

201213 Aaron and Israel Delivered by Answered Prayer 37/47 December 13, 2020GG

Dear Friends,

At some time or another we've all heard or pondered the question, "Does God really answer prayer? Does He intervene in events so as to alter their course?" And the more we study Scripture and avoid philosophical (Void of Biblical insights) reasoning the more we must conclude that, yes, God does intervene in the flow of events to protect and to bless His children. The most obvious complication to this Biblical truth grows out of a fatalistic leaning, the non-Biblical idea (In fact, the pagan religious idea) that God in some way causes every event. If we rightly learn that God does not cause every event, as Scripture occasionally reminds us, the dilemma of answered prayer goes away. Interestingly, the greater dilemma appears in the idea that God does cause every event, for that idea makes God the cause of both moral and immoral events, in fact, making God both moral and immoral, a direct contradiction to Scripture's consistent teaching that our God is only and wholly moral in everything He does.

In our study passage for this week, we learn that Moses' prayer prevented both Aaron's and Israel's judgment and demise. Thank the Lord for Moses and his prayer! Should we perhaps also consider a more personal example of this truth? Could it be that the faithful and fervent prayers of people who know and love you have prayed for you, and their prayers prevented the Lord's wrath from falling heavy on you?

Aside from the needful lesson regarding intervening prayer and God's answer, this lesson reminds us. When we observe another believer slipping into error, our first--and immediate--response should be to pray for the Lord to intervene in their lives and to bring them back to a position of fruitful, profitable service to the Lord and His people.

I have often observed and truly believe that Jesus' lesson in [Mt 18](#) regarding how to confront and admonish a fellow-believer who offends us is possibly the most ignored and neglected passage in the Bible. Jesus didn't teach that lesson just so we would ignore it. It teaches a truth sorely needed in our day. "But, preacher, I tried that lesson once, and the outcome was disastrous." You may have "Tried" it, but you obviously didn't apply it correctly, or the outcome would have been different. To be honest, Jesus makes the point clearly in the lesson. Not every brother or sister so confronted will repent and correct their offensive ways. If we approach someone with the attitude, "You have offended me, and I'm here to confront you by the rules of [Mt 18](#)," we will likely succeed only in escalating the problem and the offense. If we simply approach our brother or sister with kind regard, affirm our love and respect for them, and voice our concerns in, and motivated by our love for them, I suggest we shall realize more of the outcome that Jesus describes in the lesson. Let's face it; none of us likes to be "Preached at." But a truly respectful and loving approach melts the heart and pleads for a hearing.

Whether in personal offenses, as Jesus' [Mt 18](#) lesson, or sins that anger the Lord, our first faithful obligation is always to pray for the erring brother or sister. Who knows? If we truly pray in faith, perhaps the Lord might hear and answer that prayer, heal, and restore the erring believer, blessing them with restoration and us with the joy of answered prayer.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

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And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time. ([De 9:20](#) KJV 1900)

I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of

this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm. (De 9:26-29 KJV 1900)

In [1Co 10:6](#), Paul indicates that much of Israel's conduct during their forty years of wilderness wandering served as a **bad example**, not a good one, "...to the intent we should **not**..." The golden calf episode is one of the worst. It even snared Aaron for a time. I find this whole lesson highly instructive. It teaches us so much about our own sinful inclinations to justify and excuse our sins, even to the point of taking our excuses to the irrational. Consider Aaron's reaction when Moses confronted him for this sin.

And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. (Ex 32:24; emphasis added)

"...**there came out this calf**." Really? If you throw gold jewelry into a fire, if hot enough, it will melt. It definitely will not magically take on the form of a calf and come out of the fire. Pastors who have served long in their charge have heard such stretched explanations more than once. Anything other than what Scripture commands.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (Jas 5:16)

Rather than confess their sins, rebellious believers often will rationalize their sins with creative flare, even the logically and factually impossible. Many pastors have heard stories no more credible than Aaron's "*So they gave it to me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf*" story.

Did Aaron's imaginative rationalization convince the Lord? Not for a nanosecond! Nor did it convince Moses. If you are at all inclined to rationalize or mystify everything that happens to you, pause for a long season of reflection on God's response to Aaron's sin. "*And the Lord was **very angry** with Aaron to have destroyed him.*"

But thank the Lord for kind mercy, Aaron was not destroyed. Why? "...and I prayed for Aaron also the same time." Did the Lord answer Moses' prayer? Yes, Aaron was not immediately destroyed by the Lord's righteous indignation. We discover two powerful and relevant lessons here. First, the moment we observe someone in the faith erring, grievously so, what do we do? Pray for them? Or tell anyone who will listen? Moses didn't wait for Aaron to request prayer. He started praying for Aaron at "**the same time**." Secondly, we see a clear indication that the Lord answered Moses' prayer. Proof? He didn't destroy Aaron, did He? The Lord heard and respected Moses' prayer.

Moses doesn't stop with his prayer for Aaron. He continued in prayer for Israel. The Lord also heard that prayer. Does God truly answer prayer? We need not play amateur philosopher and try to explain God's immutability in conjunction with His responding to the prayers of His people. His character is immutable. He doesn't do impeccable morality today and immorality tomorrow. Today or tomorrow, from and to eternity, our God is always and only morally pure and righteous through and through. In that character quality, rest assured. **He is immutable!** Is it possible that He might hear and respond to the prayers of His people so that the natural course of events that might have unfolded without that prayer is altered by His answering the prayer and intervening? Not only is it possible, but every Bible account of answered prayer witnesses to the truth of this point.

