

**Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us**  
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,  
and shew my people their transgression,  
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

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# Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving

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## Hindrances to Prayer

**Reading:**  
James Chapter 4

### Introduction

The Saviour made several amazing promises concerning prayer. A few seem almost too good to be true. But they are true. And yet millions of Christians the world over fail to obtain answers to their prayers. Why? Is the Most High failing to keep His promises? Or have we Christians somewhere along the line misunderstood the **mandatory conditions** that must be met before meaningful results can be obtained? Obviously the Almighty is not at fault in the matter of unanswered prayer. Why then are so many prayers not answered? The fact is we must look within ourselves to track down the hindrances that so often rob us of the results we desperately seek. This sermon lists **seven hindrances** to answered prayer. There are others, but in my opinion these are the most common.

### 1. Secret Sin

Yahweh will not answer the prayers of blatant and unrepentant sinners. To be sure He may help anyone in an **absolute emergency**, by answering **spiritual 999 calls** for forgiveness and cleansing; but He will not answer subsequent prayers till a believer demonstrates his/her faith by obeying His commandments. Take special note of these verses, because they spell out the first mandatory condition for answered prayer - **obedience!**

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

Proverbs 15: 8: ***"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight."***

Proverbs 28: 9: ***He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."***

## 2. Doubt

**Doubt is a form of unrighteousness**, just as faith is a form of righteousness. Doubt is an action of the mind that disbelieves God; it is the silent mistrust of the Almighty's Word. Doubt is tantamount to calling the Most High a liar! **Doubt is a sin of the mind, possibly one of the first sins ever committed.**

Of course, doubt is a very human and popular practice. But doubting God and His word is deadly. Doubt is a major obstacle to spiritual progress. Remove doubt and the impossible becomes easy - even commonplace. Yes, doubt is a major hindrance to answered prayer.

Matthew 21: 21: *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, **and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.***  
22: *And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, **believing, ye shall receive.**”*

Mark 11: 22: *“And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.*  
23: *For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, **but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.***  
24: *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, **believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.**”*

James 1: 6: *“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*  
7: *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*  
8: *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”*

Romans 14: 23: *“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: **for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.**”*

In other words, if you do not have the faith to believe in God, and that you will receive what you are asking for, then it is unlikely that you will receive it. The answer to this problem is to go back to square one and sort out your own **faith**; because therein lies the problem.

## 3. Asking Amiss

**Worthless objectives** and **selfish motives** are another cause for unanswered prayer. Believers often ask for what appears - **to them** - be the right things, but they ask with the **wrong motives**. Believe it or not, it's quite possible to be totally ignorant of one's own motives; to actually think that you're asking with the right motive, and all the while to be totally wrong! We are all guilty of this error - including me.

Yahweh, however, looks upon the heart. He recognizes our motives and His answer is often **‘No.’** Therefore, if we are to be successful in prayer, we must diligently and constantly examine our own motives; a difficult task I will agree. But failure to carry it out will result in fruitless prayers. Self deception is a common fault.

James 4: 3: *“**Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.**”*

To be safe and successful always end a prayer request with words such as these:

Luke 22: 42: *“**...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.**”*

Many Christians think that to end a prayer with **‘Thy will be done’** is wrong. But they are out of touch with Scripture and the example set by the Saviour Himself. (Matthew 26: 42, Luke 22: 42)

## 4. Lack of Love & Criticism

“Let this thought burn itself into your memory: the more like Christ Jesus a man becomes, the less he will judge other people. It is an infallible test. **Those who are always criticizing others have drifted away from Christ.** They may still be his, but they have lost His spirit of love. Beloved reader, if you have a criticizing nature,

allow it to dissect yourself and never your neighbour.” (**The Kneeling Christian** page 120)

Mark 11: 25: *“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.  
26: **But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.**”*

Job 42: 10: *“And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, **when he prayed for his friends:** also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.”*

**Criticism is a minor form of hate.** It always frustrates prayer. Critics seldom have their prayers answered.

## 5. Laziness

There are certain things the Most High will never do for us humans. They are the things we can do for ourselves. He will not plough our fields, sow our crops nor weed our gardens. These are our duties, our responsibilities and if we do them faithfully He will do His part. He will make things grow and produce the harvest. Thus **working together with Him** we will receive a bountiful blessing. But we must do our part - however small that part may be; because He will not do it for us.

Judges 6: 14: *“And the LORD looked upon him, and said, **Go in this thy might,** and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”*

Note also king Hezekiah's efforts before he prayed for divine assistance. He didn't leave everything to God; he did what he could - **with all his might.**

2 Chronicles 31: 20: *“And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God.*

*21: **And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.**”*

2 Chronicles 32: 5: *“**Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.***

*6: And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,*

*7: Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him:*

*8: With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.”*

## 6. Prayer Combinations

Though secret prayer is a very good thing, there are occasions when we ought to call in the help of other true believers. A two or threefold request brings amazing results. Like a petition signed by many folk, or a rope of several strands, a group's prayers often carry more weight than would a solo prayer. Even the Master asked to disciples to watch and pray with him at his time of greatest need.

Matthew 18: 19: *“Again I say unto you, **That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.***

*20: **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**”*

**Another Prayer Combination is FASTING.**

Matthew 17: 21: *“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by **prayer and fasting.**”*

## 7. Thankfulness

Ingratitude saddens the heart of the Most High. Indeed ingratitude saddens the heart of anyone who has done

something worthwhile for another. We humans are unable to repay Yahweh for His amazing sacrifice. But He is not looking for payment. In fact we couldn't pay Him anyway - we're too poor. What the Almighty does expect - and rightfully so - is gratitude, our thankfulness.

**Failure to show gratitude when the Most High grants a request will frustrate future prayers, reducing their prospect of success.**

Ingratitude is a cruel blow to any giver. It kills future generosity. In the spiritual realm ingratitude stifles prayer. It is a major reason why many prayers go unanswered. Indeed **ingratitude** is classified as one of the sins of the last days.

2 Timothy 3: 1: *“This know also, that in the **last days** perilous times shall come.*

*2: For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, **UNTHANKFUL**, unholy,*

*3: Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

*4: Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*

*5: Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”*

1 Thessalonians 5: 16: *“Rejoice evermore.*

*17: Pray without ceasing.*

*18: **In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**”*

## 8. Summary

Do you often find that your prayers go unanswered? I'm sure you do. I do. We all do: and the fault is usually within ourselves. I trust that this sermon will help you to get it right in the future. Remember that the seven hindrances to answered prayer are:

1. Secret sin
2. Doubt
3. Asking Amiss: for the wrong things or with the wrong motives.
4. Lack of love and a criticizing attitude.
5. Laziness: expecting God to do everything.
6. Not seeking support from fellow Christians and failing to fast.
7. Ingratitude

**AMEN!**

**In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.**

**Elder: Max W. Mader**

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