

1 Search, Classify and Destroy Roadblocks to Effective Prayers



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Graham F. Watts, Sr.

VISION: To hear the midnight cry, "The bridegroom comes, go out to meet Him" (Matthew 25:6) and become like Him when I see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

MISSION: Purify myself even as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3) to be glad, to rejoice, give honor to Christ and be ready for the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7).

VALUES: Follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4), be without fault before God (Revelation 14:5), be perfect even as my Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48), wear the Lamb's fine, clean and white linen (Revelation 19:8) do righteously (1 John 3:10) and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

OVERALL AIM: Studies presented here unveil Bible knowledge to inquiring minds to prompt the following inquiries: "Are our feet on the rock of ages? Are we one with Christ as He is one with the Father" (John 10:30 in Evangelism, {Ev} 199.1)? Am I crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20)?

26 **PURPOSE/REASON FOR/WHY**

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28 This study uncovers roadblocks to effective prayers.

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31 **OBJECTIVES/WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH/THESIS**

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33 At the end of this study, the believer should deeply examine
34 motivations, purposes and values associated with prayer.

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37 **SIGNIFICANCE: SO WHAT**

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39 **The Lord presents a serious discourse on hypocrisy.** He said: "The
40 congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate" (Job 15:34); "The
41 sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the
42 hypocrites..." (Isaiah 33:14). As son of man, Jesus gave this counsel:
43 **"When you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the**
44 **hypocrites do** in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by
45 men..." (Matthew 6:2, NIV). "When you fast, do not look somber as the
46 **hypocrites do; they disfigure their faces to show men they are**
47 **fasting**" (Matthew 6:16, NIV). More importantly, "When you pray, do
48 not be like the **hypocrites; they love to pray standing in the**
49 **synagogue and on the street corners to be seen by men...**" (Matthew 6:5,
50 NIV); "And **for a pretense make long prayers...**" (Mark 12:40). These
51 warnings are for us that we might examine ourselves to determine
52 whether we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5 & 1 Corinthians
53 11:28).

54
55 **As a physical pathway benefits from repairs; likewise, the spiritual!**

56 "When Christ sent forth the disciples with the gospel message, faith
57 in God and His word had well-nigh departed from the world. Among the
58 Jewish people, who professed to have knowledge of Jehovah, His word
59 had been set aside for tradition and human speculation. Selfish
60 ambition, love of ostentation and greed of gain [had] absorbed men's
61 thoughts" (The Ministry of Healing, {MH}, 142.1), not Colossians 3:2.

62 **BACKGROUND CONTEXT**

63

64 **Hypocrisy (i.e., falseness; the art of professing beliefs, feelings**
 65 **or virtues that one does not have) is a serious community health**
 66 **problem in Christian settings.** Lingering doubts about this claim can
 67 be validated at Matthew 7:23. Some church people draw near to God
 68 with their mouth (as in taking their lamps WITHOUT oil {Matthew
 69 25:3}) and proceed to honor God with their lips (as in having a
 70 denominational name that suggests they are living but in reality are
 71 spiritually dead {Revelation 3:1}); but God knows all who are far
 72 from Him (Matthew 15:7-8). May God help us to recognize that
 73 "...Darkness and light are alike to [Him]" (Psalm 139:12, New American
 74 Standard Bible, NASB) and "...There is nothing covered up that will not
 75 be revealed, [or] hidden that will not be known" (Luke 12:2).
 76 Therefore, readers are hereby forewarned that this study may cause
 77 defensiveness among those who think of themselves "...More highly than
 78 [they] ought to think..." (Romans 12:3). One sign of defensiveness is
 79 an internal conversation of this nature: "This study is criticizing
 80 and condemning rather than encouraging." But readers are reminded
 81 that "...The light [once shined] in darkness and the darkness
 82 comprehended it not" (John 1:5)! "...Light... [came] into the world and
 83 men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil"
 84 (John 3:19); but the good news of this study is this: "[Jesus came
 85 as] a light into the world that whosoever believes in [Him] should
 86 not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). Religion was not intended to be
 87 a cloak for sin, but rather a detergent; thus, you are invited to set
 88 aside all defense mechanisms and permit conscious awareness to deal
 89 with the hypocrisy that has flourished among us.

90

91 **Through the lenses of Scripture we will examine the antidote for**
 92 **hypocrisy.** We will unmask forms of this deadly evil that we can keep
 93 the way clear to receive answers to our prayers. "All Scripture is
 94 given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine,

95 reproof, correction and instruction righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16);
 96 therefore, God's people who practice hypocrisy and who are perplexed
 97 as a result of serving graven images (Psalm 97:6); the aim here is to
 98 lead you to repentance that you turn away from "...worshiping demons
 99 and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood" (Revelation 9:20-
 100 21, NIV) that you can "...Worship the Lord thy God..." (Luke 4:8)!
 101 Jesus was both vocal and adversarial toward hypocrisy! When He
 102 walked on earth, He met the hypocrites face-to-face (Matthew 22:17-
 103 18), even among the religious leaders (read Matthew 23:13-15). Their
 104 behavior patterns were a work of art; for example, they would tithe
 105 the smallest measures to ensure the treasury was resourced but
 106 neglected the more important matters of the law such as justice,
 107 mercy and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23). External reform, i.e.,
 108 outward correctness of behavior was important to them but inwardly,
 109 they were corrupted (Matthew 23:25-26). As far as Jesus was
 110 concerned, the hypocrites reminded Him of cemetery gems—sepulchres--
 111 ornate and beautiful on the outside, but inwardly: rotten to the core
 112 (Matthew 23:27).

