VI. A LACK OF FAITH

James 1:5-8 *v5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. v6 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. v7* ***That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; v8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does****.*

Without question, faith is an essential part of prayer. The lack of faith hinders God's ability to move in power –

Mark 6:5 *He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.*

God demands our faith in prayer. However, God can do a lot with a little

John 6 - The loaves and fishes
Acts 12 - The early church prayer Peter's Miraculous Escape From Prison

God honors faith because genuine faith honors Him –

The Healing of a Boy with an Evil Spirit

Mark 9:14-23 *V14 When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. V15 As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. V16 "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. V17 A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. V18 Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."*

V19 "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." V20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. V21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. V22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." V23 " 'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Matt. 21:22. *If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

Conclusion:

Prayer can change the world, but only an unhindered prayer can reach God's ear! Has the Holy Spirit struck a nerve in your life tonight? If so, I invite you to come before Him and deal with those shortcomings He has revealed, so that you and I might enjoy unhindered, effective praying.

WHAT PREVENTS OUR PRAYERS FROM BEING ANSWERED

Genuine prayer has the power to accomplish great things. In truth, there is no limit to the potential of prayer,

James 5:16 *The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*
Matt. 17:20. *He replied, "……. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

However, while prayer is unlimited in it's potential, it can be severely hindered or even rendered totally ineffective. I want to take to time to point out some attitudes and activities that can, and do, create problems in our praying.

I. SELFISHNESS

Anytime we bring a prayer before the Lord that is based in wrong motives, we can be certain that it will fail.

James 4:1-3 *v1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? v2 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. v3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

We must be certain that our prayers are for His glory, and that our motives are pure.

1Co 10:31 *So … whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

II. IDOLATRY

Ezekiel 14:3 *"Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces.* ***Should I let them inquire of me at all?***

An idol is anything, or anyone that takes God's place in our lives, or weakens our dependence upon Him to any degree. He is to have the first place and anything that comes before Him is an idol.

Alan Redpath, "Our God is the person we think most precious, for whom we would make the greatest sacrifice, and who moves our heart with the greatest love. He, or it, is the person who, if we lost him, would leave us desolate." Unless God is in the Number 1 position, our prayer life will be hindered.

He will not share His glory with another - ***Ex. 20:1-3*** *v1 And God spoke all these words: v2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. v3 "You shall have no other gods before me.* ***Isa. 42:8*** *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.*

III. UNFORGIVENESS

Mark 11:25 *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*[7]

God forgives and He expects His people to be in the forgiving business as well –

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

Any other response by the child of God will prove to be a hindrance to effective praying.

IV. UNCONFESSED SIN

Psa. 66:16-18*; v16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. v17 I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. v18* ***<u>If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened</u>****; v19 but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.*

Isa. 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*

The primary hindrance to prayer is found in the area of unconfessed, unrepented of sin. Even though we have been saved and forgiven, unconfessed prayer will still come between the Lord and us.

Ill. We are justified by faith, we continue in fellowship by confession –

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.*

All sin in our lives must be brought into the light of God's judgment -

Pro 28:13 *He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

You may have unconfessed sin in your life that is hindering you. You may be committing a sin and not even realize that you are sinning, but it is hindering your prayer life, It is making the heavens appear to be brass. Perhaps we need to pray as the Psalmist did –

Psalm 139:23-24. *v23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. v24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

V. PROBLEMS IN THE HOME

1 Pet. 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.***

When there is a problem between a husband and a wife, or between the occupants in the home, effective prayer will be hindered!

(Ill. Literally "one flesh" When there is a break in fellowship, we are out of line with God's pattern for our lives and therefore, we are in sin!)

Notice some particular features of this verse:

1. It is addressed specifically to husbands - Why? The husband is responsible before God as the head of the home –

Eph. 5:22-27*. v22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. v23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. v24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. v25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her v26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, v27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

2. Men are told to "dwell with them: - Literally, "to be aligned to." The husband is to take the time to find out all he can about his wife. He needs to know what makes her tick. Until we are able to understand our wives, we can never be in line with their feelings and needs. When the home is out of alignment, hindered prayer results!

3. Men are told to do this "according to knowledge" - Literally, "with understanding" Most women need more than most men are willing to give. Men need to be sensitive to their partner's needs. (Ill. Two-way communication is essential to keeping an open relationship and an open prayer line to God!)

4. Men are told to give honor to their wives - Honor means to "hold in high value." "Weaker vessel" refers not to moral or spiritual weakness, but to physical strength. The picture is of a delicate, priceless, extremely fragile vase. We must realize that our wives are something of intense beauty and value, but something that is infinitely fragile and easily shattered. We men need to learn how to hold our wives in honor. Otherwise, she will be broken before you and your own spiritual life will be shattered. (Ill. How He treats His bride - Eph. 5:25!)

5. Discord in the home hinders our fellowship with God.