



Conversation with God – Part 4
Mark 11:24
GCSP – 12/20/2008

When a person receives an invitation, it is usually an honor to be included in the festivities. Formal invitations typically mean someone is requesting your presence at a wedding or a party of some sort. Some invitations are bogus attempts to sell you something or it could be a judge requesting your presence in his courtroom, but by and large when you receive an invitation it is a privilege and an honor.

When you get a legitimate invitation you have the choice of accepting or rejecting. An invitation is not a binding requirement placed on you. Refusing an invitation will not get you thrown in jail or placed on death row. Even so, some invitations should not be refused.

Prayer is an invitation for each of us to stand in the presence of God. It is an open invitation; no RSVP is required and no set time will constrain you. This invitation can be used as often as you like and at any hour of the day or night. By accepting this invitation you are guaranteed tremendous blessings and an unending supply to your needs.

So why do so many reject or ignore this invitation?

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Mark**.

Mark 11:23-24

Let's pray.

After reading **verse 24**, Charles Spurgeon had this to say in the opening of his sermon on this text: "*This verse has something to do with the faith of miracles, but I think it has far more reference to the miracle of faith. I believe that this text is the inheritance not only of the apostles but also of all those who walk in the faith of the apostles, believing in the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

I completely agree with Mr. Spurgeon's comments. For too many years the church has dishonored God's Word by randomly picking and choosing which parts of the Bible were meant for us and which were meant only for the original audience; and much more often than not this choice is indeed completely random based on the whims and preconceived notions of the reader.

If you carry this ideology to the end you could make a case that all Scripture was only meant for the original audience and thus we have no responsibility to heed God's Word. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy were written to the Children of Israel so we can ignore the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses. Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles were only the history of Israel and Judah so there is no application for the church today. Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon were just poetry for Israel. The prophets were speaking only to Israel and Judah. The Gospels and the

Book of Acts are just historical accounts of the life of Christ and the early church. The rest of the New Testament was letters written to specific churches of that time.

Do you see the danger in thinking you have the capacity to determine what is meant for us today and what was only for the original audience? Where did your ideology come from? Who influenced you to believe this verse and not that one? Who convinced you that only part of the Bible has application for us today?

Obviously some passages in the Bible are narrative and are not meant for us to follow specifically as written. For example, if you back up to **verses 1-2** of this same chapter you would see that Jesus tells two of His disciples to go into town and bring the first donkey they find back to Him. The church is obviously not to be going around stealing the first donkey they see in any given town. The principle of immediate obedience is found here as a general rule to follow, but stealing donkeys is not for us today nor was it for anyone else except these two disciples at this specific time.

When the Bible tells us that Judas went out and hanged himself, this is not a path for us to follow. When Peter cuts off the ear of a soldier it doesn't mean we all should grab a sword and follow suit. None of us should be building an ark in our backyard and none of us have the need to go and dunk ourselves in the Jordan River seven times so we can be healed of leprosy.

Narratives can have specific actions for us to follow but not always. The easiest way to make the determination is to look for clues to see if there is a broader application or search the Scriptures for other commands or admonitions that we are to do the same.

In the case of our present text, **verse 23** makes it abundantly clear when Jesus uses the word, "**whoever**." He may have been talking directly to the disciples at the time but the use of the word "**whoever**" and the fact that this kind of faith is commanded to us in other passages makes this a truth for the church today. So when Jesus says, "**All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you**", you can include yourself in the group of people this applies to.

You can read the verse this way: "*All things for which I pray and ask, if I believe I have already received them, they will be granted to me.*" And here is the thing, no matter how you view this verse it will be true to you. If you choose to not believe it then you won't receive what you pray and ask for; if you choose to wholeheartedly believe it then you will receive what you pray and ask for. Either way you will confirm your own belief and grow deeper in it; which can be a good thing or a bad thing. When you are praying and asking with complete belief you will experience prevailing prayer.

Let's look at this verse a little more closely to see what other truths we can glean from prevailing prayer.

Believe that All Things Means All Things – All things.

First it says, "**All things.**" What is included in all things? Is anything not included in all things? Can all things be interpreted in any other way? So can you make up your mind right now, before we go any farther, that whatever burdens you carried in with you

tonight are included in all things? Can you make the leap of faith to determine in your heart that every small thing and every large thing and every "impossible" thing you faced in the past, are facing now, or will be facing in the future, is included in all things?

I can see in your eyes that some of you are holding back. Some of you are hanging on to a security blanket. Some of you are wanting to believe that all things really is all things, but you have been disappointed in the past and so some scraps of lingering unbelief is hindering you from putting everything in your life into the all things. Let go. The first and most important step in this process is to not hold anything back. If you don't believe certain aspects of your life fit into all things, then you can't get any farther. If you believe all things are for everyone else but not you then you are right. But if you are going to believe that then why do you bother believing anything in God's Word?

