

Why Prayers Remain Unanswered - Philippians 1:7-11 - October 21st, 2018

- I want to talk to you today about the power of prayer and more specifically, why it may seem our prayers remain unanswered
- Doubtless you've heard that saying "prayer changes things," and it most certainly does, but prayer is so much more than that.
- By that I mean, prayer not only changes things prayer changes us and perhaps more importantly it changes how we see others.

- Such is the case here with Paul, who cared deeply about the Philippians, because he had prayed continually for the Philippians.
- We see it in our text in what Paul has to say about the Philippians, then, specifically, what Paul would pray for the Philippians.
- The reason I say it in this way is because this is what happens when we pray, namely, it changes our feelings for other people.

- It's for this reason that Paul in verse seven says he has strong feelings for them in his heart in spite of the adversity in his life.
- Then, he even goes further in verse eight saying that God is his witness concerning his longing Christ like affection for them.
- I believe that it wasn't so much that Paul prayed for them because he loved them, he loved them because he prayed for them.

- I believe this because in verse nine Paul prays for their love to abound more and more in both knowledge and depth of insight.
- Then in verse ten, Paul prays that they will be able to discern what's best so they'll be pure and blameless until Christ returns.
- In verse eleven he prays they will be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ to God's glory and praise.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the biggest problems we have with interpersonal relationships it has to be this.
- Let me explain by way of the marriage relationship, a husband or wife gets mad at each other instead of praying for each other.
- This is true with everyone in our lives by virtue of the fact that you simply cannot remain angry with someone you're praying for.

- I'll take it a step further and suggest that in addition to not being angry with them you'll start having love and affection for them.
- This because, God made us, wired us, if you will, to have a change of heart towards the people for whom we choose to pray.
- I use the word choice, because the onus is on us to make the decision to go against how we feel about them and pray for them.

Matthew 5:43-45 - 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- Now, I'm keenly aware there are those who would say that when they pray nothing happens, and their prayers go unanswered.
- If you'll kindly permit me to, I'd like to address this matter of unanswered prayer for the remainder of our time together today.
- What follows, though not exhaustive and in no particular order, are several reasons I've found for prayers going unanswered.

1. Husbands who mistreat their wives

1 Peter 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.

2. Selfish motives

James 4:3 - When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

3. It's not God's will

1 John 5:14-15 - 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

4. It's not God's timing

Isaiah 30:18 - Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

5. I give up too quickly

Luke 18:1 - Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

6. I regard sin in my heart

Psalms 66:18-19 - 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear. 19 But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

7. I don't ask

James 4:2b ... You do not have because you do not ask God.