

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expositional Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 3:7-12**

34- Godly Husbands, Fellow-Heirs, and Hindered Prayers- Part 2

October 14, 2018

1 Peter 3:7-12

7 You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

10 For, "***THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.***

11 "***HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.***

12 "***FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL.***"

To the Glory of God

One of the reasons that many of the things that we see every day are important is because they represent something *else*. And so, while it is true that the thing that we see *does* have *some* intrinsic value on its own, the *real* value, the *ultimate* value, the *supreme* value of many of the things that we see lies in the fact that what we see represents something *else* that is *infinitely more* important than the thing itself.

For example, the Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that the one, true, and living God, Who is *generally* revealed in Nature, and *specifically* revealed in Scripture, created everything out of nothing (ex-nihilo) in six, 24-hour divisions of time called "days". But, by saying that, the Bible also tells us something about God. The very first phrase in the Bible, **"In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth"**, *presupposes* the existence of God. And that means that *before* God created the Heavens and the Earth, God was there.

And God was there in all His infinite and unfathomable Perfections. So, before there was either Light or Darkness, there was God. Before there was the Sun and the Moon and the Stars, there was God. Before there was either Time or Space or Gravity or Movement, there was God. Before there was Air or Oxygen or Water, there was God.

And God was not bored. And God was not lonely, and He was not silent, nor idle. And it is blasphemy to suggest that He was. God was captured by perfect Beauty and flawless Glory as He gazed into the express Image of Himself that radiated from the Face of His Son, and He loved what He saw. Our great God had no need, He knew no lack, and He possessed nothing for which He had to ask for, or want or seek counsel. From Eternity Past, God knew Himself *perfectly* and He loved Himself *infinitely* and He delighted in Himself *absolutely*.

It is important for us to understand that God did not need to create *anything* to complete Himself. There has never been a measurement of infinite Completeness like God has always had. His Omnipotence and Omniscience, and His Omnipresence did not need any assistance by something that could be made. God was entire and complete, in Himself, from the very Beginning, all by Himself.

But, in His Wisdom, God determined to "display" or "show" or "manifest" or "demonstrate" the unimaginable Beauty and Value and Importance and Glory of *two* of His glorious Qualities:

1. His Grace
2. His Righteousness

... and God determined, before the World was, that, as He displayed these two Qualities, the "Glory", or the "Value", or the "Beauty", or the "Importance" of these two Qualities would be *seen* and it would be

understood and it would be *appreciated* and it would be *marveled at* and it would be *praised* throughout all of Eternity.

But just *how* would God demonstrate or display either His Grace and His Righteousness? God, in the Tri-unity of His Essence of "God the Father" and "God the Son" and "God the Holy Spirit", didn't need either Grace or Righteousness. But Grace *cannot* be demonstrated unless there is a need for it.

And so, God created the Heavens and the Earth. And He created the Heavens to *represent* something *bigger* and *better* and more *important* than itself. When we gaze into the Heavens, we are amazed at galaxies and solar systems and light-years and lunar orbits. But, even though those things *do* hold some degree of glory, those things exist to show forth something *infinitely* more important than what we see. Here is how David put it about 1,000 years before Jesus was born:

Psalm 19:1

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Silly, creatures of the dirt, like Carl Sagan, said:

"If we are alone in the Universe, it sure seems like an awful waste of space."

And then he said:

"All I can show is that I have no evidence for God's existence."

But what Sagan did not understand was that the only reason that all that "out there" exists is to "demonstrate", or to "display", or to "show", or to "tell" of the Glory of God. So, the reason that the Universe exists is *not* because the Universe is itself the *primary* Value, but rather that the Universe displays or tells of the Glory of God. And that means that God is *better* and *more important* than the Universe. And so, when the Universe becomes an *end to itself*, then the entire reason for its existence is missed.

And God created the Earth, so there would be a platform for Mankind to exist. So, after God made the Earth with His spoken Word, He made Man "in His Own Image." And God breathed into his nostrils the Breath of Life, and *that* is why Man became a living being. So, God

made Man in His Image, *not* that we are “little gods” as the Gnostics and the Mormons and the charlatans on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network teach. God never conferred Deity on Man. No. *Part* of why God made Man in His Image and in His Likeness is so that when unsaved people see Man create and build and plant and defend and love, they would see a *representation* of Man’s Creator. But that is *not* the primary reason God made Man. Because, even as the Heavens are telling of the Glory of God, Man is also telling of the Glory of God.

