

God Is Deaf by John Rice

by John R. Rice

God answers prayers, but sin in the home, wrong relations to others, and debts unpaid can hinder prayer, and forgiveness is a condition of answered prayers.

Duration: 30:25

Scripture: Isaiah 59:1

Topics: "Prayer Hindrances", "Sin And Forgiveness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the hindrances to answered prayers, focusing on the impact of sin, unforgiveness, and unconfessed wrongs on our communication with God. It highlights the importance of confessing and forsaking sin, forgiving others, and ensuring there is nothing hindering our relationship with God to receive His blessings and answers to prayers.

Transcript

I want to bring you a John Hindenburg prayer. In Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2, the Lord says, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

Note the scripture does not say that God cannot hear, but that God will not hear some kind of people when they pray. I wonder, do you get your prayers answered? I mean, do you every day have prayers answered so that you can live in daily communion with God? You bring your requests, and he answers them, and you know, and your family knows, and other friends know that God answers your prayers. If you don't have your prayers answered, something is desperately wrong.

This scripture says that God's hand is not shortened. God can save, God can answer prayer, God can correct conditions, God can change people, God can change things. But sin has hindered.

God's ear is open to prayer. God's in favor of prayer. Though there are too many promises in the Bible for a child of God not to have his prayer answered, if he wants to do right, if he can meet God's requirement, you remember the Savior said, "Ask, and it shall be given you.

Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Remember that the Lord Jesus said, "I say unto you that whatsoever shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the

Son." Many, many scriptures prove that a Christian ought to have his prayers answered all the time. Jesus said in John 16, 24, "Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name.

Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." I want you to see it's normal for a Christian to have his prayers answered every day. Then why do some people who are really converted, and many people who are nominal Christians, why do they never have a prayer answered, or only occasionally something that might be called an answer to prayer? There's one reason, that is, sin. There's only one thing that can keep one from constant touch with God, and for having your prayers answered, and that is sin.

So says the scriptures, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." We might say this message is about a deaf and paralyzed God. God's deaf when you pray. God's arm is paralyzed, so he cannot answer.

He cannot save your loved ones. He cannot do the things he wants to do, a deaf and paralyzed God. We might say this scripture talks about a God with cotton in his ears, that you come to pray, and God says, "Gable, turn off that radio.

I don't like that program.' You cry and pray to God, and God says, "I'm not interested,' and God turns his back, and God puts his fingers in his ears, and God will not hear because of your sin." So the scripture says, "I want to find in the word of God today some of the reasons why God does not answer prayer. I want to show you what the Bible plainly says about what hinders so that God cannot answer your prayer and does not answer your prayer. First of all, I want to find God's answer in your home life.

In 1 Peter, the third chapter, is a very clear scripture on this matter. 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word. If you have a husband who will not listen to the Bible, who does not know God, so that likewise, 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 conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation covered with fear.

Here's a plain command of wives to be subject to their husbands, so they may win their husbands." And then skipping to verse 7, the scripture says, "Likewise, 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, that your prayers be not hindered." Now note the two verses together, they are one, they're part of the same passage, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your husbands. Likewise, 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." Now why? "That your prayers be not hindered." Here the scripture plainly says that your prayers are hindered by wrongful life. And if you follow in the same chapter, 1 Peter 3, verse 12 says, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." God turns his face away from his own children when they pray with sin in the home.

When sin is in the home, when a husband or wife are wrong in their attitude one toward the other, then God says the prayers are hindered. Someone says, "Well, brother, I say, I don't want to obey my husband, to be subject to my husband." You may not like it, but you wait till your baby lies dying and you pray and God will not hear. You wait till your son is overseas and you get a message that he's missing in action.

You wait until some dread calamity comes, maybe it'll be cancer in the body, maybe it'll be some dread automobile accident, maybe it'll be the ruin of a girl or boy who've fallen into terrible sin, and you try to pray, and God turns his face away, and then you'll see it would have been well to do what God said. Likewise, you wives be in subjection to your own husband, and the scripture says that's the way to have your prayers answered. There are women who prayed for 20 years, 30 years for an unconverted husband, and they've blocked their own prayers, for the scripture has plainly commanded that the wife is to be subject to the husband.

