

03 - 07/27/12

REASONS FOR UNANSWERED PRAYER

The purpose behind these lessons is to encourage us to pray more. While there are many Christians who read the Word very little or not at all, there are probably even more who pray even less than they read--or not all!

It is in prayer that the Lord teaches us of Himself and His ways, and consequently it is not just a matter of asking and receiving immediately the things that we ask for. And, just as the Word has many, many promises related to prayer, and encouragements to pray, it also teaches us why our prayers are often not answered.

Although the first one to be listed does not properly belong in a study like this, it must be included as a part:

I. WE DO NOT PRAY (James 4:2b).

We have many excuses:

- 1) We do not know how.
- 2) We have tried, but do not enjoy it. It is not a blessing.
- 3) Our prayers have not been answered.
- 4) We say we are too tired; we go to sleep.
- 5) We plan to, but we have just been too busy.

We will never realize the importance of prayer until we look upon prayerlessness as sin. Cf. 1 Sam. 12:23. This is Samuel speaking to the people of Israel. Cf. Paul's statement in Rom. 1:9.

How can we say it is sin for us not to pray? Because it is commanded of us in the Word, and all disobedience is sin. Cf. Luke 18:1; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17.

II. WE ASK FOR THE WRONG THINGS, OR WITH THE WRONG MOTIVES (James 4:3).

"Amisss" is wrongly or improperly. The word is used in John 18:23; Acts 23:5. "Consume" is the word used of the prodigal son when Luke (15:14) says that he "spent all." "Lusts" here means pleasure, or a desire for pleasure. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:11.

There is probably more difficulty here than we realize. It does not have to be something vile, or scandalous, but James is referring to that which is basically selfish, and, as we shall see, not according to the Word.

III. THERE IS SIN IN OUR LIVES (Psa. 66:18). All of Isa. 58. See esp. v. 9.

Unanswered prayer should always cause us to let the Lord search our hearts. Cf. Psa. 139:23, 24.

Another example: 1 Sam. 2:8:15-18

A good example is found in Joshua 7:6-12. See also Prov. 15:29; Isa. 1:15; 59:1-3; John 9:31; Micah 3:1-4.

IV. IT IS NOT THE WILL OF GOD BECAUSE IT IS NOT ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD. Cf. Ex. 14:15.

This includes also praying in the name of the Lord.

Cf. Prov. 28:9; John 15:7; 1 John 5:14, 15; John 14:13, 14; 15:16; 16:23-26.

Praying in the will of God has to do, not only with the nature of our requests, but ^{with} according to the condition of our lives.