But just *how* do human beings show or display or manifest or tell of God’s Glory? By becoming the *recipients* of God’s Grace. You see, God made Man and allowed him to consciously rebel against God and fall into Sin. But why would God do that? God *allowed* that so that God could then demonstrate or show or display His Grace in redeeming those unworthy rebels by what He alone does for them. And here is how the Apostle Paul put it in his inspired “Letter” to the Church at Ephesus:

Ephesians 1:3-5

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

Here Paul says that we have been chosen to be saved, before God made the Universe, and before we were born, and before we did anything Good or Evil. And Paul goes on to say that God chose us “in Him” so that we would be “Holy” and Blameless” before God. Paul then says that, in Love, God predestined us to be saved so that we could be adopted into His family through Jesus Christ. And what was the catalyst as to why God did that? Paul says:

The Kind Intention of His Will

Wow! This is amazing! Based on nothing more than the fact that God is Kind, He chose us to save us! But to what end? What is the final and the highest and the best and the most important Reason why God did all this? Look at the very next verse (**Ephesians 1:6**):

To the praise of the glory of His grace ...

And that means that God's Grace has a "Glory" to it. God's Grace has a "Value" to it, an "Importance" to it. But, in order for the Glory of God's Grace to be "praised", in order for the Glory of God's Grace to be "admired" or "appreciated" or "loved" or "treasured", it has to, first, be seen! The Glory of God's Grace *cannot* be praised unless it is seen. It has to be understood! It has to be demonstrated! It has to be displayed! And the only reason God can display His Grace is for there to be sinful human beings who desperately *need* it!

So, even though there is *some* degree of glory to Mankind in the fact that we do what we do in the earth, the *main* reason, the *most important* reason that we exist is so that the Glory of God's Grace can be praised when it is demonstrated on us! And that means that God is *better* and *more important* than us! And so, when we become an "end to ourselves", then the entire reason for our existence is missed.

And that is why there is Hell. And that is why Hell is frightening and terrifying. Hell exists as the only *reasonable* conclusion of God's Righteousness against unrepentant rebels. What should an infinitely perfect Being do when the single most important Quality that He possesses, the Glory of His Grace, is spurned? What should an infinitely Righteous God do when the Glory of His Grace is insulted and trampled under-foot and counted as nothing?

When the pristine Righteousness of God is rejected, Celestial High Treason has been committed. And the one, true, and living God has no options but to *adjudicate* that Injustice. And so, to defend His Own Righteousness (which has been insulted by our sin), God must punish the guilty. And this Divine Punishment is correctly called God's Justice.

So, while it is true that God is Love, it is *not* true to think of God as being "Wrath". God's Divine Wrath is a *derivative* of His Justice. And God's Justice is the adjudicating Arm of His Righteousness. So, when God's Righteousness has been insulted by our Sin, God's Wrath goes about to bring Divine Justice to the guilty. If God did not issue His Wrath against unrepentant sinners, He would be agreeing with us that His Glory (Righteousness) was not worth defending.

And that means that if the *saving* of unworthy sinners (by what God did for them) displays the Glory of God's Grace, then the *damning* of unrepentant rebels displays the Glory of God's Justice in defending His Righteousness. But that also means that God is *better* and *more important* than Hell! And so, when Hell becomes an "end to itself", then the entire reason for its existence is missed.

We must understand that the End of all things is God. *Nothing*, that has been created, exists for *itself*. And that means that God is not only the *Beginning* of all things, He is also the End of all things. And this is why the Apostle Paul said:

Romans 11:36

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

... so, everything came from God. And everything serves to magnify the Worth of God. And everything will, one day, go back to God. So, as God rolled out the Heavens as a scroll, He will one day roll everything back up, and God will be all in all.

And so, everything on earth exists for God, including us. And everything on earth represents *something else* that is *higher* and *better* and *more important* than the thing itself. For example, the reason Bread exists is *not* simply so that we can continue to live by eating it. That is true, but the *highest* and the *best* and the *most important* reason that Bread exists is so that we will understand what Jesus meant when He said:

John 6:35

I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

... and the most important reason why a Door exists is so that we will comprehend what the Lord meant when He said:

John 10:9

I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

... and the same thing is true about Marriage. Of course, Marriage is valuable because it affords us great comfort in this life. And, of course, Marriage is important because it brings about Stability and Order and Children, so that the Human Race can continue.