And you go your way, a rebel against the authority God has put in the home. You go your way breaking a solemn vow before God and men, the marriage vow to love and honor and obey, and then you wonder why God does not answer your prayer. Dear wife, listen to me, you can't be a good Christian if you're not a good wife, and if you're rebellious against the husband that God has given you, then you're rebellious against God and your prayers are hindered, so says the plain statement of the word of God.

And husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, that is according to the blessed word of God. Why? So your prayers will not be hindered, for here the Bible says that if a husband doesn't take the place of responsibility for the worship and leading and authority in the home as God's deputy and high priest, that the man therefore has his prayers hindered because he isn't living with a wife according to knowledge and the prayers hindered. And somebody hears me today, some fine boy or girl, some young man or woman, and you say you want to be a good Christian, you'd like to follow God, you'd like to obey the Lord Jesus, and yet you don't get up the first time you're called, you don't say yes sir and yes ma'am, you don't speak quickly when you're spoken to, you don't do what you're commanded, you're a rebel and you think you're a good Christian.

You're not a good Christian. How could God hear your prayers when you disobey in the home the authority God has put over you? Home life is the place where our prayers are most often hindered, and I beg you to consider from the word of God the plain warning, prayers are hindered by wrong home life. Let me bring you another word from the Bible about what hinders our prayer.

I turn to Matthew chapter 5, and there the Lord Jesus gives a wonderful plain message in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 23 and 24. The Lord Jesus says, Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereth that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way. First be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift.

Will you notice that the Lord Jesus says you can't be right with God and be wrong with anybody else in the world. Did you notice the Lord Jesus said that when you bring your gift to the altar and there at the altar, we'll say the altar of prayer, that you remember somebody you've wronged. Isn't it strange the keenness of memory, the tenderness of conscience? Is it strange? No, the blessed Holy Spirit when you come to talk to God reminds you of a sin that grieves God, and if I bring thy gift to the altar and there remembereth that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave the gift there at the altar and go your way.

And then God says after you're reconciled with your brother, you may offer God the gift. I think this clearly teaches that you can't do anything to please God, that you can't offer God anything he would have, whether it's praise or prayer or money or service. There's not anything you can give God that'll please him as long as you're wrong with other people.

Let's picture an Old Testament case. Here's a Jew under law who brings a lamb for a sacrifice. He brings it to the priest and it's with his feet bound together and lays it down before the great brass and altar, and the

priest then is to take a knife and cut through the lamb and cut the blood in a basin and then to dress the lamb and wave one shoulder for the priest and the priest and the rest of it is to be burned there.

And can you imagine that as a man takes the knife to kill the lamb, that voice from heaven says, stay, wait, God says, don't kill that lamb, don't put that lamb on my altar, it's an abomination, it stinks, it's hateful to me, I'll not have it, God says. And the priest says, well, why Lord? And the man that brings the lamb says, well, why Lord? This picture's my obedience, this picture's my love, this picture's my faith in the coming Savior, the Messiah or Messiah, why not offer this lamb? But God says, you bring it with a bad heart, you've wronged your neighbor, you're not right with others, if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there at the altar, remembereth that thy brother hath ought against thee, hath anything against you, then he said, you needn't bring me anything till you go get right with your brother. Someone has said that prayer is the biggest thing you can ever do, and that prayer is the first thing a Christian ought to do in any circumstances.

Well, perhaps that is sometimes true, but it is not always true. It is certain by the word of God that you cannot offer anything to God that will please him, you can't give him any money, you can't give him a service, you can't offer any prayer, you can't offer him any praise that will please him as long as there's a brother that's wronged and offended and to whom you've not made an apology, to whom you've not made restitution. God's word says, if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there, remember that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift.

I wonder how many people put a dollar in the collection plate and think they please God, when all the time there's sin in the heart, you're wrong with somebody else, and God doesn't accept what you give with any joy. I wonder how many people sing in the choir, maybe you're singing through false teeth you haven't paid for, and God doesn't like that. I wonder how many preachers who preach the gospel, but when you preach there's sin in the way because their debt's unpaid.

