

Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

Taking No for an Answer

You would think that prayer is one of the truly simple ideas in the Bible. We have needs, we ask, God supplies. The problem is, it doesn't always work that way. It would be easier – in a way – if God never answered prayer. Then we at least would know where we stand. We could worship and honor God in song and prayer. Many of the prayers in the Psalms are there solely to praise Him. We could obey Him and carry on life's struggles and learn our lessons from them. So, if God never answered prayer, our problem would be much simplified.

On the other hand, if He answered prayer all the time, our problem would be even easier. Or would it? It is hard to imagine what the world would be like, much less what any one of us would be like, if every prayer of ours was answered.

The Dean of Christian Apologetics, C. S. Lewis, put his finger on this question in a short essay titled, "Petitionary Prayer, A Problem Without An Answer." It was in a collection of essays in a book titled, *Christian Reflections*. For Lewis, it is those prayers that ask something of God, prayers that make a petition, that pose the

problem. Sometimes they are answered, sometimes dramatically, and sometimes they are not. Sometimes they are answered in such a way as to leave a person wondering if God answered the prayer, or if they just got better.

I trust God will forgive me for suggesting that there seems to be something of a random quality in the answers to prayer. Mind you, I am certain that God answers prayers and intervenes in peoples lives. I am just as certain He doesn't do it all the time.

For example, there is this curious situation recorded in some manuscripts of John's Gospel. You'll find it in the King James Version, but nearly all others omit a verse of this story.

Here is the way it reads in the New King James Bible, which follows the same Greek text as the original King James Version.

"Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda,

having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, *waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.*

"Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.' Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk.' And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath" (John 5:2-9 NKJV).

The oldest and best manuscripts of the Greek New Testament do not include the text indicated in italics above. At the same time, though, there is no

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You've Asked. . .

How are CEM and the *Born to Win* broadcast sponsored? They are sponsored by friends like you who give tithes and offerings so that others may hear the clear message Christ taught and be anchored to Him. If you are interested in helping or sponsoring a program in your local area, contact Larry Watkins at 1-888-BIBLE 44.

Read Our Mail

What Our Listeners Are Saying . . .

"Just to let you know that my sister and I greatly enjoy your Sunday morning program at 101.3 Springfield, MO. Our Sunday School teacher suggested highly that all the class listen prior to coming to church" (KB).

"Thank you for our radio program at 5 pm local time, as I listen to it on the way home from work. You asked your listeners to report back to you if they wanted the program to stay on. Yes, Yes, Yes! Please do not cancel your show on WBTK in Virginia, as it is so interesting, and I was so shocked when I heard you say that we don't go to heaven when we die" (LP).

"I listen to you on what I believe is KCBC 770AM. I really enjoy your program and tune in often. . . I think the reason I enjoy the program so much is that each day you 'teach' from the Bible versus 'preach' from the Bible. There are many preaching channels on that I enjoy, but few that teach in detail such as yours.

"Thank you for providing such a fine program and a blessing to everyone that tunes in each day" (RP).

"Thank you for the BEAUTIFUL card and verse. It personifies your sermon titled 'Real Fellowship.' My appreciation of your ministry is beyond description. Most of the questions I have had have been answered" (ND).

"All your hard work did not go by unnoticed! Thank you for your hours (days) of preparation in making the Family Retreat such a success. I thank God for your tireless effort in helping bring our youth to Jesus Christ and anchoring them to the truth. May God shower you and Ron with blessings unmeasured!" (B & JR).

"Ron, you have a way of making things clear and understandable. This makes my faith deeper and allows me to hopefully see others and things through Christ's eyes" (MR).

"It is with our deepest, heartfelt, gratitude that we send this. . . there are no words that suffice. Our Heavenly Father knew what He was doing the day He connected us with you folks.

"From the moment we met, we felt we were family.

"We are so grateful, humbled by your generosity, your kindness, your words of encouragement, all of your prayers for us.

"And the wisdom you all seem to possess.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!

"May God our Father, and our Lord, King, and Savior, truly bless you all, and the mighty work that He does through you. We are honored to be a small part" (C & DW).

"I so enjoy your way of teaching – just goes to show the more exact one speaks God's Word the clearer it becomes to the listener. Also I admire the effort you have made in your life to become educated for His purpose" (GT).

