

Hindered Prayers

by George Kulp

The sermon addresses the various hindrances to prayer and emphasizes the need for a right heart, unity, and obedience to God for effective communication with Him.

Scripture: Joshua 7:10, Jeremiah 33:3, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 18:19, Acts 2:1, Philippians 4:6, James 4:3, James 5:16, 1 Peter 3:7

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Spiritual Obedience"

Description

George Kulp preaches on the importance of ensuring our prayers are not hindered, drawing from various biblical examples and teachings. He emphasizes the need for obedience to God, resolving conflicts with others, renouncing known sins, and living a life of unity and agreement in prayer. Kulp also highlights the significance of being specific and confident in our prayers, as well as giving to God what is holy and withholding nothing from Him.

Transcript

"That your prayers be not hindered."

I Pet. 3:7

"Get thee up; Israel hath sinned."

Josh. 7:10

The readers of "Pilgrim's Progress" will call to mind how, when Christian was in Palace Beautiful and they showed him the remarkable objects in the armory, Moses' rod, the hammer and nail with which Jael smote Sisera, the pitchers, trumpets and lamps with which Gideon put to flight the armies of Midian, the ox goad with which Shamgar slew six hundred men, the sling and stone that David used when he killed Goliath of Gath, all manner of furniture that their Lord had provided for pilgrims -- the Sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, the helmet of peace, the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes -- would not wear out -- they then gave him a weapon called "All Prayer" that he found very useful in his journey to the Celestial City. In nothing in all that beautiful allegory of the "Pilgrim's Progress" was rare old John Bunyan more scriptural than in this.

Jesus spake unto His disciples a parable with this lesson, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, and in numerous passages of Scripture we are taught the value and importance of prayer. "Ask and ye

shall receive, seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you," "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Call upon Me and I will show thee great and mighty things such as thou knowest not of." "In everything let your requests be made known unto God in supplication and in prayer, with thanksgiving." "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them."

To further convince us of the value of prayer we have the examples of men, mighty men in prayer, who prayed for any and all needs and received the answer. Hezekiah prayed for lengthened life, and God gave him fifteen more years. Daniel prayed, and the angel was commanded to fly swiftly with the answer. "At the beginning of thy petition the commandment came forth." Solomon prayed for wisdom, Bartimaeus for sight, Paul for grace, and they all received.

And we can pray anywhere, in the deep like Jonah, on the housetop like Peter, on the bed like Hezekiah, in the mountain like Jesus, in the wilderness like Hagar, in the street like Jairus, in the cave like David, or on the cross like the dying thief.

One can pray at any time: in the morning like David, at noon like Daniel, at midnight like Paul and Silas, and God will hear and answer. Aye, by prayer you can scale the mount of God, and move the arm that moves the world.

But answers to prayer are conditional. The prayer must come from a broken and contrite heart, for a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. It must come from a heart that is right, or seeking to get right with God. "PAY THY vows unto the Lord, and call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." Pay thy vows FIRST. Many persons pray and receive no answer because they hinder their own prayers; they block God's way, they tie His hands, they shut up the windows of Heaven by their own acts, hence the Apostle directed in our text that persons shall so live every day in their homes that their prayers be not hindered, and in the text from the Old Testament, God rebukes Joshua for praying while hindrances to the answer were in the way. "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Get thee up from off thy face. Israel hath sinned."

When Jesus came to the sepulchre in which the dead Lazarus lay wrapped in his grave clothes, He came to work the mighty works of God, but He first said to those standing by, "Take ye away the stone," and if we would have God work in our lives, send answers to our prayers, we must take away the stone, we must remove the hindrances in the way. There are individual Christians who, by their little inconsistencies, are hindering their own prayers. There are churches God cannot bless because of the hindrances of worldliness and unbelief and covetousness and selfishness in the way. In this congregation there are mothers praying for their children. there are wives praying for their husbands, there are friends praying for friends, there is a church praying for a revival. May God open our eyes this morning and show us if we are by our lives hindering or helping God to answer our prayers. God gave me this text last Monday morning at my family altar, and it clung to me. I could not shake it off. I looked for other texts and other subjects, but this would stay, and I began to think upon it, and this morning I want to consider the subject the Holy Ghost puts in these Scriptures -- "Hindrances to Prayer."

