

# Faith that claims

ODCC 29/03/09 (Faith that claims.doc)

**Text:** Mark 11:12-14 and 20-26

## Introduction

1. Last week I spoke on faith that confirms to us the reality of God. We do not only want to worship God because of the promise but we want to worship God because of His presence – we want a real relationship with God.
  - a. The Bible is full of accounts of God working very powerfully among His people but in these days He reveals Himself to us through His Son by the Holy Spirit.
  - b. And so it is faith in the promises and, of course, acting on the promises that brings us into relationship.
2. Today I want to speak about **faith that claims** and I want to especially concentrate on the promise that God hears and answers our prayer.
  - a. This is not an isolated promise – there are many promises throughout the Bible and the NT in particular that give outstanding promises that God will hear and answer the prayers of faith.
  - b. We either believe the promises or we don't. Did Christ mean what He said? Can we trust Him?

## I believe but...

1. I hate it when a person or a group of people earnestly pray about something and when it does not happen they give reasons as to why God didn't answer or they claim He did answer but not in the way they were asking.
  - a. When people came to Jesus and asked for something specific: "I want to see," or "My daughter is dying," He gave them what they asked for. To me, that is prayer and answer to prayer.
  - b. Jesus said, "*Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*"
  - c. It can't be more emphatic: if you have faith in God, if you ask believing and do not doubt, you will receive what you ask for – nothing less.
  - d. In fact, it says believe that you have received (**past tense (past perfect continuous tense, I think)**).
2. BUT let's also be honest there are a number of possibilities why our prayers are not answered. I have been a Christian most of my life. I could spend the rest of the day telling you how God has answered prayer in my life, in *our* life as my wife and I have prayed together, and what I have seen in other believer's lives and the church.
  - a. We have witnessed some amazing miracles for example, I saw a little boy completely deaf and dumb *instantly* healed so he heard perfectly and made a noise with his vocal chords for the first time in his life.
  - b. However if I'm honest I have not experienced answer to prayer in the way that Jesus promised although I do often remind myself of His promises.

## Reasons for failure

1. There are a number of reasons why we may not be successful. Here are a few of them:
  - a. God is sovereign. Even though Christ makes such sure promises we cannot overlook the sovereignty of God. We need to always remember that He is Lord. His ways are not our ways neither His thoughts our thoughts.
  - b. For this reason I need to always submit to Him and trust Him despite a seeming negative response to my prayer.
2. We may be asking with a wrong motive. James says, "*You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.*" (4:2-3)
  - a. If I have selfish motives and God gave me everything how dangerous that would be!
  - b. Gaille and I do not buy the Lotto ticket – I don't want to give the impression that I've never bought because I have – but we don't buy it because for us it would show a lack of trust in God and a lack of appreciation for what He has supplied us.
  - c. If we won millions of dollars or were given millions of dollars it would probably cause more heartache than joy.

- d. Paul suffered extreme need and said, “I have learned to be content in every situation” because he trusted in God who was leading him.
  - e. Wisdom is required to know when and what to pray for.
3. Relationship seems to be important in prayer. In our text Jesus immediately spoke about having a forgiving life attitude because God is ready to forgive.
- a. And Peter tells us that a husband’s prayers will be hindered if he fails to treat his wife with honour – the Gk word indicates that she should be regarded as precious (1 Pet 3:7).
  - b. Relationship is important to God – He wants relationship above religion. An example is if in a family, members are bitter and unforgiving towards one another it can destroy a family.
4. A sinful lifestyle. We’re all sinners. If God only heard the prayers of the pure He wouldn’t listen to anyone.
- a. But it seems that if I am unconcerned about my life-style whether it matches up to the Christ’s teaching, especially as the Spirit speaks to me through the Word and through preaching (to neglect these things is wrong!).
  - b. The psalmist says, “*If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear*”(Ps 66:18).

## Reasons for success

1. I pointed out that bad relationships may hinder our prayer. If that is so then good relationships must assist our prayers.
  - a. This is particularly true of our relationship with God although you can’t really have one without the other. Revealing the greatest commandment, Jesus said: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Mark 12:30,31).
  - b. In John 16 Jesus makes a similar promise as our text today and there He says that God will answer our prayers because we love Christ, therefore God loves us (John 16:27).
2. Faith is a reason for success. Again it comes down to relationship. I may put my trust in a stranger but I’m taking a chance. There are some family and friends I have implicit trust in because I know they will not let me down.
  - a. The object of prayer is not to inform God of our needs because He already knows what we need (Matthew 6:8). But it really is a means whereby we discover more about God and His ways.
  - b. Jesus repeatedly said that He only did what God told Him to do and spoke what God told Him to say. How did Jesus hear? How did Jesus know? Through prayer. It was during His times of prayer that God revealed Himself and His will.
  - c. When the disciples could not get an answer to prayer and they asked Jesus, He told them it was because they lacked faith. However, there was something else: this can only be achieved by spending time in prayer with God first (Mark 9:29)

## Conclusion

1. The promises of God to hear and answer prayer are among the most assured. In other word, they should instil confidence in us to pray.
  - a. My wife and I have personally witnessed God answering prayer in many ways: a man terminally ill with a lung disease and given 6 weeks to live healed in a moment; a little girl who swallowed poison and went into a coma with brain damage, totally healed; broken relationships restored as God has worked in hearts and brought about changes; a miracle of healing in our own son’s life when doctors made a terrible mistake on the operating table, etc.
  - b. God wants to hear and answer our prayer.