***Roadblocks to Prayer  
  
Colossians 1:3-8  
  
COL-028***

We have been talking about the subject of prayer for several weeks. We never apologize for stressing to you that if you can do it, the place to be on Wednesday night is in prayer meeting. Our method of prayer in prayer meeting is specific requests written down that are read and specifically remembered. If you are trying to talk to God if you're not a Christian, you have no phone line; you have no connection; and, you have no access to the throne room in heaven. But if you do, this verse gives you full authority to approach that throne of grace. The born-again believer has a direct phone line to heaven through Jesus Christ from the point of his salvation. God the Holy Spirit, we have shown you, acts as the operator who processes the call to the Father. He adds what you should have said. He deletes what you should not have said. He adjusts and corrects, and when the prayer is presented, it is in prime gem condition for God the Father to decide upon one way or another.

This is a permanent hotline to heaven. You will never receive a busy signal, and the service will never be disconnected for any reason. Only a break in your temporal fellowship with the Father will cause trouble on the line to interfere with the call temporarily.

We pointed out that there are four basic elements that constitute biblical prayer. One is confession of known sins to establish temporal fellowship, so that you are under the control of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, there is thanksgiving for past answers to prayer. Third, there is intercession for the needs of others. And fourth, there are petitions for one's own needs.

**Roadblocks to Prayer**

Now having put all this together, it is very exhilarating to realize the potential of the power that resides in our hands in dealing with Almighty God in our behalf. But there are roadblocks that Satan throws to prayer so that the answers are not there. Here are some roadblocks to answered prayer.

1. **Lack of Faith**

Roadblock number one is the lack of faith. And all these roadblocks are mentioned in scripture for our edification and illumination. In Matthew 21:22, Jesus said "In all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." The word "believing" is the word that means that you act in faith.

We may also add to that Mark 11:24: "Therefore, I say to you: all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

So first, Jesus tells us that the fundamental basis of prayer is not to treat it as a sometime possibility, but as a reality that God has provided. It's an insult to treat it in any other way. Faith means that you take God at His Word – that this is His system for you to communicate with Him to achieve things that need to be done. Furthermore, he says that that includes the final expression of faith – that having prayed, you thank Him for the answer: negative; positive; or, whatever it will be. But you thank Him for the fact that the answer is going to come. And it will come in the right timing and all that's involved there.

Prayer, which is done as merely a possibility is nothing more than a human ritual. Hebrew 11:6: "And without faith, it is impossible to please Him (God), for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." It's pointless to pray if you don't think there is a God. And it is pointless to pray if you think there is a God, but that He does not reward those who seek Him, and He does not listen to those who approach him.

So if you have an attitude of question and a doubt about the efficacy of prayer, you're already out of the running. That's a roadblock that'll keep answers from ever coming. Believing prayer is expressing confidence in God Himself, and in His technique of prayer. Faith is the issue. This is pointed out to us in Mark 10:27, where Jesus said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." And this is the discussion that Jesus had had about rich people going to heaven. He says that it's very hard for a rich person to be saved. The richer you are; the more confident you are in yourself; the less you are open to information (like from the Bible); and, the more critical you are of the information you get from the Bible. And the result is that Jesus compared it to a kind of humorous comparison. He said, "For a rich person to be saved is about like asking a camel to go through the little eye of a sewing needle.

Well, when the disciples heard that, they said, "Well that means it's virtually impossible for a rich person to be saved." And the thing that bothered them was that in Jewish culture, the richer you were, the more you were approved by God. And I've heard Christians say, "God knows whom to entrust with His money." And the people I've heard say that are people that are totally untrustworthy with the money they have. It's not God who's entrusting them with that money. It's someone else who's entrusting them. And the Jews could not understand, when they thought that the richer you are, the more you are under approval of God. And here Jesus is saying, "The richer you are, less likely you are to have any faith in God. You've got so much faith in yourself."

Therefore, they responded, "Well Jesus, who in the world can be saved then?" And then He says, "It's an act of God's grace. All things are possible with God. Nothing is impossible for Him."

