

Acid Tests Series 5 of 8 - Why Your Prayers Aren't Answered

by Al Whittinghill

Al Whittinghill discusses the reasons behind unanswered prayers and emphasizes the importance of self-examination and alignment with God's will.

Duration: 1:00:07

Scripture: Proverbs 3:27

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of not withholding good from those to whom it is due, when it is within our power to help. He emphasizes the need to take action and not delay in assisting others. The preacher shares a story about General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, who advised his recruits to pray with tears when they were not seeing answers to their prayers. The recruits followed this advice and experienced breakthrough. The sermon also highlights the importance of obedience and being right with God before praying for others. Additionally, the preacher mentions that sometimes God's answer to prayer may be a 'no,' as seen in the example of Paul's physical infirmity in 2 Corinthians 12:8-9.

Transcript

Prayers in my life and in your life should be the very most common thing in our life. In fact, unanswered prayers should be a great exception. And our lives should be a continual testimony of answered prayer.

And when we aren't getting answers to our prayer, we should take serious inventory as to what the problem is. We'll always find the problem is not with Him, the problem is with us. What does it mean to be the friend of God? You see, because we become the friend of God.

We have all things in Christ. Unanswered prayers should be the greatest press into a true situation to find out what's wrong with my life. Unanswered prayers should be the most pressing reason a believer has for self-examination by the Holy Spirit.

Is answered prayer the characteristic of your life? Is it? Because if it's not, He wants us to take an inventory this morning. We're going to talk about why my prayers aren't answered. I want to pray with you.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we ask you this morning to receive praise and glory from our time together. And most of all, affect change in people's hearts, my heart, these people's hearts, other people's hearts,

that when we hear the Word of God, we may be a doer of the Word and that the end might be a life full of prayer and meaning before God.

Bless this time and just give the devil a beating around the head and shoulders and show who the Lord is. And may that one who might feel condemnation realize the difference between the sweet voice of a redeeming God and the accusing voice of a nagging devil. May we see the difference of that.

And may we run to our Savior, knowing that you break, then you heal. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

When we are right with God, answered prayer comes very easily, very easily. In fact, God always answered prayer, always answers prayer. There's some things I just want to list about how God answers prayer.

Number one is that he often answers very quickly. He often answers very quickly. And our scripture for that is Isaiah chapter 65, verse 24.

Before they call, I will answer. While they're yet speaking, he'll be moving and answering our prayers. Often God answers very quickly.

But you know, there's a big difference between quickly and in a hurry. God's never in a hurry, but when he moves, he moves quickly. Oh, I love to go through the scriptures and look at how many times it says, and suddenly, and suddenly, because when he moves, it's quickly, but he's not in a hurry.

But when he answers prayer, quite often, it's quickly. Number two is that he usually says yes. He usually says yes.

In fact, in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 20, it says every promise of God is yes and amen, in Christ Jesus. His delight is to give his children the things that delight their heart, and to bring us into an understanding of what he would desire to give us. And thirdly, he usually answers big.

Big. And our scripture for that is Ephesians 3 20. Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask, we've talked about asking, or think.

He's able to do not just more, but exceedingly abundantly above all you ask or think. That ought to encourage your heart. He's not poor.

God's not poor. He's not stingy. He is not capricious.

He's not reluctant. The fourth characteristic about how God answers prayer is that sometimes he says no. Sometimes he says no.

And as he did in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 8 and 9, when Paul had his infirmity in the flesh, the Greek is very clear, you can't deny it, says flesh, a stake in his flesh. Three times he asked the Lord to take away this physical infirmity, but the Lord knew what was best for Paul, because that way he had a tendency to pride in his heart, and so he let this physical infirmity stay to keep him from a more horrible liability, which is pride. Because pride lasts for eternity, and physical bodies are going to be replaced with a new bodysuit one day soon.

The Lord is very willing to let us suffer a temporary liability in the flesh, in order that he might accomplish an eternal glory in the Spirit. And so sometimes he says no. He operates at a level beyond our feeble capacity to understand.

And so he's the all-wise God. That's what we need to remember. He's the all-wise God, and that life is like a giant checkerboard.

You see, when he hears your prayers, he's not just considering you, he's considering the whole sphere around you. And you could see like a giant checkerboard with all these men, and you're just in one square. And every single move of each piece affects every other square and every other piece.

And he may want to answer your prayer, but he's affecting someone else here, and he has to wait. So sometimes the answer is even no. But fifthly, then sometimes the answer is not yet.

Not yet, but delays with God are not denials. Delays are not denials. That's a key thing to remember.

You see, God often takes time to bring our heart into a position to where the great things of God are greatly desired, to where we appreciate the finest gifts of God because we've agonized and waited for them. Instead of just having a bunch of spoiled kids, he lets us come into a position of appreciation. And then lastly, he usually answers in a way we don't expect.

He usually answers in an unexpected way or through an unexpected channel and another source. His thoughts are not ours. His ways are higher than ours.

When there is no answer to your prayer, then it's time to take a serious inventory and examine why. It's not just a passing affair. You need to really get serious about it and take a serious inventory.

