

Hindrances to Prayer

by John R. Rice

John R. Rice emphasizes that unresolved sins and wrong relationships hinder effective prayer.

Scripture: Isaiah 59:1

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Spiritual Obstacles"

Description

John R. Rice preaches about the hindrances to prayer, emphasizing the importance of surrendering to God's will and obeying His commands to experience answered prayers. He highlights the sins that hinder prayers, such as rebellion, unforgiveness, covetousness, self-will, and indifference towards the Bible, which make prayers an abomination to God. Rice uses biblical examples like Saul's disobedience and the importance of meditating on God's Word to illustrate how turning away from God's law can block blessings and hinder prayers.

Transcript

"... that your prayers be not hindered." - I Pet. 3:7.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither 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." - Isa. 59:1,2.

"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." - I Pet. 3:12.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." - Psalm 66:18.

Daily, Regular Answer to Prayers Should Be Normal for All Christians

The normal Christian life is a life of regular, daily answer to prayer. In the model prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray daily for bread, and expect to get it, and to ask daily for forgiveness, for deliverance from the evil one, and for other needs, and daily to get the answers they sought.

That is the way Jesus Himself lived, in daily unhindered communion with the Father, so that He could say to His Father and our Father, "I knew that thou hearest me always" (John 11:42). And all the teaching of the Lord Jesus about prayer shows that we too have a normal, day-by-day unhindered intercourse with God, asking and receiving, seeking and finding, knocking and having God open to us. He plainly said,

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). When we are told in James 4:2 that "ye have not, because ye ask not," it is proper to infer that God intended asking to be followed by having and that the Christian in the will of God can live day by day in the fullness of joy of having his prayers answered.

It is perfectly normal for an obedient child to ask for food every meal time and get it, get all he wants, and eat until he is perfectly satisfied. And using that figure the Saviour said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11).

A depositor whose account is in good condition normally has every check he draws honored by the bank. Then why cannot a child of God day by day draw on the bank of Heaven have his prayers answered as a matter of course, as a daily business? He can! When a Christian fails to have his prayer-check cashed, he should regard it as proof that something is wrong that needs attention at once.

When I turn faucets in bathroom or kitchen, I expect water to pour forth every time. If I turned the tap and water did not come, I would be surprised. Also I would know that something radically was wrong and I would immediately set out to find out why the water did not run. If I press a light switch and the light does not shine, or if I plug in an electric motor and there is no power, I know that something is wrong, dead wrong, that the connection with the powerhouse is broken; and I set out to find what is wrong and to remedy it. Just so, every Christian ought to be in daily communion with God and ought to live the joyful life of answered prayer. And when anything hinders his prayers the Christian ought immediately to be able to find out what is wrong and get it remedied.

Now the Scriptures above, at the head of this chapter, indicate that there are sins which hinder the prayers of Christians, sins that turn God's face away so that He will not hear, yea, sins which make it so that God cannot, in righteousness, heed the cry of His own child, whom He loves! We are not left in the dark about these sins. God, in His wonderful love, has shown us in the Bible the things that grieve Him, the things that make it so He cannot answer fully our prayers.

Often we pray for daily bread or for other daily necessities, such as money for rent, or for a job, or furniture or clothes, things for which God tells us to pray; and yet no answer comes. Christians often pray for the conversion of loved ones, pray for revivals, pray for help in temptation; all matters about which every Christian certainly has a right to pray, matters about which God has declared in His Word that He is concerned, and which He is anxious to give us; and yet Christians often do not get the answer to their prayers. Why? The answer is that many a good prayers cannot be answered by a holy God because of sins in the life and heart of the one who prays.

It may be that you have some of your prayers answered, or think you do. The dear Lord Who "sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45), and is "kind unto the unthankful" (Luke 6:35), may give you many things that do not come because He respects your prayers and answers them, but because of His infinite mercy which is poured out even upon the vilest sinners. The God Who still gives breath to the murderer, still gives food to the man who never prays, the God Who gives all the bounties of nature to a sinning, Christ-rejecting race - that God still loves and cares for His children even when they live in sin and grieve His heart. So perhaps what God has been doing for you when you prayed was not at all the answer to your prayers but just such mercies as His infinite Love and goodness provide for the most wicked of His creatures.

But whether God hears some of your prayers, or none of them, your prayers are hindered if you do not day by day live in the fullness of answered prayer so that you can sing, "Nothing between my soul and the Saviour, So that His blessed face may be seen; Nothing preventing the least of His favor, Keep the way clear - let nothing between."

Often we are painfully conscious that our prayers are not heard. Last night a man said to me as we parted at the close of the service in a great rescue mission, "Preacher, before you sleep I wish you would pray for me. My prayers never get higher than my head. God won't hear me." Is that your case? Do you feel, even as you call on God, that He is not pleased, that He will not hear, that there is no likelihood of your receiving the thing for which you ask? Then, oh, how important it is to clear the line between you and God so He will hear you. How important it is to confess and forsake everything that grieves the dear Holy Spirit and shuts up Heaven to your prayers and stops God's ears!

Let us now prayerfully examine the Word of God and search our hearts to see why our prayers are hindered, and why God does not answer to give us what we ask.

I. Wrong Relationship of Wives to Husbands and of Husbands to Wives Hinders Prayer

In the matter of hindered prayer, we ought to begin where God begins. In First Peter 3:7, the Lord says, "... that your prayers be not hindered." Speaking first of the sins of a rebellious wife that hurts her prayers, He discusses that in detail. And then the Scripture speaks of the sins of a husband who does not take his proper, God-appointed place in relation to the wife, and warns both wife and husband that they are to obey God in this matter, "that your prayers be not hindered."

