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4-13-1961

God Will Answer

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Recommended Citation

Blazen, Ivan T., "God Will Answer" (1961). *Faculty Publications*. 4023.

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the grave. It bears witness against him at the judgment. A quenchless fire, it consumes at last soul and body."—*Education*, pp. 144, 145.

The wise in heart realize that the law of God will not *justify* or *save* the sinner, but without doubt it will *judge* him. Those who do not permit the Lord Jesus by His Spirit to burn sin out of their lives will be incinerated with sin in the final day.

Today we do not have letters of stone or flying rolls to warn us of violating God's will. We have letters "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:3). The love of Jesus motivates us to obedience; the perfect life of Jesus lived out day by day within enables us to comply with the will of God as contained in His moral law.

But what of the many who deliberately turn their back upon the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, of those who do "despite unto the Spirit of grace," and thus violate the will and commandments of God? Will there be letters of fire in the heavens one of these days expressing the indignation of a slighted Lord, or will "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"?

John the beloved writes in Revelation 6:14 that he saw the heaven depart "as a scroll when it is rolled together," and Isaiah, the gospel prophet, declares that God will roll up the heavens like a scroll. (See Isaiah 34:4.)

Once, on the walls of a king's palace, the bloodless hand of God wrote the fateful words, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." What are the words that God will write one day soon on heaven's scroll to arrest the gaze of earth's inhabitants? What will they read on the sky in letters of fire?

The answer is found in the fiftieth psalm where David pictures the second coming of Christ in majesty and in glory: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. . . . And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge himself" (Ps. 50:1-6).

Yes, the righteousness of our Lord must be vindicated; and His righteousness involves perfect harmony with the will of the Father. The Ten Commandments are, indeed, the very transcript of the will and character of God, and the psalmist affirms that "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:172).

Our Lord came the first time to

save sinners; He comes the second time in judgment. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Thus we believe that evidence of His character and righteousness will be made manifest for all the world to see in letters of fire.

Sister White comments in the following language on the appearance of God's righteous law that will appear in fiery, sky-written letters: "Then there appears against the sky a hand holding two tables of stone folded together. . . . The hand opens the tables,

and there are seen the precepts of the decalogue, traced as with a pen of fire. The words are so plain that all can read them. . . . God's ten words, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, are presented to the view of all the inhabitants of earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 639.

But then it will be too late to repent. Probation's door will have closed! God's words have been traced in stone; framed in a flying curse; written now in the heart. But the day will come when they will appear in letters of fire. Shall we not cherish them now, and obey them, while mercy yet lingers?

God Will Answer

By Ivan T. Blazen

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PRAYER is not the overcoming of a reluctant God; it is the laying hold of the highest kind of willingness to help. Jesus illustrated this truth in two short, dramatic parables. The first is the parable of the importunate friend, recorded in Luke 11:5-13; the second is the parable of the importunate widow, found in Luke 18:1-8.

In the first parable Jesus tells the story of a man who is suddenly confronted by a visitor late at night. Hav-

ing no food in his home for a guest, he goes to the dwelling of a neighbor-friend and awaking him out of sleep, requests three loaves of bread.

The neighbor does not wish to be bothered, so replies, "Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot arise and give thee." However the neighbor's resistance is met by the man's insistence, and thus Jesus says, "Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." Comfortable selfishness finds itself overmatched by importunate want. What friendship could not secure, sheer importunity extorts.

The lesson is this: We must ask, seek, and knock if we expect to receive the blessings of heaven. "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Furthermore, says Jesus, if even our earthly fathers, who are evil, do not give us a stone when we ask for a loaf, or a serpent when we ask for a fish, or a scorpion when we ask for an egg, we can be sure that God, who is our righteous heavenly Father, will never withhold His good gifts when we ask of Him.

This parable as well as that of the importunate widow gives some people a feeling of uneasiness. It appears to them that God is represented as being one who answers prayer only after much coaxing and then only to keep from being bothered. This impression is far from the truth. Christ is not *comparing* similar qualities in the re-

The Birth of Spring

By Mike A. Jones

When willows burst and greet the spring,
Questing crows call at the barrows,
And hungry robins seize worms and sing,
While playful sparrows soar like arrows.

The gurgling brook—it rushes insane—
Carrying old winter farther away;
Its rioting rivulets laugh and complain
While they follow a way lonely, yet gay.

Blue-tinted violets peek from the soil,
Recently frosted with winter's white
dress;

Awakening hemlocks slowly uncoil
Stirred by the rays of the sun's warm
caress.

A jay sits poised on a broken stick,
Peering to see what the scene will
bring;

Mute nature pauses—locked doors un-
click—

Let nature sing! 'Tis the birth of spring!

luctant neighbor and in God; He is showing the *contrast* between the two. If an annoyed householder will supply a need at a time that is most inopportune for him, how much more will our God, who never slumbers or sleeps, pour out His blessing upon us.

