

Prayer 02 Luke 11: - Hinderances

by Alden Gannett

The main hindrance to prayer is idolatry, and we can overcome it by seeking God's will, praying in faith, and having the right motive for prayer.

Duration: 38:43

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 11:22-26, James 1:2-8

Topics: "Hinderances"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares two stories of fathers who experienced the loss of their young sons. In both cases, the tragic events led the fathers to turn to God and find salvation. The speaker emphasizes the importance of putting God first in our lives and not allowing bitterness or criticism to hinder our relationships with others. He encourages listeners to seek God's wisdom and trust Him in the midst of trials, reminding them that trusting God is essential for answered prayers.

Transcript

I told me some couldn't hear me this morning. I've preached for 25 years and that's the first time that comment's ever been made. What they said is he walked away from the microphone and when he walked away we can't hear.

Now he can't walk. Now I can't walk away. I'm, I'm fog-tied.

Good. May we pray together. Father, thank Thee for tonight.

Thank Thee for the challenge just presented to us. We thank Thee that Thou didst know the needs of the Park of the Palms for the coming months. We thank Thee that my God shall supply all Your needs according to His riches and glory through Christ Jesus.

May the grace of giving be upon Thy people. We pray that Thou lead our Father in abundant provision that more may share in the ministry of the Word of God in this place. We ask Thee now as we turn to Thy word tonight that it shall speak to us.

Thou dost see us as we have need and we pray that the Word of God shall cleanse us and sanctify us and conform us more to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen. In our series on prayer this morning, we saw together the fundamental principle expressed in Luke chapter 11, also in Matthew chapter 6, that if we keep on asking we'll receive, and if we keep on seeking we'll find, and if we keep on

knocking it'll reopen unto us.

God is saying, as Andrew Murray put it many, many years ago, prayer is God's appointed way of getting things. We prefer committees, we prefer meetings, we prefer begging and pleading, but Murray was right. Jesus said, Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.

Now, I've been in the Lord's work enough to know that committees at times are required. I'm not minimizing administration, being an administrator myself, and I certainly believe in sharing the burden and responsibility. But many, many times we have to confess that we have substituted discussions for prayer and decision making among ourselves instead of waiting upon the Lord for very clear direction from him.

And so, God is reminding us these days, ask and it shall be given. Tonight we continue in this series on the subject of hindrances to prayer. I was impressed many years ago with Dr. Ironside's book on prayer.

One of his chapters is devoted to this subject, and I noticed since, upon teaching a whole course in this at Dallas Bible College a number of years ago, that many books deal with this subject, and rightly so, because the word does. I am persuaded more and more that the reason we don't see God's work is simply because we don't do God's work God's way. God's work done God's way means that we meet the conditions for answered prayer.

We think immediately that we have to pray in faith, we have to pray in the will of God, and we have to pray in the name of Christ, and we have to pray for the glory of God. These are suggestive of the conditions for prayer. Tonight, let's approach the subject from a negative point of view.

What is it that hinders God from answering our prayers? The Bible suggests several, and will you turn first of all to Ezekiel chapter 14? I do not pretend tonight to exhaust the subject, but let these be suggestive of others. Ezekiel chapter 14. We shall read verses 1, 2, and 3. Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face. Then this question, Should I be inquired of it all by them? The hindrance in this context is idolatry. Do you remember the children of Israel, the children of Judah, to be more precise, allowed idolatry in their temple? Do you remember how they were worshiping the god Tamaz? Do you remember how there were inscriptions on the temple walls? Do you remember they were worshiping the sun, the moon, and the stars? And God says, Shall I be inquired of it all by them? The answer is no.

Does a Christian have the problem of idolatry? Yes, we do. John closes his first epistle. You remember? Little children, keep yourselves from what? Idols.

This was written to believers. Paul wrote to the Colossians, chapter 3, verse 5, covetousness, which is what? Idolatry. Idolatry.

Yes, it's possible for Christians to put other things before the Lord. The challenge of Colossians 1:18 is that in all things he, the Lord Jesus Christ, might have the preeminence, or be first. Any time in your experience or mine when Jesus Christ is not first, we are guilty of idolatry.

