

**Shayla:** Should we thank God in advance for answers to our prayers?

**Meforshim:**

It depends a lot on what you are thanking Him for. Obviously, we should be an inwardly grateful and outwardly thankful and praising people. We should start our days by thanking Him for His kindness and end our evenings rejoicing in all His faithfulness.<sup>1</sup> We should give thanks in every situation<sup>2</sup> whether comfortable or not, knowing that He will make it turn out for our good.<sup>3</sup> We should go so far as rejoicing in trials because we know they'll make us more mature<sup>4</sup> and will refine us so that we more closely resemble Jesus.<sup>5</sup> When we give thanks to God, we're acknowledging that He is the "giver of good gifts"<sup>6</sup> and the source of all our benefits.<sup>7</sup> In fact, one of the first marks of rejecting God is forgetting to thank Him.<sup>8</sup>

However, it is a far cry from thanking God for who He is, for His character and nature, and for the way you know that, come what may, He will work things out for His people, to presuming to know HOW He's going to do all these things.

The charismatic, health and wealth, name it and claim it, prosperity gospel school of thought teaches that we should thank God for specifically answering the way we want Him to answer. It's not enough for them to say "Thank you Lord for providing for my needs. I trust you to take care of this for me." They have to go so far as to say "Lord I want a new car. Thank you for giving me a new car." Or they may say "Lord I want you to save my brother Billy-Bob. Thank you for saving Billy-Bob." This is presumptuous.

What was God's reaction to the man who thought he could predict the future and force God's hand to provide him with prosperity? God called him a fool and took his life.<sup>9</sup> It is arrogance to presume that you can tell the future and how God will act. It is hubris to think that we even know what the best outcome *is*.

- **James 4:13-16 HCSB** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit." (14) You don't even know what tomorrow will bring--what your life will be! For you are a bit of smoke that appears for a little while, then vanishes. (15) Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." (16) But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

Let's use the more spiritual example of the two above. Let's say that you want to pray in faith believing that the Ruach' Ha Kodesh will convict Billy-Bob and that Billy-Bob will get saved. Believe the first half all you want because that will definitely take place. The Spirit will convict Billy-Bob of sin because the Scriptures tell us so. The Lord does not want anyone to perish but all to come to repentance.<sup>10</sup> However, the Spirit will not overpower Billy-Bob and make him get saved against his will. Billy-Bob has a free will and may very well decide to resist the Spirit's call to his own peril. The one who sins is the one who will die.<sup>11</sup> That – you cannot predict. That – even God Himself will not do and unfortunately very few actually end up finding the way.

- **Matthew 7:14 HCSB** **How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.**

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 91:1-2

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:18

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>4</sup> James 1:2

<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 1:6-7

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 7:11; Luke 11:13; James 1:17

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 103:2

<sup>8</sup> Romans 1:21

<sup>9</sup> Luke 12:16-20

<sup>10</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel 18:20

Therefore, pray in faith believing that God will do His part. Then, put feet to your prayers and go witness to Billy-Bob.

Such prayers are also arrogant because they presume that the person praying them is greater than the Lord Jesus who came, witnessed, performed miracles, and even resurrected from the dead, and yet was rejected. Are we greater than the Master? Do we have greater faith than He?

Are we greater than those who are listed in the great Hall of Faith who, though approved through their faith, did not receive what was promised and suffered great tragedies?<sup>12</sup>

The danger of such prayers is that when they fail one of two things happen. Either you begin doubting the entire process altogether or you begin lying to yourself and others. You either quit praying because “it doesn’t make a difference” or you begin lying “Billy-Bob gave me a sweet smile on his death bed. I’m sure he got right with God.” Either one of these directions makes room for the Devil.

So, what about

- [Matthew 21:21-22 HCSB](#) Jesus answered them, "I assure you: If you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you tell this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done. (22) And if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

“Moving mountains” was a proverbial statement for “resolving great difficulties.”<sup>13</sup> It’s not a literal command to get into the earth-moving business. Let me ask you – how many mountains got moved in the Scriptures? How many apostles uprooted trees? If we have not one example of the command being put into practice so literally, and solid evidence that it was a proverb for resolving difficulties through the application of wise, balanced faith and hard work, then why go for the more wild-eyed, bushy haired interpretation?

When we look at the mountains in our lives we are to remember that our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.<sup>14</sup> We are to remember that He CAN resolve our problems and that He is so great that He can even do it through US! However, we must remain humble, realizing that we do not always know what’s best. We must be content to leave the resolution of our problems in His very capable hands and anticipate the good outcome. It’s rather like reading a good story. You don’t know exactly how, but you do know that in the end the good guy gets the girl.

- [Hebrews 11:6 HCSB](#) Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.

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<sup>12</sup> Hebrews 11:36-40

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 54:10; Matthew 17:20; 1 Corinthians 13:2

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 121:1-2