You see, God's not only going to judge you for what you have done, but he's going to judge you for what you haven't done. To whom much is given, much is required. That's what a great man of God once said.

He said, it's not so much the scriptures that I don't understand that I'm worried about. It's the ones that I do understand that aren't in my life. Those are the things that press my heart and concern me.

You see, we miss so much in our day-to-day life by letting opportunities slip. You know, there's a wonderful example in the scripture of this. Remember Mary, that precious woman who was always at Jesus' feet in the scriptures? And she came and she took a pound of spikenard and she anointed the feet of Jesus before his agony.

And he said, she's done this for my burial. She's anointing me. Spikenard was a burial ointment and it was one pound.

And he says of her, wherever the Gospels preach, this will be a testimony to her and the Gospel, wherever the Gospels preach, because she's done this in remembrance of me. Contrast Nicodemus after the death of Jesus. The time has slipped.

Jesus has died. His body is a dead Christ. Nicodemus takes it and he doesn't use one pound.

He uses a hundred pounds of spikenard and aloes and other things like that. And you don't hear anything else about it. He anoints the body of Jesus.

You see, the opportune moment is while you're in a living relationship. When he brings you by a situation, one pound in time is worth a hundred pounds too late. That's the lesson of that.

I heard about a rich Texan that gave, he was buried in a gold coffin and he gave a hundred million dollars to a Christian foundation. And everyone says, how wonderful. He'll get a great reward.

No, you won't get a thing because the scriptures say, God loves us a cheerful giver. You know, it says, do your live, do your giving while you're living, then you're knowing where it's going. You see, there's no, there's no sacrifice.

You got to leave it anyway. Big deal. You see the opportune moment to be a participant in the living sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

You see, prayer is like that. We have a privilege to pray, but we've got to trust God by faith. One of the ladies last night said, well, I'm just going to have to live by faith.

I said, praise God. You know, how does God want you to live? You know, somebody was in trouble in a situation. They said, well, I guess we'll just have to trust the Lord.

You know, well, what else is there to do yet? You should have been trusting him all along. You see, one day soon, we're going to see him as he is, and we're going to be like him. We're going to have perfect faculties.

You won't be able to walk by faith anymore. You won't be able to win a soul anymore. You won't be able to sacrifice anymore.

And then you'll look back and say, oh, if only I had, I believe that's the tears that you'll see in heaven. He'll wipe away all tears. When people look back, there'll be no martyrs that said they didn't like the guillotines and all the rest.

They won't be any sorry martyrs there in that day. In fact, oh, Joe, you died in the hospital bed. I'm so sorry to hear that.

You should have stood up there like William Tyndall and said, God save the queen, the king of England as the flames engulfed him. That's the way to burn out for God. You know, you can imagine in those days what it's going to be like as we stand together.

Adore him now, because in the coming day, there'll be no, uh, opportunity to grow in that type of thing. You see one hour of right praying now will be worth thousands of hours in eternity of endless praise. I really believe that it's like Spike nerd.

Now, when he's, when you're in that relationship, it'll mean so much more in faith. Now whom having not seen you love blessed are they who having not seen yet believe that when we all can see so perfectly and it's we're falling down before the throne, do it now in prayer. Don't let unanswered prayers phase you.

Don't let them put you in depression, but find out why the key today is that God wants me to pray. And the devil does not want me to pray. In fact, he just about just assumed me to do anything and pray.

One of his main objectives is to get you discouraged about what you're hearing here about prayer, to get you looking at yourself, to get you realizing that you have no hope. And you begin to doubt God. Of course

you close it under doubting yourself, but it's really doubting his ability.

And instead of doing that, you need to take a spiritual inventory of the situation, get down to brass tacks and really see why your prayers aren't answered. And I want to take a list of things. The reason that our prayers are unanswered first and primary above all things else is unconfessed sin, unconfessed sin.

And we've seen this scripture, but I want to say it again. Psalm 66 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

If I look on with favor and that in my heart, which God has not sanctioned, that which is not faith is sin. If I regard that and let stay, then I shut myself out effectively from a powerful prayer line. But also Isaiah chapter 59 verse one and two concerning the prayer for the salvation of our loved ones and all the rest.

It says, behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you and he will not hear. That's the same principle as John 15, seven, that we have to have clean prayer.

We have to abide in him and let his words abide in us. Back in Isaiah chapter one, verse 15, it talks about when the Israelites made prayer to the Lord and they came before him. And the Lord said in all the religious activity, he says, When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

Yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear because your hands are full of blood. Yea, wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes and cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless and plead for the widow. He's saying, listen, prayer is more than motions, prayer is more than words, prayer is a life.

And that's what he wants us to have with him. Now, as you begin to let God search you out, unconfessed sin, rest assured that as light comes, light attracts bugs too, remember, as you're outside at night, remember that. And there's going to be condemnation.

I heard that some of you were under condemnation for what you'd confess the first night in prayer. Somebody said, Oh, what do they think of me today? Well, you see, there's a big difference between condemnation and conviction. I don't think you're under condemnation.