"For sometime now I have been reading the Bible (7-8 years). During this time I have had questions. Some of the answers to my questions have been answered as

follows: 'We can't change that,' 'Just follow your heart,' 'It doesn't matter,' 'That's a foolish question.'

"Not to mention after listening to sermon upon sermon how confused I was. So many times I've wondered – even asked why do you stay here (place of worship). Some people there for 20+ years. Surely I thought I must not be getting it.

"One day something I listen to on the radio was counseling. Please Lord, I prayed, how will I know? Where will I go? Very soon after this I heard your teaching. Absolutely outstanding! I don't know how you do it. Something gets pushed, pulled, plucked, planted and watered in me all at the same time.

"It's not only me. I have a 15 yr. old son. He knows I'm right (belief). But he has a few wild oats in him to get out. On occasion I've found him stopped in mid-stream hearing and pondering your teaching. Oh wait there is more. I have a daughter whom I home school. One day after your program (we listened together as we are about our business). I asked her: 'What do you think, is he a good teacher?' She said, 'You know, I read my Bible and sometimes it doesn't make sense. I just think, oh okay. When I listen to Ronald L. Dart I think oh, now I get it. Now it makes sense. Do you know what I mean?' By the way, she is 7 years old. Yes, I know exactly what she means. So please don't cut off our help line!" (Listener from Milwaukee).

"The broadcast is a regular on our Sunday morning. We look forward to it and hope it is continued. My husband makes sure he gets back in the house from feeding the cattle – that's how much he appreciates Ron Dart's messages" (RS).

"You have no idea how much we both look forward to listening to your broadcasts. Some ('Beacon of Freedom' for example) moved me so much I was crying! We're in the process of copying it and sending it to different people we know that are not listening to you yet.

"Please, Ron, keep up the tremendous work you're doing (and Allie too). We're thrilled to be able to be doing our small part in CEM's work by sponsoring the *Born to Win* station in Canton, OH (WCER) and placing ads for *Born to Win* in the surface of restaurant tables in this area. Again, we appreciate you so much!!!" (T & MD).

"Without question Mr. Dart is the most knowledgeable person on the Bible and life I've ever heard. After I listen to Mr. Dart's teaching cassette tapes they usually find their way onto counters and phone stalls between Buffalo and Cleveland which I run 5 nights a week" (KH).

A note from a man in a homeless shelter in Birmingham, AL had \$3 enclosed and said, "I live in a homeless shelter. Please use wisely" (MM).

"I consider myself a 'thinking Christian'. You provide teaching and instruction that challenges my mind and soul, and draws me nearer to the word. I thank you for your service to your listeners" (SM).

*Taking No for an Answer
continued from page 1 . . .*

doubt that the clause in verse seven is in all the oldest manuscripts: “*Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up.*” Without verse four, there is no explanation of this curious statement.

The presumption is that some scribe added it to the text later as an explanation. Who would have added it and why, is lost in the fog of history. But you should know that in the earliest years of the Christian Faith, the Gospel was entirely an oral tradition. Not one word of what we call the New Testament was actually written down for nearly 20 years. So even though this may have been missing from John’s original manuscript, the story was still a part of the church’s collective memory, and found its way into some manuscripts of John.

The only reason I bring this up is not to discuss the textual criticism of the New Testament, but to consider the theological implications of this event. For the man himself believed in the moving of the water, and he believed that only one person would be healed after that.

It’s a terrible thing to consider, but we have to. This was almost like a divine lottery. A random event determined who got healed and who did not, and we must ask ourselves why God would do that. The answer that presents itself first is that it was to keep hope alive. It was to affirm God was there, He could and would forgive, and He could and would heal. But I add with some trepidation, *He healed on His own initiative.*

So why did Christ heal this man on this occasion, when the

man hadn’t been able to make it to the water before? The answer is in the text. Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” Immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. ***And that day was the Sabbath.***

Jesus was throwing down the gauntlet before the Pharisees on the issue of Sabbath keeping, so this particular healing was not random. This man suited the purpose of Jesus on this occasion. He wasn’t healed because of his faith. He was healed because God needed him for a challenge.

Now I would like to connect this to another healing by Jesus. Jesus had gone to Tyre for some reason, and while there, was accosted by a Gentile woman requesting healing for her daughter. (See Matthew 15:21 ff.)

