

The Great Hindrance To Prayer

Self-sufficiency

There are many hindrances to effective prayer. The greatest of those is self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency is believing that without Divine intervention you can succeed pretty well on your own. Jesus said emphatically, “Without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) What part of “nothing” don’t we understand? Success without a broken and contrite heart, surrendered knees, and a sense of total helplessness and desperation is nothing to God. It is emptiness, a chasing of the wind. It is vanity all dressed up with no place to go. It is an empty farce. It is nothing. It is wood, hay and stubble.

Self-sufficiency crowns itself with prayerlessness. It prides itself on its work, its sacrifice and its faithfulness. It revels in its cheap accomplishments that fleshly efforts produce. It brags of numbers, crowds, and money. It loves its buildings, music, gadgets and programs. But it knows nothing of powerful deliverances, miraculous healings, and the glorious presence of the Shekinah glory. “God-interventions” are unheard of. Revivals, accompanied by weeping and repentance, are unknown commodities.

Self-sufficiency is naked of the Holy Spirit’s power and anointing. Its knees are unbent, its heart is unbroken, its eyes are dry, its fasts are feasts, its vigils are vulgar, its prayer meetings are sterile. It is predictable, controlled, planned, promoted, and pathetically absent of any miraculous undergirdings. It stands on its own two feet, and falls flat on its face.

An effective prayer life begins with an awareness of the sin of self sufficiency. Self-sufficiency needs to be taken to the woodshed and suffer a good licking at the hands of a loving Heavenly Father. Self-sufficiency robs God of opportunity and glory. It steals the show! It spotlights the human servant rather than the Divine presence. It locks God in a closet. It relegates him to the back room, far from sight or sound. It hinders others from experiencing God himself.

Self-sufficiency deserves to suffer catastrophic failure in which the perpetrator has no where to turn but up. God will not share his glory with another. Prayerlessness is an affront to God’s mighty working power. It insults the Holy Spirit. It leans on human devices. It cheapens the grace of God. It lowers the God of the Bible to the level of the gods of this age. Self sufficient prayerlessness says God is not really needed at all. It says one can live without him, perform without his anointing, work without his power, plan without his direction, and succeed without his help.

Self-sufficiency is the Church of Laodicea (Rev 3:15-19) dressed up in the world’s finest, decked out with gold and silver, claiming to see, but in reality as blind as a bat, poor as a church mouse, powerless as a paraplegic, and sick as a senile nonagenarian on life support. Self-sufficiency has no place in the Kingdom of God.

A.W. Tozer decries self-sufficiency calling it “*the hyphenated sins of the human spirit, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-indulgence, and a host of other self-sins.*”

Oh, that we would die to this self-effort and learn to lean hard on the Everlasting Arms. Solomon’s prayer and God’s promise offers to hope to those who will abandon the arm of flesh,

11. When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, 12. the LORD appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. 13. "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 14. if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 15. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. 16. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. (2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV)