Seven Laws of Prayer

God Does Not Hear Us at Random

In nature, everything works according to set laws. It is the same in the spiritual realm: God acts according to laws. So often we get discouraged and believe that prayer is useless when our prayers do not get answered. However, the actual reason is that we have not fulfilled God's laws which are a condition for prayer.

1. The Law of a Pure Heart

"Let us draw near ... having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience..." (HEB 10:22). God's first condition is that my heart must be pure. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (PSA 66:18). What a statement!

In Isaiah 1:15, God says: "I will hide mine eyes ... I will not hear". Sin in your heart will close God's ear and cut off all communication with Him. It is useless for me to pray when I am carrying a sin on my conscience which I have not yet acknowledged. I might as well get up from my knees if there is anything in my life which I know is contrary to the will of God.

God said to Joshua: "Get thee up ... Israel hath sinned ... Therefore ... Israel could not stand before their enemies ... neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." (JOS 7:10-12)

The Lord told Joshua to stop praying. Why? Because He does not want to communicate with a soul that remains in sin. Repentance and cleansing from sin are essential for fellowship with God.

2. The Law of a Forgiving Spirit

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any..." (MK 11:25). This is a condition for getting your prayers answered.

I fear that the spirit of unforgiveness is more widespread than one would generally notice. Often you can find it with people who are, outwardly, very sincere, and who take an active part in the work of the Lord; even these people can harbour a spirit of unforgiveness towards somebody else. If we are not prepared to forgive, our prayer will not be acceptable to God. A forgiving spirit is so essential that the Lord made a drastic statement in Mark: "But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses." (MK 11:26, MATT 6:15). I will not try to explain this mysterious statement of the Lord. However, in the light of it, I search my own heart and watch and pray earnestly that I will never be guilty of this horrible sin, and that I will never be subject to this terrible judgment.

3. The Law of the Right Motive

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (JAM 4:3)

I can go to God and ask Him for things which are completely in order: e.g. I can ask Him to use the Gospel for the salvation of souls, to let evangelisation prosper, etc.; but if my motive is my own pleasure, my own wealth or the approval of people, my prayer will not be answered.

When I ask God for success in my ministry, can I ask Him with equal sincerity to give my brother the same or even greater success than what I am praying for myself? Can I rejoice when God pours His Spirit out upon another brother or sister and uses them mightily? Can I rejoice as much as though God had used myself? If I cannot do this, my motive for praying is wrong.

If my prayer is to be victorious prayer, which guarantees an answer, it is not to be inspired by the desire for selfish pleasure or success.
A proper motive is essential in order to receive an answer to our prayer. And there is only one reason to pray which is right - namely: "That God in all things may be glorified." (1.PET 4:11; 1.COR 10:31). Is this my motive?

4. The Law of Faith

"Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering..." (JAM 1:6). Weymouth translates this as: "Let him... have no doubts." Faith is indispensable if we want to receive answers to our prayers, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." (HEB 11:6). However, when there is faith, God works miracles.

In the Gospel of Mark our Lord gave an amazing promise to the praying soul: "...whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe...he shall have whatsoever he saith." (MK 11:23). How many of us have prayed that the mountains which block the spreading of the Gospel should be removed! Yet, how few of us have seen these mountains being cast into the sea? Why? Because of our unbelief.

5. Pray According to the Will of God

"If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1.JN 5:14). Everything depends on this. First we have to find out God's will, and we have to pray according to His will. Without knowing God's will it is impossible to have faith that moves mountains.

Paul's prayer for the Colossians was that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will" (COL 1:9). This requires an intimate knowledge of God Himself. How do we get to know the desires of our friends? By talking to them, and by being with them often. How do we get to know God's will? By five-minute-prayers? No! It is by waiting, waiting, and waiting on God. We cannot get to know the will of God within five minutes, perhaps not even in five hours, and possibly not even in five days. It is a matter of waiting before God daily, and learning His will for that day.

6. Praying in the Name of Jesus

Jesus said: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (JN 14:14). What a promise!

But what does it mean, to ask in the Name of Jesus? Something much deeper than some people think. It is not a matter of quoting a formula. This cannot achieve a result. A formula can be on our lips, but have no meaning whatsoever.

But what is its meaning then?

An employee goes to the bank to draw money on behalf of his employer by presenting a cheque with the employer's name on it. He receives 1000 dollars. Why? Because the bank clerk knew the employee? No! The employee could not receive the money just by his own efforts; however, if he asks for it in the name of his employer, he will receive the full amount which is written on the cheque.

To ask in the Name of Jesus means to ask for things Jesus would like. God will never say no to this: He cannot, because He loves His Son; and when we pray in the Name of Jesus our prayer must be answered, even if it means removing a mountain.

7. Praying in the Holy Spirit

"Praying in the Holy Ghost" (JUDE 20) is the secret of every victorious prayer. It is impossible to ask in faith if we are not controlled and inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is the only one who can give faith; He is the only one who knows what Jesus wants, the only one who can reveal the will of God.

How can we pray in the Holy Ghost? The secret can be found in Galatians 5:25: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Before we can pray in the Holy Spirit, we must learn to walk in the Spirit; i.e. to live in unbroken fellowship with God, every day and every hour of the day, in fact "moment by moment".

Only then, once we have learnt to do that, will we always be able to pray with a pure heart, with a forgiving spirit, with the right motive, with unreserved faith, according to the will of God, and in the Name of Jesus. Then, and only then, can we receive answers to our prayers. Then "it shall happen". Then we will be able to challenge every mountain in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Provided that we walk in the Spirit, nothing, NOTHING, NOTHING will be impossible to us.

Lord, teach us to pray!

by A. Frank Evans
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