I think your pride was just starting to come back up, some of you, as to what you'd said. Let me give you some help to see the difference between condemnation and conviction, because it'll really help you. Number one is that condemnation is primarily self-conscious.

Oh me, oh my. And you're looking at yourself, whereas conviction is primarily God-conscious. You become aware that God is there.

And it's, and I'll tell you what, they both aren't very much fun. They both often feel alike at first, and you have to pray to see which this is. What is this uneasiness in my spirit? Is it condemnation or is it conviction? And God will certainly show you, you see, because condemnation is very general.

Lord, show me why I'm feeling like this. Show me what's wrong with me. Well, condemnation is very general.

You can't ever put your finger on anything. You come to God and you never really find what it is that's destroying you. It's just always like a little mouse, just a little bit ahead of you.

And you're always, Oh, poor me. Then you step on your lower lip. And whereas conviction, when you ask, I like to say it's disgustingly specific.

God will put his finger right there on it. And you'll say, I wasn't talking. I mean, it'll be so clear that you'll wish you hadn't asked probably at first.

It's very, very specific. And condemnation is destructive. Oh, it just leaves you without any hope.

You just seem to be without hope and you feel cast down, whereas conviction is always restorative. The Lord comes and he says, listen, that is exceedingly evil what you're in, but forsake it and I will be with you. There's hope there.

You see, it's always glorious hope set before us. And so with that, that should help us as we come before him with our sin and these things don't. Our problem is the devil always confuses us and has us calling things.

We should be under conviction about condemnation and we ignore God or things that were under sincere condemnation from the devil about. Then we won't believe God that he's really put away our sin. We need to get right with him so that we can walk in faith.

So unconfessed sin will put a damper on your spirit, but just dare to believe if you come before him and he doesn't tell you anything that's wrong. So hallelujah, I'm clean. And then get out your sword and begin to hack away the tentacles of ungodliness all around you.

Secondly, pride or vanity, pride being that self-centeredness vanity being that type of attitude that loves to look in the mirror. Perhaps you spend more time looking in the mirror than you do in your Bible. God would convict you this morning that you need to repent.

Job chapter 35 verse 12 and 13 are very good scriptures concerning this. Let me just read them to you there. They cry, but no one will answer because of the pride of evil men.

Surely God will not hear vanity and neither will the almighty regard it pride or vanity. You see, we often hear in America, for example, we need a revival of national pride or stand up America. That's not what we need.

We need a revival of national humility. We need to say, fall on your face, America. That's the way to being heard in prayer.

You see, God's not interested. Well, I can't say that. I just won't say that.

That's not in good taste. We need a revival or we'll have a revolution. One or the other.

We've got to have revival or we'll have a revolution and all our prayers will not help unless they're the right kind of prayers. God promises revival, but he never promises revival in answer to prayer. Prayer will do us no good.

You know what kind of, what I mean? If my people, which are called by my name will humble themselves and pray. You can pray to your blue in the face, but if you don't humble yourself, God won't hear. You see, because it can be pride praying.

Oh God, thank you for our country. You need us. We're a missionary country.

God bless America. You can't do without us. Makes God want to vomit.

It really makes me want to vomit too, because if we look around and see our crime rate and all the rest, I'll tell you, we need to fall on our face. Like it says in Joel and get down. You see, the Pharisee stood and prayed with himself and he said, Lord, I thank you that I'm not like other men.

Lord, we thank you that we're not like other countries. This is a Christian nation. And over here is a little publican beating his breast saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner.

That Pharisee just prayed with himself. He was just beating the air. A friend of mine was reading that text one day about the Pharisee.

And he says, oh, gross, look at him, how prideful he is. Lord, I'm sure that I'm not like that Pharisee. And the Lord just went, look what you've done.

You know, you're just a step higher on the pride ladder than him. You see God knows the proud are far off, but he gives grace to the humble. And it says that this is something that God doesn't have to give you.

He says, humble yourselves. Come down, come down. You can get down.

The question is, are you willing to? That's the question. The question. Third thing, lack of compassion, lack of compassion will keep your prayers from being heard.

Scripture is Proverbs chapter three, verse 27 and 28. Let me read it to you. Proverbs chapter three, verse 27 and 28.

And hear this word. It says withhold not good from them to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do it. Don't say to your neighbor, go and come again.

And tomorrow I'll give to you when you have it by thee. You see, if we are like that saying, be warm and filled when it's in our power to do something about it, then God is not able to do in our lives what he wishes. Proverbs chapter 21, verse 13, gives light on this.

Listen to this. Whosoever stop his ears at the cry of the poor, he also will cry himself, but will not be heard. Whoever stops his ear from hearing the cry of the poor, when that person cries, he will not be heard.

In fact, in Luke chapter six, verse 38, it says, with what measure you met or give, it'll be measured back to you. If you give out with a little teaspoon, that's what God will use to measure into you. You cannot give God.

You cannot give God. And we cannot ignore the needs around us and expect for God to answer our prayers as we desire to see him answer our prayers. For example, is your neighbor in trouble? Does your heart go out to them in compassion? That's what I'm talking about here that can hinder your prayer life and why your prayers aren't being answered.