Did you ever hear anybody say they're hypocrites in the church? Well, I wish you'd remember that God loves to answer prayer, but God will not endorse sin, God will not be put on the side of crookedness and of dishonesty in order to answer prayer. I was in a revival campaign in a big southern city with 40 churches cooperating in the big campaign. Of those 40 churches, three different pastors that were officially connected, including the chairman of the campaign, after the service came to confess, saw all three of them publicly that they had debts unpaid two, three, to 20 years, and these debts had hindered between them and God.

I wonder how many common people who are Christians and who love God, but have debts unpaid. I was in a city that I love and in a church that I love preaching in revival services, and I preached on this subject, and a woman came to talk to me, and she said, but Brother Rice, I'm troubled. You have troubled me.

You've made it hard on me. I don't know what we'll do, she said, and I said, why? Well, you said if we didn't pay honest debts that God would be grieved, and it would wrong somebody else, and then we should come. When we came to pray, it wouldn't do any good until we went and got things right, but she said my husband and I owe a man several thousand dollars.

We paid nothing on it for two years, but she said we can't live the way we're accustomed and pay that debt. She said we're accustomed to lots of company. We're cultured people.

We have a big home. We can't pay the rent and spend the money for entertainment that we're accustomed to and pay that debt, and I don't know what to do, and a grim-faced man came through the crowd and spoke to his wife and said, what are you bothering Brother Rice about? And she told him what she'd told me. I don't see how we can pay that debt and live like we're accustomed to live, and he said a very sensible thing.

He said we don't have to live like we're accustomed to live. We're going to pay that debt. We're honest people.

We're Christians, and he got her by the arm and said, come on, let's go home. We could live in a garage if need be. I want you to know that the kind of sincere Christianity that God himself wants and that common people everywhere believe in will make you be honest about paying honest debts, and if you haven't done that, then you can just leave your gift at the altar and first go be reconciled with the people you've wronged before God is to answer your prayers.

I wonder how many people are like a woman who came in a service where I was preaching in a great church, and her daughter was converted, and she said, what did you do with my daughter? And I said, well, your daughter's been converted, and I didn't do anything with her, but God saved her, and she's in the pastor's study with the pastor's wife and some other converts being taught, and so I said, what's the matter with you? Are you not saved? And she said, I don't know, and she began to weep and told me what she'd never told a soul, never told that grown daughter, never told a son who waited. She said, every time I pray, God says, what about that eight hundred dollars? And I said, what about it? And she said, well, 14 years ago, my husband died. I had no way to make money, and when my husband died, I took kerosene, poured it around that little house, and set it on fire when the children were gone to school, and collected eight hundred dollars, and then she wept and said, but God has never heard me since then.

I wonder how many now are under a curse because of wrongs unrighted, and debts unpaid, and restitution not made, and the apology not offered. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembers that thy brother hath ought against thee, go thy way. First, he said, leave thy gift at the altar, and go thy way.

First be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift. Oh, before you pray, get right with people you've wronged. You can't be wrong with anybody in the world, and be right with God.

And then somebody hears me today, and you spoke some unkind and hot words, go apologize, go make them right. If a brother holds it against you, if a neighbor, if a friend, if one in your own home is grieved by it, and hurt by it, and you do not remove that sting, and that burden, and that thing between you and God, then your prayers are hindered when you try to pray. In Jesus' name, go make it right, and get that thing out from between you and God.

Hindered prayer by wrong relations to others, wrongs unrighted, and by debts unpaid, for that which is stolen and not restored. You remember, don't you, that Zacchaeus, the publican, when Jesus saw him up the sycamore tree and said, come down, Zacchaeus, this day I must abide in my house. Zacchaeus slid down the tree and was converted before he hit the ground, and he said, I'll restore fourfold everybody I've wronged.

He said, I'll pay, give half my goods to the poor. That man was saved, and God was pleased with him, and God will be pleased with you if you go to reconcile to those you've wronged, and make right that which you've done that needs to be made right. Restitution, and confession, and apology, and paying of debts is

a good way to have your prayers answered.

There's another scripture I ought to read, in Matthew chapter 6, in the blessed model prayer, the Lord's Prayer, where the Savior gives us the prayer and says you should pray after this passion, and he says, and forgive us our debts as we forgive those who trespass against us. In verse 12, forgive us, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. You are to forgive when you come to pray.