113
 114 **Chameleon-like behavior—the ability to blend in with the environment**
 115 **while preserving a duplicitous inward character—lies at the center of**
 116 **religious hypocrisy.** The religion of Christ calls people to
 117 repentance, baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit power (Acts
 118 2:38), but hypocrisy offers a substitute, leading people to appear
 119 righteous outwardly, while inwardly, they are full of wickedness
 120 (Matthew 23:28). Because the unregenerate heart is deceitful and
 121 desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), this secret operation can occur
 122 at both conscious and unconscious levels; "Therefore, let us not
 123 sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians
 124 5:6), else hypocrisy might steal upon us imperceptibly and we become
 125 "...As graves, which appear NOT, and the men that walk over them are
 126 NOT aware of them" (Luke 11:44). This is an important, individual
 127 work because God intends that we serve as lights in the world

128 (Matthew 5:14); but if we are not sober and vigilant, we will
129 ultimately hear these awful words: "...Depart from me, all you workers
130 of iniquity" (read Luke 13:27 & Matthew 7:22-23). What is the value
131 of being a church member for years, only to hear in the end: I never
132 knew you!

133
134 **Vigilance against the trait of hypocrisy is an important, personal**
135 **work.** If we neglect this work, hypocrisy will lead us to crucify the
136 righteous living and as soon as they are deceased, render glowing
137 tribute and homage to them (Matthew 23:29-32). Hypocrites do things
138 like devour widows' houses, yet make long prayers (Matthew 23:14).
139 We must be aware that "Not everyone that says..., Lord, Lord shall
140 enter into the kingdom of heaven, but s/he that does the will of...
141 [God]" (Matthew 7:21); therefore, may God help us to walk with Him,
142 even as Moses walked, then we will receive power from above to say:
143 "...Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shall see now whether my word
144 shall come to pass unto thee or not" (Number 11:23). Clearly, "The
145 Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is his ear
146 heavy that it cannot hear" (Isaiah 59:1) but the house of Israel have
147 a history of refusing to listen to God (Ezekiel 3:7); therefore, God
148 has at times refused to listen to Israel (Jeremiah 7:16), explicitly
149 commanding His prophet NOT to pray for His people (read Jeremiah
150 11:14). We do well to remember that iniquities bring separation from
151 God (Isaiah 59:2), but if God's people shall humble themselves, pray,
152 seek His face and turn from their wicked ways, THEN, He will hear
153 from heaven, forgive our sins and heal our lands (2 Chronicles 7:14).
154 This background provided the impetus for the study question that
155 follows.

156

157 **STUDY QUESTION**

158

159 Why do some prayers go unanswered?

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161 **ANSWER SOURCE: HOLY BIBLE**

162

163 1. **"Hypocrisy leads to self-centered prayers and these go unanswered.**

164 Jesus' genuineness led Him to pray unselfish prayer and His example
 165 remains in sacred history for our admonition. He came to a place
 166 called Gethsemane and began to be sorrowful and was very heavy in
 167 spirit. And despite acknowledging that His soul was exceedingly
 168 sorrowful, even unto death; His prayer was: "O my Father, if it be
 169 possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, **not as I will,**
 170 **but as thou wilt**" And just so that we, today, are not in any doubt
 171 about model prayers, Jesus prayed a second time saying: "O my
 172 Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it,
 173 **thy will be done.**" Yet another time heaven heard Jesus praying the
 174 same words: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me,
 175 except I drink it, **thy will be done**" (Matthew 26:36-44). Pause and
 176 ask yourself: "Do my prayers reflect this central theme of God's
 177 will be done in my life or do I simply want to get my way"?

178

179 2. **"Hypocrisy leads to ill-informed prayers and these go unanswered.**

180 "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes..." (Proverbs 21:2).
 181 "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof is
 182 the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25). As independent,
 183 thinking people, we tend to decide what we want, then go to God and
 184 ask Him to sanction it. And when this presumptuous prayer is over,
 185 we wait impatiently for expected results. Any success with this
 186 method creates a vending machine addiction, which we justify using
 187 Matthew 7:7: "Ask and it shall be given you..." Alternatively, any
 188 failure with this method creates accusations against God: "Why have
 189 we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and
 190 You do not notice..." (Isaiah 58:3, New American Standard Bible,
 191 NASB)? Let the reader beware that there is a better method
 192 available to us. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean
 193 not unto your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do and

194 He will show you which path to take" (Proverbs 3:5-6, New Living
 195 Translation, NLT). "He leads the humble in doing right, teaching
 196 them His way" (Psalm 25:9, NLT). Rather than deciding what we
 197 want, then telling God what He must do, we ought to "Give all our
 198 worries and cares to God..." (1 Peter 5:7) and follow His
 199 providential leadings (read Exodus 33:2 & Isaiah 30:21)!