**Faith Rest**

So, you can't treat prayer as of questionable value. If you do, that reflects on the truthfulness of God, and it takes you out of fellowship with Him. God wants you to claim his promises as a sure thing. This is what we call faith rest.

**Worry**

Now, prayers that hit the roadblock of no faith, always take a detour into worry. And the end of that is a dead-end of despair and hopelessness. From this detour, you end up in despair and hopelessness – the detour of worry. And God answers prayer even when it is very weak. Please remember that. The modicum of confidence that this is true; that this is God's system; and, that you are actually being heard in the cathedral of the throne room of heaven – the slightest confidence in God is rewarded.

We have an example of that in Acts 12, where the Christians were gathered praying for Peter to be released from prison when Herod had imprisoned him. And indeed, their prayers were answered in a very miraculous way when an angel was sent to set Peter free. And the weakness of their prayer was evidenced, while they're sitting there (the whole group of them in this home praying very seriously). And when the knock comes on the door, and somebody gives the nod to Rhoda, the serving girl, to go to the door. She opens it and sees Peter; her eyes bug out; and, she slams the door shut, and runs inside. And Peter is looking up and down the street, as nervous as a cat in a kennel full of dogs, trying to see who is going to catch him. And she says, "Peter's at the door." And they said, "Rhoda, that's not funny. Sit down and join us. And she says, "But he really is. He's really there." And they say, "Rhoda, you're really becoming an irritating little girl." Suddenly they say, "Hey, what is that? There is somebody pounding." They go, and there's Peter.

Now, after all of that, they finally let him in, but they didn't really think that their prayers were going to work. It was lack of faith, but at least they were doing it. And that modicum of faith, God rewarded.

Have you ever been inside of a whale? Probably not. There's a man in the Bible who was though, and his name was Jonah. And he had all the time in the world to pray. Nobody had to be requesting him repeatedly to come to prayer meeting. And while he prayed, it is very interesting that this man knew enough about God, which is why God wanted to use him to carry the message. God does not use dummies to carry His Word of information. He wants informed people. We have enough religious dummies out there, giving bad doctrine all the time; or, giving it in cutesy-pooh ways that give you a kick at the moment, but they don't carry you through very far in a crises.

**Jonah**

In Jonah chapter 2, notice what this man says. He's praying to God for being saved from this condition alive: "So, I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight." And he certainly was: "Nevertheless, I will look again toward Your holy temple." Jonah says, "Yes, God, I've been expelled from Your sight (speaking humanly – in human terms): "I'm out of sight here in this whale. But the time is going to come because you're going to answer my prayer. You're going to save my life. You're going to get me out of this thing, and I'm going to see Your temple again."

Drop your eyes down to Jonah 2:9, "But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed, I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord." And Jonah apparently said, "Lord, if you get me out of this, I will go to the temple, and I will bring to you a great offering (a great sacrifice) of thanksgiving." And he says, "I'm going to pay what I have vowed to pay in an expression of thanksgiving.

The first roadblock to prayer is lack of faith in the whole system.

1. **Not According to God's Will**

Another roadblock is that it's not according to the will of God. Please open your Bibles, which I trust you have brought with you today out of respect to God today. 1 John 5:14-15: "And this is the confidence which we have before Him – that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request which we have asked of Him." God never promises to grant us what He disapproves of. If something is condemned in the Bible, don't be foolish enough to ask God to bless what you're doing. If God says you should not do this, and it is wrong, He will not bless you in doing that thing.

God's will is to be found in large measure through the Word of God. Doctrine is the guideline to your prayer life. God doesn't grant requests, furthermore, on the basis of vows. Jonah wasn't making a deal with God. He was telling God something that he was confident was going to happen. He said, "I'm surely going to thank You when I'm out of here. I'm going to go, and I'm going to make the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and it's going to be done."