Fourth, a lack of home unity. First Peter chapter three, verse seven. Let me read it to you.

First Peter chapter three, verse seven. Likewise, husbands dwell with them, your wives, according to knowledge. That means understand what her needs are giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel being heirs together as of the grace of life in order that your prayers be not hindered.

That means that husbands are to dwell with knowledge with their wives, there to be one, there to be joint heirs together. And if that is not the case, then their prayers are effectively hindered. If there's not harmony in the home, prayer is hindered.

So that's something to consider. Wives, even if you have an ungodly husband, it's something to consider. Husbands, you're obligated to present your wife with spots and all to the Lord, blameless by your sacrifice for her.

They may not really be spots, they may be just beams in your own eye if you look a little closer. That's what I found in my own experience anyway. Fifthly, prayer that is not in the will of God.

We talked about this last night a good bit, but prayer that's not in the will of God will not be effectual prayer because you cannot pray in faith without a word from God. And faith comes by hearing the word, and it takes faith to please God. You've got to know the will of God to have an effectual prayer life.

You see, prayer secures God's will. It doesn't change it. It secures God's will.

It doesn't change it. And that's what often we think we're doing. We do not change God's will by praying.

We simply lay hold of it. There's a danger of praying out of His will. In fact, in Psalm 106, verse 15, we read about the Israelites when they had the desires of their hearts set on something that they wanted.

It says that God, oh I fear this verse, He gave them the desires of their heart but sent leanness to their soul. Be careful what you pray when it's not in the will of God, if you're checked, because God may allow that to come in order that you would learn not to desire the things that aren't His will. I believe He'll take it off, but let me say this, He took it off Israel, but there was leanness for a time.

Check your life, and if there's leanness, see what you're involved in that's not the will of God. There's an example of this in the scripture in Hezekiah's life. Remember when he prayed, the prophet Isaiah came to him and said, prepare your house, you're ready to die.

And Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and wept and said, oh Lord, I don't want to die, I don't want to die, and he was afraid of death. I think a lot of Christians are afraid of death, they've never seen it, sting is missing. And the Lord said through Isaiah, your prayer is heard, you'll live 15 more years.

I think he was one of the only men in the world that knew exactly how long he'd live. You know something, Hezekiah would have been better off if he'd never lived those 15 years, because in those last 15 years, he ended up bringing reproach on the Lord by many of the things he did, and he fathered an ungodly son during that time that became the worst king probably in all of the history of Israel, Manasseh. So it's an amazing thing when we pray out of the will of God.

Sixthly, what will hinder my prayers? Disobedience. Now that's very akin to our first one, which is sin, but I just want to just refer you back to the scripture I read earlier, Isaiah chapter 1, verse 14 and 15. When you come to me and spread your hands and make many prayers, I will not hear because your hands are full of

blood.

He says, leave off the things that you're doing on your own and start doing the things that I want you to do. Let me ask you a very personal question, and here it is. Why do you obey the Lord? Why do you obey the Lord? Do you obey Him because of His promise, if you obey me, I will bless you? Do you obey Him because you expect to see blessings in return? In that case, you have a hard time obeying Him when you don't see results, and that means the very motivation of your obedience is selfish.

That means that if you don't receive a reward, if you don't receive a visual return on your obedience, then you will give up. What do you do when you're called to obey Him in prison, if you ever go there? What do you do? You see, the Lord asked my wife and I that not long ago in a certain matter. We weren't seeing anything.

We were getting discouraged, and He just said, why are you obeying me? For your reward and pleasure or for my pleasure? Because if it's for my pleasure, you don't need to see anything. It brings me pleasure, and you can be content to wait until glory to see the fruit of obedience. You see, that'll help you to obey the Lord.

You see, He does not desire just a meek surrender, just a passive flopping in His presence. He desires this, a willful, strong surrender that is active and trained and disciplined. And therefore, faith has got to be tested to be trusted.

If you've never been tested, you can't be trusted. He's not after innocence. Look, innocence is not righteousness.

Innocence is innocence. Righteousness is purity that's been put to the test and come out clean. If you want righteousness, and if you're seeking that first, it means you're willing to walk through whatever He sends you and remain pure by His power and truly obey Him.

And when you do that, God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. In Acts 5.32, it says that it's not talking about salvation. It's talking, otherwise, it'd be by works.

It's talking about a filling and a using by the Holy Spirit as we obey Him in faith, then to whom the faithful and the small things, then the true riches are committed. You want to be rich in prayer, obey Him. Obey Him.

Seventhly, we've talked about this some too, but selfishness, selfishness, that is chronic in our lives, and we must be rid of it. James chapter four, we talked about this last night. Verse two, part B and three, he says, you have not because you ask not.

And then he goes on and says, you ask and you have not because you ask amiss for the wrong reason that you may consume it upon your own lust. You see, our prayers must be poured in the mold of God's Word. We pour our prayer in that trough of our life.

That's His Word that runs, and He can't pour the ocean of His love in the thimble of a heart. He just can't do it. We need to have our heart enlarged.