200
 201 3. **"Hypocrisy leads to rebellion, which undermines prayers, thus they**
 202 **go unanswered.** In ancient times, some of God's people were
 203 entrenched in sins and transgressions, yet they found joy in the
 204 religious experience called worship (read Isaiah 58:1-2). In fact,
 205 their audacity was so brazen that they challenged God by saying:
 206 "We have fasted before you! Why aren't you impressed? We have been
 207 very hard on ourselves and you don't even notice it." [God's
 208 response to His ancient people]: "...It is because you are [praying
 209 and] fasting to please yourselves. Even while you [pray and] fast,
 210 you keep oppressing your workers, [but this rebuttal fell on deaf
 211 ears]" (Isaiah 58:3, NLT). Even God had trouble educating those
 212 who seem to have all the answers, a condition characterized by
 213 Laodicea (read Revelation 3:17). It is a serious matter to ignore
 214 God's counsels because He regards rebellion as the sin of
 215 witchcraft and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry (1 Samuel
 216 15:23). "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those
 217 things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children that we
 218 may do all the words of [His] law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). "If
 219 [Israel] had responded to [God's] rebuke, [He] would have poured
 220 out [His] heart to [them] and [make His] thoughts known to [them],
 221 but since [they] rejected [Him] when [He] called and no one gave
 222 heed when [He] stretched out [His] hand; since [they] ignored all
 223 [His] advice and would not accept [His] rebuke..." (Proverbs 1:23-25,
 224 NIV); God said: "[...You] will call to me but I will not answer..."
 225 (Proverbs 1:28). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today
 226 and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). "If [His] people, which are called by

227 [His] name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek [His] face
 228 and turn from their wicked ways; then will [He] hear from heaven,
 229 and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles
 230 7:14). Time has elapsed but the conditions of answered prayer have
 231 not changed.

232
 233 4. **"Hypocrisy deflates prayers offered in earnest and these go**
 234 **unanswered.** Examine the following lesson from sacred history.
 235 Ancient Israel withheld tithes and offerings from the support of
 236 God's ministry and inherited a curse, yet they had the bravery to
 237 query God about how He could charge them with robbery (Malachi 3:7-
 238 9) and said in their hearts that it was unprofitable to have kept
 239 His ordinance and walked mournfully before Him (Malachi 3:14).
 240 Restore the pledge (read Ezekiel 18:7 & 12; 33:15), pay thy vows
 241 (read Job 22:27, Psalm 50:14 & 66:13) quit cheating the Lord with
 242 our time, talents and treasures, which are His (read Psalm 50:10
 243 and James 1:17) and seek first the kingdom of God and His
 244 righteousness and all the material things we need for subsistence
 245 will be granted (Matthew 6:33). In fact, God has pre-pledged that
 246 if His children "Bring all the tithes [and offerings] into the
 247 storehouse that... [He] will open the windows of heaven and pour out
 248 blessings that there shall not be room enough to receive it.
 249 [Moreover, He], will rebuke the devourer... and NOT destroy the
 250 fruits of [the] ground; neither shall the vine cast her fruit
 251 before their time in the field. [Finally, faithfulness will bring
 252 honor and glory to God when] All nations shall call you blessed for
 253 you shall be a delightsome land..." (Malachi 3:10-12). Prayers
 254 without faithfulness are penance! Get out of the business of
 255 penance for in righteousness you will be established (Isaiah
 256 54:14)! "Righteousness exalts a nation but sin, [even hypocrisy],
 257 is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

258

259 5. **Hypocrisy inspires false worship and prayers coming from that**
 260 **context go unanswered.** There is a class of religious people who
 261 offer vain worship based on traditions and the understanding of
 262 mortals (Matthew 15:9 & Mark 7:7). Don't get sucked into that form
 263 of godliness, which lack power (2 Timothy 3:5). A brief
 264 description of powerless worship and prayer follows. All Israel
 265 had gathered on Mount Carmel to witness an inevitable showdown
 266 between Elijah and the renowned prophets of Baal. Some 450
 267 prestigious prophets who socialized with Ahab's royal empire came
 268 to a prayer meeting of momentous proportions. The atmosphere was
 269 electric as many styles and repertoires of prayers were enunciated.
 270 In the end, nothing happened (1 Kings 18:19-29), until one,
 271 unpopular prophet, Elijah by name, called on the name of the Lord
 272 (1 Kings 18:30-38). Brethren, for too long "We have wearied the
 273 Lord with our words..." (Malachi 2:17) and He has asked us to "Take
 274 away... the noise of [our] songs..." (Amos 5:23). God is very clear
 275 about conditions of answered prayer. "He that turns away his ear
 276 from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"
 277 (Proverbs 28:9). Although God's people have from time to time
 278 rejected Him by rejecting His word (read Jeremiah 6:19; 8:9 & Hosea
 279 4:6); as only a loving Father can, He appeals to His backsliding
 280 children, giving this assurance: return unto Me and I will heal
 281 your backsliding (Jeremiah 3:22) and hear the prayer of the
 282 righteous (Proverbs 15:29).