Don't say, "God, if you'll do this for me, then I will do this for You." Don't pray like that. Don't make deals. Don't insult God. Pray according to whatever is His will. He doesn't have to have you do something for Him in exchange.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in His humanity, was the example to us in prayer which is subject to the will of God the Father. And that was the great point which was expressed in Matthew 26:39, where Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He walked off a little ways by Himself. And in the garden was this huge rock – a very large flat rock. And we think that it is the same rock that is there in the Garden of Gethsemane today. And I tell you, it is a very awesome moment when you stand by that huge round boulder on the ground, and realize that here is where Jesus knelt to pray before they took Him for the crucifixion.

Matthew 26:39 says, "And when He went a little beyond them (the three disciples that were with Him), He fell on His face and He prayed saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup." In Jewish symbolism, "cup" refers to wrath and to judgment. So, He probably was referring to the judgment of bearing the sins of the world, and, at that moment, being separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit – a very traumatic future: "Let this cup pass from Me, yet not as I will, but as You will:" He was saying, "It isn't the way I want it, but I want Your will to be done. I wish we could provide salvation in some other way than for Me to become sin for all of humanity." And yet it was all governed by the will of God.

The old sin nature in us is always confident. It knows best. So, it guides our prayers astray, and those prayers get as far as the ceiling, and that's all. Be very careful that the sin nature is not your guide in prayer. It must be the Holy Spirit, but it'll be one or the other. And if it's the sin nature, you will not pray according to the will of God. And you will pray amiss, and, as James, says: "Foolishly."

1. **Lack of Compassion**

The third roadblock is a lack of compassion. This was a principle that was known in the Old Testament, and very clearly stressed in Proverbs 21:13: "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself, and not be answered."

Now let me put it up front that Christians cannot stamp out poverty. We know that for the simple reason that Jesus said that. Mark 14:7: "For the poor you always have with you, and whenever you wish, you can do them good. But you do not always have Me."

Here, Jesus being anointed by Mary, Judas Iscariot was raising an issue of wasting the money on this very valuable ointment – anointing Jesus for His mission of death and burial. Jesus says, "She did the right thing at this point in time. She's ministering to Me by the will of God. If you're concerned for the poor people, you'll always have a chance to deal with them. You won't always have a chance to deal with Me. You'll always have a chance to serve them, because they're always going to be here."

Now what in the world happened during the Lyndon Johnson administration when he came up with the great idea of a great movement called the "War on Poverty," where poverty was to be wiped out in this country? There were to be no poor people. Was there no one in the whole government that had ever heard of this verse? Was there no one who could walk into that oval office and say, "Mr. President, the Bible doctrines is against what you're doing? The Bible doctrine is against this program. If you pursue this, this will be an act of liberalism. This will not be an act of biblical wisdom, and you will bring disaster on the nation. All of the fighting that is going on in Congress today is because of what happened as the result of the war on poverty. It brought such disaster to human beings. It so degraded people. It so made people dependent upon the government. It so drained their self-esteem and their self-respect, and it was so injurious to their moral life. So, illegitimacy became a way of life, because it was a way of increasing your little green government check that comes in the mail every month. And now the nation is recoiling from the horrible consequences of the war on poverty, begun by the disorientation characteristic of liberalism which is detached from biblical principles.

And suddenly, as if Jesus had never said a thing, everybody's getting back to saying, "The poor we will always have with us." And you will notice that in this verse, Jesus also told us how to handle that problem of poverty, whenever you wish you can do them good. Whenever you (individual human being – child of God) wish, you can help the poor person. And that's God's way. And it will never work any other way.

However, it is true at the same time, that God wants us, as individual believers, to have pity on those who are in need in the circle of our lives. They are not to be ignored. Psalm 82:3, "Vindicate the weak and fatherless. Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy. Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked." So, even though these people may be undeserving, their need should be cared for. They may not be deserving, yet we do not turn a deaf ear to their needs. We give them what assistance we can. Will they beat you out of it?