That's right. My children can come first, my grandchildren can come first, my home, my business, my financial planning, my stocks, my bonds can come first, part of the palms can come first, anything. Status,

prestige, the devil can throw anything in the way to keep Jesus Christ from being first in my life and ministry.

Now, if anything or anybody has the primary place that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, I am not on praying grounds. It's that simple. For if we regard iniquity in our heart, finish it, the Lord will not hear me.

His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, his ear is not heavy that he cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God that he will not hear us. Is there idolatry in your life? Is it in mine? Not one of us in this gathering tonight would walk into a church on Sunday morning and bow down before a graven image. We call that idolatry.

But if my family comes before God, I'm guilty of the same sin. My business is before God, it's the same sin. Status or prestige is before God, it's the same sin.

And this may be why some of us haven't heard from heaven lately, why God hasn't answered our prayers. We've not met the condition Christ is to be first. I was up in the Northland last week in meetings and revival services, and they told of a dear, dear sister in the church who loved the Lord and prayed for the salvation of her boys.

And she's seen God wonderfully answer prayer for a number of her sons, but this one was still without Christ. The former pastor had just left and gone out and do full-time evangelistic work, and he had no sooner arrived at his destination by plane than there was a telegram from the church he had just left. So-and-so's son had just died.

That's the grandson of this dear praying mother. The grandson, they said, was four years of age, a lovely boy, keen and alert, and a wonderful youngster. Loved to go to Sunday school and church, loved the things of God as a little lad, just enjoy these things.

God took that boy home. When the pastor, boarding another plane, returned immediately to the church he had just left to conduct the funeral, he walked into that home, and the very first thing he did, by the grace of God, was to leave that dear father to Christ. And I, last Sunday evening, in Wabash, Indiana, sat in a fellowship circle and heard that dear father stand up and thank God for his salvation and the grace of God in his life.

It cost his boy. His boy, apparently, was God's means of saving that father. I was a pastor a number of years ago in a church up in New York State, and the father said to me, God took our five-year-old boy home because he was first in our home.

Since then, we've put God first. Is there an idol in your life, in mine tonight? God says, I won't hear your prayers. Our second text is Mark, chapter 11.

A familiar passage. In fact, we shared it together here at Palms a year ago. In February, I want to turn tonight to verses 25 and 26.

Remember our Lord's discussion about the fig tree being dried up from the roots, and then the challenge of verse 22, have faith in God, and then the great promise of verse 24, Therefore I say unto you, whatever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. At that point, he says, and when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have anything against any, that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven

forgive your trespasses.

Now, I'm reading from the New School field. The translation's just a bit different at times. Now, what's our Lord saying here? Is he giving us legal grounds, as some Bible teachers suggest? No, I do not believe so at all.

What our Lord is saying is that if you won't forgive your brother, then you're insincere. I won't forgive you, says God. Let's call this an unforgiving spirit, as an hindrance to prayer.

An unforgiving spirit. Do Christians have this problem? I've met some who do. I know the struggles of my own heart.

Do you know the struggles of yours? When someone is maligned, when someone has spoken evil against you, when someone is mistreated, when someone won't pay a bill, when you disagree with someone over policy or principle, when you're in the minority in the decision of a gathering, when the brethren met together and made decisions, you didn't like the decision that was made, and you felt they were wrong, you were sure they were wrong, yet you had to go on and live in it. You know about this? And then it's so easy to question one's motives. You're sure that brother so-and-so had it in for you? You're sure that so-and-so stood up and made that motion just in spite about you? We've all been in such gatherings.

I had an elder one time. If I wanted to get anything through the elders' board, just take the opposite position, and then I'd win. He was born to object.

He had the gift. No matter what position you took, he was against it. And his son was just like him.

He'd stand up in a gathering of the believers, and making a decision about something, and whatever was on the floor, he had to stand up and challenge it. It mattered not. You could just count on it, just as the morning sun.

There will always be people like that around. There will always be people that disagree. But, you know, the Lord loved people like that enough to die for them.

