

WHY IS GOD NOT ANSWERING MY PRAYER?

Video clip transcript is extracted from the talk: Persisting in Prayer
by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

So we're big talkers and big prayers but that's what prayer is. It's where you put yourself in the other person's shoes that you'd rather die for them. That's the prayer that God answers. God often holds back our answers because He knows we don't really love. He knows if we go into heaven with the shallow, superficial love that we call love, it's going to be hell for us. And we're going to eventually end up in hell, which is the only place we'll be at home with all the other selfish people who are just talking love and not loving.

So for that reason the Father will often hold back an answer to our prayers to get us to come into this place where we ask ourselves, "Why is God not answering my prayer in regard to my mom or in regard to my wife, or in regard to my son or in regard to my colleague? Why is He not answering my prayer? What am I lacking? Holy Spirit, what am I lacking?" And often the Holy Spirit is trying to get through to us and say, "You wouldn't die in their place, that's what you are lacking, you wouldn't die in their place. You wouldn't go to hell so that they could go to heaven, that's what's lacking." God can only answer your prayer when you begin to love the way He loves.

One of the great privileges of preaching is that the Father preaches to you as you preach. So doesn't it dawn on you as it dawns on me? You have no excuse to stop praying. We haven't. Which of us here says, "Well brother, I am willing to die for that person", or, "I have spent such hours in prayer that God must know I am." Loved ones, I think we all have to stand before God poverty-stricken this morning and say, "Lord, what we call prayer isn't prayer at all. We've offered up to you little petitions during prayer in church or we've offered up a little wish to you as we've been sitting at the stoplights in the car or we've done things as we've talked a lot to our friends and our relatives but we haven't prayed this way. We haven't prayed with the kind of willing love that is ready to sacrifice itself for them. No, no, no I am not that anxious for them to be saved." It comes to our hearts that we are not praying loved ones.

We're not praying, yet do you see the tragic situation we put ourselves in? We put ourselves with those people who generally take a shallow superficial attitude to prayer and who say, "Well, yes God answers prayer on the whole, except for the 45 that He hasn't answered in my life." We put ourselves in that position.

So do you see, and I say it lovingly to you, because I know it's a hard thing to bear, but do you see that in a sense, we are God's enemies because we're not praying with the kind of prayer that He is able to answer. Yet we tend to be saying to other people, "Yes, we have prayed." But God doesn't just operate the way He used to years ago and so we end up being God's enemies primarily because we're saying, "It's not my fault. Whatever is the problem with this unanswered prayer is not my fault. It's not my fault. I have done....."

See, that self-righteousness has to freeze our tongues in our mouths. We have to stop saying, "It's not my fault, and I have done all that." That's terrible. We bow before the Lord God and say, "You are right Lord. All the time you are right. You are always right. This is your nature. This is what your son says is your nature, you're right. Show me what I have to do so that you will be able to answer my prayer." But don't stop praying, you don't stop praying.

Any other reasons? Sometimes it's to get us to stop our silly games. Sometimes it's to get us to see our own impotence, our own inability to solve this problem. Sometimes God holds back from answering our prayers for that reason-- to get us to stop thinking another set of tapes will do it, or a new spiritual wave. We think if we could only get them to the Basic Youth Conflict Conference or to Campus Church or if we could give them another book. Just stop that. That's not what they need. They need somebody to pray for them with a whole heart and a self-sacrificing love. Often God refuses to answer your prayers to bring it to the end of all those human devices, which answer only the problems that can be solved by human power.

So often the Father holds back from answering our prayers to bring us into the kind of love and the kind of prayer that His Son prays. Loved ones there is far more to say but could I ask you to just stop for a moment now and identify again those things that you have prayed for in the past and that you have now given up praying for. Would you just identify again those chronic problems in your family or in your home or in your marriage or in your job, just identify those now.

Now, put them down in your diary again today and start praying for them. Start praying for them. There's another reason for this. If you don't do that, that whole defeated area that you know about acts as a cancer in your relationship with God. It acts as a cancer and you keep on allowing that to grow and grow and grow until it eats up all your faith. Because the truth is, our place is to pray. It is the Lord's place to answer. Our place is to pray. Our place is not to say, "He has not healed Susan yet." Or, "He has not healed my marriage yet." Or, "He has not put things right in my family." Our place is to pray and after the answer has come that we did not ask for, our place is to bow down to the Father as David did when his son died and to say, "The Lord's will be done."

Our place is not to judge God. Our place is to believe what His Son said that our Father is more anxious to give us good gifts than we are to ask for them. And we have a holy privilege and opportunity to pray for our friends unfailingly until the day when our tongue stops for the last time. Only then can we stop praying. Only then can we say, "God has not answered our prayer." So brothers and sisters, will you deal with God on those things and let's take back some ground from Satan here this morning.

Full Sermon: Persisting in Prayer by Rev. Ernest O'Neill