I cannot tell you how many times I have helped people who have come to my door, and have been sent to me, or one or another came under our circle of association who were asking for help; who needed some kind of help; who needed some kind of assistance; and, who assured me: "If you'll just give me this, I will be able to even repay you in a week or two or so," and how regularly they never show up again.

Well, I take it the moment to give them the Word of God and the gospel. And if I think I want to help them, I always help them with the understanding that they're going to beat me out of it. I don't trust the sin nature in poor people any more than I do all you rich ones sitting out here today. And you have to make that decision – that you'll pay the price. But it is between you and God. The government can never deal with this problem. It just acerbates the condition. It just has created the horror of our society that we have today. And it all goes back to the war on poverty.

Lack of pity on the needy will redound to the loss of good things for yourself. You will not get away with it. Psalm 41:1, "How blessed is he who considers the helpless? The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble." If you help that person, even if it's sacrificial for you to do so, God will not forget that. And as James points out: "What good is it for you to listen to your brother's need and say,' Go brother and be blessed; bless you brother,'" and you don't help him? You don't give him the money; you don't give him the food; you don't give him the shelter; you don't give him the clothing; or, you don't give him the care. This kind of lack of compassion, or throwing it upon the government agency – that's what's happened today. God says, "You do that, when it is in your power to do good, and God will close His ears to your prayers." It will be a roadblock. Everything slams shut.

Perhaps God does not listen to some of our prayers because of our mental attitude towards someone in need. We need to be grace-oriented. And we have a very dramatic example of that illustrated in Matthew 18:26 – this closing the ear to the needs of someone. In Matthew 18:26, we have this slave who owes an enormous sum to his master. And I mean it's like 10,000 talents. That's something, if we can keep some reference of money – that's like $10 million. This slave an enormous, huge sum of money. And since he didn't have the means to pay, verse 25 says, "The Lord commanded him to be sold with his wife and children – all that he had for repayment."

Verse 26, "The slave, therefore, falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.'" He pled with his master not to send him off and sell him, and maybe break up the family: "And the Lord of that slave felt compassion for this man, and his financial need, and released him, and forgave him the $10 million debt." Verse 28 say, "But that very same slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 denarii." Now mind you, he owed $10,000 denarii ($10 million worth) to his master. 100 denarii is a paltry sum by comparison: "And he seized him, and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'" And that slave now asked him to have compassion. His fellow slave fell down and began entreating him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I'll repay you.' He was unwilling, however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed."

Now that was kind of dumb. They don't pay very well in prison. And he's never going to get paid that way: "But the other slave said, 'That is terrible.' They knew how much had been forgiven him, and he was entreating this poor guy for a paltry sum like this? So, they told the Lord – the master.

Verses 32-34 say, "Then summoning him, his Lord said, 'You wicked slave. I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?' And his Lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him."

Now $10 buys a lot of torture – very sophisticated kind of stuff. And this slave learned the principle of the dangers of not having compassion on those that need our help. Forgiving is to be kind. This man was not kind.

So point number three is the lack of compassion to those whom you can help, whether they deserve it or not, will block your prayer life.

1. **Pride**

Next is the presence of pride and self-righteousness. Job 35:12-13: "There they cry out, but he does not answer because of the pride of evil men. Surely God will not listen to an empty cry; nor will the Almighty regard it." Here is pride (self-righteousness), and God will not answer prayer of people who have that attitude about them. This is the question that Paul referred to in Romans 12:3, about thinking more highly of yourself than you should. Romans 12:3-4, "For through the grace given to me, I say to every man among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of judgment." To the extent that God has given you faith to serve Him, and quality to serve Him, that's the extent to which you do it. So, what do you have to be so proud about? You have nothing but what God enables you to have the capacity to do. You should be grateful – not arrogant, because you have the faith capacity to serve. When you have no faith, then you are limited in your service. When you have no faith, then God may ask you to do something, and you say, "Oh no, I can't afford that. Oh, I can't do that. I can't, I can't do that. I can't take that burden on me." No faith means no service that God calls upon you.