Therefore, the Lord considered them worthwhile, infinitely worthwhile. I've discovered in the Lord's work that I will always disagree to some extent with a brother in Christ. Often it's a matter of judgment.

He may be right, and I may be wrong, or vice versa. But I found I never agree with everybody. But I find the Lord has grace that I can love a brother though I disagree with him.

I can love a brother though he maligns me. I can love a brother though he speaks evil against me. I can love a brother though he's wronged me.

The Lord did that. On the cross, you remember how he prayed, Father forgive them for they know not what they do, and they murdered him. And Stephen knew the grace of God to such an extent that he could pray as he was being stoned to death, Father lay not this sin at their charge.

And if God can give grace to people to pray that way when they're losing their lives at the hatred and jealousy and spite of others, he can certainly give you and me and grace to live with someone with whom we disagree, and whose personalities may in the natural clash. God has grace for all this patience, long-suffering, with joyfulness. I remember one time the dear sister came to me, and she said, I have a problem, and my problem is my own flesh-and-blood sister.

They both came to the same Bible class where I was teaching the Word of God. But the one sister would not allow her own flesh-and-blood sister to enter her home. She was an unforgiving spirit.

They wouldn't speak to each other. The one sister tried reconciliation. Her sister would not allow it, would not allow it.

Here they were both professing Christ, both saying they were believers, both claiming oneness in Christ, couldn't get along with each other, wouldn't get along. And I'm sorry, I don't know the end of that story. But Christians have problems, too.

But in the context of our subject tonight, when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses. I repeat, this is not legal ground.

The Father in heaven is saying, you and I are hypocrites, we're insincere. We get on our knees and talk to our God and ask forgiveness there, when we won't forgive a brother, a sister who has sinned against us. Is this a problem in your life? Is there anybody on the face of God's earth you can't meet face to face tonight? Anybody you avoid? Is there an unforgiving spirit? Well, preacher, I'll forgive, but I'm certainly not going to forget.

You've heard that before. That's not forgiveness. I'll never forget reading the book by Finney on revivals.

Now, remember this soul-searching experience of his own life. He took out paper and pencil and wrote down one, two, three, four, five, the specific sins that God the Holy Spirit brought to his attention through the word. And then, one by one, he confessed them to God.

And one by one, he made rights wrong with his neighbors, with his friends, with his loved ones, where possible, so that there was nothing that would hinder the full working of God the Holy Spirit. You and I know the rest of the story. Great revivals swept New York and other lands up there, other areas.

A man fully possessed by God the Holy Spirit. Are we asking God tonight for things and not getting the answer because of a wrong spirit, an unforgiving spirit? The third text tonight is in the book of James, fact two in the epistle to James. James, chapter one.

Count it all joy, verse two, when ye fall into various trials, knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that she may be perfect or mature and entire, lacking nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to him in liberty, and abradeth not, and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Unbelief is the next hindrance to prayer. Unbelief.

Unbelief in this context, in the midst of trial. The time of burden, the time of heartache, the time of disappointment, the time of reverse, the time of physical or financial difficulty, a time of problems in the community, a time of real problem. And James says, count it all joy when ye fall into divers testings, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience.

I mentioned one time in Southeastern Bible College that I was asking God to increase my faith. And one dear sister came up to me afterwards, and she said, Do you realize what you're asking for? You're asking for more trials. You're right.

What are we to do in the midst of trials? Well, one approach is taste the flower at night. Another approach is weep our hearts out. Another approach is to complain and get bitter against God.

Why did God let this happen to me? Why did God take my husband? Why did God take my wife? Why did God take my son? Why did I fail in my business? Why, why, why? Oh, I've heard that number of times from the Lord's people. Bitterness of soul. What does James say? Count it all joy.

What does James say? Let him ask in faith. Talk to God about it. When you do, trust God for the problem.

Trust God for the outcome. And in the meantime, count it all joy, James said. I love to use this statement, but my wife pulled it on me one day.

I was, I don't know what in the world happened. Somebody made an awful mess in the bathtub. I don't know whether a mirror had been broken and glass had been shattered.