But the *main* reason that Marriage exists is because it represents something *else*. And what Marriage represents is *more important* than Marriage itself. So, the *highest* and the *best* and the *most important* Reason that Marriage exists is to "display" or "show" or "tell" about the Relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. Here is how the Apostle put it:

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, because we are members of His body. **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.**

And this is *why* it matters how Husbands and Wives behave within the Marriage. People ask me all the time, "*What is the big deal, Brother Blair? Why do you continually harp on this 'Divine Order' thing? We have a happy Marriage and we are content in the way we carry out our Marriage. But we choose not to adopt an archaic first century model because we live in America in the 21st Century. And we are saved and we love God. So, quit trying to get us to adopt a way of behavior that is outdated and irrelevant.*"

And my response to that is that the main reason Marriage exists in the first place is to be an earthly, tangible, visible, and temporary *representation* of the Mystery between Jesus Christ and His Church. And that means that what Marriage *represents* is more important than the Marriage itself. And so, when Marriage becomes an “end to itself”, then the entire reason for its existence is missed.

So, the main reason why there are things like “Husbands” and “Wives” is so that people can see what it means for Christ to love His Church, and what it means for the Church to submit to Christ’s Authority. And that is *why* the Roles of both the Husband and the Wife matter. And that means that Jesus Christ is more important than Husbands, and that means that the Church is more important than Wives.

You see, when Men, joyfully and humbly struggle against the lusts of their flesh to submit themselves to what the Scriptures teach about how Husbands must lead and love and provide for and protect his Wife and Children, and lead in the Church, that strange and odd and unique behavior gives the world a correct portrait of Jesus’ Relationship with His Church. And Peter says that behavior will *help* our Prayers.

When Women, joyfully and humbly struggle against the lusts of their flesh to submit themselves to what the Scriptures teach about how Wives must submit to the limited authority of their Husbands, and support him and respect him in the Home, and afford that same Support and Respect to the Leaders in the Church, that gives the world a correct portrait of the Church’s Relationship with Jesus Christ.

And that means that a Man, who *refuses* to lead gives a false representation about Jesus. And a Woman, who refuses to submit tells a lie to the world about the Church. And no human being has that right. And Peter says that rebellion will *hinder* our Prayers.

Look, God certainly *could* have made all humans to be Male or Female. But He didn’t. And He didn’t on purpose. And so, God created them *uniquely* Male and Female. And He did that on purpose. And that means that we are *not* “Equal”, in the truest sense of the word. Now we should all be afforded dignity, and Women absolutely have an “equal” place at the Table of Salvation, but we are manifestly unique, distinct, and different.

And that is *why*, dear friends, we have to make certain that the current effort of our own Country to achieve “Equality” between Men

and Women does not sin against the Biblical Truth about *why* God made us Male and Female in the first place.

Husbands represent Jesus Christ in the Marriage. And so, a violent or unloving Husband, or one who refuses to lead, *falsely* testifies to the world Who Jesus is and what Jesus does. Wives represent the Church. And so, a rebellious, disrespectful Wife, or one who *refuses* to submit to her Husband's Authority, *falsely* testifies to the world who the Church is and what the Church does.

And that means that our "Maleness" is *not* some random and accidental result of Darwinian Evolution. Maleness, in and of itself, has meaning and purpose and value. And so, to ignore that or to even minimize it or to seek to redefine it, simply because it *inconveniently* stands in the way of some "utopian society" that is being engineered, is not only *unworkable*, it is *dangerous*.

Femaleness also has significant meaning and purpose. And so, for Women to *ignore* biological and biblical Reality, and usurp authority over the Man, will not only subjugate and feminize *him*, it will also make Women supremely unhappy as well.

Unlike the lost pagan world, we must understand and emphasize and celebrate the God-given uniqueness of both the Man and the Woman, between Male and Female, and between Husbands and Wives, and we must re-enforce the God-ordained "Roles" in both the Home and in the Church that are given to the Husband and the Wife, that the Holy Bible clearly and repeatedly delineates.

