

All this I have done since my youth!

One of my favorite verses of Scripture is Mk10:21a. "... and Jesus, looking upon him, loved him..." What's going on here? A man had just run up to Jesus, literally in the middle of the street, had fallen on his knees and said, "Good Teacher! What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied with, "You know the commandments. Do them." The man's response is telling, and leads me to this week's comments on prayer.

Upon hearing Jesus drop a list of a few of the commandments, the man proudly proclaimed (remember, he's on his knees in the middle of the street where everyone can see and hear), "All these things I have observed from my youth". Then comes that wonderful verse, "... and Jesus, looking upon him, loved him..."

At this point, God in the flesh, the Lord Jesus, could legitimately have said, "Liar!" ... or "Who do you think you're kidding?" ... or he could have just laughed out loud. But He didn't. Instead, looking upon him, He loved him.

Sometimes when I pray... or when I pray for something that I've been praying for a long time, I might be tempted to remind God of the same thing that this man reminded Jesus.

"Lord, I've been faithful all these years!" Really...

Or, "Lord, I've done just what you've told me to do!" Oh yeah...

Or, "fill in the blank!"

It is at this point that God, looking upon us, loves us and says to us just what He said to the man on his knees in the middle of the street, proclaiming his own righteousness, "Well since you've done all that, try this". You see God knows exactly what we have done and not done. He knows what commandments we have kept and not kept and how long we've been in whatever condition we're in. But in those moments He doesn't come at us with the appropriate, "Liar! Fool!" Instead He loves us.

Our attitude when communicating with God - which this man in the street was doing - is to be one of humility. But when we communicate with God - prayer - we like to tell Him how good and faithful we've been; how hard we've been working; how diligently we've been serving Him... as if He doesn't know exactly how hard or not, how faithful or not, how diligent or not we have been. So then, why the delay in answers to prayer? Are we praying outside of His will? Does He have something else in mind? Perhaps any number of things is true, but most frequently I think it's what Spurgeon articulates in one of his devotionals on faithfulness in prayer. I will quote from that work in closing, for in reading it, Dear One, you will feel the Spirit's call.

Spurgeon writes (as only he can), *It would be more agreeable to flesh and blood to have a speedy answer, but believing souls have learned to be submissive and to find it good to wait for as well as upon the Lord. Delayed answers often set the heart searching itself and so lead to contrition and spiritual reformation: Deadly blows are then struck at our corruption, and the sinful images are cleansed. The great danger is that men should faint and miss the blessing.*

Carry on Dear One. He loves us.

pjh