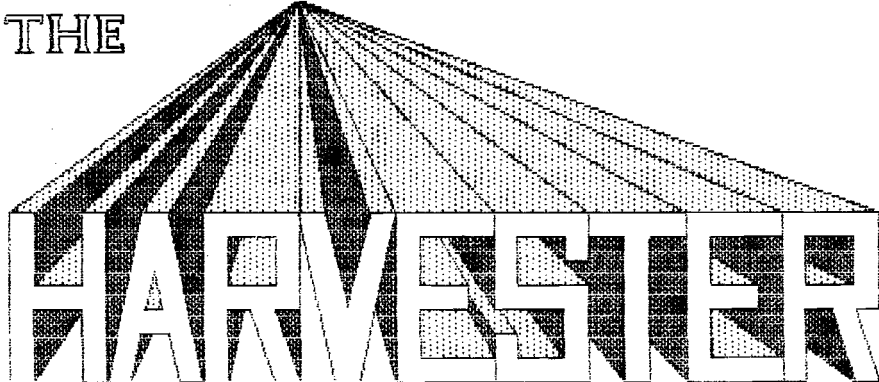


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

NOVEMBER 1992

No. 083

DOES GOD ALWAYS ANSWER OUR PRAYERS?

(Based on a talk given at the camp meeting at Sacramento, New Mexico on 7/16/92.)

The question we wish to consider is, "Does God always answer our prayers?" I have heard some make the statement that "God answers every prayer, but sometimes the answer is 'No'." I believe that ~~is~~ statement is exactly right.

"So Jesus answered and said to them, Assuredly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into

THE HARVESTER
1120 Sun Hill Road
Birmingham, AL 35215-4106

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Birmingham, AL
PERMIT No. 4624

the sea, it will be done. And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matt. 21:21-22)

Christ has promised his followers that, if we will have faith when we pray, he will give us what we are asking for. So the general rule is that God will answer our prayers, and the answer will be 'Yes'.

In II Corinthians 12 we can read about Paul's "thorn in the flesh". Here is an example of a prayer which was answered, but the answer was 'No!'. Paul prayed about this matter three times, and God answered him, but the answer was that Paul was better off with things left the way they were. There was a reason for the discomfort Paul was allowed to endure.

Why would God ever say 'No' to our requests? To understand this, let's bring it closer to home. Many of you are parents, who have children who come to you and ask you for things. What is your answer to them? Of course there are times when the answer must be 'No', but don't you usually say 'Yes'? You love your children, and you want to make them happy. So the answer is generally 'Yes'.

Why does a parent say 'No' to his child? I can think of three reasons:

- 1) You can't afford to buy the thing that is being asked for.
- 2) It is something that would be harmful for the child.
- 3) The child is being disciplined, and you can't give him the good things until the period of correction is over.

I believe that it is the same with God when He deals with us. Let's consider each of these points:

- 1) The request is too expensive.

God has far more wealth than we can imagine, so you might not think this one applies. But I believe there are (rare) situations where our Heavenly Father can't afford to grant our request.

For example, suppose that Brother Jim is praying that interest rates will go up so that his bank will prosper, and Brother Bill is praying that interest rates will go down so that his radio station will prosper. Not even God can grant both requests. He can make them both prosper, but not by making interest rates go up and down, both at the same time!

As another example, consider Mary as she was watching her son Jesus being led away to be tried. Do you suppose she might have been praying for her son's release? But God couldn't answer this request. He couldn't afford to. I do believe that these cases are the exception, and not the rule.

2) The request would be bad for us.

Children don't always ask for intelligent things, but God in His mercy will not let us have things which would not be good for us. Often, because of our lack of understanding, we fail to appreciate God's mercy as we should.

3) We are being disciplined.

If we are being rebellious and are not trying to follow God, how can he reward such behavior with His rich blessings? Of course, as human parents, we will sometimes bless a child with something he wants even when he is being bad, but generally we can't afford to reward rebellion and evil. I believe that it is the same with God. God, in His mercy, will sometimes give us good things, even when we are unfaithful. He wants to see us be happy

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

Ray McManus
3265 Fowlers Ferry Rd.
Gadsden, AL 35901-9130
Phone: (205) 442-4181

and safe. But the rich fullness of his blessings must wait until after our time of discipline is finished.

We gave an example earlier of praying for physical prosperity. Is it right to pray for temporal things such as this? *"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."* (Jas. 4:1-3)

We should not be praying for things just to consume them on our lusts. Our religion should be more than that. And I believe we are familiar with this teaching.

But consider verse 2: *"Yet you do not have because you do not ask."* The people here were being rebuked for NOT asking! In other words, I shouldn't be looking at this thing you possess, and coveting it and envying you because you have it. I should pray to God and ask for one of my own!