Will you read prayerfully these seven remarkable verses, which may show why God does not hear your prayer?

"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 coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in 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 unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (I Pet 3:1-7).

Here God speaks to the wife about her duty to the husband. And in the matter of getting your prayers answered, it does not matter, says the Lord, what kind of husband you have; you must obey him, you must be subject to him. A woman must be subject to her husband, or her prayers are hindered. He may even be an unsaved man, one who will not obey the Word of God, who will not listen to the Bible, will not attend church; and yet a Christian woman is to be subject to such a husband, says the above Scripture, that her prayers be not hindered.

It is even inferred that the wife's prayer for the salvation of her husband may be blocked by her own disobedience. A woman may seek to use her influence with her husband by adorning her body, by the plaiting of her hair, by the wearing of gold, or by her neat and attractive dress; but the Lord here says that these things are not to be the beauty, the adornment, the attraction of a Christian woman. And they will not win her husband; they will not get her prayers answered. Rather, every Christian woman is to have that "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (verse 4). It is not wrong to plait the hair, or wear clothes; but the only ornament to win a husband for God is the ornament that will cause God to answer prayers, the ornament of a meek, obedient spirit.

In this matter, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is held up as an example. She called Abraham lord, as she obeyed him. And God gave Sarah a baby when she was ninety years old, wonderfully answering her prayers. And so, argues the Word of God, Christian women, if their prayers are not to be hindered, must be subject to their husbands.

Many a Christian woman has wept as she told me how earnestly she prayed, how diligently she attended the house of God, how eagerly she did church work, and God seemed not to hear her prayers about an unsaved husband or son or daughter! It is a remarkable fact that in nearly every congregation of Christians are godly women, women who pray, who read their bibles, who live lives more or less separated from worldliness in general, and yet who cannot get their prayers answered for the conversion of their loved ones. "Why? Why?" the cry comes. The answer is not found in the public church services. The answer is not found if you watch such good women singing in the choir, teaching in the Sunday School, attending bible conferences, giving money to the poor. No, no! Our sins and hindered prayer are primarily home-sins. The sins of Christians which hinder their prayers and stop Heaven, and shut the ears of God and grieve Him till He turns His dear face away from His own born-again children, are not most often the sins of the tavern, nor of the dance floor, nor of the theater. They are not the public sins so much as the private sins. They are not the sins in the church so much as in the homes!

You remember Achan and the wedge of gold and the two hundred shekels of silver and the Babylonish garment which he stole - treasures dedicated to God. When the curse of God was pronounced upon all Israel, Achan finally admitted, "They are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it" (Josh. 7:21). Achan's sin was not a public sin. Others never dreamed of it. It was a home-sin.

And, dear wife who reads this, if you are guilty of this horrible sin of rebellion against the one whom you took with solemn vows as your husband, to honor, love and obey, then that sin today hinders your prayers! That rebellion is the secret of why God has turned away His face and many of your prayers go unanswered.

Rebellion is the sin of fallen angels. Rebellion is the sin which damns every Christ-rejecting sinner. Rebellion against authority is the heart of all crime, and every criminal in a penitentiary has been guilty first not of murder, nor of theft, but has been guilty first of rebellion against authority. This was the sin of the prodigal boy. Rebellion is the very heart of all sin. Dear Christian wife, God says to you that if you will not be subject to your husband that your prayers are hindered.

I dared not use this Scripture without an honest interpretation of it. The meaning surely is clear. Rebellious wives have their prayers hindered.

And again, He says, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be

not hindered." Husbands, too, have their prayers hindered if they do not deal Scripturally with their wives.

Husbands are (1) to dwell with their wives "according to knowledge," that is, based on an understanding of the Scriptures relating to husband and wife. (2) "Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel," and (3) "as being heirs together of the grace of life." Husbands, then, should take the place accorded them in the Scriptures as heads of the home, high priests unto God, responsible for the home and for the children, like Joshua, who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," for "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). Husbands are to "rule over" their wives (Gen. 3:16). A husband who does not dwell with his wife according to knowledge of the plain command of Scripture is likely to have his prayers go unanswered, hindered.

A husband is to remember that he is stronger than his wife. His life should be an example to his wife. The husband should be able to explain the Scriptures to his wife (I Cor. 14:35). The heavy responsibilities of earning a living, of disciplining children, winning the family to Christ, of religious instruction in the home and the family - these heaviest burdens ought to fall heaviest on the husband's shoulders. The man who shirks and avoids such responsibilities, leaving them for the weaker partner, sins before God and will have his prayers hindered.

And the husband should feel himself as one with his wife, one flesh. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherished it" (Eph. 5:29). The husband is to love the wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

And this general surrender to God's pattern for the place of the husband in the home is essential to the full, happy life of daily answered prayer. The slacker husband will find that his prayers are hindered.

Discord in the home grieves God. And if there be children that rebel against parents, let them know that such rebellion turns away the face of God and stops His ears and hinders their prayers.

If an old-time revival of Bible Christianity can be had in the homes, how blessed, how far reaching will be the results! Heartfelt surrender to the will of God and obedience to His plan in the home is more important than any kind of public worship or any duties of citizenship. The hindrances to prayer are often in the relations of wives and husbands and of children and parents in the home.

II. Prayers Blocked by Wrongs Unrighted, Debts Unpaid, Offended Brothers Unreconciled

If a wife's prayers are hindered by the sin of rebellion against her husband, and the husband's prayers are hindered by not taking his Scriptural position in the home and in relation to his wife; it is also true that every wrong against others which is not made right stands between the Christian and God to hinder his prayers.