I've forgotten what in the world the problem was, but it was a mean, nasty job, whatever it was. And I guess it was a hot day and I was busy and in a hurry and all the rest. And it was obvious that things weren't going too well.

And my wife stuck her head around the door and she said, Dear, are you counting it all joy? She was right. And I was wrong. What do you do in the midst of problems, trials, disappointments? What do you do when there are problems and difficulties? James says, count it all joy and then get on your knees and talk to God about it and say, Lord, what's the reason for all this? I want to profit by it.

I want to grow in grace through it. I want to be more conformed to Jesus Christ because of it. And Lord, I'm trusting thee for wisdom as to the next step.

And if any of you lack wisdom in the context of trial, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and abradeth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith. And so I'm to trust God in the midst of trial.

When I don't trust him, I'm turning off the answer to my prayer. When I don't trust him, I'm hindering God's answer to my prayer. There's another text in James, chapter 4, verses 1, 2, and 3. Hear this selfishness that hinders prayer.

From where come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hear even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and have not. Ye kill and desire to have and cannot obtain. Ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not.

When you do ask, ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss. And the Greek says here, evilly, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Here's the wrong motive in prayer.

Selfishness. Oh God, save my husband, he's so hard to live with. How much happier our home will be, Lord, if you'll save my husband.

That's a worthy reason for prayer, but that's not high enough. It must be the glory of God. Lord, save my teenage son.

You don't know how rebellious he is, and how difficult he is. Lord, you don't know how our testimony is being hurt in the community. Lord, you don't know what problems we have.

This motive is not high enough. It's worthy. But all must be that the Father is glorified in the Son.

Lord, bless Parker the Palms. Lord, we want more people talking about them. Tell folks we've got more folks at Parker the Palms, and it's bigger, and it's greater, and it's grander.

Ah, careful. The motive must be right. The heavens declare what? The glory of God, and so must Parker the Palms.

Lord, give us more students at Southeastern Bible College next year. You know, in Bible College every year, you have to have more students. Or it's horrible, probably.

You mean you don't have more the next year? You mean it didn't grow this year? The motive's got to be right. Why do you want more students? Ah, for the gospel's sake. For the glory of God.

Let God take care of the numbers. Right? Now, why are you asking God for that very special problem in your life, in your home, in your community? Why are you talking to God? Why are you burdened about it? Is your motive right? Are you asking that you might consume it on your own lusts? Lord, give me a million dollars. What do you want a million dollars for? Buy all the things I couldn't have, you know, in the last 60 years.

I'm not raising up grand. I want a million dollars to serve Jesus Christ. Further the gospel to the ends of the earth, if that's your prayer.

What is your heart tonight? What is your burden tonight? What is your concern tonight? Every one of us has one. I've known people too long. We do at our house.

Ah, the Lord Jesus prayed, glorify thy son, that thy son may also glorify thee. When he gave his disciples instruction, he said, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do. And whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

There's our motive for prayer. There's the highest and greatest good, the glory of our God. All have sinned.

Why? Because they've come short to that glory. Let's investigate our motives tonight. Are they the highest? Are they the noblest? Are they the purest? Ultimately, whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, we're to do all to what? A glory of God.

Turn to Peter, 1 Peter chapter 3. Still another hindrance to prayer, Dr. Arnside suggests. 1 Peter 3, In the same manner ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the behavior of the wives. Father, behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear, whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.

Let it be the hidden man of the heart, and that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands. Even as Sarah

obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any terror.

In like manner ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life. Notice that your prayers be not hindered. Let your prayers be not hindered.

The immediate context is a believing wife who has an unsaved husband, and Peter says you win that husband after you've given your testimony, after you've shared the gospel of Jesus Christ. That husband won't listen. You win him without a word by your behavior, by your conduct.

A spirit that will reflect, manifest our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Husbands are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, and all of this that our prayers be not hindered. I have noticed again and again and again that in a home there is one son or one daughter that doesn't walk with God.

This is not always true. Thank the Lord. When I found so many Christian homes, parents that dearly love the Lord, one member of the family, the black sheep, one causing great concern to parents, to grandparents.

