

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 6 (February 4-10, 2018)

We will conclude our study on the hindrances to prayer in this week's devotions.

Sunday, February 4 (read Mark 11:22-25)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in Heaven may forgive you your sins. (Mark 11:25)

An unforgiving spirit will also hinder your prayer life. The devotion on February 2 looked at the problem of **doubting** that God would answer our prayers, so I will not duplicate that here except to say that you don't have to be afraid of the mountains (obstacles) up ahead (v. 22-23). Trust God enough to believe that you have **already received** what you have asked for in prayer, even though you have not seen or experienced the answer yet (v. 24). However, if you are appealing to God's mercy and grace in order to answer your prayers, make sure that you are extending that same mercy and grace to those who have hurt you. If you are not willing to do that, your prayers will bounce off the ceiling! My standard is this: If someone has hurt you more than your sins have hurt Jesus, hold onto your resentment. If not, let it go!

Monday, February 5 (read Philippians 4:4-7)

Do not be anxious about anything . . . (Philippians 4:6a)

Another hindrance to your prayer is an **anxious mind**. I know that some people are wired so that they worry more than others, but I also know that we are commanded to "Rejoice in the Lord always" (v. 4a). When we follow that command, it will be easier to be gentle as we deal with others (v. 5a). The return of the Lord is near, but He will be near to you now when you rejoice in His care of your life (v. 5b). It is not possible to rejoice in His presence and in His care if our minds are loaded down with worry and anxiety. The word "worry" means to eat away from the inside out. It reveals a lack of trust in the promises of God. Don't allow Satan to rob you of a powerful prayer life.

Tuesday, February 6 (reread Philippians 4:4-7)

*Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6, emphasis mine)*

Still another hindrance to prayer occurs when we fail to give **thanks** for the things God has already blessed us with. It's proper to make **petitions** to God, but when we continue to demand more answers to our prayers without **gratitude** for what He has previously done for us, we hinder the wonderful time we spend with Him (v. 6). In fact, we will never truly experience the peace of God (v. 7) until we learn "to be content, whatever the circumstances" (v. 11). When you pray back to God something that He has definitely promised in His Word, you can live in assurance that your prayer has been answered (see Sunday's devotion). Can you trust Him enough to give thanks for the things you have not yet received?

Wednesday, February 7 (read Luke 10:38-42)

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. (Luke 10:40a)

Many people think that they are simply **too busy** to pray. The well-known Bible story in today's text features two sisters, Mary and Martha. Luke records that the **home** belongs to Martha (v. 38); this is her domain. On the other hand, John records that Mary is at home in the **village** (John 11:1). Jesus often stops by to visit with the two sisters and their brother, Lazarus. Mary loves to sit at the Lord's feet (v. 39), but Martha, before she can relax and worship, needs to make sure everything is ready (v. 40). She actually **commands** Jesus to make Mary help her (v. 40b), causing Him to gently rebuke her to examine her priorities. If you are wired like Martha, learn to "eat, drink and be Mary" (my sermon title when I preach on this text). Take quality time to pray and to worship Him!

Thursday, February 8 (read 1 John 3:21-24)

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. (1 John 3:21-22)

We have already learned that **sin** can separate us from effective prayer. This passage goes a step further. **Willful disobedience**, even though it may not break a direct commandment, separates us from powerful prayer. James, the earthly brother of Jesus, says, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (James 4:17). Why would God grant **more** of our requests when we have failed to respond to **previous** convictions from the Holy Spirit? Many times in His Word (seven times on the last night of His life), the Lord promises the Christian that he/she will receive whatever is asked for in prayer. Only those who are walking in all the light they have been shown can claim these wonderful promises. I pray that you are one of them.

Friday, February 9 (read 1 Peter 4:7-11)

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. (1 Peter 4:7)

I encourage you to read this entire passage, although I will focus primarily on the first verse. We have been reminded twice this week in our study on hindrances to prayer that the end of all things is near (v. 7; see also Philippians 4:5 from Monday's devotion). Peter tells us to **clear our minds** and **control our bodies** so that we can pray. You have to decide what fits into this category. Obviously, things like excessive drinking are easy to condemn, but excessive TV watching, excessive reading of secular books, or excessive sleeping and eating can also take the place of prayer. The prioritizing of our time will assist us in following the other commands in this text: love one another deeply, show hospitality (v. 8-9), serve others and speak the words of God with boldness and authority (v. 10-11).

Saturday, February 10 (read 1 John 5:13-16)

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything **according to His will**, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.*

(1 John 5:14-15, emphasis mine)

What a promise with which to conclude the subject of **hindrances to prayer**! We need, however, to pray **according to His will**! Many people get discouraged in prayer because they ask for things that **may not be His will**. Some ask for things that they already know are **not His will**! I have had people ask me to pray for God to bless the affair they are having. That's a no-brainer! However, once you are assured that you have eternal salvation and are walking in the light of His Word (v. 13), you can pray for anything you need. If it is a direct promise from God, pray with **boldness** and **confidence**. If it isn't a promise, pray, "not my will, but your will be done." Some say that you should never use that expression in your prayer, but Jesus did (Luke 22:42). I strongly suggest you follow His example!