So, there's no place for pride and self-righteousness, even when you recognize that you are doing good and proper things of service as a Christian. Satan's sin was this very thing. 1 Timothy 3:6 points out: "And not a new convert." Here it's talking about qualifications for a pastor-teacher, put in authority in a local congregation. It says, "Don't put in a guy that's just been born-again recently, lest he become conceited, and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil." Well, what did the devil do? He had pride – pride that made him equal to God in his eyes. And the result was that he was condemned by God out of that sin of pride and self-righteousness.

So, there's a serious question to the motivation behind a prayer request. Are you seeking God's glory or yours for what you ask? Are you seeking something for the glory of God as the result of that prayer answer, or is this a great glory for yourself. When the answer comes, whom will you? Will you be glorifying? Will you be glorifying God, or will you glorify yourself?

Turn to Luke 18 for the classical example of this. Here we have the Pharisee and the Publican, in that order, praying: "The Pharisee prayed, thanking God for how commendable he was. He was proud of his relative righteousness. In Luke 18:9, Jesus told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and they viewed others with content: "Two men went up into the temple to pray: one, a Pharisee; and, the other, a tax gatherer (the publican). The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself: 'God I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers; unjust; adulterers; or, even like this tax gatherer (this publican). I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes of all that I get.'"

So this man was very proud and very self-righteous, and he thanked God that he was better than other Jews (relative righteousness). But what God saw was his mental attitude sin of pride, and his self-righteousness. Therefore, God ignored his prayer, because the end of verse 14 tells us that: "This man went down to his home, unsaved and unjustified." He went just as condemned as he was when he approached God.

So, if you have the attitude of a spiritual snob, despising others, your prayers are canceled out. You're trying to build your own righteousness on other people's unrighteousness. So, I would be very careful of being very harsh on other people when they are sinning, and when they are wrong. I'm very uncomfortable when I hear people say things that are a judgmental evaluation. You can judge what a person says. You can judge what you see a person do. But you cannot judge, and this is what the Bible forbids – judging what is the motive of the heart. The Bible says, "Judge what you see him do. Judge what you hear him say. But don't you dare imply motivations to him that are of the mind (of the heart). And you cannot judge, because you cannot look in there and know that.

Here this Pharisee is condemning others on judgments that he cannot make, and when indeed he is totally blind to his own self-righteousness. And the more arrogant and the more self-righteous you are, the more snooty you'll be, and the more readily you will condemn and judge others about you.

On the other hand, this publican humbly beat his chest. He ask God out loud for all to hear, to be merciful to him a sinner. The Pharisee prayed to himself. And this man has no hesitancy of speaking out loud. He's not making any pretense to God or anyone else: "But the tax gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me, the sinner.'" This man was humbly asking God to be merciful to him. And you must understand an important point about the word "merciful." The word "merciful" means "propitious;" that is, for God to make satisfaction for his sin: "God, make satisfaction for my sin. Makes satisfaction for me, a sinner. Be propitious to me, a sinner." This is that great word "propitiation" that we have in various places in Scripture.

This man was asking God to save him on Old Testament ground where he understood that in the holy of holies in the Temple, there was the ark of the covenant. And on top of that was the mercy seat. The mercy seat was where the blood was sprinkled once a year for the forgiveness of sins of the people. And when that mercy seat was sprinkled, it was said that God was propitiated. With this symbol of the coming blood of Christ, for one year, for the sins of the people and of the nation, God was propitiated. So, he was saying, "God, please sprinkle the blood on the top of the ark of the covenant (the mercy seat), which will cover my sinfulness, and you will be propitious toward me. Your justice will be satisfied." This was the picture of Jesus Christ, Who is the mercy seat, and who is covered by this blood.

Leviticus 16:14 was the background of this man's thinking: "Moreover, he (the priest) shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side, and also in front of the mercy seat. He shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times." "Seven times" indicates completion. So, Jesus Christ, as the Savior, is the mercy seat, and became the final propitiation for the wrath of God – His justice satisfied.