283

284 **ANSWER SOURCE: SACRED WRITINGS**

285

286 6. **Hypocrisy leads people to be wise in their own eyes, thus their**
 287 **prayers go unanswered.** "There are certain conditions upon which we
 288 may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers. One of the
 289 first of these is that we feel our need of help from Him. He has
 290 promised: 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods
 291 upon the dry ground' (Isaiah 44:3). Those who hunger and thirst

292 after righteousness, which long after God, may be sure that they
 293 will be filled (Matthew 5:6). The heart must be open to the
 294 Spirit's influence or God's blessing cannot be received" (Steps to
 295 Christ, {SC} 95.1).

296
 297 7. **Hypocrisy diminishes the capacity of people to exercise Abraham-**
 298 **like faith, thus their prayers go unanswered.** "Another element of
 299 prevailing prayer is faith. 'He that comes to God must believe that
 300 He is and that **He rewards them them that diligently seeks Him'**
 301 (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus said to His disciples, 'Whatever... [you]
 302 desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall
 303 have them' (Mark 11:24). Do we take [God] at His word" (SC 96.1)?
 304 [Do we believe like Abraham, who "...**Considered not his own body now**
 305 **dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of**
 306 **Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but**
 307 **was strong in faith, giving glory to God"** (Romans 4:19-20). Do we have faith
 308 in God in ALL our situations to believe His word, which says to us,
 309 "Go forward" (Exodus 14:15) or must the way be open before our
 310 physical eyes and a clear path evident before we move forward]?

311
 312
 313 8. **Hypocrisy undermines belief in God's faithfulness and the prayers**
 314 **of those who don't trust God fully go unanswered.** In contrast,
 315 genuineness--used here to mean experimental faith--gives confidence
 316 in the assurance that "...All the promises of God in [Christ] are
 317 yea..." (2 Corinthians 1:20). But more importantly, genuineness
 318 leads us to recognize that "Having... these promises, ...[we must]
 319 cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,
 320 perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1) because
 321 God gives "...Us exceeding great and precious promises that by these
 322 [we] might be partakers of the divine nature..." (2 Peter 1:4).
 323 Therefore, "When we do not receive the very things we asked for, at
 324 the time we ask, we are still to believe that the Lord hears and

325 that He will answer our prayers that requests **NOT** for our will to
326 be done, but that God's will be done (Matthew 26:42)]. "...When our
327 prayers seem not to be answered, we are to cling to the promise;
328 for the time of answering will surely come, and we shall receive
329 the blessing we need most. [Though the vision tarries, wait for it
330 (read Habakkuk 2:3).

331

332

333 SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS: In this study, we examined why some prayers go
334 unanswered. This journey uncovered the following: 1) Hypocrisy leads
335 to self-centered prayers and these go unanswered; 2) Hypocrisy leads
336 to ill-informed prayers and these go unanswered; 3) Hypocrisy leads
337 to rebellion, which undermines prayers, thus they go unanswered; 4)
338 Hypocrisy deflates prayers offered in earnest and these go
339 unanswered; 5) Hypocrisy inspires false worship and prayers coming
340 from that context go unanswered; 6) Hypocrisy leads people to be wise
341 in their own eyes, thus their prayers go unanswered 7) Hypocrisy
342 diminishes the capacity of people to exercise Abraham-like faith,
343 thus their prayers go unanswered AND 8) Hypocrisy undermines belief
344 in God's faithfulness and the prayers of those who don't trust God
345 fully go unanswered. When was the last time you examined your
346 behaviors to detect whether any falseness or hypocrisy exists within
347 you? "...Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall"
348 (1 Corinthians 10:12, New American Standard Bible). Because it is of
349 little redeeming value to engage in Bible Study merely for
350 information, subsequent paragraphs follow that make a practical
351 application of the truths set forth here.

352

353

354 **DISCUSSION: WHAT DO THESE THINGS MEAN?**

355

356 **"Prayer is not understood as it should be.** Our prayers are not to
 357 inform God of something He does not know. The Lord is acquainted
 358 with the secrets of every soul. Our prayers need not be long and
 359 loud. God reads the hidden thoughts. We may pray in secret and He
 360 who sees in secret will hear and will reward us openly" (Matthew 6:6
 361 in Messages to Young People {MYP} 247.2). "We should be much in
 362 secret prayer. ***Christ is the vine; we are the branches and if we***
 363 ***would grow and flourish, we must continually draw sap and nourishment***
 364 ***from the Living Vine;*** for separated from the Vine, we have no
 365 strength" (Christian Experience and Teachings, {CET 127.1}). "[But]
 366 to claim that prayers will always be answered in the very way and for
 367 the particular thing that we desire is presumption. ...[Nevertheless],
 368 do not fear to trust [God] even though you do not see the immediate
 369 answer to your prayers" (SC 96.2).

