

PROBLEMS IN PRAYER

Introduction:

To review our study, we have considered

Purpose of Prayer—To bring glory to God

Preparation for Prayer—Knowing God and obeying Him

Prerequisites of Prayer—Salvation, Hearing, Faith, Purity, Right

Motives, A Forgiving Spirit, Love for Others, Persistence, Humility,

Removal of Idols, Praying in Jesus' name, and According to God's will

Patterns for Prayer—ACTS, The Disciples Prayer in Matthew 6

Today we will look at Three Problems in Prayer.

I. WE HAVE AN ENEMY AROUND US—SATAN

Years ago a pastor wrote, *"When God opens the windows of heaven to hear us and to bless us, the devil will open the door of hell to blast us"*. That may not be 100% theologically accurate, but one thing is . . .

A. Satan Is Real

Satan is not a fairy tale, a force, or simply an influence. He is a powerful supernatural being. We need to be aware of his existence.

Jessie Penn-Lewis explained, *"It is only as we advance in our spiritual growth that we comprehend that our foes are actually spirit beings . . . In order to recognize and defeat them we must recognize the reality of their existence."*

B. Satan Is Powerful

Just look around. He has developed a world system of evil beyond belief. That's because it is supernatural.

Paul warned us in Ephesians 6:12, *"we fight not against any physical enemy; it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil."* (As translated by J.B.Philips.)

C. Satan Isn't All Powerful

Andrew Murray, in his classic on Prayer said, *God's children can conquer everything by prayer. Is it any wonder that Satan does his utmost to snatch that weapon from Christians or hinder him from the use of it?"*

Valley Bible Church Growth Studies

Only God can deliver us from this pure evil, but God always wins.

II. WE HAVE AN ENEMY IN US--OURSELVES

The most famous line to come out of the comic strip *The Wizard of Id* was spoken by Pogo. He said, *"We have met the enemy and he is us."*

A. We Are Flawed

Most of our hardest battles involve the flesh. We identify with Paul in Romans 7. We do what we know is wrong and don't want to do, and don't do what we know is right and want to do.

This is a spiritual battle that can only be fought with spiritual weapons. So we need to put on the "Armor of God" (Eph. 6).

B. We Are Lazy

We may know the Purpose, the Preparation, the Prerequisites, and the Patterns for Prayer, but do we pray? It's like knowing all the ingredients in a recipe but never putting them together.

We rationalize about pressure, and business, and outside interference, everything but our own view of prayers importance.

C. We Are Negative

Much of our prayer focuses on the negative aspects and needs of our lives. No wonder we don't covet our prayer time. Is there an answer? Yes!

Philippians 4:8—*"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."*

III. WE HAVE AN ENEMY WITH US—ATTITUDE

A. Emotions

Prayer is too important to make it a slave of our fickle emotions. If you feel like it, pray. If you don't feel like it, pray. Just do it! Hudson Taylor said, *"Most of my major victories came from emotionless prayer."*

A soldier involved in combat cannot dictate the time of battle, nor can we, so we must "pray always and not lose heart."

B. Action

A Bible Church pastor went to a boxing match with a priest and before the fight began one of the fighters crossed himself. "Will that help?" asked the pastor. The priest answered, "It will if he can fight." Action bathed in prayer is more powerful than prayer alone.

Florence Nightingale once said, *"What is the use of praying to be delivered from plague and pestilence, so long as the common sewers are allowed to flow into the Thames River?"*

Valley Bible Church Growth Studies

C. Expectation

Prayer is a closet ministry. Get used to it. God keeps the books.

Matthew 6:5 and 6--"*And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*"

IV. WE HAVE AN ENEMY ADVISING US—BOOKS

When we go to our local Christian bookstore looking for a cure to the illness of prayer lethargy we often find the cure is much worse than the disease.

A. Non Biblical Views

Prayer is popular across the world and in virtually every religion. It is, therefore, easy to get a human view of God and therefore a human view of prayer. This is prayer made in the image of man.

B. Warped Biblical View

When theology and doctrine is formed from an inaccurate or inadequate view of Scripture it leads to problems in ones view of prayer.

For instance, if one believes the Old Testament Covenants that were given to Israel have been transferred to the New Testament Church then it leads to prayer based on the assumption that all the promises made to Israel can be claimed by us today. This leads to prosperity gospel and other errors.

Likewise, if you view each believer as a priest rather than an elite company of special people, it changes you prayer life drastically.

C. Unbalanced Biblical View

If teaching on prayer and Christian living is selective it can easily lead to an unhealthy preoccupation with one aspect of Scripture actually leading us into error.

This is, I believe the case in the book titled

The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life

By Dr. Bruce Wilkinson