

## PRAYER: What Difference Does It Make?

*The Hindrances to Prayer*

January 29, 2023

**INTRO.:** I welcome you to the third message in our four-part series, **Prayer: What Difference Does it Make.** We began this journey with examining **The Purpose of Prayer.** To Bring Glory to God (an opportunity for the greatness of God to be on display); To Get to Know God Better (we looked at the account when Jesus visited Mary & Martha. Martha was running all around doing the preparations and she asked Jesus to intervene and tell Mary to help because Mary was just sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to Him. Jesus' response: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."); and To Develop Dependency on God (God wants us to come as little children. Was anybody reminded of this by looking at a Play-Do container?) Then two weeks ago we looked at **The Priority of Prayer.** We often say about things "I just don't have enough..." Time (clocks) Why should prayer be a priority in our lives? It begins with the character of God: He is perfect, totally without sin. He is so unlike us in this way! He knows everything and is eternal. God is all powerful and we would do well to remember all that He did as recorded in the pages of Scripture and in our lives. The second reason we should make prayer a priority is because of the example of Jesus Christ, God the Son. He taught about prayer, and He often prayed to the Father. If Jesus saw the need to communicate with God the Father, what does that tell us. Thirdly, prayer should be a priority because of the commands and teaching of the Bible. It is God's will (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 that we:

\*Be joyful always

\*Pray constantly, continually

\*Give thanks in all circumstances

These are all present tense commands! Jesus taught a parable on prayer that taught men ought always to pray and not give up. The Apostle Paul mentioned often that he was praying for those to whom he was writing. There was a sense of urgency to pray. So, how is it going in your prayer life? Several made a commitment to make prayer more of a priority in their lives. If you made that commitment, did you tell anybody about it, so you be held accountable? Other ideas to make prayer more of a priority included:

\*Have a plan for reading & studying the Bible

\*Do a study on prayer from the Bible

\*Seek opportunities to pray for others

\*Make a public commitment to get serious about prayer

So, this morning we want to look at the hindrances to prayer. Some people think God is obligated to answer prayer the way they want, no matter what. Is that what the Bible says? Did you know that sometimes God says no to our prayers because He has a better plan even though you and I may not think so. Scripture has much to say about the hindrances to prayer. Why would God not listen to my prayer? Isn't He supposed to be a good and loving God?

1) Not knowing Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord

**John 14:6** Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

**John 1:12** Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

The reason to end our prayer with the phrase, "*in Jesus name*" is because it is a recognition that we come to God in prayer on the basis of what Jesus did on the cross. We have access to God's throne because of Jesus.

**Hebrews 4:14–16 5-7**Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. **16** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

2) Unconfessed sin

**Psalms 66:18** If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

**Isaiah 59:1–2** Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. **2** But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

**1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

3) Praying for show

**Matthew 6:5–7** “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. **6** But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. **7** And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

4) Being self-righteous

**Luke 18:11–14** The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ **13** “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ **14** “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**Philippians 3:8–10 (NIV84)** — **8** What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. **10** I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

5) Unresolved conflict

**Matthew 5:23–24** “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

**Galatians 6:1–2** Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **2** Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**Matthew 18:15** “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

6) Unforgiveness

**Mark 11:25–26** And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

**Matthew 6:12–15** Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ **14** For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

**Ephesians 4:32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

7) Family relationships

**1 Peter 3:7** Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

**Ephesians 6:1–4 (NIV84)** — **1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— **3** “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” **4** Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

**Colossians 3:18–21 (NIV84)** — **18** Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. **20** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. **21** Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

#### 8) Wrong Motives

**James 4:1–3** What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? **2** You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. **3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

#### 9) Lack of faith

**James 1:6–8** But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

**7** That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; **8** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Do I pray like I believe God can really do it? I must admit there are times I go through the motions. I need to be reminded that the same God who did all those things recorded in the Bible is the same God I serve.

**Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

#### 10) Not seeking God's will

**1 John 5:14–15** This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. **15** And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

**Luke 22:41–42** He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, **42** "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

#### 11) Lack of obedience

**1 John 3:21–22** Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God **22** and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

**John 15:7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

#### 12) Lack of persistence

**Luke 18:1–8** Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. **2** He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. **3** And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' **4** "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' " **6** And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? **8** I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

I am so prone to give up! I can be persistent in so many things but how persistent am I in prayer? How many here have stories of people in your life who refused to give up praying for you?

#### SO WHAT????

Are any of the above a description of where I am at when it comes to prayer?

\*Where am I at with Jesus?

\*Take some time to memorize some of these Scriptures

\*Make myself accountable for my prayer life