So, when they ask me, "*Brother Blair, are you really against 'Female Equality' in the workplace?*" My answer is, "*Neither I nor God's Word advocates the subjugation or abuse or mistreatment of Women. God wants Women to be satisfied and fulfilled more than they do. But Rebellion and Sin can never bring about that Happiness and Satisfaction. So, I see the effort to ignore or minimize our God-given, sex-based distinctions as unwise and hurtful. So, what I am "for" is that both Men and Women struggle against the lusts of their flesh, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in their daily lives- all to the Glory of God. And you cannot achieve that by ignoring or rebelling against the Divine Order of Male Leadership and Female Submission.*

So, if you can work out some form of 'earthly equality' and not violate that 'Order', I'm all for it. But if you have to ignore or cast aside

the clear Commands of the Word of God about Men and Women and their Roles in this life, in order to achieve this so-called, 'Equality', then I am against it and I will cry out against it and I will fight against it with every ounce of strength in my body, as long as I live, because that effort is Sin."

And one of the biggest reasons I know that to be true is because, here in verse 7, the Apostle Peter said that if Husbands do *not* love their Wives, and if Husbands do *not* dwell with them in an "understanding way", and if Husbands do *not* honor them as "fellow-heirs of the Grace of Life", then this Apostle, who walked on water with Jesus said:

Your Prayers will be hindered.

Now why is that true? What has my Prayer-life got to do with how I treat my Wife? Well, evidently, a lot. *"But Brother Blair, I thought that since I was already saved, I was okay with God. So, are you telling me that, even though I am saved, my Prayers are still hindered if either the Husband and Wife rebel against what Peter says here?"* Yes, I am. That is *exactly* what the Bible teaches.

And that is because the Husband and the Wife, and even Marriage itself, is not an end to itself. They all represent something *else* that is *much more important*. And so, you would have to ask yourself why any genuinely saved Man would not desire to treat his Wife the way the Bible teaches here? Why would any genuinely saved Woman not gladly submit herself to her Husband since that is what the Bible clearly teaches?

So, what Peter is teaching here is that truly born-again people live like this. And that means that if either the Husband or the Wife rebels against what the Apostle teaches here, then they are proving that whatever "salvation experience" they think they had was a lie. So, how does this all work?

Well, here, in his first Epistle, Peter mentions Prayer three different times. And what is remarkable about these three instances is that there is something common in each of them. Let me read them to you and see if you can detect the common thread running through each one:

1. Peter has a word for Husbands about Prayer and their relationship with their Wives in **1 Peter 3:7**:

You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

2. In the very next paragraph he speaks to all believers (verse 8) about being brotherly and kindhearted and humble, and (verse 9) not returning evil for evil but instead giving a blessing. Then, to support these admonitions, he quotes **Psalm 34**:

For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

3. In **1 Peter 4:7**, he says:

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.

And what was amazing to me as I read these three references was that they do *not* teach us that praying helps us to "live right". No, these three verses tell us that us "living right" helps us to pray. Now it's true that praying is one of the "Means" by which God has chosen to distribute His Grace to His people. But Peter's point in every one of these references is that it's true the other way around too:

God has appointed a way for us to live, which will help us pray.

And that means that there are certain ways that humans can live, ways that Husbands and Wives can live (ways that the world will gladly applaud), that actually *hinder* our Prayers. And conversely, there are certain ways that Men and Women can live their lives that *helps*

Prayer. And the reason this is true is because Men and Women, and Husbands and Wives, and even Marriage itself represents something infinitely *more important* than the Marriage or the people in it.

So now that we know this, let's read these verses again so we can see what Peter is telling us about how the way we live our lives either "helps" or "hinders" our praying:

1 Peter 3:7

You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

This inerrant verse tells Husbands that there is a particular way we can live with our Wives that can either *hinder* our Prayers or *help* them. Peter tells saved Husbands that if you want your Prayers to be *helped* and not *hindered*, you have to live with your Wife:

... in an understanding way ...

Why? Because Wives are not "Equal" with their Husbands:

[Because she is] **someone weaker, since she is a woman ...**

So, this tells us that there must be some type of effort to understand the Wife, so as to know her needs. There has to be a special *solicitousness* of her *intrinsic* weaknesses (since she is a Woman), and what she especially needs from you.

And there is not a Man on earth that understands this very well. But there aren't many Women who understand this either. Women have almost as hard a time explaining their needs as Men do. But this is *why* the Apostle attaches Prayer to this Command. So, Husbands, do *not* start with trying to understand your Wife. Start with Prayer. Ask God to help you understand her. But that isn't all. Peter went on to say,

... and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life

... which completely *eliminates* every sinful violent or rude or abusive or disrespectful word or act against a Wife by any Husband for any reason at any time.

