

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE PRAYING

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Effective Prayer expresses a definite need (Burden) with an expected result (Faith). It is persistent (Isaiah 62:6-7- "Give God no rest"; Luke 18:1- "men ought always to pray, and not to faint;") and unwilling to be stopped by obstacles (cut a hole in the roof, press through the crowd).

Sometimes, however, it appears God does not hear our prayers- *When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.* (Lam 3:8). *Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through* (Lam 3:44)- That is when it is time to find out what is wrong- *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.* (Lam 3:40).

I. SOMETIMES IT IS A DELAYED ANSWER:

A) By Satan to discourage us: Dan 10:12-13 *Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, Thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me;*

B) By God- To Increase Our Faith and cause us to Focus on God's Glory instead of our good

1. The Canaanite woman who asked for the crumbs from the table in Matt 15, had her Faith called Great after it was first delayed
2. The death of Lazarus- Jesus delayed coming to him in order to show God's Glory. John 11
3. By waiting on God, Habakkuk went from doubt to trust in God even in the midst of famine, bankruptcy, and trouble.

II. SOMETIMES IT IS A DENIED ANSWER:

A) When God has already given an answer (Even though the answer is not what you want! Remember the trouble Balaam got into because he wouldn't accept God's answer-Num 22?)

1. Sin in the life of Moses- Deut 3:25-26 *I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter*
2. Sickness in the life of Paul- II Cor 12:8-9 *For this (thorn in the flesh) I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

B) When God has already decreed Judgment - Jer 11:13-14 *According to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.* (See also Jer 7:16)

C) When Something is Blocking God's ability to Bless and Answer:

1. DISOBEDIENCE- Deut 1:43,45 *As I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord,...And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear to you.* Their disobedience was caused by disbelief (They believed the report of the 10 spies instead of God's Word and would not enter into the promised land). Remember- *If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed,...nothing shall be impossible unto you* Matt 17:20. You must listen to God's voice if He is to listen to your prayers.

2. REFUSING TO TAKE YOUR PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN-I Pet 3:7 *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered.* Family Friction hinders prayers. Lazy husbands hinder prayers- *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* (1 Timothy 5:8). Demanding rights instead of building relationships hinders prayers.

3. UNCONCERN FOR SPIRITUAL MATTERS- Prov 1:24,28 *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded,...Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:* Zech 7:14 *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:* Ignore God and there may come a time when HE will ignore YOU!!

4. NEGLECT OF MERCY- Prov 21:13 *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.* You reap what you sow. God blesses us to bless others. If we will not be a blessing then we can become "unblessable".

5. DESPISING GOD'S LAWS FOR YOUR LIFE- Prov 28:9 *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination.* Would YOU give something to someone knowing they would use it wrongly??

6. SELFISHNESS- James 4:3 *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* Sometimes people want things that aren't good for them- you don't let a child eat an entire gallon of ice cream at one time, even though they think they want to! God is concerned about what you do with what He gives you. If you aren't willing to accept His plan and purpose for your life then He can't give you the blessings that come with sacrificial service.

7. SECRET SIN- Ps 66:18 *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* Is 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* If my heart is set on sin can a Holy God have fellowship with me???

God values the prayers of His people. If they are "ignored" then there is a reason. *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, **which are the prayers of saints*** (Revelation 5:8). *And the smoke of the incense, which came with **the prayers of the saints**, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand* (Revelation 8:4).