So where do we stand today? Is it proper for you to tell people, as one famous evangelist used to tell people, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." That's such an insult, and I hope you understand why. You're asking God to be satisfied relative to your sin. That's what Christ has already done. What people have to understand is that the sin is no longer a problem. The problem is believing that God has covered sin.

How do we know that? 1 John 2:2: "And He Himself (Jesus Christ) is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." All the people in hell have had their sins paid for. They just wouldn't take the propitiation.

1 John 4:10: "In this, His love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." So, it would be insulting to be asking God to be propitious toward your sins. Don't ever tell anybody to pray like that. Instead, the prayer is to thank God for the fact that He is propitiated. He has been satisfied.

So, this man in Luke 18:13 says, "God be merciful to me a sinner". The consequence is in verse 14: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

So, the prayer of the Pharisee went nowhere, and he went home as condemned and non-propitiated as he was before. Whereas the publican, humbly accepting his status without pride in himself, found himself indeed born again.

2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God wants to give all of us salvation. But it is our pride that gets in the way of our good works, and our virtues are filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). They stand in our way. God wants to answer prayer, but our arrogance very often closes the door.

1. **Discord in the Home**

The next roadblock is discord in the home. 1 Peter 3:7 tells us about that: "You husbands likewise live with your wives in an understanding way, as with the weaker vessel (since she is a woman), and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered." Parents who fight cannot pray with results because they're out of fellowship. And that's why the Bible tries to say, "If you're going to fight as a husband and wife, settle the thing before you go to bed. Settle the thing before the day is over. Settle the thing before sunset." Do not let the day end, because you are in a very serious condition all night long. Children who fight with one another cannot pray effectively. That's why your children in the home should not be squabbling with one another. They should be brought up short that that is unacceptable. And it will not be tolerated in your home. They will not fight with one another, let alone fight with the parents. Anger, malice, and unfriendliness are mental attitude sins, and they will neutralize the power of prayer because you're out of fellowship.

The grace-oriented facet will resolve much of this. If you just treat people with grace, and know that you are a worm just like they are a worm, you won't be quite so heavy-handed, and so adamant to press the fact that you know better.

The Bible recognizes that people who are single, and people who are older, do a better job at keeping peace and acting as prayer warriors. 1 Timothy 5:5 points this out to us: "Now she who is a widow, indeed, and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God, and continues in entreaties and prayers, night and day." People who are widows usually are older people; they are single people; and, they are very effective prayer warriors.

1. **Selfish Asking**

The next roadblock is selfish asking. The classic passage is James 4:2-3: "You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain. So, you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask in prayer, and you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasure". We often say that we need something when we merely want it to satisfy some old sin nature desire. That's a wrong motive for prayer. There are so many things around to lead us into senseless, selfish desires – to trivialize, and to waste our allotted lifespan. So many things are so attractive that we knock ourselves out day and night, week in and week out, pursuing, only to leave it all behind, and to find an empty quota of rewards in heaven.

Psalm 37:4 says, "Pray to please and to glorify the Lord, and the desires of our heart will most assuredly be granted to us." What a great promise. Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the Lord." You wake up in the morning, and you begin your week, and what is your orientation guideline? It is the Lord. It is the work of the local church ministry. It is the work of your Christian service. That is what you focus on. And you never say, "I must skip going to church because I have some activity that I must prepare for in the circle of my interests and ambitions. You never depart from your Christian service, or come unprepared for it because you have substituted other things for it. You have delighted yourself in other pursuits: "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Now, either you believe that, or you blow it off.

Do you remember when the Israelites wanted meat to eat? They were just complaining to Moses, "What kind of existence is this? We don't ever have any meat like we used to have in Egypt." So, God said, "I'll give you flesh." And they got it. And it was a wrong prayer, and that's one of the greatest punishments that God gives sometimes. He gives you the thing you ask for. And this is a principle that you might have to use. I've used this. Sometimes we have believers who just are adamant to do something. So, then I calculate, and when they find out how wrong they are, the price we'll pay is this. And if I think it merits it, I let them go ahead and do it. Then the price they pay is indeed very costly. Then they back off and say, "Boy, I shouldn't have done that." And they have learned a lesson well, but it's costly to teach that way.