And then in verse 14, Jesus said, for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses, says the word of God. Jesus says that a condition of answered prayers to forgive others who have wronged you.

Well, somebody said, but Brother Ashley, haven't asked me for forgiveness. That may well be true. I remind you that the Pharisees who sat and mocked when Jesus died had not asked him for forgiveness.

I remind you that those wicked soldiers who drove the nails through his hands and feet, and the spear in his side had not asked for his forgiveness. And yet the dear Savior prayed and said, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.

I do not know that they could take advantage of that forgiveness. I don't think they could get the benefit of that forgiveness. But in the dear heart of the Son of God, already forgiveness was offered.

And God wants you to be the same way. How could we be like our heavenly Father if we do not forgive? I know that some of the things a Christian must stand for in good conscience, according to the word of God, will not please the outside world. But there's one coin that is good in any realm.

There's one quality of Christian character that even a heathen man knows a Christian ought to have. Jesus said, by this shall all men know you're my disciples if you have love one toward another. And the Christian who cannot forgive is not in his character the kind of Christian he ought to be.

The Christian who cannot forgive has some way betrayed his testimony and has wronged God and dishonored God and misrepresented the Savior. And so God cannot answer your prayer as He'd like. There are two senses in which forgiveness is taught in the Bible.

In the first place, when one comes to trust in Jesus Christ and has his sins all forgiven, he is saved. Sins of the past and present and future are laid on God and on Christ and are paid for in the blood of Calvary. And so God can impute to the Christian righteousness his sins are forgiven.

There's another sense in which a Christian needs daily forgiveness, and that's mentioned in the Lord's Prayer, forgive us our debts. And we're taught in 1 John 1 9, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. A Christian needs a daily cleansing, a daily forgiveness.

You may be God's child, but God still hates sin. God will not take the part of sin. God will not endorse sin.

If God must endorse sin to get the prayers answered, then God will let every cry go fruitless, and every tear will be wasted, and every plea of a child of God will be ignored. If God must, in order to answer your prayer, do wrong, God will not do wrong. God will not endorse sin.

So if you have hatred and unforgiveness, then get it out before your prayers are answered. Remember the scripture says that, let not the sun go down on your wrath. That means every day before sundown.

Be sure, be sure, be sure, not one root of bitterness remains. It may grow and poison the whole life and wreck your Christian life. Don't do it.

Forgive in Jesus' name, if you would be forgiven. If you want God to smile upon you and hear your prayers, then you must forgive. Or your sin piles up uncleansed and unforgiven.

You must forgive, if you would be forgiven. I want you to remember that you can't have all the blessing God wants you to have, the freedom to call on God and the blessed answer to your prayers that you have a right to expect otherwise, if sin, the wicked sin of unforgiveness is in the way. I was in revival services at Huntington, West Virginia, in the East Huntington High School, with 20 churches cooperating in the revival campaign and a pastor came to say, Brother Rice, will you pray about a problem in my church? He told me how two women who lived with one door between them on the same street, the most influential women in the church, how they had hatred and grudges and unforgiveness and they didn't speak when they passed on the street.

One comes in one door, he said, and sits on this side, the other in that door and sits on that side, and they never speak, he said, and the whole church was divided. He said that these good women had split the church and that for six years had been a curse and no results had been little of salvation in the church. He asked me to pray and we did pray and I saw the time when those two women came to the platform after service one night, had their arms around each other and one said, I want you to forgive me, I'm to blame for every bit of it, and the other woman said, no, no, I'm to blame, you must forgive me.

The pastor's wife had her arms around these two as well as she could for they were rather large women and the pastor stood to one side and cried and blew his nose and praised God and I saw a revival break out in that end of town around that little church and the plague was gone and God answered prayer because here God's people had learned to forgive. If you want God to hear your prayers and to forgive you your sins and clean you up and let you day by day come to him without a hindrance, then you must learn to forgive as you want to be forgiven. Again, let me bring you another message, another scripture that shows why our prayers are hindered.