370

371 **Many words offered as prayer are not prayers at all!** How can this
 372 be? Consider the following statements: "...Prayer is the key in the
 373 hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse where are treasured the
 374 boundless resources of Omnipotence" (Review and Herald, {RH} December
 375 8, 1904 par. 6). "Living faith [also] unlocks heaven's storehouse
 376 and brings the power, the endurance and the love so essential for the
 377 Christian soldier" (The Upward Look, {UL} 154.5). The point here is
 378 both prayer and faith must combine. This obvious revelation calls
 379 the question: "...Why [is] there no more faith and power in Israel...?
 380 The divine reply is: '[You] let go of the arm of the Lord too soon'
 381 (CET 127.2). What does that mean? ***Please review the gold standard of***
 382 ***private communion with God in Genesis 32:22-30 before continuing with this study!***
 383 ***Now let's apply what we have just read to ourselves! "When we feel destitute of the***
 384 ***Spirit, when thick clouds of darkness seem to hover over the mind, then is the time to***

385 **let living faith pierce the darkness and scatter the clouds" (CET 126.3). True faith**
 386 **rests on the promises contained in the word of God and those ONLY who obey that**
 387 **word can claim its glorious promises:** "If you abide in Me and My words abide
 388 in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you"
 389 (John 15:7), knowing that "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him,
 390 because we keep His commandments and do those things that are
 391 pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22 in CET 126.4). It is time for us
 392 to recognize that "The prayers that are offered to God to tell Him of
 393 all our wretchedness, when we do not feel wretched at all, are the
 394 prayers of hypocrisy. It is the contrite prayer that the Lord
 395 regards" (MYP 247.3). "Press your [CONTRITE] petitions to the
 396 throne, hold on by strong faith; ...the things you [have] asked for
 397 ...you shall have them" (CET 127.2).

398

399 **Prayer should center on things that are in accord with God's will:**
 400 **the Holy Spirit, gold tried in the fire (that is, faith and love).**
 401 We have the assurance that "...No good thing will He withhold from them
 402 that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). **The gift that God wants to**
 403 **bestow on us, which brings all other blessings in its train is the**
 404 **Holy Spirit** (God's Amazing Grace, {AG} 212.3) and He is more willing
 405 to give us the Holy Spirit than are earthly parents to give good
 406 gifts unto their children (Matthew 7:11 & Luke 11:13). "**When [we**
 407 **are] fully emptied of self, when every false god is cast out of the**
 408 **soul, the vacuum is filled by the inflowing of the Spirit of Christ"**
 409 (AG 212.6). Therefore, when you pray, ask for the Holy Spirit for it
 410 is this gift that equips us with faith and love (read Romans 5:5 & 2
 411 Thessalonians 1:3), which the True Witness calls: **gold tried in the fire** and
 412 which we are counseled to buy that we might be rich and be clothe in
 413 white raiment to cover our nakedness and also receive spiritual
 414 discernment (Revelation 3:18 in Our High Calling, {OHC} 350.1).

415

416 **We should examine our prayer life to uncover what motivates communion**
 417 **with God.** God is not held hostage to change our situations when we
 418 pray. He is God all by Himself and is not in a senate confirmation hearing when we pray.
 419 Whether He answers immediately or delays His response or simply does
 420 not answer in the way we want, He is still God! Even in suffering,
 421 when God does not do what we ask, it helps to remember that God tests
 422 the righteous (Jeremiah 20:12) and "That the trial of [our] faith,
 423 being much more precious than of gold that perish, though it be tried
 424 with fire, might be found unto the praise and honor and glory at the
 425 appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). Even Jesus, as the son of
 426 man, learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8);
 427 therefore, let your knowledge of God combine with faith in His Word
 428 to make you aware that the light affliction, which you endure, is
 429 momentary and will yield a far more exceeding and eternal weight of
 430 glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). Thus: "Rejoice in hope, [be] patient in
 431 tribulation [and] continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

432

433 **The son of man knew both to pray and how to pray.** Unlike us, who
 434 pray seasonally for things to either satisfy temporal, comfort needs
 435 or relieve sufferings perceived to interfere with temporal quality of
 436 life, all the while showing contempt for God's instruction to "Pray
 437 without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17); Jesus, on the other hand,
 438 had a systematic prayer life. The sacred record reminds us that in
 439 addition to rising early in the morning for prayer (Mark 1:35), at
 440 other times, He dedicated all night to prayer (Luke 6:12) **that He might**
 441 **come forth braced for duty and trial** (Steps to Christ, {SC} 93.4). Clothed
 442 in mortality (Philippians 2:7), Christ felt the need of the
 443 refreshing and invigorating of soul and body, **that He might meet the**
 444 **temptations of Satan** (Maranatha, {Mar} 85.4) and God did not miss any
 445 opportunities to answer the intercessory prayers offered by Jesus,
 446 who was often in prayer **that He might minister to the needs of others.**