There has to be an ongoing, cognizant recognition that the Wife is a “fellow heir of the grace of life”. And this will always, always, always result in an accompanying bestowal of Honor rather than any belittling or demeaning effort. But as hard as this might be, the Reward is sweet indeed, because Peter, acting as an official spokesman for the Lord Jesus Christ (Apostle), promises us that if we do this, our Prayers will *not* be hindered! But that also means that if we do *not* live like this, our prayers *will* be hindered.

So, we must understand that there is a certain way we can live with our Wives that results in our Prayers being *hindered* and that *ruins* our spiritual impact. And there is a way we can live with our Wives that *frees* our Prayers and helps empower our spiritual impact.

1 Peter 3:8&9

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

Next, Peter goes on in verses 8 and 9 to call *all of us*, not just Husbands, to be “harmonious” and “sympathetic” and “brotherly” and “kindhearted” and “humble in spirit”, and “not to return evil for evil or insult for insult but to bless those who are unkind to us”. And then he said:

... for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing

... and that is the biblical reason why we should strive to obey this, the knowledge that we have been called by God to live this way so that we may inherit a Divine Blessing.

And then the Apostle gives the Foundation underneath this kind of strange behavior. And it's a quote from **Psalm 34**. And in verse 12, this Foundation reaches a zenith with the very *same* argument found in **1 Peter 3:7**, which is, our Prayers will be hindered if we *don't* live this way. Here is how King David put it:

FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

And that tells us that Almighty God has a special "attentiveness" to the Prayers of those who pursue peace and whose lips are pure and who don't use guile (deceit).

Peter tells us that God listens to the Prayers of those who keep their tongue from evil, people who refrain from guile, people who seek peace and do righteous deeds. So here again Peter is telling us *how* we can live so that our Prayers won't be hindered. And it's the very same thing Jesus was teaching in the Lord's Prayer when He told us to pray:

Matthew 6:12

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

... which means that us not forgiving those who repent will hinder our Prayers. And that's Peter's point, too. There is a way to live that either hinders or helps our Prayers.

1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.

Thirdly, Peter says that there are two special endeavors we can make so that our Prayers will be helped and not hindered:

1. Be of "sound judgment" for the sake of your Prayers
2. Have a "sober spirit" for the sake of your Prayers

In other words, there is a way to think and a way to live that will either help or hinder our Prayers. And from this, we can formulate a Doctrine, a Divine Teaching, a Biblical Truth that we can teach and learn and proclaim with great confidence from these texts:

Christians must endeavor to think and live in a way that does not hinder their Prayers.

... and this Doctrine has three parts to it:

1. Our Prayers *can* be hindered, even if we are saved. Our “prayer life” can be clogged and blocked.
2. What blocks Prayer is often the way we think and the way we live, the way we relate to Wives or Husbands or kids or parents or colleagues or neighbors, or even those who have wronged us.
3. Opening the way of Prayer to God involves a *conscious* endeavor. In each of these texts Peter is telling us to resolve to “do” something so that our Prayers will not be hindered.

... and the motivation behind us being of sound judgment and of having a sober spirit is:

The end of all things is near...

Jesus is soon to come. And He desires that when He bursts the clouds and comes back, that He finds us faithful, fruitful, and busy in the Work of the Lord. The Bible promises great Rewards for those who the Lord finds like this. And the Bible promises terrifying Punishments to those who are not like this. And that knowledge will motivate us.

But this Doctrine tells us something else:

A free, open, real, satisfying life of Prayer is not automatic.

... it won't just happen. It isn't automatic. A free, open, real, satisfying life of Prayer doesn't automatically come simply because you are saved. Because it is possible that saved people can still sin. So, it matters how we think. And it matters what we believe. And it matters how we live our lives. And if that was not true, there would have been no reason for Peter to go to such length to talk about this.

Dear friends, our prayer life in the remainder of 2018, and beyond, depends in part, under God and His enabling Grace, on how we live at home and at work and in our private life of solitude.

Another way of understanding the Biblical Truth that we've seen in these verses would be:

Do whatever you must do, so that your Prayers are not hindered.

Form the resolution right now in your heart while I am preaching that you will *not* be passive about your prayer life in the rest of this year, but that you will take some active steps to make it good.