Yet we should recognize that persistence is a vital part of prayer. We do not persist in order to make some change in God, or to make Him more willing, but to make a change in us, or to increase our faith. The Spirit of Prophecy writings, commenting on this very point, say that we should "unwearingly persist in prayer. The persistent asking brings the petitioner into a more earnest attitude, and gives him an increased desire to receive the things for which he asks."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 145.

Not From Selfish Motives

Another lesson of the parable is that what we request from God should not stem from selfish motives. We are not to ask merely for our own benefit. We are to ask so that we may give. This was the case with the man in the parable. His request was based on his desire to do good to another. The result that came to him will come to us when we exemplify the same attitude. He was given "as many as he needeth." God's abundance will flow to us when we ask that we may give to others.

In the parable of the importunate widow Christ taught the same lessons we have been considering. Here we

see a widow who has been grossly mistreated, appealing to a judge in her city for justice. Her appeals at first fall on deaf ears, for the judge is a man noted for having no fear of God and no regard for man. The widow could neither bribe nor coerce the judge in order to gain her ends, but she was persistent in pressing her plea.

Her appeal was so constant that the judge finally said within himself, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Jesus then goes on to point out that if an unjust judge could finally be made to do justice for an importunate widow, how much more shall God speedily avenge His elect who cry unto Him day and night.

Jesus told this parable "to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." The apostle Paul gave the same instruction: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). We are "not to faint," not to become disheartened and stop praying if we do not receive an immediate answer. What may appear to us as unwillingness on God's part to hear and answer may in reality be His desire for greater good to come to us.

The Syrophenician woman (see Matt. 15) who importuned Christ to heal her daughter thought that Christ seemed unwilling to grant her request. Why did Christ present Himself in this way? Not because He was reluctant to give. Rather, He knew that

the woman's faith would carry her victoriously over all the obstacles that lay in her path. He knew that through pressing her petition her faith would be strengthened and purified as it could not have been without such a trial. In part, also, this experience was for the benefit of the disciples.

Augustine expressed somewhat the same truth when he said, "God withholds His gifts for a time that thou mayest learn to desire great things greatly." He also said, "Things long desired are more sweet when obtained; those quickly given soon lose their value." There is no danger that God will neglect our prayers. The danger is that in times of adversity we shall become discouraged and fail to persevere in prayer.

Apparently Unanswered Prayers

We have been speaking about delayed answers to prayer. But what about the apparently unanswered prayers? For the Christian there are no unanswered prayers. True, God may at times say No, but the No itself is an answer. It means that God knows that it would not be best for us to have what we asked for. In other instances God may give us something other than what we requested. We see our welfare only for a moment, but God sees it for eternity. And so He does not always give us what we want, but He always gives us what we need and what will be best for us and for His total plan.

There is one prayer, however, that knows no delay and that is always answered in the way expected. This is the prayer for deliverance from sin. "When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than what we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 266.

Following the thought of Trench in his *Notes on the Parables*, page 254, we would summarize the teaching of both parables: In the parable of the importunate friend the tardy selfishness of man is contrasted with the prompt liberality of God; in the parable of the unjust judge the unrighteousness of man is contrasted with the righteousness of God. The conclusion is that if a reluctant man can be won by mere importunity to give, and an unjust man to do right, how much more certainly shall the bountiful Lord bestow, and the righteous Lord do justice! In the words of Paul, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

Parents' Fellowship of Prayer

"I will save thy children."—Isaiah 49:25.

[Address prayer requests to Parents' Fellowship of Prayer, Review and Herald, Washington 12, D.C.]

"How Happy and Thankful We All Are"

"More than three years ago I sent in a prayer request for my sister, who was going to marry a non-Adventist. Soon after I received your letter my sister broke up with this man for what seemed no reason at all. Now she is happily married to a fine Adventist, and you can imagine how happy and thankful we all are."—Mrs. N., of Colorado.

"I know that you will rejoice with me to know that my husband was saved before he passed away, December 11. How good God is. My husband was sick only a few days. I had prayed day and night for this darling husband, and thank God He has answered. . . . I am lonely at times, but I know God in His mercy took my husband, and I shall see him at that great day when Jesus comes. I can never

thank God enough for His goodness to me."—Mrs. Y., of Texas.

"Many months ago I sent in a request for my daughter to be reclaimed. I am happy to report that God worked through one of her children who was attending a Sunday school of another faith. Today [January 28] my daughter and two of her children are to be baptized. Surely my cup runneth over. My faith has been greatly strengthened through this experience."—Mrs. G., of California.

"I want to thank you for your earnest prayers and tell you that one of my sons and his wife have given their hearts to the Lord and have been baptized. I do thank God for answered prayer."—Mrs. B., of Colorado.