



November 9, 2008

How Prayer Hindrances Are Removed

2 Chronicles 7:11-14

MINISTERING HELPS

Group Prayer

This Thursday is Veterans' Day, and this Sunday would be a great time to pray for specific people your group knows who are serving in the military and their families. For our church military prayer list go to http://fbcallen.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=18668

Stay Connected

How about taking your attendance sheet today and looking for the names of people who haven't been here in 3 weeks or more. Assign each of those names to someone in the class to be contacted this week. Don't harass them, but let them know they are loved and find out how we can pray for them.

REACHING HELPS

In about a month, FBC Allen will present CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION. This annual event will share not only great Christmas music, but the story of Jesus from His birth to His death, resurrection and ascension.

The dates are Dec. 12-14 at 7 p.m., with a matinee presentation at 2 p.m. on Sunday. There is NO charge to attend.

This is a great way to get the unchurched and unbelievers to hear the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. Challenge your class to start praying about whom they will invite and make it a class goal that everyone will not only come this year, but will bring someone who needs to hear the reason for the Christmas season... Jesus!

TEACHING HELPS

Pastor Chad continues the sermon series on Prayer today with a look at things that can hinder our prayer life.

Prayer is more than an outward action. It is based on many internal things that can hinder powerful prayer if they are not right.

When the internals are right, God is free to work in some amazing ways. Today's lesson will help us talk about some of those amazing ways.

How Prayer Hinderances Are Removed

2 Chronicles 7:11-14



What's wrong with our culture?

Many Christians and even non-believers are increasingly getting frustrated with the erosion of morals and values in today's culture. Things that were taboo twenty years ago are commonly seen and discussed today.

There are a lot of fingers being pointed at the cause of this moral decay. Recording artists and producers, television stars and producers, politicians, magazine writers and editors, professional educators... all have been targeted for their part in where things are.

While it's easy to see the cause and effect of the above mentioned, what about the cause and effect of that which is not so easily seen? While we can tangibly see the result of a magazine produced, we can't usually see the prayer life (or lack thereof) in the life of a Christian, nor is there a meter that measures other Christian disciplines such as witnessing, worship, stewardship, or just general Christian influence in the hundreds of relationships that each Christian is privileged to be a part of.

I guess what I am saying is, it's easy for us to blame unbelievers for the problems in the world, but the truth is they are doing what comes naturally; they are doing what they are supposed to be doing as unregenerate people who have no place for God in their lives. The question really is, are we who are believers doing what we are supposed to be doing as people who have been changed by Jesus Christ and have access to a 24/7 relationship with Him?

God's people not living up to their spiritual potential has always been an issue. God knew this even before He created us. God's historical record found in the Bible is the story of God redeeming us from our sins and bringing us back to correct and abundant living for Him.

If we are feeling hindered in our prayers, today's lesson reminds us that the problem is probably in us, not because of an outside influence. When we allow Him to push our spiritual reset button, God is free to begin to work in and through us as He wishes to.

Teaching Points

Introduction...

1. An African proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." What do you think this means? Who are some of the human "influencers" on a child in our culture? What happens when an "influencer" is good? What happens when an "influencer" is bad?

2. Have each person list 3 people who they have some kind of influence with. Ask folks to categorically list some of these (kids, spouse, workmate, friend, neighbors, etc...). If you are a good influence, what difference will that make? If you are a bad one, what difference will that make?

Using ideas from the commentary, discuss ways that we see the moral decay of our culture. Ask, "Is the root of this problem due to unbelievers doing what comes naturally to them, or is it more about Christians not living rightly in relationship with God and not doing what we need to be doing in culture?"

Praying to change culture can be hindered because real change first needs to happen in those who believe in Jesus Christ. Let's see what God says about it in today's passage of scripture...

1. God in the good times... (v11-12)

¹¹ When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, ¹² the LORD appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

2 Chronicles 7:11-12 (NIV)

What temple are we talking about?

The temple was a place of worship, built in Jerusalem for national worship of Yahweh. Sacred or holy space is the meaning of our word temple, very like the two Greek words, hieron (temple area) and naos (sanctuary itself) which are translated "temple" in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the language is usually beth Yahweh or beth Elohim, "house of the Yahweh" or "house of God" because He is said to have dwelt there. The other Hebrew expression for temple is hekal, "palace, great house" deriving from the Sumerian word for "great house," whether meant for God or the earthly king. So David, when he had built for himself a cedar palace, thought it only proper he should build one for Yahweh, too ([2 Sam. 7:1-2](#)). Nathan at first approved his plan, but the Lord Himself said He had been used to living in a tent since the Exodus from Egypt. He would allow David's son to build Him a house (Temple), but He would build for David a house (dynasty, [2 Sam. 7:3-16](#)). This covenant promise became exceedingly significant to the messianic hope fulfilled in the coming of the ideal king of the line of David.

Chronicles makes it clear that David planned the Temple and accumulated great wealth and gifts for it, though Solomon was the one who actually built it. Solomon's Temple may not have actually been the first temple which housed the ark of the covenant, since there was a house of Yahweh, also called a temple, at Shiloh ([1 Sam. 1:7,9,24](#); [3:3](#)) but in [1 Samuel 2:22](#) (NIV) it is called "tent of meeting," whether the wilderness tabernacle or not. Jeremiah in his great Temple sermon warned all who came into the Lord's house in Jerusalem that if they trusted primarily in the Temple, instead of the Lord, He could destroy Solomon's Temple just as He had the previous one at Shiloh ([Jer. 7:1-15](#); [26:1-6](#)).

