

# First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

February 17, 2019

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 3:8-16 (NIV)

8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. 11 They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” 15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

**Congregational Prayer:** “Our Father”

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

**Message:** “Prayer 7: Locks of Prayer”

Introduction:

- In Shakespeare’s epic play, “Macbeth”, Macbeth starts as a loyal servant to Duncan, but later murders him. Convicted of

his guilt, he is overcome when he hears other’s prayers, but a guilt ridden Macbeth cannot say a simple ‘Amen’ to them, knowing of his actions (Act 2, Scene 2). He says this: “But wherefore could not I pronounce “Amen”? I had most need of blessing, and “Amen” Stuck in my throat.”

- Has the prayer you needed to send to God ever been stuck in your throat? Have you felt that there is something in the way of you and God that makes your prayers impossible? Are there times when you want to pray, and prayer would release you, as it would have Macbeth, but you are unable to lift your voice in prayer?
- We recently finished a Bible Study called “A Battle Plan for Prayer,” where we learned that these things are what they call “locks” of prayer. Today, let’s recognize and remove those locks for prayer, and get ready for next week when we shall talk about the keys to effective prayer.

## Part 1: Four Truths of Locks and Keys to Prayer

- 1. Prayer is not about religion, or a ritual, but a relationship.
- 2. If we want to pray effectively we must approach God on His terms, not our terms.
- 3. Prayer's effectiveness is hindered (locked) by certain things (as found in scripture).
- 4. There are keys to prayer where God is pleased and willing to do more in our lives.
- Summary: We shall talk more about these four truths next week, but remember these 2 simple principles: 1. Righteousness: We receive God's righteousness by giving our life to the Lord, Jesus Christ, AND by living our lives for Him. This leads to 2. Relationship: God wants us to be close to Him in submission and honouring Him AND God wants us to be in a right relationship with other people. Make sure your heart is in the right place before the Lord. In James 5:16

it says (NKJV): *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."*

- Therefore, what are the locks to effective prayer to God?

## Part 2: Three Initial Locks:

- 1. Praying for show (Matthew 6:5)
  - Have you ever been to a Christian program where the world's best pray-er is standing before others, and boy, is it a great prayer, but it's also empty and more of a show? It's done to redirect the listener's attention to the one doing the praying. Similarly are those who pray and then proudly stomp around telling everyone how their prayers healed someone. Prayer is not a show, it's a relationship.
- 2. Praying empty, repetitive words (Matthew 6:7)
  - This is tricky one, as repeating a prayer has power and might. But only because the one who is praying the repeated prayer is actually praying it. If you only repeat the Lord's prayer,

you have lifted up to God an amazing prayer of power and forgiveness and life, but only if you pray it from your heart.

If you just say words, they will all fall flat like an airplane without gravity.

- 3. Prayers not prayed (James 4:2)
- James 4:2 ends with (NIV): *“You do not have because you do not ask God.”* What does this mean: It means that you don’t pray. You pray without belief. Your prayers are not real, just words. If you have faith in the living God, ask God for anything, and wait for amazing things to happen. But you must ask, Do you say, “God is too busy for my little thing.”? God doesn’t. Ask in faith, and await something great.

Part 3: 5 Further Locks:

- 1. Praying to God without a relationship with Jesus Christ. John 14:6 has Jesus saying (NIV): *“I am the way, the truth and life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Jesus is the mediator between us and God. The bridge between finite, simple humans and an infinity, Holy God.

Jesus enables us to have a relationship with God when we repent of our sins and place our faith in Him. Will God answer the prayers of those who are in a loving, caring, faithful relationship with Him? Lock 1: praying without a relationship.

- 2. Praying from an unrepentant heart. Psalm 66:18 says (NIV) *“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened...”* If I chose my sins over listening to God, then...? What will happen? Unconfessed sin in our life makes us hesitant to pray. We cannot come before a Holy God if we have hidden, unholy sin in our life. Walls of sin need to be torn down through a relationship with God. The key to revival 2 Chronicles 7:14: *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray...”* As our

Bible passage for today from 1 Peter 3 makes clear, we must plant our prayer in the soil that has been tilled by humility and brokenness. The second lock to prayer is and unrepentant, dirty heart.

- 3. Praying with a lustful heart. James 4:3 says (NIV): *“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”* We don’t receive that which we ask for in prayer because lust wars within us. Lock #3 to prayer is a lustful heart longing for our own.
- 4. Praying while mistreating others: 1 Peter chapter 2 ends with us believers treating those who work under us properly, and 1 Peter 3:7 summarizes all this by talking about husbands and wives (NIV): *“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the*

*gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”* If we are asking God’s blessing upon ourselves, but treating others with contempt, with anger, with disrespect, then we should never expect the blessing of God. The 4th lock to prayer is mistreating others.

- 5. Praying when there is bitterness in your life: Mark 11:25 says (NIV): *“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”* In the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:12 Jesus says that we are to forgive others as we are forgiven. Psalm 66:18 says: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me.”* Matthew 5:24 says that we should leave our gift at the altar and first correct our broken relationships. In Psalm 139:23-24 we are to ask God to search us and try us to see if there is any wicked may in us, that God may clean us up. The 5<sup>th</sup> lock is bitterness in your

heart.

#### Part 4: Other Locks:

- What other locks stop you from getting close to God? Think of some other things that hinders you: Media, flesh, sensuality, greed and want, control and power? Do you have anything in your life that comes before God, before your relationship with Him? These locks will make your prayers get stuck in your throat, just like Macbeth, until you remove them all. You know what these hindrances are, and you know that they are not good, nor right, nor holy, nor pure, so just get rid of them. They are holding you back. Take time today to ask God to show you the sin that you covet, that you hold onto, and then ask God to remove the love of the sin from your life, to unlock your prayer life before a Holy, loving God of life.

Conclusion:

- There is only one way to come to God: ready. We need to prepare to come into the presence of the Living God, as the words of 1 Peter 3 remind us. Macbeth could not do so because his hands were bloodied, impure. What of you?
- Are you walking away from God? Do you need to get your heart right with The Living God? Do you need to fix a relationship with someone else? Does sin hinder your prayer life as you cannot face a Holy God because of the way you have been living your life? Are you pretending to be in a relationship with God? Do you have anything that you put ahead of God, before your relationship with Him, a sin that you hold up before the One True and Living God?
- These locks are placed there by you. It's time to come to the Mighty God with those barriers unlocked, and your voice ready to praise the Living God, without your prayers getting stuck in your throat.