447 **Am I following the divine purpose for the life loaned to me? Is my**
 448 **lifestyle patterned after Christ or is it** self-centered so that my
 449 **prayer** requests are attempts to get things to consume on my own lusts
 450 (James 4:3), which violates the conditions of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20?
 451 "There is necessity for diligence in prayer; let nothing hinder you.
 452 Make every effort to keep open the communion between Jesus and your
 453 own soul" (RH, December 8, 1904 par. 9) for "Our Heavenly Father
 454 waits to bestow upon us the fullness of his blessing. It is our
 455 privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a
 456 wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to
 457 hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of his children, and yet
 458 there is much manifest reluctance on our part to make known our wants
 459 to God" (RH, December 8, 1904 par. 5) and "The darkness of the evil
 460 one encloses those who neglect to pray" (RH, December 8, 1904 par. 6)
 461 while "We are living in the great antitypical day of atonement"
 462 (Signs of the Times, {ST}, May 29, 1884 par. 3) and we are on the
 463 borders of the eternal world (This Day with God, TDG, p. 117.1).

464

465 **God will hear the prayers of the righteous** (read 1 Kings 8:32; 2
 466 Chronicles 6:23; Psalm 4:1 & 15:1-2 & 32:11 & 34:17 & 64:10; Proverbs
 467 15:28 & 29; Ecclesiastes 3:17 & 9:1; Isaiah 54:17). A special
 468 apparatus exists to receive their prayers. An angel with a golden
 469 censer stands at the golden altar before the throne of God. This
 470 angel receives incense from the altar AND the prayers of ALL the
 471 righteous saints, which ascend to God. Both are mixed together and
 472 as the offering is made, they flow to God from the angel's hands as a
 473 sweet savor (read Revelation 8:1-4). Therefore, let the heart long
 474 after God. [...Keep seeking things from above, where Christ is seated
 475 at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above..."
 476 (Colossians 3:1-2)]. Let the heart go out in daily, hourly prayer,
 477 believing, trusting, holding on to the promise, saying as did Jacob,
 478 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me' (Genesis 32:26 in HP

479 258.4). Hold on to God and submit to His providential leading (read
 480 Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 27:14 & Isaiah 40:31). God keeps everyone in
 481 perfect peace, free from disabling anxieties and phobic reactions,
 482 whose mind is stayed on God (Isaiah 26:3). "A guardian angel is
 483 appointed to every follower of Christ; these heavenly watchers shield
 484 THE RIGHTEOUS from the power of the wicked one" (The Great
 485 Controversy, 1888 {GC88} 512.2); therefore, when we prayer, let us
 486 have complete and perfect trust in the Lord whose word has power
 487 (Luke 4:32) and who upholds all things by the word of His power (read
 488 Hebrews 1:3 & Psalm 33:9).

489

490 **The invitation to commune with God is of heavenly origin** (Revelation
 491 3:20). "God asks you to give Him your heart. Your powers, your
 492 talents, your affections, should all be surrendered to Him, that He
 493 may work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians
 494 2:13), and fit you for eternal life" (My Life Today, {ML} 7.4).
 495 "When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His
 496 love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him;
 497 and in contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ
 498 will be the spring of action. Those who feel the constraining love
 499 of God, do not ask how little may be given to meet the requirements
 500 of God; they do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect
 501 conformity to the will of their Redeemer. With earnest desire they
 502 yield all and manifest an interest proportionate to the value of the
 503 object.. [sought]" (ML 7.5).

504

505 **"It is the submissive, teachable spirit that God wants.** That which
 506 gives to prayer its excellence is.. a loving, obedient heart" (ML
 507 7.6). "God will do great things for His people when they put their
 508 entire trust in Him" (ML 9.3). "Trust in the Lord forever: for in
 509 the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4 in ML 10.1).

510 "...Learn the... art of taking God at His word; then you have solid
 511 ground beneath your feet" (ML 10.8). "It is a part of God's plan to
 512 grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not
 513 bestow did we not ask" (ML 15.5). "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of
 514 Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are
 515 pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22 & Psalm 84:11); therefore, stand
 516 perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians 4:2); "...**Walk**
 517 **in the Spirit...**" (Galatians 5:16) and **pray always in the Spirit**, being
 518 watchful, with all perseverance and supplication... (Ephesians 6:18);
 519 **be anxious for nothing**, but in everything, **by prayer and**
 520 **supplication, with thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to
 521 God (Philippians 4:6).

522

523 **CONCLUSIONS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

524

525 **Jesus encouraged His disciples to have a genuine prayer life.** He
 526 said, "...They should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). Why?
 527 "Prayer has "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained
 528 promises, stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of
 529 fire... [and] turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Hebrews 11:33
 530 & 34 In Heavenly Places, {HP} 83.2). "Prayer is the key in the hand
 531 of faith that unlocks heaven's storehouse where are treasured the
 532 boundless resources of omnipotence" (Steps to Christ, {SC} 95-96).
 533 We must not trust in man or make flesh our arm, but rather trust in a
 534 hand that is warm with life and a heart that throbs with love for the
 535 helpless (HP 258.7). Yet, many prayers are unanswered because "When
 536 [we] ask..., [we do so] with wrong motives that [we] may spend what
 537 [we] get on [our] pleasures" (James 4:3, NIV).