Consider an example: suppose our car is falling apart, and we desperately need a replacement. Is it appropriate to pray and ask God for something like this?

Question: do we really want it? Does our heart contain a desire for this new car? Of course it does! Then why would we want to exclude God from that part of our lives? Why would we not want to share our whole heart with God in prayer?

We should be careful that our main focus is on spiritual things. We should be careful not to ask amiss. But let us not go to the other extreme, and never ask for anything. God has power and resources far beyond what we can imagine. Why not give Him a chance to work in our lives?

One final point on prayer: there will always be an answer, but the answers do not always come quickly. For some requests, it may take the better part of a lifetime to see the answer.

Remember when Abraham was praying for a son. He had to wait longer than most of us will live to see that request answered. God's time scale is not the same as ours. Let us not be discouraged when our requests seem to take a long time. We can be sure that God is listening, and that He cares for you and me. *"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!"* (Psalms 27:14)

BOBBY D. RAMSEY
10841 E. Placita Metate
Tucson, AZ 85749

**SERVICE IS THE RENT YOU PAY
FOR THE SPACE YOU OCCUPY
ON EARTH.**

SELLING OUT

To anyone who has been even a casual observer of professional football over the past twenty years the name Lyle Alzado is certain to ring a bell. He was a two-time all-pro defensive lineman who played for three different teams during his fifteen NFL seasons. His tenacity and ferocity on the field struck fear into the hearts and minds of many opposing quarterbacks and running backs.

In 1991 Mr. Alzado publicly admitted having a form of brain cancer. This affliction he blamed on two decades of using steroids to enhance his athletic performance. These drugs may have enabled him to reach higher pinnacles of glory in his profession than would have otherwise been possible, but was it all worth it? They say that everything and everyone has their price. The price Mr. Alzado paid was exceedingly high. On May 14, 1992, at the age of 43, he died in his sleep with his wife by his side.

Back in 1991, while he was battling for his life, Mr. Alzado travelled around the country appearing on most of the popular talk-shows. He had learned a great lesson in his life and he sought desperately to share his wisdom with others. He realized that he had sold out his health, and ultimately his life, for a few moments of glory on the football field. He realized his own foolishness and wanted to warn others before they followed in his footsteps.

I was impressed and touched as I watched Mr. Alzado pour out his heart on national television. He said, "I don't want anybody to be hurt by it anymore. I don't want anybody to go through what I'm going through" When asked if he thought his former colleagues were

afraid after seeing what happened to him, Mr. Alzado replied, "I hope they're afraid!"

Mr. Alzado, who was often reduced to tears during the interview, said, "I've never been afraid of anything or anybody in my life, but this battle is harder than anything I've ever been through." The thing he said which most impressed me was this, "There is a lot more to life than just winning, as I realize now; which may be too late." If only the rest of our nation learn this lesson.

Mr. Alzado said, "Athletes that are taking steroids are trading one thing for another, and it's just not worth it. I would never trade my life for my career. I would just as soon give it up, but it didn't work out that way." Fame, glory, and wealth are not near enough to trade your life for. Yet many still do it.

But what is far more distressing is that so many people sell out their souls for worldly pleasure. I think of Mr. Alzado, his eyes filled with tears, and his heart with regret, as he spoke of his past mistakes. And I wonder how the lost will be when they are cast into Hell. I think Christ gave us a good indication. *"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matthew 25:30)

Mr. Alzado sold out his health and eventually his life. I saw him full of regret and bitterly weeping over this. But how many more tears of anguish will be shed, and how much more regret will there be, for those who have sold out their eternal souls? But the good news is that it is never too late to buy your soul back. The blood of Christ can pay any price, regardless of how high.

TONY WHIDDON

7350-F Howells Ferry Rd.
Mobile, AL 36618

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Nov. 6 - 8	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Nov. 13 - 15 (F - Su)	Hokes Bluff Church Gadsden, AL 7:00pm/ 10:30 & 8:00 Sun.	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Nov. 13 - 15	Summit, KY "What Lies Beyond Death"	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)

& & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & &

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What was Hamar's son's great sin?
2. Where did Lazarus and his sisters live?
3. Why should the people who believe in Moses believe in Christ?
4. In Leviticus, what must the fire on the altar not be allowed to do?
5. What was the name of the boy king that Queen Athaliah failed to kill?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. In the group of ten lepers, what is the only nationality mentioned? SAMARITAN (Luke 17:16)
2. How many days was Ezekiel to lie on his side to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel? 390 DAYS (Eze. 4:5)
3. According to Isaiah 55, if the evil man turns to the Lord, what two things will the Lord do? HAVE MERCY AND PARDON HIM (Isa. 55:7)
4. According to Proverbs, to what does the prostitute reduce you? A LOAF OF BREAD (Prov. 6:26)
5. Who wrote the book of Philemon? PAUL (Phil. 1)