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# UNANSWERED PRAYERS

Is God Unfaithful or Limited?

# **UNANSWERED PRAYERS?**

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## **Acknowledgement**

I am grateful everyone who has played a role in my Christian journey so far. A more special appreciation to all members and leaders (present and past) of St. Paul's Catholic Church, Sheaga and the entire St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish Tongo; St. Augustine Catholic Chaplaincy, Navrongo; Notre Dame Seminary Senior High School; IMCS Pax Romana, Adom Fie and ITI-CCR Ghana.

To mention individual names will require a whole book. God bless you all.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this piece to the late Very Reverend Father Doctor Augustine Hope Kututerah Abasi. Pray for us from your heavenly abode.

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## Why some prayers go unanswered

The famous Matthew 7:7 reads ‘Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you’ but when we act accordingly, sometimes there seem to be no response. Does it mean that God is limited in what he can give, things he can help us find or doors he can open? Yet the Bible says in Isaiah 59:1, ‘Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear’. So why do some prayers get unanswered?

First, there is no prayer that goes unanswered; the answer is probably what is not understood. God can answer in at least three ways: Yes, No, or Wait. Almost everyone expects a ‘yes’ answer to every request made, but that is not always the case. Whether he answers yes, no or wait, the purpose is always for our good. Let us find out why some prayers may receive ‘No’ answers and others ‘Wait’.

### ***Praying outside God's will:***

First, the Bible never said ‘whatsoever you ask, I will give you’, rather ‘whosoever that ask, will receive’ (Matthew

7:8) and ‘whatsoever you ask in my will/name’ (1 John 5:14/ John 14:14). The verse that talks of ‘ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you’ (John 15:7) starts with an if-condition ‘if you abide in me, and my words abide in you’. As much as the father is willing to give to whomever that ask of him, he is careful of what he gives to his children. In Matthew 7:9-11, Jesus spoke of how more than earthly fathers, God would give good things to us, his children. Just like earthly fathers who would not give snakes to their children who ask for fish, much more than that would the heavenly father deny his child who would request for a snake.

This may sound absurd, but the truth is that we sometimes ask for things that we do not need or things that may be dangerous for our purpose now. Would you, as a grown person, give fire to a child just because he/she is crying for it? The child may be requesting it just because he/she does not know the harm that fire can cause. When this same child comes of age and asks for the same fire, you are likely to hand the fire over, knowing that the child would know how to handle it.

The father knows and understands us better, especially our level of maturity, and what matters more to him is our relationship with him than our ‘earthly enjoyments’, so as long as he knows that certain things we ask for would take us away from him, he would most likely restrain them until we come of age or outrightly deny us such.

### ***Asking wrongly***

St. James wrote in James 4:2 that, ‘You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.’ There is a way of asking God wrongly, asking for selfish reasons, asking for things just to fuel evil passions. The next verse reads ‘You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.’. If what is being asked has a tendency of making us friends with the world and enemies of God, we should be sure that God will not grant such a request. This in no way implies that God wants us to live poor, miserable lives. NO, he said ‘For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans

for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.' The Lord's plans for us are perfect and for our welfare here on earth and in heaven above. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.' The moment your focus is on the kingdom of God, which means we are walking in the will of God and abiding in him, we can be sure that whatever we are asking for in line with his will, he surely is going to answer us. In order to ask right, there is a need to know the will of God, which comes from reading the word of God.

### ***Asking with Doubt***

The author of the letter to the Hebrews noted that "without faith, it is impossible to please him." Therefore, to receive from God, one must ask in faith, as St. James wrote: "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that*

*he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8).* Indeed, faith is said to be the currency used for transactions from the heavens, and the amount of faith one possesses has a correlation with the answers one receives from God. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, those who received instant healing were those who had faith, while those who did not believe saw no mighty work from Jesus (Mark 6:5). Faith is the permission that one allows for God to interfere in a situation. The greater the permission, the more control and work he would carry out there. Until God is given permission to enter into a situation, he would never force himself to do anything about it. Therefore, asking without faith is a sure way not to receive answers from God.

### ***The timing of God***

God's promise for our lives is a perfect end, he has never promised us of an easy journey. In order to give us this perfect end, there is a need to take away from us anything

that would serve as a distraction to this perfect ends and hence we may have some frictions in life.

For instance, when you take your fabric to the seamstress/tailor, depending on the complexity of the style (the perfect end), he would first have to draw the plan and then cut the fabric into various pieces that he would join with thread and a sewing machine. If out of impatience, you walk into the middle of the process where the fabric is still in pieces and take away the fabric, what result would you have? Torn pieces of your material that are very useless, however by patiently waiting until the tailor stiches all the parts together for you, then you would have a great style to wear out.

Our lives are like the fabric in the hands of God, and there are times, he would need to cut parts of our lives into pieces in order to reassembly it into one perfect piece at the end of the day, and so we may find ourselves in some inconveniences. Out of impatience, people ask, ‘why do bad things happen to good people?’ and some never get the chance to see the beautiful end that God has prepared for them.

