

# PRAYING THROUGH

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Text: Ephesians 4:22-24 and Ephesians 6:12

■ Leonard Ravenhill wrote, “One might estimate the weight of the world, tell the size of the celestial city, count the stars of heaven, measure the speed of lightning, and tell the time of the rising and the setting of the sun--but you cannot estimate prayer-power. Prayer is as vast as God because He is behind it. Prayer is as mighty as God because He has committed Himself to answer it.

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 424.

To pray without any expectations is a waste of time; and to stop praying prior to reaching a spirit of prayer is not much better.

Let’s look at the *obstacles* of praying through until we reach a spirit of prayer.

## I. WE MUST PRAY THROUGH THE BARRIER OF THE FLESH.

■ *Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:22-24, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” NIV*

### A. The barrier of the flesh involves the desires of self.

There is a natural human and even carnal desire for self to be exalted above God. Self wants to be first in our plans. That’s why it’s natural for us as humans to shun fasting and prayer.

John the Baptist had the right perspective when he said of Jesus, “He must increase but I must decrease.”

## **B. The barrier of the flesh involves the attitude of selfishness.**

As humans we have a natural desire to seek self-gratification. We want to satisfy our own human desires. It is when we get past that that we reach the spiritual realm in which the Holy Spirit works.

■ A.W. Tozer wrote, “True spirituality manifests itself in certain dominant desires.”

1. First is the desire to be holy rather than happy.
2. A man may be considered spiritual when he wants to see the honor of God advanced through his life even if it means that he himself must suffer temporary dishonor or loss.
3. The spiritual man wants to carry his cross.
4. Again, a Christian is spiritual when he sees everything from God's viewpoint.
5. Another desire of the spiritual man is to die right rather than to live wrong.
6. The desire to see others advance at his expense.
7. The spiritual man habitually makes eternity-judgments instead of time-judgments.

-- A.W. Tozer, *That Incredible Christian*. Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 5.

## **II. WE MUST PRAY THROUGH THE BARRIER IN THE SPIRIT WORLD.**

■ *Ephesians 6:12*, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

### **A. Our opposition wants to stop us from receiving power.**

■ Paul tells us of the power that we have through prayer in II Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (NIV)

## **B. Our opposition wants to stop us from overcoming sin.**

■ I John 3:18-22 “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

## **C. Our opposition wants to stop us from being spiritually sensitive.**

## **CONCLUSION**

There will always be *obstacles* to reaching that place of spiritual freedom and power; but we must press on. It is important that we pray expecting but it is also important that we pray until we break through every barrier that would hinder us.

Here’s some simple advice to help you get started in having a spiritual breakthrough in your prayer life.

■ **Be simple and direct** in your secret prayer. The grace of simplicity is not to be despised in public prayer; but when we call on God in secret, any formality or elaborateness in our petitions is an offense.

**Pray audibly.** You need not lift your voice to be heard in the street, but it is vastly better to pray not merely in your thoughts but also with words. The utterance of our wants helps to define them.

**Be honest in your secret prayer.** Do not express any want that you do not feel. Do not confess any fault that you do not mean to forsake. Do not keep anything back. Remember that it is He that searcheth the heart to whom you are speaking.

**Pray earnestly.** The words need not be loud, but the desire should be intense. "The fervent, energetic prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." No listless, drowsy petitioning will serve.

**Do not mock God in your prayers.** Do not beg him to come to you. You know that he is never far from any soul that seeks him. That prayer is answered before you utter it. Do not ask God to do for you that which he has expressly bidden you to do.

**Pray always with special reference to the needs of the day and the hour--**the warfare to be waged, the temptations to be resisted, the work to be done, the sorrow to be borne; put your life into your prayer; and let it be the most real and the most immediate business of your life.

--Walter Rauschenbusch

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 418.