So step one is to believe that all things means all things, without exception.

Be Specific in Your Prayers - **All things for which you pray and ask.**

You will need to get specific in the things you pray for. There is a definite object for which you pray. You can't pray and ask for generalities. I cringe every time I hear someone pray for God to bless so-and-so, or to be with so-and-so. What does that mean? Specifically how do want God to bless so-and-so? What do mean by asking God to be with so-and-so? I can see God standing up in heaven and replying, "Okay, I'm with so-and-so, now what?" How can God answer the prayer of being with so-and-so?

We have a great tendency to ramble in our prayers. We go here and we go there and we go everywhere, and we get nothing because in each instance there really isn't a true desired result for which we ask. We chatter with God instead of specifically detailing our desires before Him. We rarely concentrate our thoughts to any single item at a time. Or, as I said in the first sermon in this series, we are afraid of silence and thus we find it necessary to use filler phrases all throughout our prayer time.

I have caught myself using the filler phrase of, "We thank You and we praise You." Now that is quite honestly a good filler phrase if there is such a thing, but I would be better off being still and allowing God to bring thoughts into my head instead of using the filler phrase to stall for time while I think of something else to say. Why am I in such a hurry? Why shouldn't I just slow down and talk to God like I was talking to a friend over a cup of coffee? I don't use filler phrases and repetition when talking with a friend.

These ramblings are quite honestly a great hindrance to the effectiveness of our prayers. We will struggle with focusing our mind and hearts on the issue at hand if we are forever using filler phrases and repetition in our prayers. Either consciously or sub-consciously we are trying to impress others with our prayers or impress ourselves when we ramble. You cannot have a definite object or desire in which to plead when you are rambling.

Before you pray, take time to collect your thoughts and go to God with specific requests. If you can't think of anything because your mind is cluttered with the busyness of your day and the things of the world, then get somewhere quiet and relax your mind before accepting the invitation to stand boldly before the throne of grace. Don't reflexively and

habitually kneel in prayer without a plan, unless your plan is to just have a casual conversation with God.

If you and your friends make plans to go to a favorite restaurant for dinner, you consider your options all week before you even are handed a menu. When you get the menu you may decide on something else but you usually already have an idea as to what you will order long before you get there. The same should be for your prayer time. In the midst of your praying you may change course but you should always come to your prayer time with a thought or idea of what you are going to "order."

If given an audience with the president of our country would you wait until you got there and just wing it, or would you have several questions, comments, and requests prepared in advance? If you went out to practice shooting your rifle would you aim at something or would you just randomly fire off a few rounds? If you got in a boat would you have a destination in mind or would you just crank up the motor and turn it loose?

Why go to God with a lesser plan or no plan at all? Is it any wonder than many Christians find prayer to be boring or unfulfilling? Going back to the rifle illustration, is it more fulfilling to randomly shoot in any direction or to aim at a target and hit it?

When you pray to God tell Him what you want! Don't go to Him with fake modesty or mock humility and then do the soft-shoe all around your request. Be bold! Be specific! Thank God He isn't waiting for any one of us to use the exact right combination of words in order to grant our request. You are not going to impress God with your command of the English language in your prayers. All God desires, is for you and I to be up front and honest with our specific requests. Tell God what you want!

Have an Earnest Desire to Attain – Believe.

An old quote goes this way: "*Cold prayers ask for a denial*" – meaning, prayer without passionate desire actually stop the hand of God and restrain Him from providing the very blessing we are pretending we want.

The object or objects in which we plead should be of such importance that we actually feel we would be in danger without it. My prayer to be debt free has that kind of passion behind it. To a certain extent I fear that my ministry and my effectiveness for God will never reach the heights God intends while saddled with debt. I can't explain it in any greater detail than that, but I feel there is a certain measure of danger looming over me if the Lord does not answer this prayer. I guess you could say there is definitely a good measure of passion behind this prayer.

On the other hand, I have not been passionate about overcoming this sickness I have had this week. I have resigned myself to enduring it and letting it run its course; and running its course it has.

Cold, impassionate prayers die before they finish leaving your lips. Spurgeon calls them, "*frozen supplications*." I like that. Frozen supplications don't move men's hearts, why would we think they will move God's? Our prayers must be earnest and passionate. And why wouldn't our prayers be earnest and compassionate if we truly believed?

How many of our prayers are actually an abomination to the Lord because they are frozen supplications? How many of our prayers have no soul and no heart? Angels veil their faces before God and we dare come before Him with prayers we do not believe will be answered? Do we truly comprehend the greatness and enormity and majesty and awesomeness of God when we bring cold, impassioned requests before Him?

Have you ever considered passionately pleading with God on a specific request until it is completely settled in your mind; until you earnestly and passionately believe, before you move on to any other requests? Have you ever been that singularly focused to only pray for one thing through to this end before taking any other issue up with the Lord?