538

539 **On an individual level, a genuine prayer life requires a change of**
 540 **attitude from hypocrisy to voluntary submission to God.** "...Two men
 541 went up to the temple to pray: one a Pharisee, the other a publican.

542 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank [you]
 543 that I am not as other men are: extortionist, unjust, adulterers or
 544 even as this publican. I fasted twice in the week; I gave tithes of
 545 all that I possessed'" (Luke 18:9-12). "And the publican, standing
 546 afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but
 547 smote upon his breast, saying: 'God, be merciful to me a sinner'"
 548 (Luke 18:13). "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified
 549 rather than the other; for everyone that exalts himself shall be
 550 abased; [but they] that humble [themselves] shall be exalted" (Luke
 551 18:14). Is the attitude and tenor of our prayers--"If thou be
 552 Christ, save thyself and us" (Luke 23:39) or is it: "...Lord, remember
 553 me when [you] come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42)? Humility must
 554 replace eloquence, ostentation, pride and boastfulness.

555

556 **On a group level; a praying people require a change of attitude to**
 557 **avoid systemic hypocrisy.** "As the spirit of humility and devotion in
 558 the church had given place to pride and formalism, love for Christ
 559 and faith in his coming had grown cold. Absorbed in worldliness and
 560 pleasure-seeking, the professed people of God were blinded to the
 561 Savior's instructions concerning the signs of his appearing. The
 562 doctrine of the Second Advent had been neglected; the scriptures
 563 relating to it were obscured by misinterpretation, until it was, to a
 564 great extent, ignored and forgotten. Especially was this the case in
 565 the churches of America. The freedom and comfort enjoyed by all
 566 classes of society, the ambitious desire for wealth and luxury,
 567 begetting an absorbing devotion to money-making, the eager rush for
 568 popularity and power, which seemed to be within the reach of all, led
 569 [people] to center their interests and hopes on the things of this
 570 life and to put far in the future that solemn day when the present
 571 order of things should pass away" (GC88 308.4). Against this
 572 background, it is not surprising that some prayers are unanswered!

573

574 **Effective, fervent prayers will encapsulate Eli's attitude!** "...It is
 575 the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him" (read 1 Samuel 3:18);
 576 therefore, the supplicant casts all cares upon Jesus (1 Peter 5:7).
 577 And the decision to casts all cares upon Jesus leads to a
 578 transactional and transformative experience that culminates with the
 579 supplicant taking the yoke of Christ, learning of Him and finding
 580 rest (Matthew 11:29), which comes only as the supplicant submits to
 581 the providential leading of the all wise, all knowing and all
 582 powerful God; creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 40:28
 583 & 43:15; 1 Peter 4:19). Described here is a prayer experience in
 584 which the supplicant recognizes the awesome power of Jehovah that
 585 renders nothing too hard for the Lord (read Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah
 586 32:17 & 27; Matthew 19:26 & Romans 4:17) who "...Breathed into [Adam's]
 587 nostrils the breath of life and [he] became a living soul" (Genesis
 588 2:7) and who also has the reputation of giving "...Life to the dead and
 589 calling into being that which does not exist" (Romans 4:17 NASB &
 590 John 11:43).

591

592 **"The arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear to dull to**
 593 **hear.** [It is our] iniquities [that] have separated [us] from [our]
 594 God; [our] sins have hidden his face from [us] so that He will not
 595 hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). "A backsliding church closed their eyes to
 596 the signs of the times. God did not forsake them or suffer his
 597 faithfulness to fail; but they departed from him and separated
 598 themselves from his love. As they refused to comply with the
 599 conditions, his promises were **NOT** fulfilled to them" (GC88 315.2).
 600 "Such is the sure result of neglect to appreciate and improve the
 601 light and privileges which God bestows. **Unless the church will**
 602 **follow on in his opening providence, accepting every ray of light,**
 603 **performing every duty which may be revealed, religion will...**
 604 **degenerate into the observance of forms, and the spirit of vital**
 605 **godliness will disappear** [and what will remain is hypocrisy]. ...**God**

606 **requires of his people works of faith and obedience corresponding to the**
 607 **blessings and privileges bestowed**" (GC88 316.1). As long as the
 608 conditions of Isaiah 58:2 are in existence, radical revival and
 609 reformation is needed. And when "...A revival of primitive godliness
 610 as has not been witnessed since apostolic times [occurs among us]"
 611 (GC88 464.1) we will see that "Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence.
 612 He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word
 613 controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will
 614 work in behalf of His people, if they will call upon Him in faith"
 615 (The Review and Herald, {RH}, December 14, 1905 par 3).