This must be the meaning of our Saviour in Matthew 5:23,24 when He said,

"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hat ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

The Old Testament saint who came to present himself before God at the temple and offer a lamb for a sacrifice, represents a Christian in his prayers and service and praise. If the Hebrew saint were spiritually minded, he knew that that lamb represented Christ, the Lamb of God which should take away the sins of the world. He knew, if he were taught by the Holy Spirit, that the blood of that lamb pictured the blood of Calvary that would be shed for sinners. All his heart's devotion to God would be expressed by the offering of this lamb, all his hope of pardon, all his trust in the atoning blood, all his loving adoration. But the Lord Jesus plainly said that if one should bring a lamb for a sacrifice or any kind of an offering to God and there at the altar should remember a brother whom he had wronged or offended, then he must at once stop the sacrifice. 'Leave the lamb with its feet tied together on the ground before the altar! I will not receive it! I will not hear your prayers, I will not be pleased with your offerings. Nothing you can do for Me can be viewed with favor until you go and make right the wrong done your brother!' said the Saviour in effect.

Some of you pray long, and God never hears you. Some of you give much money, and the sight of it is an abomination to God. Some of you work and toil doing "church work," and God hates it. Anything you can offer to God is hateful in His sight if you will not go and be reconciled to others you have wronged. There is a fundamental hypocrisy in any attempt at worship or service by those who do not honestly forsake sin and make an effort to undo the wrong that has been done, to pay debts that have been made, to ask forgiveness for sins committed against others.

Many of us cannot get our prayers heard because already the cry of others whom we have wronged has been heard by God. Cain tried to talk to God; but the blood of his slain brother, Abel, had cried out of the ground to God against Cain. Pharaoh in Egypt made fair promises, but already he was marked for destruction, and God brought along one crisis after another that forced Pharaoh to choose, knowing that Pharaoh would harden his heart and die under the wrath of God. The reason was that God had heard the groanings and the cries of the oppressed multitudes of the Israelites; of mothers whose babies were murdered; of toiling laborers who had to make brick without straw. May God pity Hitler if ever he tries to pray; for ringing in the ears of God already are the groans and pleadings of the martyred dead, the slaughtered Poles, the murdered Jews, the betrayed French, the starved Greeks, and the downtrodden millions of poor and oppressed in all of Europe!

God told the Jews in the days of Malachi that divorced wives had covered the altar of the Lord with tears until He would no longer regard the offering or receive it with good will at the hands of the Jews because He was a witness between the sin of the men who tried to pray and their treacherously divorced wives (Mal. 2:13,14). And the Lord warns in Exodus 22:22,23 that any afflicted widow or fatherless child could cry to God and that their faintest cry would be heard, and God's wrath would wax hot against those who oppressed them. And verse 27 of the same chapter tells us that if the poor man should cry at all to God against those who take away his garment and covering, that God would hear.

Do you then, dear Christian, believe that God will hear you pray when there are wrongs against others that you have not made right and debts that you have not paid?

God commands all men to repent, we are told. And repentance means a sincere, heart-turning away from sin, a change of mind and disposition toward sin and toward God. How, then, could God be pleased to bless His own children who have not themselves honestly turned away from some sin in their own lives?

More than once when I have urged some businessman to come out to the services at the house of God, he has replied, "Well, if the members of that church would pay me what they owe me I would feel a good

deal more like going to their church." Anyone who is well acquainted with retail credit business knows that multitudes of church people will not pay honest debts unless the bill collector follows them up to get it. Sometimes Christians move out of apartments or houses owing back rent which they never pay. Some Christians owe long-standing bills to doctors, good physicians who cared for them in the time of deepest distress. Students leave Christian colleges with bills that they never pay. A brother borrows money from a Christian brother, promises to repay it within a certain time; and then the debt becomes so old that he is ashamed to pay it, and never does! I am not speaking about unusual circumstances. As a pastor, as an evangelist, as an editor, as a radio preacher, and as one who feels the heartbeat of multitudes through the thousands of letters that come to me each year, I know something of the shockingly lax standards of Christians about debt paying. I know of churches, more than one, who borrowed money in good faith on buildings, and then in depression years turned the buildings back to the creditor, buildings which were not useful for other purposes and had no sale, and then bought back the same buildings at reduced prices. The creditors in such cases took a net loss. They would rather have part of the money than none of it. But the result is that church loans are not counted good business loans in America!

From a small town in Texas a storekeeper who heard my radio broadcasts in Dallas wrote to me about as follows:

"Dear Brother Rice:

"The other day a man came into my store and handed me \$25.00 to pay a debt that was ten years old. I had given up all hope of ever collecting the debt. I had tried again and again, and the debtor would make no effort to pay. When he came in to pay the debt, I told him frankly, 'That's \$25.00 I never expected to see. And he answered back, 'Yes, it's \$25.00 I never intended to pay. But I've been hearing Brother John R. Rice on the radio. He showed me from the Bible that if I ever expected God to hear my prayers for the salvation of my children, to hear my call for daily help, I must make things right and be reconciled to those I had wronged. So I resolved to pay this debt. I must make it so God will hear my prayers and save my children!' "

The storekeeper then wrote me that he felt the money ought to go to God's cause since long ago he had marked it off of his books as a loss. He said, "I have given \$5.00 to a Methodist pastor here who I know preaches honestly that Christians must get right with others if they expect God to hear their prayers. I am sending you \$10.00, and I will give the other \$10.00 to the next preacher I hear who preaches that you must pay your honest debts if you expect God to hear your prayers."

I beg you to read this, if there are debts unpaid, that you go now and make them right at any cost so God will hear your prayers.

