



Sermon Outline

*HINDRANCES TO ANSWERED PRAYER*

Introduction

We should never use a material yardstick to measure the blessings of God. If material prosperity were a sign that God is blessing, then the mafia must be doing something right! (note Matthew 7:21-22)

Introduce topic - Hindrances to Answered Prayer

Hindrance One: Selfishness – James 4:3: “Ye ask amiss.”

- What we ask may be proper, may be the will of God. Yet it is the motive that matters. The true purpose of prayer is that God may be glorified in the answer.
- If it is for our pleasure or gratification, we ask amiss.
- A person could even be praying to win souls - not for the glory of God but to get recognition.

Hindrance Two: Sin - Isaiah 59:1, 2: “Your iniquities have separated you.” Psalm 66:18: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, He will not hear.”

- We are all sinners. The above texts are talking about known and cherished sin--the sins we are not sorry for or are justifying, the sin we rationalize, the sin we know is wrong or we excuse (“no one is perfect”).
- If God were to answer our prayers when we are knowingly in sin, then He would be aiding and abetting our sin.
- We are talking about sins we’re not sorry for or those which we enjoy.
- For this reason, David prayed - Psalm 139:23-24: “Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wickedness in me.”
- Someone may say, “But it’s just a little sin.” No such thing. What we call the little sin in our lives may very well be the biggest, because we are refusing to give it up.
- Living in compromise--harboring sin in our hearts--is unacceptable and incompatible with prayer.

Hindrance Three: Putting Others Before God - Ezekiel 14:3: "Should I be inquired of them that have idols in their hearts?"

- What is an idol? It is anything that is the supreme object of our attention.
- What does it mean to give God first place in my life? It may not be what we think.

Illustration: What if I were to tell you that my wife has first place in my life. But then there is also Judy, Sarah, Alice, and Patty. They have second, third, fourth, and fifth places. No, God must not only be on the top shelf of our lives, but on every shelf.

- Our mistake is in trying to separate our lives into two parts--religious and secular. The truth is, our lives are either sacred or profane.
- No man can love his wife and children too much. But he can put them before God.
- Men make idols of their reputations or business. Is God absolutely first in your life?

Hindrance Four: An Ungenerous Spirit - Proverbs. 21:13: "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

- A generous person is mighty in prayer.
- How can we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and withhold from those who are in need?
- James 2:15-16: "If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food...", etc.

Hindrance Five: An Unforgiving Spirit – Mark 11:26: "But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

- Bitterness and resentment are some of the most common hindrances to answered prayer.
- Our lack of forgiveness does two things: It stops our life at the moment of the offence, and it causes us to rationalize our own self sins.
- A person who refuses to forgive is living in the past.
- Most of the time, the object of our bitterness does not live miles away. They could live under the same roof.

Hindrance Six: Problems Between Husbands and Wives – 1 Peter 3:7: The text suggests that not honoring our wives and husbands will hinder our prayers.

- Men who pretend to be Christians are often unkind if not brutal to their wives.
- Many women who are faithful and devoted to the church neglect their husbands and are cross and wound them by the sharpness of their speech and unruly tempers.
- If Christianity doesn't work in the home, it doesn't work at all.

Hindrance Seven: Not Praying Sincerely – Psalm 145:18: Refers to them that call upon the Lord in truth - sincerity.

- Many of our prayers are insincere.
- Prayers that are driven by fear, duty, or guilt will be frustrated.
- We may actually pray for things we really don't want.
- Churches even pray for revival and don't mean it, because revival would bring a radical transformation of individuals' domestic and social lives. If they realized this, some might even pray, "Keep us from revival."
- Even ministers who pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit might think again. It could mean the total redirection of their ministry.
- The point is, "Tis not enough to bend the knee and words of prayer to say. The heart must with the lips agree or else we do not pray."

#### Conclusion

(Invite the congregation to kneel and silently pray that the Lord will forgive the things that are hindering His work in their lives. Then the pastor will close with prayer for the entire congregation.)