“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed,” she cried. Strangely, Jesus ignored her and brushed her off. This is a little hard to grasp. We have to wonder why, if He was going to decline to heal some people, why He healed anyone at all.

To call it a kind of divine advertising to get attention to the Gospel cheapens what Jesus was doing and saying. And to say that He healed people because He cared about them and because He had the power to heal doesn’t work in light of this story.

Finally, after making a complete pest of herself, “Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’”

Ouch. That just doesn’t seem like the Jesus we know. Her desperation shows in her re-

sponse. She could not afford to be offended by what Jesus said. She replied, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

Then Jesus answered and said to her, “**O woman, great is your faith!** Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Now we pass clean out of the realm of random acts of kindness and healing. This was no more random than the choice of healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. Her faith was a factor, but how come Jesus didn’t see it earlier?

The answer is that it was only partially on display earlier. What was it that identified her faith as great faith? ***She didn’t take no for an answer.***

The implications behind these two healing events deserves a lot of thought. And when you couple it with Jesus’ own example in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, you encounter the problem that C. S. Lewis was addressing.

Unfortunately, there is not enough room here to develop this theme, but I have done so in a taped presentation titled, “Taking No for an Answer.” To get a *FREE* cassette tape of the message, just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us.

Keep in touch, and keep studying the Bible,

Ronald L. Dart

P.S. Every dollar helps get the Gospel out through the *Born to Win* broadcast and the work God has called CEM to do. If you feel led to help with this awesome job, your donations would be greatly appreciated and used wisely.

Calendar of Events

Fort Walton Beach, FL - Day of Atonement, October 13, 2 p.m. at the Emerald Coast Conference Center. Ronald L. Dart will be speaking.

Fort Walton Beach, FL - Feast of Tabernacles, October 17-24 at the Emerald Coast Conference Center. Opening service at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 17, with Ronald L. Dart speaking. Everyone is welcome!

Paris Landing, TN - **Family Retreat** Memorial Day Weekend, May 26-29, 2006 at the Paris Landing State Park, TN. See Article for more information.

Family Retreat Memorial Day Weekend 2006

By Skip Martin

Christian Educational Ministries will be sponsoring its second annual Family Retreat on Memorial Day Weekend, May 26-29, 2006, at Paris Landing State Park, TN.

Paris Landing is a beautiful state park on the banks of the Kentucky Lake in Tennessee (about 30 miles from Clarksville, TN).

We have reserved 100 rooms at the Inn. The group reservation number is 3043. The reservation number is 1-800-250-8614. Be sure to mention the group number. If we use at least 50 rooms, they will give us a \$10 per night discount. Rooms are normally \$75 per night. Each room has two double beds, a small balcony, and most have a nice view. Many rooms look directly out over the lake.

Paris Landing is very popular, so make your reservations as soon as you feel you can commit.

Watch for us to ask for volunteers to teach YEA classes, cooking, seminars, activities, etc. If you have some experience or just the "wanna helps," e-mail smartin400@sbcglobal.net.

The following is a link to Paris Landing State Park: <http://www.state.tn.us/environment/parks/ParisLanding/>.

You can check out pictures taken on the planning trip at <http://groups.msn.com/CEMMemorialDayFamilyFellowshipWeekend/shoebox.msnw>, then click on the pictures to enlarge them.

This will be a fun learning experience where families and friends bond with each other and with Christ. We hope you'll try to make it.

NOTICE! New Web Address

Check out our new web address at www.borntowin.net. It's new and improved with more frequent updates. You will find interesting and insightful articles and essays to read, sample YEA lessons for youth, a calendar of events to help you know what is happening, book reviews, CEM's bookstore, etc. and you can hear the *Born to Win* broadcast.

Radio Update

Salt Lake City, UT

KSL 1160 AM & KQMB 102.7 FM
Sun. 7:00 a.m.

York, PA

WQXA 1200 AM

M-F 4:00 p.m. & 8:30 p.m.

Wausau, WI

WSMT 730 AM

Sun. 8:00 a.m.

Grand Turk Island

TURK 1020 AM

M-F 8:30 p.m., Sat. 7:00 p.m., Sun. 6:00 p.m.

Cleburne, TX

KTFW 1460 AM

Sun. 7:00 a.m.

Don't forget, you can listen to the *Born to Win* broadcast on line at www.borntowin.net.

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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.