In a Sunday morning revival service in St. Paul, Minnesota, a number were led to trust happily in Christ. After the benediction, a woman with a troubled face came to me and said, "What did you do with my daughter? Where is she?" She was in the inquiry room being instructed by the pastor's wife with a group of other women and girls, I explained. And then I said, "Are you a Christian? Hadn't you better get this matter settled for yourself?"

"I don't know whether I am saved or not. I guess I'm not. I must talk to somebody." And she began to weep. We sat down together, and I asked her what her trouble was and why it was she could not know whether she was a Christian or not.

"Well, every time I start to pray," she said, "God says to me, 'What about that \$800.00?' I never can get anywhere with my praying. God won't talk to me about anything else," she exclaimed.

"Well, what about the \$800.00?" I asked.

Then she told me the sad story that she had never told another living soul. Her husband had died fourteen years before. She had two children. She knew of no way to make money. So when the children had gone to school, she set fire to the little home and burned it to the ground. The insurance company paid without question the full \$800.00 of insurance. With that money she had moved to St. Paul, got the children in school, and got started in a livelihood. The lovely grown daughter who had that morning accepted Christ never dreamed it, nor did the son. Not a breath of suspicion had ever been attached to her. yet God still remembered that she was a thief, that she was crooked; and every time she started to pray God said to her, "What are you going to do about that \$800.00?"

I told her that she must at once go to the officials of the insurance company and make confession.

"But I have no money; I could not pay it," she said. But I reminded her that she had beautiful clothes, that both she and her daughter now had good jobs, and that if she had to pay it just a few dollars a week she could begin to pay it and at least show good faith.

"But I would land in jail," she said. "I have broken the law, and they would brand me before the whole world as a thief. I can't do that," she said.

"But you are a thief, whether anybody knows it or not," I said. "And if you do not pay this honest debt, you will never have any peace with God. If you go to jail, then go to jail; and God will there give you peace in your mind and heart and hear you pray. As it is, God will never hear you pray as long as this wicked sin is between you and Him."

Again she objected saying, "But I don't even remember the name of the insurance company. I do not know where its offices are. I could not pay them if I had the money."

"Just turn the thing around," I said. "If an insurance company owed you \$800.00, and you did not know which insurance company it was, don't you believe that you could find out who it was?" She agreed that she would try mighty hard and she thought she could find out under those circumstances. So I showed her that she ought to try just as earnestly to find out so that she might confess a known sin and pay an honest debt and clear the way before God so He would hear her prayers which He had refused to hear for fourteen years!

Beloved reader, you may be God's own child, dear as the apple of His eye. You may be as dear to Him as David, a man after His own heart; or as Samson, a judge of Israel; or as Peter, the first apostle. But I warn you solemnly that God hates sin even in the dearest of His children. God demands that you forsake it, that you hate it, that you honestly try to make right the things you have done wrong.

Some things, of course, can never be undone. If you killed a man, you cannot bring him back to life. But as long as there is a sin which you could make right and have not honestly tried to do it, you are still as guilty as Satan; and every prayer you offer to God stinks of hypocrisy!

Oh, I long to see the kind of Christian lives that prove honest repentance! Zacchaeus, converted as he slid down a sycamore tree to face Jesus, made sudden high resolves that showed that he meant business. He

said, "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). He meant that beginning that very moment he would try to make right the wicked sins of his career as a crooked tax collector. No wonder that Jesus said, "This day is a salvation come to this house."

The wicked jailer at Philippi, when he came trembling to lead Paul and Silas out of the wrecked jail following the midnight earthquake, was wonderfully saved by simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. And the same night, with scarcely an hour gone by, we suppose, he saw every member of his own family wonderfully converted. Do you know why? It was not simply because he was saved. Some of you who read this have been saved ten years, twenty years, thirty years. Yet you wives cannot win your own husbands. You parents cannot win your own children. But that poor, wicked jailer won every person in his household before morning, that same night. And I will tell you how he did it.

First, he took Paul and Silas the same hour of the night and was baptized. It was a wholesale turning of his life over to God in public profession and declaration.

Then he washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, long welts and cuts made by the Roman cat-o'-n-in-tails, or scourge. I can imagine that with tears running down his old face, marked perhaps by years of sin, he said to Paul, "Oh, I'm so sorry I stood there and laughed while they beat you. I helped to tear your clothes off of you! I put you in the jail and in the innermost prison and fastened your feet in the stocks, and you had never wronged me. I treated you like a common criminal. God forgive me! I want to make it right the best I can!"

And then a midnight meal was prepared for these two preachers let out of jail in such strange circumstances. They had been put in the dungeon the night before without supper, and the jailer could not rest until he had made that right with a meal that showed his love.

It is not hard for me to believe that if there were a profligate, drunken son who had followed the father into all kinds of sin, when he saw what happened that strange night he may well have said to himself, "Well, the old man sure means business this time! Something surely has changed him. And if God can do that for Dad, He can do it for me, and I'm going, too!" At any rate, the whole family was saved and baptized. What a happy scene they must have made, sitting around that table in the wee morning hours, the whole family saved, the whole family rejoicing after being baptized as a public profession of their faith!

Some of you pray and pray, but your prayers are not heard. You had as well never offer them any more until you make a genuine effort to pay the bills you owe, to right the wrongs you have done, to apologize for sins committed and to be reconciled with others.

Oh, what zeal we ought to have about making wrongs right! Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. 5:38-42). You will never understand that passage until you remember that it is a matter of restitution God is talking about.

