know how to pray more effectively. We'd like to know how to pray and get more consistent answers.

Last week I said that Moses was probably the most important character in the OT. And Moses was certainly one of the greatest "prayers" in the bible.

In Ex. 32, Moses has led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt to Mt. Sinai. God told Moses to tell the people to stay back and for Moses to come up to the top of the mountain to meet with God. On top of the mountain, God spent a long time talking with Moses about how to have a relationship with God and how to live a godly life. He basically gave Moses the outline for the first five books of the OT. It took a while.

Meanwhile, down at the foot of the mountain ... the people are getting restless. They said "we don't know what happened to Moses and God but we're tired of waiting so make us another god. And Aaron did. And after all God had just done for them, they started worshipping another god. Unbelievable isn't it? But before we are too critical of them, I've noticed it doesn't take a lot of people very long ... if God doesn't do just what they want when they want it ... they start

looking elsewhere. If the church doesn't do just what they want when they want it ... they start looking elsewhere.

Look at what God said.

### **Read Ex. 32:7-14**

Moses prayed one of the most powerful types of prayer that there is – he prayed an intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer means to intercede to someone for someone. At its most intense, it means to put yourself between them.

**EX.** Picture it like this. Mom is mad. I mean she is very upset. The kids have finally done it this time. She is about to go for blood. Dad steps in between them and asks her to cool down a little before she does whatever she is going to do. That is intercession. Jesus is the ultimate intercessor. He stood between us and judgment.

God describes intercessory prayer in Ezekiel 22:30.

*Ezek. 22:30 "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."*

Moses powerfully interceded with God on behalf of Israel and God answered Moses' prayer. I want to get answers to prayer like Moses did. There are some keys here to getting answers to our prayers.

### **1. Get Serious About Praying**

*Ex. 32:32 But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."*

Moses said, "God if you are going to kill them then just go ahead and send me to hell with them." How many of you think that is a serious prayer? God took Moses seriously. He said Moses, I'm still God and I'm the final judge. But, He answered Moses prayer. A lot of prayer is not answered because we don't take prayer seriously. We need to get serious about praying. What does that mean?

#### **A. Make Time for Prayer**

*Ex. 32:1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain...*

Moses spent a long time talking with God. Prayers are not answered simply because they are long but you cannot seriously pray without investing some time with God. Moses' second time on the mountain was for forty days. Jesus spent forty days in the desert fasting and praying and then regularly went out and prayed long hours into the night or early in the morning. Elijah prayed all night. Jacob wrestled all night with God. The apostles spent ten days together in prayer in the upper room before Pentecost – much of the time in prayer.

Serious prayer takes time. If we want to get answers to our prayers, we have to make the time to pray. That includes praying regularly. Prayer is a discipline that must be cultivated through regular practice.

Serious prayer also requires intensity.

### **B. Pray with Intensity**

Moses' prayer was intense. Look at vs. 11-12. Moses says to God, "God don't respond from anger. Don't destroy your people. Remember your promises." That is intense! Have you ever said to someone ... come on now don't respond from anger. Don't destroy what you've built. Remember your promise. That is intense. And God listened to him. Prayers that get answered are serious. They are intense. God is not going to take us seriously until we are serious about what we are asking Him.

The people I know who get serious about prayer reflect it in their posture and their tone of voice. They aren't afraid to kneel or stand or get on their faces before God. They aren't afraid to pray aloud. They aren't afraid to express emotion. They are communicating intensely and it shows. When I want to increase the intensity of my prayer, I use posture, tone of voice, everything I can to get serious with God. Sometimes that includes fasting with prayer. Moses spent 40 days interceding that second trip up the mountain and he fasted the entire time. Often serious prayer includes times of fasting.

That includes selecting special places to pray.

### **C. Select Special Places for Prayer**

*Ex. 33:7 Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp.*

Moses set up a special place to meet with God. Jesus withdrew to lonely places or went up on top of a mountain. The point of a special place for prayer is so I can eliminate distractions and increase the intensity of my prayer. Jesus said go into your room and close the door [Matt. 6:6] and get some privacy for just you and God. I know that is tough sometimes but if you want to get answers to prayer ... you've got to get serious about prayer.

The second key to getting answers to prayer is to pray persistently.