In Psalm 66, 18 is this plain word from the Bible, will you listen very carefully, Psalm 66, 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

The scripture does not say that if I have ever done wrong, God won't hear me, that would be tragedy unspeakable, that would mean the end of all opportunity to pray. God doesn't say that, thank God, but he says if I have a love for sin, if I regard sin, if I make an alibi, if I make excuses, if I take up for sin, if I hug it to my heart, if I, if I feel that way about sin, God will not hear me. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

What does that mean? Suppose we make this general rule, any known sin, unlamented, unconfessed, unrepented, and unforsaken, any known sin can block your prayers and turn God's face away if you do not confess and forsake that sin. I do not know what it is, I just know this, that if you hold on to sin in your wicked heart, you have blocked the gateway to God as far as having prayers answered, as far as getting your loved one saved, as far as having prosperity and blessing on your life. Oh, then in God's dear name, I beg you, confess and forsake any known sin.

What is it? I wish I could tell you, I can't. Is it some filthy habit that dishonors God, that maybe you say, oh, this little bit of a habit, it isn't so bad? Well, it may be no bigger than a pencil and a half as long, but if it has become an issue between you and God because it defiles the temple of God, then it'll mean your prayers will go unanswered. Is it membership in some secret organization? I don't know.

Is it some worldly amusement? I don't know. I don't know what it is, but if there's any known sin, a matter about which God has spoken to you and you didn't hear or would not listen, if there's any matter that has become a matter of controversy between you and God, that will hinder your prayers. Any known sin, unconfessed and un lamented, any known sin, unforsaken, will mean that God cannot hear and cannot freely answer your prayers, however much he loves you and wants to do so.

Will you check in your heart, it may be that it's robbing God, maybe it's covetousness and you're under a curse, that covetousness which is idolatry. It may be that, according to Proverbs 28 9, the scripture says, he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. Maybe your prayer is an abomination because you've turned your heart away from the Bible.

You do not read the Bible. You do not gladly hear the Bible. You do not come with an open heart to the Bible to find what God says to you.

If so, then your prayer is a failure and God turns his face away. Your prayer is an abomination. I do not know, but I say any known sin.

May the Lord help you by his spirit to find that sin, if it's unconfessed, if it's un lamented, if it's unrepented, it's between you and God when you pray. And then someone says, but what is my trouble? It may be you've never even come to put your trust in Jesus Christ. Don't you know the Bible says that if any man loved not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.

Don't you know that without Christ as a Savior, you cannot come to God acceptably in any matter. Why would God hear you pray when you reject his Son and turn down the only Savior? I beg you in Jesus' name to turn to him first and make sure of your own salvation, and then you can pray for others. And wait, let me give you a good, a wonderful remedy for all of our prayerlessness and the lack of answer to our prayers.

You turn in 1 John 1 9, the scripture says, if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. What can I do when I fail God? What can I do when sin is hindered? This I may do, this you may do. You can confess that sin with an honest heart, and as you confess it, you will help to kill it.

You take sides against sin and for God, and God in his mercy forgives it and blots it out, and then God will make it so he can hear you gladly because you're on his side and against sin and for the right. Then confess your sin today and forsake it. Wouldn't it be blessed if everyone who sits and hears me now, if down in your heart you could say, nothing between my soul and the Savior.

Wouldn't it be blessed if you could say, the dearest idol I have known, whatever that idol be, help me to tear it from thy throne and worship only thee. May God help you today that you'll say, there'll be nothing between me and God. I'll confess and forsake every known sin, and God will show me what's wrong, and God will help me to confess it, and I'll make right with others, and I'll make right with God, and then when I pray, God will smile into my heart and give me the answer that I so much need to my prayers.

Don't forget the text now, that the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save me. This is heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities are separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. But again, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God help you to confess and forsake the sin that blocks heaven and shuts up the answer to your prayer. What is there between you and God today? Are you read to lay it on the altar? If you will lay that sin on the altar and let God cleanse it away, then the road will be cleared for God to answer your prayers. I want Joanne and Jesse to come and sing this for you, and my daughter Grace at the piano, and as they sing it, you put your heart and everything in your life on the altar tonight, and God bless you as they sing it.

You have longed for sweet things, and for grace to increase, but you shall never be perfectly blessed.

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