Under the Mosaic law if a man put out his neighbor's eye, he was to be held and his eye put out. If one man's ox killed his neighbor's ox, he was to give the live ox for the dead. If one farmer's cattle ate his

neighbor's crop, he was to make it good out of his own crop. And so the Saviour says if a man says that you owe it to him to let him hit you on the right cheek, they you are not only to allow that but to turn the other cheek also, and so see that you satisfy your neighbor's claim against you. If he claims that you have his coat, then you make sure that you satisfy his claim perfectly so that your brother can have nothing against you. give him your cloak also. If he says he has carried your burden a mile and you should go a mile with him, then offer to go with him two. In other words, a Christian should earnestly set out, at any cost, to be reconciled to people he has wronged.

Your hot words may have cut some dear one to the heart, and you have never confessed and asked forgiveness for that sin. You may have slandered some man of God, some innocent girl, or some thoughtless neighbor. I beg you, go be reconciled! Confess your wrong and earnestly try to make it right.

Someone hears me who has a mother or father far away. They long to hear from you. You have your own home, your own business, your own interests. They have now only memories of the past. How can God bless you who neglect heartbroken mothers and cause grief to those who gave everything for you?

Dear Christian, many times I have had to write letters asking forgiveness, or write a check to pay an honest debt before I could have assurance that God would hear my prayers. Are you prayers hindered because there are those you have wronged with sins that you have never tried to undo? Then the Saviour said, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hat ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer they gift."

III. Unforgiveness Grieves God and Hinders Prayers

Unforgiveness in the heart of a Christian hinders the answer to his prayers. A grudge, a root of bitterness, or even hate, it may be, may be blocking the answer to your prayers.

In Matthew 6:9-13 we are given the model prayer, or the Lord's Prayer. And in that model prayer the Saviour taught us to pray daily, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." And when the prayer was finished Jesus added this plain, sharp word of warning,

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14,15).

Here it is clearly taught in the solemn words of our Saviour that Christians who will not forgive others will not be heard when they ask for forgiveness. And when we come to pray that our Heavenly Father will take sins out of the way, will cleanse them and forgive them, not let them hinder our communion with Him or our service for Him, all our praying is useless unless we forgive others who may have wronged us.

You understand, I trust, that forgiveness of sins has two meanings in the Bible. In the first place, when a poor lost sinner comes to Christ and trusts Him for salvation, then all of his sins are forgiven and blotted out and will be remembered against him no more forever, as far as the damnation of his soul is concerned. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:8). In getting saved we do not get sins forgiven one at a time; but all at once the glorious transaction is finished and all of our sins are laid on Jesus and forgiven, blotted out, never to be held against us any more and never to endanger our poor souls again! What wonderful salvation! What marvelous mercy in the forgiveness of vile sinners!

But after one is already a child of God, after one is born again, after one has been made a partaker of the divine nature, he is still, while in this world, as sinner. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Paul, the mighty apostle, yet in the midst of his great ministry claimed still to be the very chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15). And David in that inspired fifty-first Psalm, was led to write, "My sin is ever before me." And the Saviour in the Lord's Prayer is expressly teaching us that we ought daily to confess our sins and ask forgiveness. so besides the forgiveness of our sins we get in salvation, one can have, and needs a day-to-day clearing of sin out of the way.

Although the Lord has forgiven all of our sins, yet He still hates sin. God hates sin in David or in Peter or in Paul; God hates it in you, beloved Christian. And if your sin is not confessed and cleansed day by day, it piles up between you and God to hinder your communion, to block your prayers, to taint your testimony, and to grieve the blessed Holy Spirit. So the Lord teaches us here to come daily and confess our sins, asking for forgiveness.

The Scofield Reference Bible has wonderful helps; I use it constantly and recommend it. But no one man can know all about the Bible, and here the Scofield Reference Bible has a very foolish note, saying this is legal ground. No, this is not legal ground. This does not contradict Ephesians 4:32.

We should forgive others, Ephesians 4:32 tells us, because Christ has already forgiven us all o four sins in salvation so that they are not held against our souls' welfare. But here in Matthew 6:14,15 the Saviour warns us that we should forgive others that we as Christians may have the daily cleansing, the daily renewal of fellowship, the daily fullness of the Holy Spirit which God desires for all His dear children, but which He cannot give without a daily confession and forsaking of sin.

When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10). He meant that the disciples were already saved and all their sins were under the blood. But Christians walking in a dirty world need day-by-day confession of their defilement that they may have daily forgiveness and cleansing as the dear children of God in order to have His fullness and power and fellowship. The washing of the whole body, which these disciples already had, represents salvation, the forgiveness of all sin. That cleansing is once for all at regeneration. Bu the washing of the disciples' feet represented that day-by-day cleansing which is offered Christians who confess and forsake their sins (I John 1:9).

But unforgiveness blocks this daily cleansing and forgiveness and so hinders our prayers. Unforgiveness, holding grudges or enmity against others, may seem to be a very respectable sin. People who would never get drunk, who would not gamble, who would not steal, who scorn a lie, are yet guilty of this wicked sin. The temptation to this sin attacks preachers and soul winners who would never be tempted to grosser things. I know Christians who would never attend the theater nor belong to a lodge nor play a game of bridge, but who have been guilty of this horrible sin. In God's sight, it is truly hideous.

In Matthew 18:21-35 is the following remarkable teaching of our Saviour about the need for Christians to forgive others and of how God hates the wicked sin of unforgiveness.

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all

that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then is lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

How many times shall we forgive one who sins against us? Peter thought seven times would be the perfect number; but Jesus answered back, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." And when you have forgiven the same person 490 times, no doubt you would have lost count and would have conquered that wicked disposition to temper and bitterness in your own heart!

