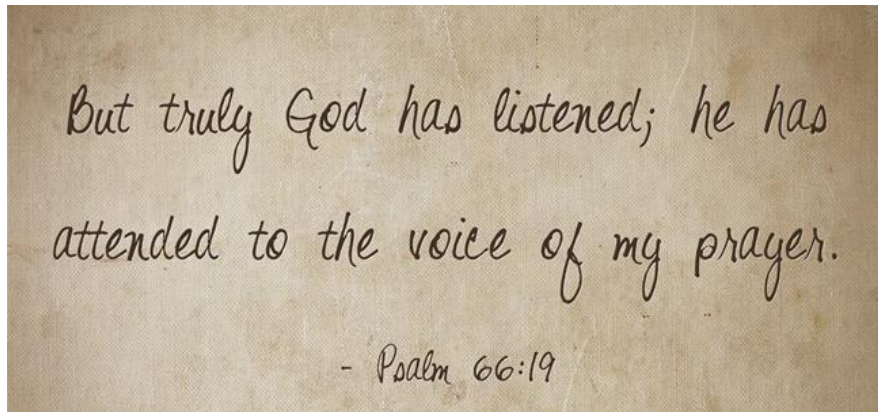


79. Unanswered Prayer



Over a decade ago this was the title of a number one hit for country singer Garth Brooks. In the lyric narrative he meets up briefly with an old school yard sweetheart and realised that while he yearned for her, she was not right for him. God didn't act on this prayer as he had asked, instead He provided him with his current wife. Song co writer Brooks said, "Every time I sing this song it teaches me the same lesson. Happiness isn't about getting what you want, it's wanting what you've got". Perhaps the title of the song is not theologically correct. God does answer prayer. Sometimes He says, "Not now", and "not exactly like you are requesting" and the hardest of all to accept are, "No".

I want to tell God what I want now to be happy, and how I want Him to solve my problems and those of people around me. It does irk me that he is not beholden to my plans and insight. I do forget myself. Hardest of all is prayers for healing, for restored marriages, when death and divorce result. No easy scripture verse gives the calm we crave; we know the death of His loved ones is precious to him, and that He hates divorce. We do want to escape horrid situations, and find it hard that these very trials are shaping our character so we emerge from the pain stronger. In the trial we just feel our prayers are unanswered. We are fashioned for battle, but are seduced by advertisers who would have us believe that life is a garden party of pleasure and delight.

In praying we can see God as a cosmic dispensing machine, believing that the right formula of fasting, correct words, sacrificial giving or setting up a string of prayer supporters will work the mechanism of heaven. It is a hard lesson to learn, God is not manipulated by His children. There is a master plan and we are to pray, and to allow prayer and the circumstances we find ourselves in, change us. In *The Lord of the Rings* story we see Gollum used to secure the kingdom's safety, it's based on the gospel where Judas is a vehicle for securing our salvation. The seeming triumph of evil, is never for long-term gain. Several generations may have to wait, but evil regimes fall, deceptions are exposed, evil reaches its zenith then it recedes or suddenly collapses.

The things I prayed for earnestly as a child I don't want to find delivered now. I don't want that confectionary, or toy or little success any more. I wonder at the close of our lives if we will look back and reflect on some of our adult prayers and realise why God didn't deliver? In the perspective of the total of our life, they don't have such a profile as they once did. Our job is to keep praying, keep believing and to earnestly pursue the things of the Kingdom. More than enough prayers are answered to our satisfaction to keep us moving forward and if we are not intrepid in our praying and only ask for safe simple prayer requests, we won't see the miracles God wants to release through us.

*Trust God from the bottom of your heart;
don't try to figure out everything on your own.
Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go;
he's the one who will keep you on track.
Don't assume that you know it all.
Run to God! Run from evil!
Your body will glow with health;
your very bones will vibrate with life! **Proverbs 3:5-6***

*Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, "There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: 'My rights are being violated. Protect me!' "He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, 'I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won't quit badgering me, I'd better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I'm going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding.'" Then the Master said, "Do you hear what that judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won't step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won't he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet. **Luke 18:1-8***

Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans, *all things work together for good to those who love God **Romans 8:28***

http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/TWbTVEjo_r0/

Video of Garth Brooks singing his song.

<http://www.mylifetime.com/movies/unanswered-prayers>

Movie site for the film based on the song

Prayer, Does It Make Any Difference? Phillip Yancey, 2010 book

<http://www.philipyancey.com/>