This is what God did in Numbers 11:18-20: "And say to the people, 'Consecrate yourself, for tomorrow you shall eat meat. For you have wept in the ears of the Lord saying, 'Oh, that someone would give us meat to eat, for we were well-off in Egypt.' Therefore, the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat.'" Oh, boy are you ever going to have meat? Now, here God has had it with these people insulting Him, and insolent to Him, saying that their lives were better in Egypt than in freedom.

Verses 19-20: "You shall eat not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor 10 days, nor 20 days; but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils." Now, how does meat come out of your nostrils? When you throw up. Have you ever thrown up and have it come through your nostrils? That's very bad. I wouldn't recommend that you do that.

We who are into scuba diving are always concerned about getting sick when you're down under, which sometimes happens, and you throw up, and you don't want it to come out of your nostrils. There's a way of handling that. I won't go into that right now. That may not be pertinent. But you're there, and you have a mask to clear, and you got a breathing tube to keep open.

However, God says, "I'm going to give it to you until you're going to be throwing it up right through your nose, and becomes loathsome to you." This thing that you just had to have, you're going to hate it, because you have rejected the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?" They are whiners. And God says, "Okay, you're bound and determined that you're going to kill yourself getting something you had to have. I'm going to give it to you. I'm going to pour it on in abundance. You are going to get it like you'd never dreamed. I'm going to pile that wealth until it comes out of your nostrils." And this wealth here was the flesh.

Numbers 11:31: "Now there went forth a wind from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side: all around the camp, and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground." One cubit is 18 inches. Double that, and that's how high the quail were: "And the people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail. He who gathered least gathered 10 homers." That is about 11 bushels. The least they gathered was 11 bushels: "And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very severe plague. So, the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah because there they buried the people who had been greedy." Kibroth-hattaavah means "graves of greediness."

Psalm 106:15 also speaks to us about this selfish asking: "So, He gave them their request, but sent a wasting disease among them," describing this event here that we've just read of.

Solomon asked unselfishly for what he wanted (1 Kings 3:10-14). He was the contrast of these people in the wilderness. He asked unselfishly. And the result was that God said, "Because you have asked in an unselfish manner (you have asked in the will of God), I'm going to give you everything you asked for, and I'm going to make you the richest man – not only the smartest man, but I'm going to give you everything you could have asked for but didn't." 1 Kings 3:10-13: "And it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon asked this thing. And God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing, and you have not asked for yourself long life, nor have you asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discern to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.'" No one with the spiritual discernment has ever lived to exceed what Solomon had: "And I have also given you that which you have not asked for: both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. And if you shall walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days."

What a deal! God says, "You asked in the right way. You could have asked for this and this and this. I'm going to give you all those things because those were good things to have. But I'm going to give you the thing you asked for – the smarts. And no one will ever have the smarts that you have. Now, there's one thing, I warn you. You are going to enjoy the good life like you can't imagine. You didn't pray for riches, but I'm going to make you rich. And boy, you're going to know what the good life is. And if you're not careful, you're going to deviate from doctrine, and you're going to start living in a godless way. You're going to start using My blessings to do sinful things."

Well, I'm sorry to say that, unlike his father David, Solomon used God's blessings to do sinful things. And the result was that his life crashed in on him, and most of it was wasted, trying one thing after another for happiness, until he came to the end of his life. And as he says at the end of book of Ecclesiastes: "What is the sum of life? To learn the commandments of God, and to obey His will." He finally remembered what God had taught him.

Now there are a few other very dramatic things (perhaps the most likely) for you to be guilty of in roadblocks to prayer. And those we will look at next time.

God, our Father, we thank for the instruction for Word of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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