Think of some things in this world that you are passionate about. Maybe you love to hunt and fish, or maybe its horseback riding, or football, or shopping, or eating a good meal, etc. Now compare your passion for that activity or thing with the passion you muster up in your prayers. Is there any drop off in intensity? If there is a drop off in the measure of passion, you don't earnestly believe. You have just offered up a frozen supplication.

So we must first believe that all things mean all things, we must be specific in the object or objects we are praying about, and we must have an earnest and passionate desire to attain what we are praying about.

Have a Firm Faith in God - **Believe that you have received them.**

Do you truly believe in the power of prayer? Be careful how you answer that. Because if your belief is one in which you think prayer is a good thing and that it has wonderful results sometimes but not always, then you do not truly believe in the power of prayer. You simply cannot believe in the power of prayer the way we are commanded to if you think it doesn't work sometimes.

Tell me where the exception is in the statement Jesus makes. His statement is that we already have our request when we wholeheartedly believe. Jesus phrases His response to faithful prevailing prayer in the past tense. He doesn't tell us to believe that we will receive our requests He tells us to believe that we already have received our requests.

I have an aunt who was going blind. She had a severe case of macular degeneration and the doctors had all but given up hope of saving her sight. My aunt began to passionately and earnestly pray that her sight would be restored. At the end of her prayer before going to sleep she said, "Thank you Lord for restoring my sight."

The next day she went to her scheduled appointment with the eye doctor because her sight was blurrier than it was the day before. The doctor was puzzled until he tested her vision and told her that the prescription for her glasses was way too strong. He had never seen anything like it before.

That's the kind of faith that is described in this verse; believe that you have received.

Whether or not you realize it, you have unimaginable power in your prayers. You stand amongst the most powerful creatures God ever created. Spurgeon once again says, "*You have power over angels, who fly at your will. You have power over fire, and water,*

and the elements of the earth. You have power to make your voice heard beyond the stars. Where the thunders die out in silence, your voice shall wake the echoes of eternity. The ear of God shall listen and the hand of God shall yield to your will. God bids you to cry, 'Thy will be done,' and your will shall be done. When you can plead His promise, then your will is His will."

What a tremendous power that you have through prayer! Did you hear me? What a tremendous power that you have through prayer! You have that power; it is within you. Having that firm, unwavering faith in God is the ignition switch that turns that power on and releases it. Without that firm, unwavering faith the power lies dormant.

If you have ever watched the sport of drag racing, you could get a very small glimpse of what I am talking about. These cars are pretty much all tires and engine. When the light goes green and the drivers punch the gas, the g-force pins them against the back of their seat as they go from 0 to in excess of 330 mph in less than four and a half seconds. Now imagine sitting in one of these vehicles with that kind of power behind you but never turning the key. Without the turning of that key you might as well be sitting in a folding chair.

Now understand that there is no force so tremendous, no energy so marvelous, as the energy endowed within every Christian who determines to wrestle with God and prevail with Him in prayer. But you must believe. If you do not believe that your prayers are effectual then they will not be. God may at times be merciful to the point of granting your requests apart from this kind of faith, but when you can pray the promises of God with earnest and passionate desire, it is no longer a possibility or even probability that you will obtain the blessing, but it is an assured certainty. As the apostle John says, "(we will) **know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him**" (**1 John 5:15b**).

Have a Realizing Expectation – **And they will be granted you.**

If you are praying with a belief that all things mean all things, and you are specific in the object or objects we are praying about, and you have an earnest and passionate desire to attain what we are praying about, and you have a firm and unwavering faith in God, then you will be able to count your blessings before they appear.

God will breathe the desires into your heart that match up with His Word, and as soon as the desire is there, before you call, He begins to answer. Before the words reach heaven, while they are still trembling on your lips, He begins to answer. He sends His angels just as is described in **Daniel 10:12**: "...**from the first day you set your heart on understanding and on humbling yourself before God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.**"

God's angel came to Daniel in response to his words, and he was prepared to come as soon as Daniel set his heart on understanding; before any words were spoken.

The old hymn encourages us to count our blessings and name them one by one. According to this verse we need to add unrealized blessings to our lists. We need to count the blessings we have prayed for but have yet to realize. We need to proclaim like the prophet Joel, "**Let the weak say I am strong**" (**Joel 3:10b**). If you are praying

for health, let the sick say I am whole. If you are praying for deliverance, let the bound say I am free. If you are praying for provision, let the poor say I am rich.

Whatever you are praying for, you can proclaim that you have already received what you have asked for if you are praying with a belief that all things mean all things, and you are specific in the object or objects we are praying about, and you have an earnest and passionate desire to attain what you are praying about, and you have a firm and unwavering faith in God, and you have an undying expectation of results.

You have been invited to pray in this way and to have the power of God working through you. Will you accept this invitation or will you reject it?

Let's pray.