In John 15:1, Jesus said, the father cuts down branches that do no bear fruit but prunes the tree the branches that bear fruit. The purpose of the pruning is not destruction, but rather an act to make the branch more efficient at bearing good fruits.

Sirach 2:5 reads; ‘For Gold is tested by fire, but human character is tested in the furnace of humiliation’. To understand this, you need to know how gold is categorized. Two common categories of gold is 12-carat gold and 24-carat gold. 12-carat gold is made up of 50% gold and 50% impurities (non-gold material) and is usually less valuable. But in order to transform it to a 24-carat gold, it is put in a fire of very high temperature where all the impurities are burned out leaving the purest form of gold behind. This is the most valuable form of gold that exist and is very expensive. This is what God wants for us, He wants us to be 24-carat Christians, 100% Christ-like, 0% all else, so he would sometimes take us through situations would burn out certain friends, relations, habits, locations, etc., which serve as impurities in our Christian lives.

The will and purpose of God are perfect, we know the end is going to be the best, but we never know the journey that would lead us there. God drew the plan for us, he know the end and the road as well, so it is up to us to trust that he would lead that to that perfect ends.

## **Why certain blessings may delay**

God delays certain blessings because He knows we do not need them at that time, and keeps them for our time of need. We sing ‘God’s time is the best’ but are tempted sometimes to wanting to squeeze God’s time into our time, by setting deadlines for him to meet and when he fails, we begin to doubt him. I have been in a situation like this before, when I was praying to recover my stolen phone, I prayed with declarations commanding when the phone should be returned. The good news is that the phone has still not been returned to me for four years now, but more importantly, I understand why God permitted the phone to be stolen in the first place.

God has a purpose for each and every one of us, along with a timeline, he knows us more than we know ourselves hence he knows when we need certain blessings or not. My SHS French teacher used to say, ‘time before time is not time, time after time is not time, time is time’, and I strongly believe this is how God operates. He releases our blessings not before nor after we need them, he releases them the very moment we need them.

Take the case of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers after his glorious dreams. He probably would have prayed for God to restore him back to his family, Joseph was faithful to God even in Egypt, but God never granted this request until he became a prime minister. If he had been restored to his family earlier, they probably would have all died in the famine that was set to come in the future.

Even when Joseph was in prison, he interpreted the dreams of two servants who were his co-prisoners, which led to the release of one and the execution of the other. Joseph requested the one to be released to remember him after his release from prison. Fortunately, this servant did

not remember Joseph, he forgot of him for a time [Genesis 41:14-15]. If the servant had remembered Joseph immediately he came out of the prison, Joseph may probably have been taken out of prison, but would not have had access to this throne room. God in his goodness caused the servant to remember Joseph at the right time, when the King has a great need him for him, and immediately he was released, he moved from been a prisoner to being a Prime minister, and this was what preserved the Israelites from extinction in the famine. Of this the psalmist wrote, '*When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.*' (Psalms 105:16-17)

Modacai was also a righteous and faithful man to God even in the land of exile, he raised Hadassah, who became Queen Esther in a very godly way. In Esther 2:19-23, Mordecai saved the life of the King by revealing the evil plot of Bigthan and Teresh. This act was forgotten and Moddacai's life remained as normal as it had always been. Years later, when wicked Haman made a plot

against the Israelites and Moddacai was to be hanged to death the following day, God caused the King to remember Moddacai by giving him a sleepless night [cf. Esther 6]. If Moddacai had received his blessing right after his good act, he probably would have died along with the blessing, but God's perfect will didn't allow such a thing to happen.

God knows when we truly need everything and as a faithful father, he would give them unto us when we ask, but we must first of all put our complete trust in him such that, whether our request are granted the very moment we ask or it delays, our faith remains stronger.

‘Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.’ (**Matthew 6:31-34**)

**34).** One other cause of delay in blessing is resistance from the devil or demons

### **Resistance**

Surely, God answers all prayers, but not all answers are delivered on time or delivered at all. In Daniel 10:12-13, we read,

*“Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withheld me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia”.*

The prince of Persia is not referring to the son of the King of Persia, but a demonic spirit that was ruling over the kingdom of Persia, who also captured the kings of Persia as well in the spiritual world. Daniel's prayer was answered immediately but because of his location, a force intercepted his answer from reaching to him. Daniel's consistent and persistent prayer for 20 extra days caused

Angel Michael to join the fight against the wicked prince of Persia, before the answer could reach Daniel.

This is the situation of some Christians, God surely have answered their prayers, but they never receive their answers because some demons/people somewhere have intercepted the answers from reaching them. It is not always the case that, we are asking wrong or doubting or that God has a purpose for a particular happening, but rather because of the works of the devil and his agents. St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, ‘we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places’, so there is a need to put on the armour of God.

To become a Christian is to rebel and declare a war against the kingdom of darkness and so for the rest of your life, they would work to make sure you are frustrated and so give up on God. There is nothing deadlier than to be a Christian and be ignorant of the schemes of the devil. The devil is real and so are his actions. In order not to become

a victim of his schemes, there is a need to put on the armour of God which includes Truth, Righteousness, The Gospel of Peace, Faith, Salvation and the Word of God continually in prayer and supplication (cf. Ephesians 6:10-18).