Well, how does He enlarge our heart? Can anybody tell me a scripture? In the Old Testament, in Psalm 5, it says, in distress, thou hast enlarged me. He enlarges our hearts in the fiery trial, in the distress. When

we come forth as gold and He breaks us and overthrows the strongholds and tears up the fellow ground, He then makes us able to hold more of Himself.

A plowed field takes water better. So, is your main motive in your life happiness or holiness? Because if it's just happiness, you'll have a hard time obeying Him. You'll give out when it doesn't necessarily feed yourself.

But if it's holiness, then you'll be content to live just for His pleasure and glory. You see, the corollary of the Lord's prayer that says, thy kingdom come is my kingdom go. Thy will be done on earth means that my will no longer can be done on earth.

So, selfishness will effectively hinder my praying and your praying. Number eight. This is a biggie.

An unforgiving spirit. An unforgiving spirit. And this is not just when you've been wronged.

This is not just when someone's wronged you without a reason. This is when you have a very good reason in your mind to think bad thoughts about them and you begrudge it and say, well, God, you need to have them make it up to me because they're just wrong. But the Lord's prayer says, forgive us as we forgive others.

In other words, Lord, you give to me the same kind of daily cleansing and forgiveness that I'm willing to shed forth to my brethren and to those around me. In Matthew chapter five, let me read this to you. Matthew chapter five in verse 23 and verse 24, it says this.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and you remember that your brother has anything against you, leave there your gift before the altar, go your way and first be reconciled to your brother. That's the priority. And then over in Mark chapter 11.

And when you stand praying, forgive if you have ought against any in order that your father, which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. Here it is. If you do not forgive neither in the same way, will your father that's in heaven forgive you your trespasses? You see, we've talked to a lot of people here at Reach Out that come in for counseling.

And I would say probably over half of the ones usually that are Christians that have great turmoil is due to the fact that they've got a secret lodging place in the back of their heart for a root of bitterness or unforgiveness, maybe towards someone that just didn't treat their sweet old heart the way they thought it ought to be treated, just because someone didn't realize that they deserve better treatment than that. And even some who've had real legitimate reason for actually hating their parents. We talked to a man who had practically been raped by his father, and his father had turned gay and wouldn't write him or anything.

And this man had a legitimate stronghold of hatred in his mind, in his heart. He was not saved. He thought he was, and he couldn't even say the words, I'm willing.

He had such a stronghold. He got down on the ground and began to pray and twitch and shake. What a spiritual battle going on.

And he formed those words, I choose in Jesus' name to forgive my father. And when he did, it was like just a popping of a water balloon. I mean, it was just like just gushing out of praise.

And that fellow got saved that day. You see, we only damage ourselves by unforgiveness. It's like a cancer.

In fact, it's worse than a cancer, because it defiles not only yourself, but many others, it says in Hebrews 12. So, God wants us to be clean in the spirit of unforgiveness. And when you have unforgiveness in your life, concerning prayer, bitterness and unforgiveness will close the door and bolt it.

And until you get rid of that in your life toward your mother, toward your brother, toward your neighbor, toward your husband, toward your wife, toward your children, God will not be flowing in your life like you desire him to flow. You must forgive. Number nine, unbelief.

Unbelief. Are your prayers in faith or are they a vent for despair? One lady called me about her mother, who was in the hospital, and she told me all these ways she'd been praying. And as she was praying, I became strangely aware that the lady wasn't really praying.

She was like going to a psychologist or something. She was pouring out her griefs, which is right before God, but she wasn't praying in faith. She was praying in hopelessness.

Oh, God, there's no hope for my mother. Oh, Lord, this or that. You see, we mustn't just vent our emotions in prayer.

We must pray in faith. In Hebrews 3, verse 19, it says that unbelief will keep you from entering into rest. You've got to believe God when you pray.

You've got to take from him his promise. Listen, in a generation that stands for nothing and falls for everything, we tend to not believe God. We won't do it because we want to see something or feel something.

But you see, when you pray, you need to have faith in God. So many make the mistake of having faith in their praying and not in God. I just can't pray.

Well, you're trusting your praying. You're not trusting God. Quit trusting your praying.

Quit trusting and trust him. Throw yourself in desperate desperation before him and say, I can't pray. I can't even groan right.

But Lord, you're alive. Hallelujah. You're alive and you understand and you're who you say you are.

You see, if we would stay on our knees, then unbelief would melt from our heart. It would. You cannot tiptoe around the throne of grace without having unbelief plucked off from your heart like an old leech.

Faith is omnipotent only when it's on its knees. But when it's on its knees, it can choose that impossible. The impossible becomes him possible when you're on your knees and the eyes directed to that sweet vision of him.

Then to bring out a little more of what we said before, number 10, double mindedness, double mindedness. Last night, we made reference to James chapter one, verse six and seven. And the last of those verses saying a double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.

He's like a wave of the sea tossed. You know, there's one thing about a wave. It's never in the same place.

