



# Condensed Milk

## Reasons for Denied Prayers

### Reasons in Us for Denied Prayers, 2

"If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;  
and whatever we ask we receive from him, because...  
...we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

1 John 3:21-22

In the last reading we observed that self-centeredness is an obstacle to our petitions being granted. In the verses above we, again, have the promise that we will receive whatever we ask of God. But the promise is conditional. *If* our hearts do not condemn us, and *if* we keep his commandments and do what pleases him, we can ask *whatever* and it will be granted.

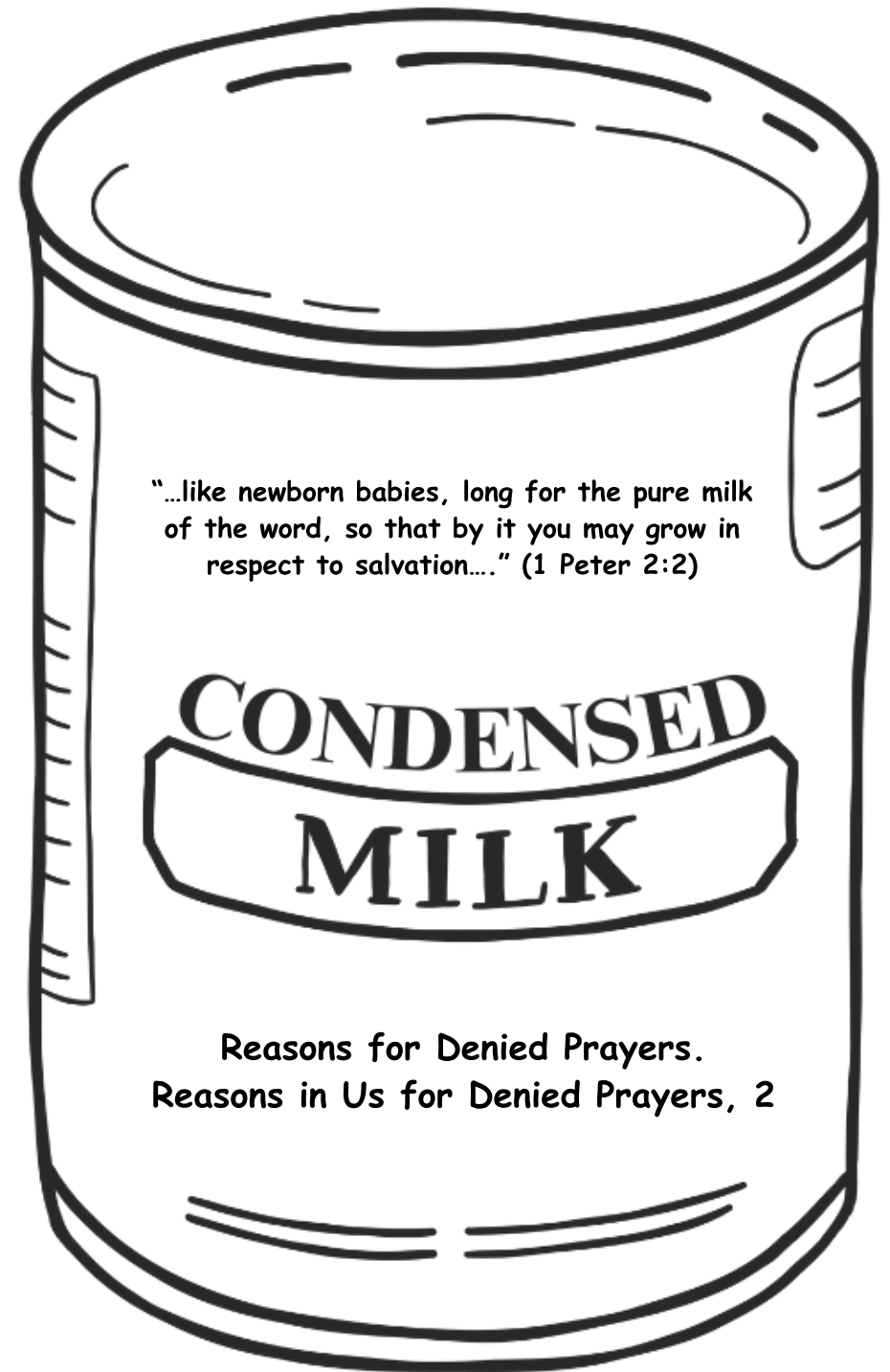
Some years ago, I was in my office when the phone rang. I answered it and a stranger introduced himself and then said, "I need someone to pray for me. My wife is dying of cancer and I need someone to pray for her healing." I told him I would be happy to pray for him but asked whether he had a home church that might pray for them. He replied that he wasn't very religious and did not want to start now. But he did want God to grant his wish.

I'm always amazed when people think they can ignore God, defy his will, and still have prayers answered. Unconfessed and unrepented sins will prevent answers to prayer. We see this in the words of God through Isaiah the prophet. "When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! <sup>16</sup>Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong" (Isaiah 1:15-16).

In the Bible God has defined for us the ways that are right and he expects us to learn to do them. All of them. He has defined the ways that are wrong and demands we stop doing them. How many times do people, wittingly or unwittingly, take the approach, "God, here's the deal: I don't want to do what you want but I hope you are willing to do what I want"? How does God feel about those prayers? "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9). Those prayers are like flowers from an unfaithful husband. They are repulsive to God.

If I am holding on to sin, justifying it, secretly practicing it, ignoring my conscience, and not making an effort to know and practice the will of God I should not expect God to hear my petitions with any favor. Has God commanded me to do something I am refusing to do, or being negligent about doing it? Has he told me to forgive someone, clean up my language, pay my taxes, read my Bible, contribute money to his work through the church, to be truthful, to honor my leaders, to use my screen-time differently or less? We should joyfully do all that he says.

We should be assured, however, that sinless perfection is not the requirement. If it was, no one could hope to have their petitions granted. Rather, God's Word says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Our sins do not have to be the obstacle to granted petitions. If self-centeredness and sin are not the reasons for your petition being denied or delayed, there may be other obstacles. The following readings will examine those. But be encouraged, God wants us to receive whatever we ask of him. He wants to shape us so that we can have that experience.



"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...." (1 Peter 2:2)

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