Note the word, continually; there is a need for especially in cases like this. PERSISTENCE indeed breaks RESISTANCE. There is a need that men ought always to pray and not to lose heart (Luke 18:1).

Sometimes there is a need to change location. Maybe like Daniel you might not be able to quickly change your geographical location but you can change your spiritual location and that matters a lot. One location that is suitable for the devil to dwell in is sin. He finds comfort in sin (which is darkness) and becomes uncomfortable in holiness (which is light), so by moving away from sin, you get to limit his direct access to you. And by physical location, the church is a good place to be, it is not for a joke that there is a particular building dedicated to fellowshipping as a body of Christ, finding yourself in the church is a good location to limit the interference of the

devil and also by church, it also means finding yourself always in the midst of believers. As iron sharpens iron, so will other Christians help sharpen you against the works of the enemy. Change your location, put on the armour of God, persist in prayer, and be sure that the devil would have a hard time intercepting your prayers.

## **Do you ask or you complain in Prayer?**

*The elder son answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes; you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. (Luke 15:29-31)*

The latter part of the parable of the prodigal son presents us with the predicament of the elder son who had worked for the father faithfully for many years but never received even a kid (small goat) to celebrate with his friends, while his prodigal brother had the fattened calf killed for him. The problem was not with the stinginess or biases of the father; rather, it had to do with the ignorance of the elder son.

Remember the younger son had initially fled away with his part of the father's property, which meant that the rest of the property now belonged to the elder son. Though he was the rightful owner of the entire estate, he could not

even get a small kid to enjoy with his friends. The elder son was like an heir who was still a baby, though he owned everything, he was no different from a servant (Galatians 4:1-2).

All he could do was to complain about how the father was not even giving him a kid to celebrate, but rather lavished the properties on the younger son. Unlike his brother who had the courage to ask for his share of the father's properties [which he squandered], and even came back to ask for mercy, the elder son never made a request to the father.

This is likened to the situation of many Christians, who continue to labor so hard in the house of God with all that they are and all that they have, but have no evidence of God's provision and blessings in their lives. They continue to labor but never gather the courage to ask for their needs; they either complain or keep quiet. St. James wrote, "You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Instead of asking, they either desire, covet, or simply complain. Jesus said,

"Ask and you shall receive," not "complain and you shall receive."

Moreover, like the elder son, they are ignorant of their heritage in Christ. Though they may have spent decades in church, they remain spiritual babies. Growth and maturity in Christ are not a result of spending many years in Christ, but rather on the amount of knowledge of Christ one has. St. Paul prayed for the Ephesians:

"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:15-18).

We are very rich in Christ because all the silver and gold on earth are his (cf. Haggai 2:8). And everything that is his is ours (cf. John 17:10; John 16:15; Luke 15:31), but

until we have the revelation of the knowledge of him and the eyes of our hearts are opened to this reality, we would be ignorant of our inheritance on earth. In fact, our inheritance is far beyond gold and silver, which would corrupt. Our inheritance includes all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3), which cannot corrupt. Our heritage includes long life (Deuteronomy 6:2), good health (1 Peter 2:24), riches on earth and in heaven (Mark 10:30-31), favor, blessings, and on and on.

Ignorance or knowledge of Christ is what differentiates babies from mature ones in the Spirit, and the cure for ignorance is not in the number of years but in the amount of knowledge obtained. Until one becomes conscious of intentionally growing in the knowledge of Christ, one will continue to be a baby and ignorant of his/her heritage. Growth in Christ is an intentional thing, and one must be intentional about eating the right diet of God's word. Christ is truly present in the Word and the Holy Eucharist. Make it a conscious effort to meet Christ when you attend Mass or read the Bible anywhere you are.

Reflection:

- Do I know my heritage in Christ?
- Do I ask or complain?
- What is God's will for me?

Prayer:

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give me the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of my heart enlightened, that I may know what is the hope to which he has called me, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. Amen. [cf. Ephesians 1:17-21]

PS: You can make this your daily prayer.

Thank you for reading to the end of this mini book, I believe you were blessed. This is a work in progress and your comments will go a long way to make it better for everyone out there, same as your support.

You can send your comments or support to

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GOD BLESS YOU

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

10 years ago, on the 19th of April, 2014, **Joseph Sohyinzor Salmawobil (aka Joe Yapzor)** said “Yes, I do” in response to the creed of the Church and received the three sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion).

Since that time, his life has become more dedicated to Jesus above all thing and all he wants to do is to make Jesus visible to all. Through one-on-one ministrations, preaching, writing and other methods he proclaims the God News of Jesus.

He is the current National Organiser for the Inter-Tertiary Institutions Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Parish Youth Chairman of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish, Tongo. He has continually served in many other leadership positions in the church and outside the church since 2015.

This book is specially released as he marks his 10 years anniversary in the faith. It speaks to the critical topic “Unanswered Prayers”, which can often make Christians and even the world to question the faith-fullness and riches of God. It does not cover the topic in its entire but will serve as a reflective piece to those going through such difficult moments.