It may look the same, but it's always moving and it's never really in the same place. And the question is in your life, do you have a secret sympathy with sin? Do you? You'd never dream of doing it outwardly, of course, but but in your heart as you watch things on the idol and as you spend time fellowshiping with your family before the family shrine in the evenings, do you ever do you ever have a secret sympathy for the villain? Do you? Do you ever get in your like the clever bank robber that got away with the Bonnie and Clyde heist? And you say, boy, that is really pretty sharp, you know. Let me tell you something that's double mindedness.

And God says you can't expect anything from him. You need to hate evil. That's the fear of the Lord to say something like that and not even desire to see it, to be able to turn that thing off and to not look at others who are suffering through the wages of sin and have sympathy because of sin, but rather have sympathy because of God's compassion.

You cannot be double minded. Number 11, prayer is often not answered because of non-diligence. We come as casual inquirers rather than diligent seekers, just coming and casually inquiring.

But Isaiah chapter 45 verse 15 says, Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior. He hides himself from the non-diligent. Did you know that? Can you by seeking find out God? No.

Job asked the question. The answer is no. You'll never find God.

He's got to reveal himself to you. He comes when your heart is right. When you're before him and he sees that you've met the conditions of faith, he comes and says, this is who I am.

It's not a matter of you saying, there's God. Oh, hurry up. I see him.

We'll catch up with him. No, you'll never catch up with him. You rather come before him and he's hiding himself from you.

You will never see him until you come believing he is and that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. And when you come before him like that, he says, you have sought me and searched for me with all of your heart. And because you've done this, I promise that when you seek me and search me with all your heart, I will be found of you.

Here I am. This is your heart's desire. You see, I remember a letter that came to General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, and some of his new recruits in a major city had been seeking God's power in the salvation of souls and they didn't see anything and they didn't see anything and they'd been praying, but they just didn't see any answer to their prayers.

And they wrote General Booth and says, we are not seeing answers to our prayers. Please tell us what's wrong. General Booth wrote back two words.

Try tears. Try tears. That's all he said.

You know something? They did it. And you know something? It worked. They stayed before the Lord until tears came.

You know, when Jesus squeezes your heart, your eyes will water. They will. There's no such thing as being too hard to cry when he gets ahold of you because the Niagara Falls of years of emotions will begin to come out as he opens up the Pandora's box of hidden little grimies we keep down in there so afraid for anybody to see.

You know, it takes a free heart to weep before others. It really does. And then number 12, this is a big one.

This is a big one. This is warfare. Our prayers are sometimes not answered because of warfare.

And we need to realize the truth of Ephesians 6, 12, where it says these words, we wrestle not. And you know, a lot of places ought to just put that over their prayer room and leave it like that. We wrestle not.

But it goes on and it says we wrestle not against flesh and blood. That's where we do most of our wrestling, isn't it? Against flesh and blood. But the Bible says we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but we wrestle rather against principalities and authorities or powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

There's a whole host of unseen that are seeking to devour your prayers and to take the desire away that God is planting in your heart this week. And he would love to destroy that beginning that God has made in your life. Well, your warfare is not that which you can so much do in your own counsel and figuring out.

Second Corinthians 10, 4 through 6 says this, or verse 3, excuse me, 10, 3 through 6. Though we walk in the flesh, we don't war after the flesh. In other words, you're going to walk away from here with the body suit, but you're not going to be warring according to what you think is the way to war. Here's how you're going to be warring.

The weapons of our warfare are not fleshly or carnal, but they're mighty through our God to the pulling down of strongholds. And then it says to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the true knowledge of God and bringing every one of our thoughts captive into the true obedience of Christ. And then it says these words, the stinger of it verse six, God is ready to revenge all disobedience.

When your obedience is fulfilled, we're praying for other people and strongholds to be broken down and imaginations and for minds to come into captivity to Christ. When we begin to pray like that, uh, and, and we don't see in our own life that our, that we have a disobedience in our heart, then we've got to deal with that disobedience in our heart. And he is ready to revenge all disobedience out here through our prayers and our non-carnal weapons.

When our obedience is fulfilled. I'll never forget the time that a man brought his son over to the living room and it was at a team conference. He had brought him down and he had brought peyote buttons with him and, uh, cigarettes and pornography pictures, you name it.

He came prepared for the team conference. And, uh, he had been in a JD home and all the rest, you know, and he was so concerned for his son. He brought him in the lights of them are like these.

They're very bright. And he says, I feel like I'm being cross-examined. And I just began to talk to him.

And I said, you're not being cross-examined. We cut the lights out and began to talk. And as he began to talk, uh, he just hostility and bitterness just came up out of him.

And, uh, it was just absolutely impossible to talk to him. I went over and just grabbed him by the hands and looked him in the eyes and said, in Jesus name, I'll take authority over this spirit of rebellion in this boy, in Jesus name, you must leave him alone. And his jaw began to go disheveled like that.

And his tears began to course then his cheeks like this. And he just jumped out of my hands and he lifted his mother and says, you're killing my mother. I said, no, you're killing your mother.

And he got up and he bolted out of the front running up on the hill. Needless to say, his mother and father who were sitting there were a little upset and, but they were upset for the wrong reason, because you see their obedience wasn't fulfilled. That's what, that wasn't why they were upset.