The notion that any divine intervention that alters the course of events means that God changes rests on the quicksand of fatalistic belief that God caused the travesty that begged for prayer in the beginning. If God didn't cause "Option A" in the course of unfolding events, but the events of "Option A" would

have naturally unfolded, God may stand back and do nothing, or He may intervene in answer to His child's prayer for that child's deliverance. Whichever "Option" God chooses, He chooses based on His fixed righteous, moral character. His intervention grows out of His character and out of His loving mercy for His people. Nothing about Him changes. In fact, refusing to intervene when His children are at risk or suffering would, itself, be a change of character in Him. Further, if God, directly or indirectly, caused the bad events of "Option A," that action would itself be a contradiction in His righteous nature. The fatalistic flaw in the errant human mind creates a dilemma that, in fact, according to Scripture, doesn't exist. God's nature remains faithfully fixed in gracious righteousness. Whether He intervenes in human events or not in no way alters His character. Humans and the flowing circumstances of events cause these events. Every thought, word, and deed, of man is not divinely caused. ([Jas 1:13-15](#); [1Jo 2:16](#))

...look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin. Have you ever prayed specifically for the Lord not to look to your sins—or ***even your stubbornness***—when He answers your prayer? There are times in every life when this sentiment would be a fitting prayer. Aside from what we typically classify as sin, how many of us are truly afflicted with stubbornness? If that trait haunts us, do we confess its bad fruits and ask the Lord to forgive it?

Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Another unusual petition that deserves our reflection. As you prayed for our churches and people during the last nine months of the COVID-19 disruption, have you raised to Him the faithful believers of the past who faithfully served through far greater trials than we know? Sometimes we might gain rich edification by studying the lives of those faithful giants in faith from our past. At the least, their memory should remind us to consider our ways through the present troubles. Will future generations of believers read about us and take courage from our faithfulness as they struggle through their trials? Or will we vanish from the record? I studied the Book of Genesis for decades before I took notice of a distinct pattern in the way Moses deals with various people named in that record. As long as a person named in Genesis remained faithful to the Lord, his/her life is recorded for our study. When someone turned from the Lord, their turning becomes the last mention of them in the Genesis record. They are forgotten. In future generations of believers, will you and I be among the "Remembered" or the "Forgotten"? Be faithful! Keep the memory of your faith—through faithfulness—alive to encourage those future generations.

Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Here we have yet another unusual prayer theme. Moses uses his prayers to reason with the Lord, to petition the Lord to turn to His mercy in dealing with His wandering people. While the Lord's people would obviously benefit from the Lord answering Moses' prayer in these points, Moses prays for the Lord's honor, not for Israel's relief. Again, during the last nine months, have we prayed for the Lord to intervene in our distress ***in such a manner as to manifest His honor and power***? Deliverance? Of course. But which is of greater significance, our deliverance or our God's honor?

Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm. In this petition, Moses remembers the Lord's past deliverance of His people, in many cases deliverance that required far greater power and every bit as much loving forgiveness as was need in our present trial.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus included "***in my name***" in His final "Sermon" to the disciples prior to His arrest and crucifixion? ([Joh 14:13-14](#)) Our appeal to Him in our prayers should be based on what in our lives will most honor and magnify Him and "His name," not necessarily what might be most convenient for us.

Study Paul's "Thorn in the flesh" example. ([2Co 12:7-10](#)) We do not know what Paul's specific

“Thorn” was. Avoid senseless speculation about it. Whatever we might think it was amounts to nothing more than our private speculation, not at all edifying. Follow Paul’s reasoning and teaching in the lesson. It was not a soothing ointment; it was a “Thorn,” a painful, piercing wound. Three times Paul prayed for relief. When you go to the Lord with something intense and troubling, do you pray once and forget it? Or do you continue to pray? Follow Paul’s example. Keep on praying.

After Paul’s third request, the Lord gave Paul an answer, not the one for which he prayed, but the Lord’s answer. Instead of removing the thorn, the Lord promised sufficient grace to Paul, grace that would enable him to endure the thorn and continue faithfully in his service.

As I reflect on this lesson, my thoughts linger around many instructive points that we all need to ponder as we pray for the Lord to deliver us from and/or protect us through the COVID-19 trial. Have we been praying for deliverance for our personal relief? Try praying for deliverance for the Lord’s people and their need for fellowship and personal collective worship. ***Pray for deliverance to come in such a way that will magnify the Lord’s name.***

I recall an experience told me by a dear saint many years ago. She was alone, and her son faced serious surgery. She left him in the hospital room the night before his surgery, went straight home, opened her Bible, placed it on the side of her bed, knelt, and prayed. She continued praying, even told the Lord that she would continue till she “Heard from Him.” After some time, she felt an overwhelming peace flood into her mind. She thanked the Lord for His answer, slept well, and was blessed the next day by her son’s successful surgery. God bless her faithful example in prayer. Let’s follow her and keep on praying for relief—***God’s way and for His honor.***

Elder Joe Holder