

HINDRANCES TO PREVAILING PRAYER

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."
James 4:3.

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." I Peter 3:7.

God works when men pray. Andrew Murray said, "In relation to His people God works only in answer to their prayers." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16. Only a little? No. But much! What we need as individuals, in our homes, in our churches, in our nation, and in all nations is what God can do. The greatest need in the world today is praying Christians. Prayer is the greatest weapon Christians have and often the least used.

"I'd rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach." -- J. H. Jowett.

"Secret intercessors make it possible for public laborers to do their work and win."
-- Evans Roberts.

"Prayer is the mightiest force in the universe, and the Christian world is blind to this fact." -- Courtland Meyers.

"The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless study, prayerless work, or prayerless religion. He laughs at our work, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." -- S. Chadwick. "Whoever prays most, helps most." -- William Goodell. "Prayer is like opening a shining gate between the great ocean and our little channels when the sea gathers itself together and flows in at full tide." -- Tennyson. "I never prayed sincerely for anything but it came, at sometime -- no matter at how distant a date -- somehow, in some shape, it came." -- Adoniram Judson.

Pleading with people to pray Jowett said: "The people with one talent can help the man endowed with ten. They can be fellow-laborers in a common crusade. What a privilege is mind! Also, what a solemn duty!"

Many would rather be powerful in prayer than to surpass in any of the arts, than to have genius in scientific investigations, than to be politically successful in seeking high places and offices.

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

I. Neglect.

II. Disobedience to God.

"Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." -- Zechariah 7:13.

God had answered prayer for those who were His obedient servants. God heard and answered Abraham's prayers because Abraham was ever ready to do the will of God. God said unto him: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice." Genesis 22:18. Moses was obedient to God's commands, and for his obedience he was answered of God. Joshua rendered glad obedience to God. Jericho fell because Joshua strictly obeyed the instructions of God.

If we are disobedient to God, we cannot pray for the spirit of disobedience can never find acceptance at the throne of grace. Such prayer has no promise of reward. God

always hears the obedient, but He never grants the request of the rebellious. A disobedient spirit can claim nothing from God. If we do not want to obey, we will be powerless in prayer. When Jeremiah was pleading with the people of his day and showing them the way out of their troubles, he said: "Obey the voice of the Lord your God." Jeremiah 26:13. Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice." I Samuel 15:22. Prayer, then, to prevail with God must be from a heart ready to obey.

III. Sin Cherished.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. John Mott asked, "Has God ever been known to hear a prayer from a heart in which any form of iniquity was deliberately fostered or fondled or tolerated?" God will not answer our prayers so long as there is one point of controversy between us and Him.

IV. A Lack Of Faith.

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Hebrews 11:6. "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11:24. When we call, we must call in faith. Illustration -- the church praying for the release of Simon Peter from prison. Acts 12.

V. Family Discord.

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." I Peter 3:7.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Ephesians 6:1-4.

VI. Pride.

"Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it." Job 35:13. Men must humble themselves before God. They cannot come into God's presence with a strut and expect God to hear and answer. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm 34:18.

VII. An Unforgiving Spirit.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:14-15.

How little and trifling the sins others have committed against us in comparison with the terrible way we have treated God. Unforgiveness, holding grudges and enmity against others may seem to be a very respectable sin. People who never get drunk, never gamble, never commit adultery, never lie, never steal, are guilty of this sin. How can they expect to prevail in prayer? One who turns a cold shoulder to his fellowman cannot offer an acceptably warm heart to God. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" I John 4:20.

VIII. Selfishness.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3.

A selfish person can only be puny in prayer. Since selfishness is making self the center, no selfish person can expect to be mighty in prayer.

IX. Idolatry.

John, the beloved apostle, said, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."
I John 5:21.

"Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." Genesis 35:2-3. When God called Jacob back to Bethel, he found it necessary to cleanse his house of "strange gods." An idol is anything that takes the place that God ought to have. God tells us that covetousness is idolatry. We cannot expect God to hear and answer prayer if we live covetously.

X. Unpaid Debts.

If men expect their prayers to be answered, they must be honest enough to pay their just debts. As long as there is a debt you can pay and you do not do what God requires about such, every prayer you offer God stinks with dishonesty. When Zaccheus was converted, he said, "Lord, if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Luke 19:8. When the Philippian jailer was saved, he did all he could to right the wrong done Paul and Silas "and he took them the same hour of the night." Acts 16:33. Be careful that nothing is held in heart or practiced in life that hinders prayer.