But, uh, I just said to that man, I said, sir, you're his umbrella. Is your obedience fulfilled? Are you right with God? Why don't you get on your knees? And first you get right with God. And then you pray for him.

That man fell on his knees at our coffee table and began to pray and pray and confess sin that hitherto had been unimportant to him. He'd overlooked them. He realized now it was at stake.

His umbrella had a big hole in it. It was coming right through to his son. And you know something, the devil was just taking all of that hole in his umbrella and just raking his son across the coals because of that.

And that man confessed. And finally he was clean he said, and Lord, and now I just stand between the devil and my son in Jesus name. You can't touch my son, devil, get away.

Just then the door opened and he walked back in and he walked back in and he'd been up on the hill. He'd thrown away all his peyote, torn up his pornography, burned his weeds. And, and he walked back down there and he's shaking his head said, don't know what got into me.

And he came up and he hugged his dad with a great big old hug. He looked over at his mom. She broke down and crying.

Of course she did. I mean, good grief. She had a human heart and, and it was just a glorious situation.

But to see the warfare was accomplished when the obedience was satisfied. I want you to look at another example too, in Daniel chapter 10. Things like that are hard to change gears after you hear a story like that, to change gears to something like this.

But in Daniel chapter 10, Daniel is praying. He's been praying for 21 days and the skies seem like they're brass. There's no answer.

Maybe you felt like that about something. There's no answer. Where's God? Is it maybe God's gone on vacation? Maybe he's out to lunch.

Maybe we, we were tempted to think that kind of thing, you know, but it says in Daniel chapter 10, that as, as he was fasting and praying and he was not even taking a bath, he was seeking God with all of his heart, just in a room. And finally, after 21 days in verse 12, first, let me just give you some background. He had a vision of a glorious, glorious being.

I believe it was probably the Lord himself. And as he, as he was coming to Daniel, but it says in verse 12, then he said to me, don't be afraid, Daniel, because from the first day that you did set your heart to understand in truth and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard. I've come for your

words, Daniel, even though the heaven's been brass in your understanding 21 days ago, from the very first moment, you really set your heart to be willing to know the truth and to understand and to really chasten yourself.

Even though you've been discouraged all this time, I want you to notice God heard your prayers. And when you heard your prayers, you have the petition that you've been asking for. I've come for your words.

Here, here they are, Daniel. But he says, here's the reason it's taken so long. Verse 13, but the Prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for 21 days and low Michael, who's the archangel, one of the chief princes came to help me and I remained here with the King of Persia.

But now I've come to make you understand what will befall your people in the latter days, because the vision is yet for many days. You see, there'd been a heavenly warfare. They'd been ascending forth of God's provision, but the Prince of the power of the air had sent forth one of the princes of Persia, a demonic spirit over an area, apparently, and had contested that answer in prayer coming.

And there'd been a warfare waging. And you know something? That's often the case today. And intercession and prayer breaks that.

It breaks that. When you declare the victory of the Lord Jesus in a situation, it's just an incredible thing. You can go into a situation where there's absolute turmoil.

And the reason there's turmoil is because the dominion of the Lord is not being exercised there. You come into there and just say, I'm taking dominion in this situation in Jesus' name. Let the peace of God be here.

You'd be surprised what happens, because you see, I'm claiming victory on the basis of the blood of Jesus. Satan, your work must stop in this house. Your activity must stop in this individual.

I have authority here, not you, because all power is given to me in heaven and earth. It is written and lo, I am with you always. I have given you power over serpents, scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Therefore, go see Jesus, devil, and see what he says. You know, and you can just, that's the warfare we're talking about. But oftentimes, we meekly lay back and we say, oh Lord, the devil's beating me up, and I understand that when you pray like that.

I've prayed like that. I still pray like that sometimes. Lord, I just can't even muster strength to raise my sword.

Lord, would you get somebody to fight the devil for me? But see, the battle's over. The battle's over. We don't ever win any victories anymore.

The victory's won. It is finished. We don't win any victories in the Christian life.

We receive them by faith. They're received. Tell Zion, tell Jerusalem that warfare is accomplished.

The Lord says in the Old Testament. You see, we clash with an invisible host, and he wants you and he wants me to exercise the judgment that is written upon them. Now, this is a long list.

I have one more. I have one more. Number 13.

What will keep your prayers from being answered? Idolatry. It can be anything from a thing to a person. It's anything that takes your heart away from pure passion toward the Lord Jesus.

It can even be your wife. I praise God for the emphasis on the family in this country, but I'll tell you something. Jesus is supposed to be first, and many people will give themselves totally, totally, totally, totally to family so much that the sacrificial element is gone in the service of the Lord.

They don't have time for Wednesday night prayer meeting. They don't have time for the getting together with the brethren to prayer. You see, there's two ditches.

One is not enough time with your family, and the other is making your family an idol. You can make your job an idol. You can make an ambition, a home an idol.

You can make anything an idol. You see, and it says in Ezekiel chapter 14, it says, talking about some of those religious folks in Israel, he's saying to Ezekiel, the father is saying, Ezekiel, these men are coming to pray before me. Should I be inquired of by them? They've taken idols in their hearts.