The first one to which I would call your attention is disobedience to God. There is a man praying, and, by the way, he is a mighty man of God, chosen by Divine appointment to lead the hosts of Israel. He knows God. The Captain of the hosts of the Lord appeared unto that man and made known unto him his mission. Oh, how he prays! Listen to him! "O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan

to deliver us into the hands of the Amorite, and to destroy us? O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us around and cut us off, and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" And the Lord said unto Joshua, "Get thee up. Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Israel hath sinned" -- sinned in this disobedience -- taking of the accursed thing, and then in dissembling before God. Disobedience hinders answers to prayer.

Mother, has God wanted you to do anything, perform some duty, run some errand for Him, make some sacrifice, and you said "No"? That "No," that disobedience, may be in the way of the answer to that prayer that has gone up from your heart so often -- "O God, save my son, save my daughter."

Wife, you have been praying for your husband so long, and so earnestly. Have you been consistent? Have you honored God in your home, and your church? Have you responded to God's call? Have you confessed Christ when called upon to do so, at all times, and on all occasions, before husband, so that deep down in his heart he acknowledges the power of your religion over you and in you? Or does your inconsistency hinder the answer to your prayers?

My brother, my Christian friend, let me ask you: Are you living in obedience to God? Are you walking in the light of God's Word? Are you following the leadings of the Holy Spirit? Answer, my brother, as in God's own presence, in the secret chambers of your soul, and if you cannot say "Yes," consider if your disobedience is in the way of God answering your prayers.

The second hindrance is difficulties with the brethren. Now to begin this aright and that you may meet God's truth in the very beginning, let me call your attention to the words of Jesus, in which He describes this hindrance. Matt. 5:23: "If thou bringest thy gift to the altar and there rememberest [and what a place the altar is to remember such things!] that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; FIRST be reconciled unto thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Do this, or it will be a hindrance to your prayers. I give you this plain, pungent Scripture from the lips of Jesus, that you may see that the man who does not accept of this truth antagonizes God's own Word; he destroys the lifeboat God sends to save him. What right has any person, by his little private grudge, by his resentment against a brother, even though it was justly aroused, to imperil the prosperity of a church, to hinder the work of God? And how foolish for any one bound for eternity, and needing all the grace of God that he can get on the way, to rob himself of the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit, and to bar Heavens' door against his own prayers, by his disagreements with his brethren. Let each one see to it that his own case is clear in this regard?

A glorious work of grace was in progress in a certain church, but it did not rise to the full tide. Something seemed to be in the way. The pastor knew that there were five men in the church who, although they communed together, yet had heart burnings toward each other, and did not speak as they should. He preached a sermon from the text: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." He went home and prayed earnestly for the Spirit to apply the truth He had inspired. Monday night one came to the altar, then another, and another, till every one of the we alienated brethren was there. After the meeting all shook hands, and the people wept while sinners were made to feel that there is power in the religion of Jesus that can bring men together that way.

The third hindrance to which I would call your attention is indulgence is any known sin.

Achan knew it was a sin to take the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, but he deliberately took them. Ananias and Sapphira knew it was a sin to rob God, but they deliberately planned to do it, and carried out the plan. The man who would have access to God in prayer must renounce every known sin and continue in the renunciation. "As ye have received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in Him." There can be no such thing as boldness at a throne of grace for that man who indulges in any known sin, or in what he fears may be sin. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded," is the exhortation of God's Word; and in regard to doubtful things, the Apostle says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is SIN." That is, if you are not certain a thing is right, it is wrong for you to indulge in it.

Brethren, these may seem trifling things, but if they hinder our prayers, if they starve our soul, if they shut us out of the treasury of Heaven, they are great things and too important to pass by. Oh, how many render themselves useless to the cause of Christ by what they call "little sins;" how many lose communion with God for the sake of indulgence in some secret sin! And right under this head let me say the neglect of duty is the known sin of many that is deliberately indulged in. Men can sin negatively as well as positively. He who neglects to take up his cross and follow Christ will have no confidence to pray, either for himself or others. He cannot escape the conviction that it is his first duty to repent. He who neglects the family altar, the secret place of prayer, the prayer-meeting -- all means of grace that he so much needs -- is hindering his own prayers by his neglect of duty. May God give us eyes to see our duty plainly, and the will to do it.