In the above parable, the Saviour illustrates our awful debt to God by the man who owed his king 10,000 talents. Ten thousand talents would be nearly twenty million dollars if they were silver talents, nearly three hundred million dollars if the talents were gold. In either case it would be an unpayable amount, no doubt beyond the capacity of any man living in the world at that time. So great is our sin toward God which needs forgiveness!

And then the sins of one against others is represented by the Saviour in this parable by the debt of one hundred pence. And the servant who had been forgiven 10,000 talents took his fellowservant by the throat saying, "Pay me that thou owest," and would not give him time, but cast him into prison until he should pay that trifling debt of a hundred pence, when he himself had been forgiven 10,000 talents that he owed!

How trifling, how insignificant are all the sins that anybody ever did against us compared to our horrible sins against God all the days of our lives! This parable tells us how God sees the sin of unforgiveness.

And note the punishment of the wicked servant. Jesus said, "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him."

Here the king delivered the evil servant "to the tormentors." And then Jesus warns Simon Peter and the other disciples, in a lesson which is meant for us Christians, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." God will deliver His own children over to tormentors, will allow their hearts to be miserable, their lives to be unhappy, their prayers to be blocked, their homes to be accursed, if they do not forgive others! The Lord does not mean that saved people will lose their salvation and go to Hell because of unforgiveness, but He certainly does mean that here in this life they will miss many, many blessings and suffer torment of soul because of the horrible sin of unforgiveness. And how ashamed they will be when they face Jesus!

I have known brother who would not speak to brother. I have seen churches split into factions, I have seen homes broken, I have seen Christians so embittered by this horrible sin that they made shipwreck of all their lives. Terrible punishment will be the lot of every Christian who carries a grudge and unforgiveness in his heart.

And note that the Saviour said this forgiveness must be "from your hearts." To live nominally at peace is not enough. Sometimes a Christian will say, "Well, I will forgive her, but I will never forget." Or a brother may say, "I will forgive him, yes, because it is commanded me; but I will never have anything more to do with him." Such forgiveness is no forgiveness at all in God's sight. When God forgives, He forgets. How would you like for God to say about you, "Well, I will forgive your sins; but I never want to have anything more to do with you"? You know that is not forgiveness in a real, genuine sense. By God's grace, a Christian can so forgive that every memory brings not bitterness but a sweet sense of peace without any rancor or bitterness whatever.

If we want to be like Jesus, we must forgive. Dying on the cross, He prayed about the people who crucified Him, who mocked Him while He died, who gave Him vinegar mingled with gall when He was thirsty, who had spit in His face - for these He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." One of the names of the Lord Jesus is "Prince of Peace." And if we forgive, we become Christlike. That is the reason why the Beatitudes say, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). Every one who makes peace is that much like Jesus Christ. The Beatitudes promise that those who are pure in heart shall see God, that the meek shall inherit the earth; but they give the blessed promise to the peacemakers that they shall not only see God but shall be called His children, and shall not only inherit the earth, but even inherit Heaven as heirs of God! How blessed to be a peacemaker, with forgiveness toward brethren, "even as God for Christ's sake hat forgiven you."

And that attitude of mind and heart which Jesus had is to be ours, also. Stephen had it when, dying, he prayed about his tormentors, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). And, oh, dear Christian, if you are to have your prayers answered, you, too, must learn to forgive!

When boiled down to its essence, unforgiveness is hatred. And I John 3:15 says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." If you think a little grudge is very respectable, then you should remember that God looks into your wicked heart and calls it murder!

In Mark 11:22-24 is that marvelous promise about prayer that "whosoever" (anybody) can have "whatsoever" (anything) he asks, if he has faith. But Jesus qualifies even that great promise by these words in the following verses: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25,26). It is obvious that every Christian who tries to pray with unforgiveness in his heart finds a great wall of his sins piled up between him and God which he cannot get removed and cannot get taken out of the way until he forgives all that others have done against him.

The Lord's Prayer is to be a daily prayer, for daily bread and daily needs, and confessing daily sins. And that indicates that every Christian every day ought to go about this important matter of seeing that all grudges are forgiven. Thus Ephesians 4:26 commands us, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." A grudge, if left in your heart overnight, may so take root as to embitter your whole life and ruin your testimony. So daily, before sundown every day, search out your heart, judge every little grudge, every bit of enmity, every slightest passion of unforgiveness. Confess it to God as a sin and turn your heart away from it, and God will take it out and cleanse it. But if you do not forgive, neither will you be forgiven.

Have you honestly searched your heart as you have read this? Is there any root of bitterness, any of the sin of unforgiveness in your heart blocking your prayers?

IV. Covetousness Puts One Under a Curse, Hinders Prayer

Covetousness, too, is a most respectable sin and is found in the "best families." But it is a sin that God hates terribly. It is literally idolatry (Col. 3:5), and the covetous man is an idolater (Eph. 5:5). And God's Word says that "the love of money is the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10), that is, literally, that the love of money can lead to every kind of sin in the world.

No the Scripture expressly says that covetousness is a sin that shuts the Heavens against the Christian. In Malachi we read:

"Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Mal. 3:7-9).

Here is a startling statement that men actually rob God. They do it in tithes and in offerings. The tithe is the Lord's; not to give it is to rob God. The offerings also are the Lord's; not to give them also robs God. And the Lord says, "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."

Because of this sin of covetousness, the land of Israel was under a curse, the whole land. God had withheld the rain. He had not heard their prayers. They were under a curse, and could not get the things they desired from God. And God gave them a challenge in the following verses:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

The simple matter of forsaking covetousness and bringing the tithes and offerings which He had expressly commanded as a token of His ownership of everything would enable God to hear their prayers, to bless their crops, and to pour out such blessings as they would not even be able to receive! The insect pests would be rebuked, the rain would come when needed, and it would be a happy land, God promised, if the people would prove God on this matter of tithes and offerings.