And let me ask a question that might increase your incentive to do that. *Why does it matter if your prayer life is hindered?* And there are a lot of tremendously important answers to that question. But let me give an answer today that lies close to my own experience:

You don't want your Prayers to be hindered because when your Prayers are hindered, it means you are not connecting with God, and that God Himself starts to seem distant and unreal. Now for an unbeliever who has never known a peaceful, personal walk with God, that would not be so unusual. Unless the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives, they have deadened themselves to it. But for a person who has known God and loved Him, and tasted the sweetness of Peace and Fellowship, and a sense of being Right with God, *nothing* is more terrifying than the growing feeling that God does not seem to be there anymore.

To wake up in the morning or to go to bed at night and to lie there and stare at the ceiling and feel, *"It's not real. He's not listening."* To feel like all the bolts in your mind are coming loose and it won't hold still long enough to focus on anything, let alone God. There's just an uneasy rattling and slipping of instability.

And to try to *manufacture* a Prayer and feel utterly phony because your mind is so full of worldly stuff and earthly feelings and fleshly desires that a sweet, peaceful, confident communion with God in Prayer seems about as possible as flying to the moon.

These are terrifying experiences for any Christian, who has known Peace with God, and unhindered Communion with Him. And so, I am saying that Peter wants to spare you that. I want to spare you that. I want to avoid it myself at any price.

So, Peter tells us: endeavor to live in a way that does not hinder your Prayers. But, as we do this, keep in mind that this endeavor is *not* an effort to *earn* or deserve "Divine Wages" from God. It is merely an effort to humbly and joyfully follow our Good Physician's loving Prescription because we trust Him.

So, resolve this morning, that in whatever time you might have left, you will take Peter's inspired Teaching seriously and seek to do whatever you need to do to *unclog* your Prayers and set them free.

It may be that changes need to be made at home. Nothing is more important than unclogging the streams of Prayer and Power that are clogged at home. It may be that changes need to be made in the wider circle of relationships where there is bitterness or guile or unforgiveness. Or it may be that there are simple awakenings that need to happen concerning the "pattern of Prayer" in your life.

When Peter says in 4:7,

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.

... he means that there are disciplines of the mind and the spirit which can guarantee unhindered Prayer in your life.

This, I think, is what God wants you to especially hear from this Message this morning: make this coming week, a week of freshly awakened sound judgment regarding what hinders Prayer in your life, and a week of sobriety of spirit regarding Prayer. Sound mind. Sober spirit.

We must understand that Jesus does not kiss a drunk wife. He may carry her off the street and back to bed. He may be utterly patient with her, and set before her hot coffee and fresh starts. But He will not kiss a drunk wife. What do I mean by that? I mean that when the Bride of Christ, the Church, is drunk with the world, she may turn to Him for a brief kiss of Prayer, but her breath reeks so bad of worldliness that He turns His Face away. To avoid that, Peter says:

"Be sober for the sake of your prayers,"

But whoever sobered up by resting or relaxing or coasting? Nobody relaxes into sobriety. Nobody rests into sobriety. And nobody ever coasted into sobriety. Sobriety happens when we begin to use sound judgment about our lives. Sound judgment about how we spend our time. Sound judgment about the spiritual climate of our homes. Sound judgment about the worldliness of our leisure. Sound judgment about the music we listen to, the movies we attend, and the TV we

watch. And that tells us that when the spiritual breath begins to clear up, the kiss of Prayer is not hindered.

Nobody sobers up without intentional steps to get the bottles of worldliness off the shelves, out of the cabinet, and out of the house. When that happens, then the spiritual breath begins to clear up and the kiss of prayer is not hindered.

There are so many ways we can be helpful to each other at this point. There are so many things God has been teaching some of you recently, several of you have told me examples. And I want us to teach and exhort and encourage, and, if necessary, rebuke, *each other*. So, I invite you to pray as you leave here today about what God might be wanting you to say to all of us in the few weeks left in this year. I also invite questions and struggles to be shared. We need to hear about the real world of warfare that you are waging.

And I will share some of the things that help me in the fight for unhindered prayer. But I fully expect that what you say to us will be what God uses most. So, Pray. And in the Q&A time on the first Lord's Day of November (November 4), stand and speak to us in either weakness or in strength. Because there will be someone here who will need *exactly* what God prompts you to say.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.