The next hindrance to prayer is laxity of life and conduct; We sit in judgment on others; let us judge ourselves. If we judge ourselves, then shall we not be judged. How inconsistent it is to neglect the means of grace for anything else. What business has any professing Christian to give the preference on prayer-meeting night, to the lodge, or the political meeting, or some social function, the lecture, or the club-room? Sinners, husbands of praying wives and children of praying mothers, see professing Christians at these places and attempt to excuse themselves by their inconsistencies.

Some time ago a Christian mother who has been praying for her son for some years told me, while her heart was almost breaking over it, that her son went to the opera house to see a noted actor he knew his mother would not approve of; but he wanted to go, and he went. The next morning he came to his mother and said: "Why, mother, it could not be wrong. I saw Mr. A and Mr. B there, and others who are members of the church. They are good men, are they not?" And she said to me, "Now, Brother Kulp, what could I say to that? What reply could I make? Those men are church members and in good standing." Let me say right here, if there are any persons here who, by such inconsistencies and wrong living, are not only hindering their own prayers, but that mother's prayers; if at the judgment seat of Christ that son of many prayers should be on the left hand and hear that awful sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed," you, my professing brother, had a hand in his damnation. May God help you to repent before it is forever too late.

Another hindrance to prayer is this: Lack of unity, or agreement. Jesus says, "If any two of you shall agree on earth as touching any one thing, it shall be done for them of My Father in Heaven." What a promise for the Church of God! What a privilege for believers! If any two of you agree on earth, touching any one thing, it shall be done. On this basis, there ought to be shall be done. On this basis, there ought to be land, two or three persons in each league agreeing upon the same thing, praying for the same persons, by name, at the same time every day. Oh, how communities and churches would be stirred by the power of God, and what a floodtide of salvation would come in answer to prayer. "This is the confidence WE have concerning Him, if WE ask anything according to His will WE know that He heareth us, and if WE know that He heareth us, WE know WE have the petitions we desire of Him."

Another hindrance to prayer is what I am pleased to call "baptized infidelity" -- asking for nothing specific, nothing definite. That cold and sickly sentimentalism which dares not ask confidently for any specific thing is an offense to God. It distrusts the goodness of God at every step and treats His promise as a lie. Elijah asked for rain. He said RAIN when he prayed; he was specific and definite; he held on to God until the cloud began to enlarge in the sky. At another time he prayed for fire and fire came, and consumed the sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water in the trench. The disciples met at the home of Mary and prayed for Peter and asked God to take him out of prison where Herod had placed him, and from which place the king expected to bring him forth to death, and God sent His angel to do the very thing they had prayed for, and the chains fell off, doors were opened, and Peter came to that very company and told them, the Lord had brought him out.

Another hindrance to prayer, and the last which I shall notice at this time, is withholding from God that which is or should be holy unto Him. Dr. Peck says in the last work which he wrote, and which was published after his death, that he was one time very much impressed by four words uttered in his hearing -- "God cannot bless nothing." If you give nothing to God, do nothing for God, all the prayers you ever offer will be of no avail. If you give less than you ought to, you hinder your own prayers. God cannot bless covetousness, for He has declared in His Word that it is idolatry and hinders prayer. "Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord."

Would you see a united church, all hindrances removed, every man obedient? Look at that church in Jerusalem assembled in an upper room, with one accord, no disagreements, all united in prayer, and by faith claiming the fulfillment of the promise. Suddenly the Holy Ghost came upon them, the place was shaken, they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance, three thousand were converted, and daily afterward there were added unto the Church such as should be saved. That was once. Never to be repeated? Read on. A few days afterward Peter and John were arrested and put into prison for preaching Jesus; being examined, they were let go and they returned unto their own company, and rehearsed all that had been done unto them, and then went to prayer. All hindrances being out of the way, God answered, and the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. God waits to do that every time and everywhere He can get an opportunity -- to the individual, to the Church, to believers everywhere who comply with His conditions, and see that their prayers are not hindered.

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