## **2. Pray Persistently**

*Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?"*

Jesus told several stories to illustrate the point that God listens when we "keep on asking and we keep on seeking and we keep on knocking." Jesus said God

rewards persistence. When I believe something is right – I keep praying until God does it or He tells me to stop praying. If it isn't right, God will tell me to stop asking.

**EX.** There have been times when I was praying for someone's healing and God said Alan, stop praying for his healing. You pray for Me to give them comfort and help them but stop praying for their healing. When God says stop asking – then stop, but until then keep asking.

### **3. Expect to Get Answers**

When Moses prayed, He expected answers. Prayer is communication. When I talk to someone – I expect some type of response. If I'm talking to my wife on the phone and she hangs up on me – that is an answer. It isn't a good one – but its an answer.

If you want to get answers to your prayer ... you need to expect to receive answers. That means believe that God is who He says He is and that He wants to answer your prayers. It also means you need to learn to recognize the answers when they come. You need to learn to recognize and understand God's voice.

#### **A. Learn to Recognize God's Voice**

If all you speak is English – God isn't going to answer you in French.

#### **B. Accept God's Answers**

Three years ago, we asked everyone in the church to pray about what God wanted them to give [above and beyond their regular tithes and offerings] toward the relocation.

**EX.** I wasn't sure how ready I was to pray that prayer... because I knew something. I knew God was going to ask us to sacrifice. Jan and I were just finishing another stewardship campaign when we moved to Monroe. Through that campaign God had always provided for our needs but there wasn't anything extra. I had to say Lord, your will be done. You tell me what you want – make it clear and with Your help, I will follow you.

He made it clear to us didn't He? He has helped us to give and give and give some more.

**EX.** When my brother was in a coma right before he died, I was praying and fasting for his healing. And the whole time God was talking to me. He was giving me scriptures of comfort and consolation, letting go and trusting God. But I wasn't ready to accept that answer. That doesn't mean you can't ever try to change God's mind. Sometimes God put us in that place of prayer so that we

can stand in the gap and intercede with Him so that He can change His mind. That was what Moses did and God changed His mind and didn't destroy Israel.

But you have to understand something. God wanted to change His mind. God wanted Moses to intercede and give God the Holy Judge the opportunity to exercise His mercy instead of just His justice. Does that make sense? We are talking about the will of God. His ultimate will – is what God will do. But sometimes He uses us to change the course of events within that will.

Part of accepting God's answers means asking in agreement with God's will.

#### **4. Ask in Agreement with God's Will**

*1 John 5: 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*

#### **5. Be in a Right Relationship with God**

This would not have been a good time for Aaron to pray for the children of Israel. Right after he made the golden calf and led them into idolatry they needed Moses' prayers. When your child has just done something to really tick you off – before they ask for the car keys – they better ask for forgiveness.

A lot of prayer goes unanswered – not because it is outside God's will. It may be something God wants to do for you – a prayer He wants to answer. But your prayer goes unanswered because your relationship with God is not right. In Psalm 66:18, David said:

*Psalm 66:18 If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.*

How are things between you and God?

#### **Conclusion**

**EX.** Twelve years ago, I asked God for a favor. I wanted my daughter to be born on Monday because that would give me the most time to help Jan with the baby. We went to the hospital Sunday night and Laura was born on Monday. Same thing with Samuel. God answers prayer.

**EX.** When I was five years old, my father passed out at work. They rushed him to the hospital and said he had a brain aneurysm. There was very little treatment available and they weren't sure if he would live or die. The church was contacted and God's people began to pray. A few days later my dad left the hospital with no sign of an aneurysm. God answers prayer.

**EX.** When Jan and I were pastoring in Ohio, a very fine 12-year-old boy in the church was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm. He was scheduled for surgery to try and treat it before it ruptured. The church began to pray. We anointed him

and prayed for him and the surgery was cancelled because the aneurysm disappeared. God answers prayer.

**EX.** Thursday I was jogging about 7AM. I was thanking the Lord for how beautiful the ice was on the trees and road and thanking Him for a great family and a great church and suddenly something hit me. About a year ago, I was really struggling with heel spurs. The doctor told me there was absolutely nothing he could do. The pain was so intense that lots of days I could just barely walk. I prayed, Jan prayed, my parents prayed, some of you prayed for me. It hit me Thursday that I haven't had any trouble with heel spurs in some time. I thanked the Lord all the way home. God answers prayer.