I've seen it over and over and over. If I had no other reason to walk with God than to have a happy Christian home, it's right here that God will answer prayer for my children. Wrong relationship between husband and wife, and stop heaven from answering prayer in my home.

You mean Christian couples have problems? You mean they spat at home? You mean some wives are not in subjection? That's what they tell me. Mine is the perfect example of the New Testament subjection here. Her text there in Colossians is, Wives, be in objection to your own husband.

She's here tonight, so I'm preaching at her. The wife's place of being in subjection to the home, the husband's place of loving his wife as Christ loved the church. Well, you don't know my wife, Richard.

No, I may not know your wife, but I know what the book says. And here, giving reverence to the wife, being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered. Dear wife, if you're not subjecting yourself to your own husband, this may be the reason God hasn't answered the prayers in your home for your children and grandchildren.

Dear husband, if you're not loving your wife as Christ loved the church, and you're not honoring your wife, this may be the reason God isn't answering the prayer for your children, your grandchildren, your loved ones. Maybe this is why you've had such a problem in business, problems in other areas, great difficulties. This may be the reason right here things aren't as they ought to be at home between you and your dear companion.

Wrong family relationships in your prayer. One more. 1 John chapter 3. Let's begin reading with verse 14.

We know that we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth none his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hated his brother is a murderer, and we know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

By this perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whosoever hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his compassions from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in sound, but in deed and in truth.

And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, and whatever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us a commandment." What's the problem here? The problem is a lack of confidence in God, because our hearts condemn us. A condemning heart. And in the context, what is it that condemns? Loving in word rather than in deed.

Being superficial in our Christian experience. Being insincere in our relationships one with another. And John illustrates, here's a man who's in need, here's a man who's hungry, here's a man who needs clothing.

And you say, Lord bless you, friend, but you know nothing about it when you can help. How to develop a love of God in him? Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in reality. John is saying, in effect, that if I am superficial in my relationship with my brother, if I don't really love him, if I don't genuinely express the love of Christ to him in very practical, down-to-earth experiences day by day when I can do so, John says, I don't have confidence toward God in prayer.

Do you love tonight in deed and in reality? Through the years, I've met a number of professional Christians. You could tell by the way they talk they were insincere. You could tell by the remarks they made that they didn't love people.

I've heard pastors say, people bother me, people disturb me, people get in my hair. My dear brother in Christ, God calls you to people. When I hear somebody criticizing people all the time and not expressing the love of Christ toward that brother, something's wrong.

I'm sure this is a big challenge in a community like this where you live in such a small gathering. We have problems like this on a small Bible college campus. We enrolled 180 this last year.

But that's a relatively small group of people, and when they live on seven acres, they meet each other very often in the course of a year and get to know each other very well in the course of nine months. And they get to know the pros and the cons, you know, the negatives and the positives, and they get to know all kinds of things about people. And oh, it's so easy to write them off.

It's so easy to just complain and get bitter and find fault and criticize, and not look for opportunities to express the love of Christ to an erring brother, to one who's burdened, to one who's having difficulty, to one who is carnal and walking this man, to one you disagree with, with whom your personalities clash. John says that you're sincere, loved in deed and in truth. God will open the windows of heaven and answer your prayer.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. May we go home tonight to do business with God. Let us let God search our hearts tonight.

All the challenge of Park of the Palms, all the challenge of your own life and your own family and your own witness and testimony for the Savior. Nothing is important enough to hinder God working in our midst, amen? And I can't spend my time on the other fellow in terms of trying to straighten him out. First of all, I start with myself.

Are you willing to go home tonight and get on your knees before God, as this preacher must, and say, Lord, is there anything in my life that hinders prayer? I would be on praying ground. I would be an instrument of righteousness unto God. I would be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work.

Lord, if there's anything in my life that hinders, show me. How shall a young man and older man cleanse his ways? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Jesus said to his disciples, you're clean through the words which I've spoken unto you.

May this be a preparation for our study the rest of the week, as we come to our Lord with clean hands and pure hearts and see God wonderfully works in answer to prayer. May we bow together. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. This is our prayer tonight, in the name of Christ our Savior. Amen.

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