I well know that this was first addressed to the Jews. I have heard long arguments that the tithe was commanded only for Jews. But the truth of the matter is that proportionate giving is as clearly commanded in the New Testament as in the Old (I Cor. 16:2). Abraham, the tither, the man of faith, is held up as an example to New Testament Christians in this matter (Heb. 7:1-10). And the New Testament examples who are greatly praised went far beyond the tithe, as we see in the cases of the woman who put in two mites (Mark 12:41-44), in the case of the saints at Jerusalem after Pentecost (Acts 4:34-37), and the churches of Macedonia (II Cor. 8:1-6). And besides, the promises given in the Old Testament about liberality have been abundantly proved true by literally thousands of New Testament Christians. I know that it pays in dollars and cents to bring God the tithes and offerings. And I have proved God, and He has opened the windows of Heaven as He promised.

And why should God demand more of an Old Testament Jew than of a New Testament Christian under grace? Should a Jew under law love God better? Should he trust Him further? Stealing, God-robbing, covetousness is the same wicked sin in New Testament times as it was in Old Testament times. And those who sing, "Oh, How I Love Jesus," but do not love Him a dime's worth out of a dollar will not get far in their praying. If you cannot trust God to supply your need and to repay you for all the tithes and offerings you bring in for Him, you have not much faith.

In Dallas, Texas, a good Christian woman who had long proved how joyful and how prosperous it is to put God first with tithes and offerings, came to church one day with her heart all set on plans for some lovely clothes. Her husband's bi-monthly pay check had come Saturday night, and she had it in her purse at church, since he could not come. She thought to herself, "This one time I'll not put in the tithe; I will give \$1.00, and the rest of the money we can use so well for things we need to buy."

But that dear Christian woman was on the committee to prepare the bread and grape juice for the communion table that Sunday morning. As she filled the little glasses her heart remembered the strict injunction, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." She dared not partake of the emblems representing the poured-out blood of the Saviour and His broken body with any known sin or rebellion in her heart. And the Spirit of God spoke insistently to her about how she had planned to withhold the tithe and use it for her own ends. She could have no peace in her heart; and she cried out to God, "Oh, heavenly Father, I cannot take the Lord's Supper until I know You are pleased with Me!" So she solemnly promised God, 'Lord, if You'll give me the joy in my heart again and let me know that You've forgiven me, that there is nothing between my soul and the Saviour, I promise You that before I leave the house of God today I'll get that check cashed and turn in the tithe and offerings that I vowed to You that I would give.' And then in sweet peace and in remembrance of the death of our dear Saviour, she took of the bread which pictured His broken body and of the cup which pictured His poured-out blood. She came then to tell me, her pastor, of her victory; and the tears of joy rolled down her cheeks as she told it! Oh, dear friend, God does not care so much about your money, but He wants you. He wants your trust, your full surrender, your willingness to give Him anything, everything, even yourself! How grieved He must be if any child of His does not believe Him enough, does not love Him enough to put Him first in money matters!

Many, many Christians have their hearts so set on material possessions, on money, on business that God cannot answer their prayers. Are your prayers hindered by this sin? Would God have to say to you, "Ye are cursed with a curse because ye have robbed me"?

V. Self-Will, Rebellion, Disobedience Hinder Prayer

Dear Christian, I am probing in your heart and life trying to help you find the reasons for unanswered prayer. What sin of yours hinders your prayers and shuts out the blessing God would give you?

Self-will is another horrible sin which means that God cannot have His way in your life and cannot give you His best. I recall the case of Saul, the first king of Israel, who was commanded to go out and utterly destroy the Amalekites. God said to him, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (I Sam. 15:3). If that seems to you a hard command, then I remind you that you do not hate sin as God does. This wicked, idolatrous nation had long deserved extermination. God's long-poured-out mercies had been rejected. If any of the nation were left alive, they would be a temptation and snare to Israel. Even their

property should be destroyed as an awful reminder to Israel of how God hated sin and was certain to punish it.

But Saul came back leading King Agag, alive, behind his chariot and with a great number of sheep and oxen as a spoil, which he said he intended to offer as sacrifices to God. But, oh, how the wrath of God mounted up against Saul for his disobedience! Hear what God said to him through Samuel.

"And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. 15:22,23).

Immediately thereafter Saul pled with Samuel to go worship with him. Saul admitted his sin. He even laid hold upon the skirt of Samuel's mantle, as Samuel turned indignantly away, and rent the mantle. Despite all Saul's professed repentance, God rejected him as king. David was anointed to take his place, and Saul went steadily downhill until his suicidal death in disgrace, with his sons, who but for Saul's self-will might have reigned after him.

How moving is the story of how Saul tried to pray, but because of his self-will, his disobedience, God would not hear! God said to him, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." God does not want our money nor our work nor our promise one half as much as He wants our hearts surrendered to the will of God, and an obedient surrendered spirit. The Lord said through Samuel, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." Rebellion, stubbornness, self-will in dealing with God is certain to block the answer to our prayers and shut up Heaven against us!

If there is a single matter, then, about which God has a controversy with you, I beg you, dear Christian, surrender your will at once, repent of your wicked rebellion, your self-will, your insistent disobedience. It is more important to hearken to God, to obey from the heart, than to give money, to sing, to pray, to preach, or toil. It is a sad, sad fact that many active church people, some, no doubt, really born again, live at a far, guilty distance from the conscious presence of God and do not know the constant joy of answered prayer.

