

THE BIBLE VIEW

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The Situation Was Impossible, BUT ...

Bill Brinkworth

Peter's future did not look too promising as he lay in a dark, dank prison cell. Acts 12 describes his unpleasant position further by detailing that he was chained to guards on either side of him, was unclothed, was locked in a prison with other security outside his chamber, and was facing a death sentence from Herod. No one would ever have suspected he would leave that jail alive. Then a hopeful word came into the story. It is a word that usually indicates that things are going to change. The word is "but" (Acts 12:5), and the situation did change.

Things changed in Peter's gloomy situation because praying Christians got God involved. The impossible was made possible. Guards were not disturbed; however, shackles fell off the prisoner, an angel got involved, and prison doors flung open on their "own" accord. Out walked Peter, a free man!

Just as the situation was changed for Peter when others started praying, things can change today when God's people start praying. People with illnesses have been cured by prayer. Fearful and dangerous situations have been transformed into peaceful ones when petitions were sent to our heavenly Father. Drunken, runaway parents have had their lives changed and salvaged by the prayers of their loved ones. Continuous supplications have gotten God involved in putting marriages back together. Prayer has prompted God to do miracles at jobs, to help financial situations, to mend relationships, to fix broken things, and countless other "hopeless" situations.

For Christians, calling on God in prayer can transform any situation. It should be our first line of defense in battling the troubles we face in this life. There is always hope when God is involved. There is nothing God cannot do when a Christian calls on his Father for help!

"Children of God — please call home. Your Father is waiting!"

They Denied Giving God His Due Credit

Bill Brinkworth

God had done an incredible miracle and healed a man who was crippled from birth in Acts 14. Paul was the vessel through which God enabled the man to stand and walk by faith.

Then a shocking thing happened. When the people saw what Paul had been used to do, they immediately gave credit to their false gods! They attributed Paul to being Mercurius (Mercury), the Roman god of commerce. They thought Barnabas was Jupiter, the Latin name for the false god, Zeus. To make matters worse, the priest of Jupiter soon arrived, bringing them gifts, and wanted to make a sacrifice to the false gods (Acts 14:13).

Needless to say, when the two men of the true God heard how God's work had been interpreted and credited to false gods, they were shocked. Barnabas and Paul "rent their clothes", which was how the Jewish culture at that time showed great distress and disappointment. They immediately went among the crowd trying to explain to the people who the real God was.

Many times, we see God's mighty hand at work in a situation. We know it is answered prayer and are amazed at what He has done. However, it is not long until we hear the ungodly crowd see it completely different.

I remember when Florida was faced with a hurricane that was headed directly for the southwest portion of the state. All weather projections had it going straight through the state and doing much damage.

The hurricane got closer and closer. It was inevitable that the state would be clobbered. Windows were boarded up. People left the threatened area. Dark clouds and winds arrived. At the last minute, the hurricane turned 180 degrees and headed away from land and went out to sea.

Christians were elated. They knew God had done the impossible — again. Almost immediately, the weather broadcasts attributed it to some scientific weather anomaly. They would not give credit where credit was due. They failed to recognize God's intervention. Perhaps, it was for the same reason that the crowd who saw Paul's and Barnabas' experience was blinded. It may have been because they were raised without the knowledge of God, and therefore, did not know Him or what He was capable of doing.

Unfortunately, I believe our world today is in a similar position as it was in Paul's day. Many people have been programmed and raised without any knowledge of God: His creation, His history with the people of the world, and His workings. When something supernatural does occur, they explain it away with the only "religion" they do know: humanism, science, or other false religions they have been exposed to.

Man always has to have an answer for what happens. If they are not trained properly or shown God's truths, they will devise their own explanations. That is why, as Christians, it is so important that we fill the void of understanding that an ungodly world has with the truths from the Word of God.

"A coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous." — Author Unknown

Reasons Why Prayer May Not Be Answered

Bill Brinkworth

Many do not have what they need from God because they:

Do not ask Him. *“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.” James 4:2*

Ask improperly, often selfishly. *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” James 4:3*

Are separated from God’s help because of sin. *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalm 66:18*

“Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.” Lam. 3:44 Also: I Kings 8:35, Jer. 11:14, Psalm 80:4, Isa. 45:20, Isa. 59:1-2, Lam. 3:8.

Ask the wrong “god”. *“Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.” Isa. 45:20*

Are praying for a situation in which God will not intervene.

“Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.” Jer. 7:16

Are hypocritical: *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” Mat. 6:5*

Are not sincerely seeking God: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.” Mat. 23:14*

Without meaning they repeat the same prayer over and over. *“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” Mat. 6:7*

Be Grateful!

Bill Brinkworth

After passing through Samaria and Galilee, Jesus healed ten lepers (Luke 17:11-17). In the account, only one turned back and thanked Jesus, and gave God the credit. After being healed of a debilitating disease that severely disfigured their bodies and made them social outcasts, one would expect that all would be grateful. Perhaps they were, but only one expressed his gratitude.

We dare not ridicule them, because many praying Christians have been ungrateful for what God has done for them.

We pray. We beg God to deliver us from the clutches of a disease or deliver us from a hopeless situation, and He does. How many times did we forget to thank the Lord for His miracles and answers to prayer?

Sometimes, perhaps because we did not ask God specifically how to answer our prayer request, we fail to see that He has answered it. Unless the answered prayer is gift-wrapped and dropped out of Heaven with a note “From God, with Love”, we often write the prayer fulfillment off as a “coincidence”.

Here are some suggestions as to how to be more grateful for answered petitions:

- Thank the Lord for the answered prayer when you originally told Him your need. By faith, assume He will answer it. Sometimes the answer will be, “Not now, later”, or “No.” Many times, it may not be the way you expected it to be answered, but there will always be an answer to a Christian’s request.
- Write your prayer requests on a piece of paper. Pray daily for them, and when they are answered or no longer needed, put a mark next to them. Soon, a marked paper will clearly show you that God is working and answering your prayer requests.
- Pray daily for the need. Doing this will show God how urgent it is to you, and will make you aware that it is still a need you asked Him to help you with. When you no longer have to pray for it, you will be reminded that it is He who has met your need.

God does answer the prayer requests of Christians who seek His help. Have you thanked God for His answers to your prayers, or are you like the nine, unthankful lepers?

“When in doubt, give God the glory [credit].”