

## *Answers To Prayer*

Joe Slater

Does God answer prayer? We know from the Scriptures that he does, but we also know this doesn't mean we will receive everything for which we pray. Not even Jesus received everything He requested. Three times He pleaded with the Father, "Let this cup pass from Me." Yet He drank every bitter drop of that cup of suffering!

Paul asked the Roman Christians to join him in praying for three things (Romans 15:30-32). First, he prayed to be delivered from the unbelieving Jews in Judea; second, that his service for Jerusalem might be acceptable to the saints; and third, that he might come to Rome with joy. As to these three requests, how did God work things out?

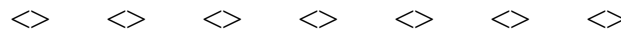
Paul's first request was not granted – at least not in full. Shortly after his arrival in Jerusalem, some hostile Jews falsely accused him of bringing Greeks into the temple. They mobbed him and would have beaten him to death had not the Roman garrison stationed nearby rescued him. Though we might say he was delivered from the Jews by the soldiers, he still endured a beating before the soldiers arrived and arrested him. Then, due to the lies and slander of the unbelieving Jews, coupled with the dishonesty of the Roman officials, Paul spent about four years in custody (Acts chapters 21-28).

God answered Paul's second request with an unqualified "yes." The Jerusalem saints accepted his service. Under Paul's direction, several largely Gentile churches in Greece, Macedonia, Galatia, etc., had made "a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26). Due to the friction between Jews and Gentiles, Paul feared the Jewish Christians might reject what their Gentile brethren had

sent by his hand. Happily, the Jewish brethren welcomed the generous gift. Paul anticipated that this would go a long way toward improving the relationship between the two (2 Corinthians 9:10-15).

As to Paul's third request, he did, indeed, go to Rome – but not in the way he might have preferred (going to visit the brethren and travel on to Spain). After being arrested in Jerusalem and transferred (for his own safety) to Caesarea, Paul appealed his case to Caesar rather than return to Jerusalem (which would have been suicide). Therefore, he was taken to Rome where he remained under house arrest for two years. Whether he ever went to Spain after his release is uncertain; some historical sources indicate he did, but we cannot be sure.

Yes, God answers prayer. Sometimes we may not understand why He answers the way he does. Remember that His wisdom is infinite and that He does not owe us an explanation. We, on the other hand, owe Him our trust and obedience, regardless of whether He gives us what we want.



### Who Left The Lights On?

Passing by the church building about 6:30 one Sunday evening where they had attended the morning service, a little girl with "Christian" parents exclaimed, "Look, Daddy, somebody left the lights on! We should stop and turn them off."

In silence, the parents drove on. Later, at home, they decided that they had better start attending the evening services – not only to satisfy the curiosity of their little daughter, but their own consciences.

If you passed the building on Sunday or Wednesday evening, would your children wonder who left the lights on?  
–via Lindsay, OK

## *EMPATHY EROSION*

One of the side effects of Botox use for a more youthful face is the paralyzing of facial muscles. Many are no longer able to smile, or make normal facial expressions. Scientists now believe that Botox paralyzes not only muscles, but the innate human response to the suffering of others: empathy.

A study published in the journal Social Psychology and Personality Science found that someone with a permanent poker face caused by Botox can't mirror a joyful smile or a furrowed brow – which, research suggests, is essential to our capacity to empathize with others. In other words, a frozen face begets frozen feelings.

"Empathy erosion," according to Cambridge University psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen, is the root of much of our destructive and hurtful behavior. When we cannot put ourselves inside the consciousness of another person, we are capable of harming them.

You don't have to be a Cambridge professor to observe those who are out for themselves rather than for each other. People will take your parking spot when you've been waiting for five minutes to get, or slip in line in front of you, dump their ash trays on the parking lot, endanger your life on the highway by cutting in between cars to get ahead of you. You know what I'm talking about!

There are Christians who will be seriously upset if no one visited them or a loved one in the hospital but will never visit anyone in the hospital but their very best friends or loved ones. The callused close their hearts to the needy. The death of one child brings tears but when the numbers mount up, it's just numbers. How sad.

Paul urges Christians to pass on the comfort they have received from God, and from others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). If we have been the object of compassion, care, comfort and concern we ought to manifest the same towards others. Doesn't the Golden Rule teach us this?

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)