They've taken idols in their heart. Now, you've got to get rid of idols. Let him tear them out by the roots.

They're there in your heart. It's very, very hard. You're going to have to be ruthless with them, but the dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol may be, help me to tear it from thy throne and worship only thee.

Idolatry. Little children, keep yourselves from idols, John writes in 1 John. So I would just say in the aftermath of perhaps what is a rather, or could be, depressing list, don't be discouraged because, you see, the glory is that God is determined to teach us to pray in spite of all that we've just mentioned.

He doesn't answer our prayers because of us. He answers our prayers in spite of us, and there'll be no opportunity for any flesh to boast in his presence one day before him. Prayer in your life should be the key of every morning to open the door, and it should be the bolt of every night that you close your day off.

And as you lay in bed at night, you can sing praises on your bed. That ought to shock your partner, your husband or wife. Next time in the middle of the night you wake up, start singing hymns in the middle of the night.

Sing high praises of God at midnight on your bed. That's what it says in Psalms. I will sing praises to you upon my bed.

Let me close with this, because it's often discouraging to try to pray and feel like we've failed. I just want to just use an example of my son, Jonathan. You know, he's only two years old, and he doesn't know a lot of words yet.

He knows pretty much for his age, really. I'm pretty proud of him, but I'll tell you something. He doesn't know a big vocabulary.

But one thing he is getting the hang of, and even so much that it makes me under conviction, is that he's understanding that God hears prayer. I don't know how he knows it, but he just knows it. It's an answer to our prayers.

And at night when we tuck him in, we'll say, Jonathan, let's pray. And he'll put his hand out and take Mary Madeline's hand. If I'm not there, if I'm there, he'll take my hand.

If she's not, he'll take our hands and we'll say, who do you want to pray for? And he actually can just, he'll say like, Jack and Kay. I mean, he prays for Jack and Kay every night, more than me. Talk about conviction.

And he'll pray for people that he's known in the past that have gone overseas that I would think he would never know. That Stuart and Ann, and they left separately, but he says, who do you want to pray for? Stuart and Ann. And I'm just floored in my heart.

And he can't pray, but he just says, go name. And you know something, as, I mean, he prays for stupid things too, like David and the yellow motorbike. He loves bikes and all the rest.

And, you know, but I find that as I'm praying and vocalizing these prayers for him, he'll pipe in. I just can't quit. He'll keep on saying, or he'll keep saying names, and he'll say things like Mark, and he'll say things like Mark gets, and Tom gets, and he'll say all these names, and he'll just keep on this big long list.

And I'll be sitting there with the brake in my back, and he'll keep going and keep going. And it's not a game to him. And if I leave out one thing, he'll remember what it is.

And you know something, I just said all that to say this. He's not eloquent, is he? He doesn't know the vocabulary of prayer, like his mother or his dad. But I'll tell you one thing that makes me happier than anything else, and that's the father's heart delights to see that he's learning how to pray.

And I'll guarantee you this, the father's answer to his prayers will be just as mighty as they are to Mr. Eloquence or Mrs. Eloquence, whoever they might be. His answers to prayers are going to come right on home because he looks on that baby Jonathan's heart. And your heavenly father understands that you don't know how to pray as you ought, and he understands that you don't have the vocabulary of all the scripture that you might wish you had.

But let me say this, the father's heart understands the vocabulary of his children, and he delights in the fact that you're learning the things of the kingdom. Oh, he wants you to learn it more than anything else. He wants you to learn to pray.

How much more shall your heavenly father give you the things that pertain to the kingdom, the Holy Spirit? It's his good pleasure to give you the kingdom, little flock. It's almost like a giant reservoir up on the top of a mountain, and we don't really have to pump water down. All we have to do really is just open the spigot, and just the force and the weight of all of that reservoir of water will come pouring out as big as the reservoir.

And that's how it is with God. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. You know where from? From the rivers of living water that are coming from within.

Get on your knees and open the spigot, and you'll find out that that reservoir of prayer is as vast as God, and that will begin to come out and come out, and as that comes out, it'll wash your insides out, and it'll wash your eyes out, and you'll be clean before him. Your father in heaven wants you to talk to him. He wants not to just hear a long list of needs.

He just wants to love you and fellowship with you, and so I exhort you at the end of these sessions to see it like that. Don't be discouraged, but realize that he's delighted when you begin. Just begin, and let him teach you to pray.

He really loves you, and he's long-suffering. He won't give up. If he hadn't given up by now, he won't.

Let me tell you, if he didn't love you before you were born, he wouldn't have found the reason afterwards. He has an everlasting love, and it's going to stick on you. He's counted the cost, and he's going to follow it through.

He's going to present you before his throne perfect. So pray. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your mercy. We thank you for your grace. Things that we say so easily, grace that's greater than all our sin.

Oh, make those words live. We thank you for the Spirit of God. Oh, Lord, speak to our hearts with your voice, and call us to prayer.

For Jesus' sake, for your glory, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, we pray these things. Hide these truths in our hearts, protect them, and send forth these praying people to accomplish the will of God on their knees. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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