

Prayer, Part 5

When Your Prayers Are Not Answered

Prayer is the greatest work of the Christian. The purpose is to find out God's will for our lives. Remember, there are two people involved in prayer: you and the Lord. Prayer is the breath of the soul.

2 Corinthians 12:1-22

In Chapter 11, Paul goes through a laundry list of all trials and tribulations that he has endured. But Paul says he doesn't want glorification because of all that he's been through; he's just giving an example. There is always someone else who has been through something worse than what you've been through.

- 1 ¶ It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. *Paul says there is something far more important than the trials God has put him through.*
- 2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. *Paul is talking about himself and this incident he had 14 years ago, and to this day he does not know if he was dead or alive. There are 3 heavens mentioned in scripture: 1) the atmospheric heaven in which we live, 2) the stellar heaven where the planets and stars reside and 3) God's heaven.*
- 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) *Paul repeats he doesn't know if he was dead or alive. He doesn't know the situation he was in when this incident happened to him; only God knows.*
- 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. *Paradise is God's heaven he's speaking about, where he saw and heard things he is not allowed to speak about. There is another language that they speak in God's heaven. People to whom this happens come back a changed person.*
- 5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. *The person that went there or whatever happened to him when he went there could really glory in the honor bestowed upon them to be allowed to witness God's heaven. But Paul says he doesn't want any glory for this honor.*

ACTS 14:19-20:

- 19 ¶ And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead. *When they stoned Paul, the people thought he was dead and they dragged him out of the city and through him in the trash.*
- 20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. *While they're standing around wondering about Paul, he stands up and leaves the next day. We think this is the incident when Paul had his experience of going to God's 3^d heaven.*

2 Corinthians 12 continued:

- 6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me. *Paul says again he doesn't want any glory. He wants to be seen as a weak, infirm human being.*
- 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. *After talking about all this and recognizing what has happened, he says he doesn't want to be measured above an infirm man. We don't know what this thorn in the flesh is; the bible doesn't tell us.*
- 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. *This thorn in the flesh was given to Paul by God to keep him humble. Be careful that the closer you get to God and the more things He reveals to you*

that you stay humble. God has a way of keeping you humble. Paul says he prayed to God 3 times to take this away from him.

- 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. *Paul asked 3 different times to take this thorn away from me and You said no. Instead God gave him the grace to bear it, because Paul's weakness makes God strong. Paul endured this "thorn" for the rest of his life. Don't ever get over being humble. This is the most important thing. God has a way of bringing a big head down to size. God will not take your personality away; He will just redirect it for His glory. This is what personal surrender is all about. God uses us to further God's kingdom.*
- 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. *Paul says he endures all the trials in his life for Christ because it makes God strong. He wants God to get all the glory, not himself.*