God called one man to preach; and he said, "Lord, I have no money to go to school. I must take care of my family. Lord, I'm too ignorant. But I will be a Sunday-school superintendent." But God would not use him as a Sunday-school superintendent. God did not want work for its own sake; he wanted obedience.

A young friend of mine felt clearly led of God to preach the Gospel. He had been only to the eighth grade in school, was now married, and felt his ignorance, his limitations, his poverty. It was a long fight of unbelief that God could use him, of rebellion against the long years of preparation, of holding on to the career and money-making he had planned. But at last when he had surrendered tearfully to the full will of God, this young preacher told me, "Brother Rice, if I do not preach, I can't even live like a Christian!" He meant that God would not give him happiness, would not answer his prayers if he did not surrender to the full will of God.

A daughter was bitter over the death of her beloved mother. She complained and mourned and querulously asked, "Why? Why?" She felt that God had not been fair to her mother, had brought unnecessary suffering to herself; and there was rebellion in her heart against God. But the Bible lost its sweetness; the day-by-day conscious presence and fellowship with the Holy Spirit left her. God did not

seem to hear her prayers, and doubts of every kind beset her. She could not find any peace until she confessed her sin to God and said, "Thy will be done," about her mother's death.

Beloved Christian, there is no way you can please God, no way you can have the sweet communion with Him to get your prayers answered if you are in rebellion against the known will of God.

Has God turned His face away from you as He did from Saul, refusing to hear your prayers or bless you because of a stubborn self-will that rebels against God's play for you? Oh, then I beg you, surrender today your poor will to God's good will. Trust Him! His will for you is wiser and sweeter and richer far, and happier than any way you could plan! And no matter what other trouble or grief or loss might come, in His will you may always have the consciousness of His approving presence with the Holy Spirit ungrieved, manifesting Himself to you, and with the daily knowledge that your prayers are heard!

VI. A Disinclination or Indifference Toward the Bible Makes Prayer an Abomination to God!

Proverbs 28:9 is a most searching Scripture. There God says,

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

If your prayer is an abomination to God, then any happy fellowship, any oneness of purpose, any communion between you and God is hindered.

Note that the Scripture does not refer primarily to infidels. One does not need to say that the Bible is false, that Christ was not born of a virgin, that He did not rise from the dead, that there is no real Heaven or a literal Hell in order to come within the scope of this great hindrance to prayer. No, if only your heart is turned away from the Bible, if you have a disinclination to read it, if it is not interesting to you, if you do not meditate on it prayerfully, joyfully, then your prayer is an abomination, says God's Word.

Throughout the Bible, God stresses the fact that there is a close connection between the Word of God and spiritual prosperity. For example, Psalm 1:1-3 tells us of the blessed man who shuns evil companions,

"His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Day-by-day blessing from God, spiritual prosperity, Christian fruit bearing all depend upon delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating on it day and night. Knowing the Bible is not enough; reading the Bible is not enough; blessing depends on delighting in it and meditating on it.

In Joshua 1:8 the Lord spoke to Joshua saying,

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make they way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Good success, prosperity, depended on having the Word of God in his mouth and meditating therein day and night so Joshua might make sure to observe everything in it. And then Joshua would make his way prosperous and have good success. But if Joshua had turned his heart away from hearing the law, he

would not have been prosperous, he would not have succeeded, and the blessing of God would have failed. And does not that bear out the statement of Proverbs 28:9 that even the prayer of one who turns his heart away from hearing the law, is abomination? How could one who is disinterested in the Bible, who shuns it, one who has his heart turned away from it, please God in prayer? What claim could such an unspiritual heart, such an alienated child, have on God in prayer?

Then notice that one whose heart is alienated from the Bible, disinterested in the Word of God, finding no joy in God's promises, indifferent to the duty of obeying God's commands - notice that such a Christian cannot meet any of the conditions of successful prayer. All the promises in the Bible concerning answers to prayer involve in some way a heart that is eager to find the will of God in the Word of God. In John 15:7 Jesus promised, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." One who does not love the Bible, is not eager to read it, does not gladly heed its warnings and admonitions and commands, cannot meet that promise, because Christ's Word does not abide in him, and he is not really abiding in Christ in the sense of surrender to the will of Christ. And how can such a Christian come to ask anything of the Father in the name of Christ? One who does not know the Bible does not know the will of Christ. One who is not interested in the Bible is surely not much interested in the will of Christ. How could I genuinely ask anything in Jesus' name, if I can quote no authority from Christ giving me the right to ask it in His name? Therefore the blessed promise that the Father will give you anything you ask in Christ's name, the promise of John 14:13,14, will not avail for the man whose heart is turned away from hearing the Word of God.

"If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us," says I John 5:14. But one who does not know the Bible, does not love it and does not meditate on it, will not have any assurance that what he asks is in the will of God. "All things are possible to him that believeth," said Jesus in Mark 9:23, but "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). One whose heart is turned away from the Bible is turned also from faith. He cannot call upon God in faith, since he does not use the means to grow faith, and since God's Holy Spirit will not encourage faith in such a disobedient heart. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart," says Psalm 37:4. But a real delight in the Lord involves a delight in God's Word. How eager I am for a letter from home! And that is because I love my wife and daughters and long to see them. How anxiously a young woman awaits the postman, looking for a letter from her sweetheart who has been called away to the army. So if one really delighted in God, he would delight in His letter to us. God is so revealed in the Word that those in close fellowship with God must delight in His Word. Oh, then, Christian, if your heart has been turned away from the Bible, you are out of touch with all the promises of God for answers to your prayers! "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even

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