616

617 **The time has come to end the hypocrisy that has flourished within and**
 618 **among us (Revelation 3:1).** "...The children of the Lord [have] neglect
 619 prayer, especially secret prayer, altogether too much; [and] many do
 620 not exercise that faith which it is their privilege and duty to
 621 exercise, often waiting for that feeling which faith alone can bring.
 622 **...Faith is ours to exercise; ...joyful feeling and the blessing are God's to give...**"
 623 (Christian Experience and Teachings, {CET} 126.1). "...We are on the
 624 very borders of the eternal world! Am I seeking to keep in constant
 625 communion with God? ...[Am I educating and training] my soul to lean
 626 on Christ, to draw spiritual strength from Christ? **God intends that we shall**
 627 **have an experimental knowledge of Christ (read Jeremiah 29:13 & 33:3; John 17:3; 10:27 & 16;**
 628 **Genesis 3:8 & 22:2),** then we can be faithful witnesses for God, testifying
 629 of the grace of Christ in words and actions, by conscious and
 630 unconscious influence" (TDG 117.1). "We must seek to be one with
 631 God. His interest must be our interest, His sentiments and designs
 632 ours" (TDG 117.4).

633

634 **CALL TO ACTION: WHAT SHALL WE DO?**

635

636 **Close the gap between the ideal person and the real person!** And as
 637 the gap disappears, this will end the hypocrisy that lies within
 638 (Philippians 2:12)! As "...Moses stood in the gate of the camp and
 639 said: 'Who is on the Lord's side'? Let him come unto me..." (Exodus
 640 32:26); this study makes a similar appeal: **When you pray: either**
 641 **individually** (Matthew 6:5) **or collectively** (read Malachi 3:16; Matthew
 642 26:36-41; Acts 1:12-14) **at early morning** (Mark 1:35) **or at midnight**
 643 (Acts 16:25) **or all night** (Luke 6:12); **do not be like the hypocrites who**
 644 **love to make a public and ostentatious display.** It shall not be so among
 645 you! But rather, "...**Go into your room, close the door and pray to your**
 646 **Father...**" (Matthew 6:6, NIV). "...**Do not keep on babbling like the pagans,**
 647 for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do
 648 not be like them for **your Father knows what you need before you ask**
 649 **Him**" (Matthew 6:7-8) and when you "...**Seek first the kingdom of God and**
 650 **His righteousness, all [the things that the Gentiles seek--food, drink,**
 651 **clothing--] shall be added unto you**" (Matthew 6:31-33).

652

653 **"Pray as Jesus has taught us! 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed [is]**
 654 **your name, your kingdom come, your will be done: on earth as it is in**
 655 **heaven.** Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as
 656 we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,
 657 but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:9-13). "All God
 658 requires of [us to answer our prayers]... is [complete] submission of
 659 [ourselves] to Him with all the consequences that [our] acceptance of
 660 the whole truth involves" (The Upward Look, {UL} 376.2) and answers
 661 will come to prayers offered in faith that are according to His will
 662 from lives that are obedient and submitted to His counsels (read Acts
 663 3:6 & Acts 20:7-10; Isaiah 58:6-9, emphasis on verse 9; John 11:42-

664 44, emphasis on verse 42; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; Matthew 9:5-7 & John
 665 14:12). He who spoke and it was done, who commanded and it stood
 666 fast (Psalm 33:9) has witnesses in the visible heavens (Psalm 19:1-3)
 667 and by these, God has legitimized the end-time call to reverence,
 668 glory and worship (Revelation 14:6-7). God is [our] keeper, He
 669 "...Neither slumbers nor sleeps! He is the shade upon [our] right
 670 hand" (Psalm 121:4-5). He saw us before we were conceived (Jeremiah
 671 1:5) and has kept us safe and by the right hand of His righteousness
 672 (Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 17:5 & Revelation 3:10) He holds our right hand
 673 (Isaiah 41:13); therefore, "...In quietness and in confidence shall be
 674 [our] strength..." (Isaiah 30:15). Then set your face to seek the Lord
 675 by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes
 676 (Daniel 9:3) and God will "...Hear from heaven [your] prayers and
 677 supplications and maintain [your] cause" (2 Chronicles 6:35).

678
 679 **Cease praying and worrying for doing both shows a lack of faith.** If
 680 we worry, then don't pray, but after we have prayed, definitely don't
 681 worry! God has our names engraved on the palms of His hand (Isaiah
 682 49:16) and "...Has a thousand ways to provide for us [that is unknown
 683 to us] (The Desire of Ages, {DA} 330.1); therefore, choose to be kept
 684 in perfect peace; keep the mind stayed on God (Isaiah 26:3) by
 685 meditating on His word (Joshua 1:8 & Psalm 119:97 & 99). Learn to
 686 "...Wait on the Lord and keep His way..." (Psalm 37:34) knowing that "...He
 687 [will] incline [His ear] unto [us] and [hear our] cry" (Psalm 40:1).
 688 In view of these promises, rest quietly because God, who is faithful
 689 will keep His promise to never leave or forsake us and to supply all
 690 our needs according to His riches in glory (read 1 Corinthians 1:9 &
 691 10:13; Deuteronomy 7:9; Lamentations 3:22-26; Hebrews 13:5-6; 2 Peter
 692 1:3 & Philippians 4:19). Dearly beloved, it is safe, smart and
 693 beneficial to let go of hypocrisy and choose to walk faithfully with
 694 the Lord, Jesus Christ through communion and fellowship with the Holy
 695 Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:9 & Galatians 5:16). Do it now!