—Holman Bible Dictionary

Solomon and the Jewish People had just finished building the great temple and had just completed a great time of worship, dedicating the temple to God for His use. God had revealed Himself at the dedication through some miraculous ways. Obviously, Solomon and the people were on a spiritual high, and God visits Solomon to give His approval to the temple and to all it has been dedicated to accomplish. The interesting thing about all this is that this event where God came to Solomon probably happened a while after the event..

Months, maybe years, had passed since Solomon's prayer of dedication (chapter 6). Several other building projects had been completed after the temple ([2Ch 7:11](#); [8:1](#)). Then after all this time, God told

1. God in the good times... (v11-12)

1. Read the entire passage found in v.11-14.
2. Using the commentary, discuss the context of the passage being at the conclusion of Solomon's building of the temple and its dedication to God. Why was this such a big deal for the people?
3. How do you think Solomon and the people felt about this "mountain top" spiritual moment? Have you ever had a time where God did something through you that was bigger than you thought you could do? Have class members share their stories. Ask how it made them feel. Ask them if they felt close to God? What kind of prayers do we tend to pray during these "mountain top" experiences?
4. Why don't spiritual "mountain tops" last? Can they? If so, how could we sustain them?

Solomon that he had heard Solomon's prayer. How often do we look for immediate answers to our prayers and, when nothing happens, wonder if God has heard us? God does hear, and he will provide for us. We must trust that God will answer at the proper time. —Life Application Bible Notes

Could it be that God allowed the emotion of the Temple dedication to wear off, so that the reality of His relationship with Solomon and the Jewish nation could be understood?

2. God warns that tough times will come and tells us how we need to respond to Him in tough times... (v13-14)

¹³ "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. **2 Chronicles 7:13-14 (NIV)**

The reality of the relationship between God and His people was that God would be with them in the good times and the bad. When the people were serving Him wholeheartedly, such as at the Temple dedication, God would be there. But what about if the people's hearts were not interested in serving God wholeheartedly? What would God do then?

*Included in every covenant text in the ancient Near East as well as in many of those in the Old Testament was a section containing blessings and curses. The blessings would become effective if the subservient party would stay loyal to the great king while the curses would be expected to fall on the disobedient (cf. [Deut. 27-28](#)). In line with God's covenant with David and Solomon such a section now follows. **The LORD appeared to Solomon and assured him that his work on the temple and its dedication pleased Him (2 Chron. 7:11-12).***

*God then encouraged Solomon by the promise that if His judgment (by drought, **locusts**, or a **plague**) should fall on the nation for **their sin**, they need only **turn** to the Lord in earnest humility and repentance and they would find forgiveness and restoration ([vv. 13-15](#)). This promise, in answer to Solomon's prayer ([6:26-31](#)), was given because God's presence among His people Israel is eternal... —Bible Knowledge Commentary*

2. God in the tough times... (v13-14)

1. What were the tough times listed in verse 13? Who shut the heavens, commanded locusts, or sent the plague? Why would God do this? Is God really a God of love if He would send stuff like this on His people? Explain that God loves us too much to let us continue in spiritually destructive behaviors. When we are spiritually messed up, God will allow tough times to come to get our attention focused back on Him.
2. Where does God start, when culture is messed up, according to verse 14? (My people) Why does God need to start with His own people?
3. Prayer is an important part of us getting things right with God as we can see in verse 14.
 - Is there a difference between just praying and humble praying? What would be the differences?
 - Is there a difference in just praying, and prayer that seeks God's face? What would seeking God's face in prayer look like?
 - Is there a difference in just praying, and praying with a willingness to turn from sin? What might that kind of praying be like?
4. God says that praying like this will have results. What does God say He will do when our prayers are unhindered?
 - If God's people were convinced that they were heard by God and forgiven by God, how might our land (culture) be impacted by God?

At the core of a right relationship with God or getting a relationship right with God is prayer. God wants a relationship with us, and a sign that we want a relationship with Him will be seen in a willingness to pray. If God's people come to a place where they are not interested in relationship, God will allow difficulties to come to help us realize how much we need Him. God makes it clear to us, how we need to respond to Him when we find our hearts are not right...

In chapter 6, Solomon asked God to make provisions for the people when they sinned. God answered with four conditions for forgiveness: (1) humble yourself by admitting your sins, (2) pray to God, asking for forgiveness, (3) seek God continually, and (4) turn from sinful behavior. True repentance is more than talk — it is changed behavior. Whether we sin individually, as a group, or as a nation, following these steps will lead to forgiveness. God will answer our earnest prayers. —Life Application Bible Notes

If we are willing to humble ourselves and pray, pray seeking Him, and pray willing to turn from our spiritually unproductive (wicked) ways, God promises to act.

Note the order of restoration. First God wants His people right, then He will start working on healing the land. While we would love to pray for everything outside us to be right, God says here that the key to Him working on the land is for Him to first be at work in us.

References....

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament Ed., John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Victor Books, Wheaton, IL: 1985.

The Holman Bible Dictionary, Copyright 1991 Holman Bible Publishers.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible [Volume Index], Matthew Henry. Rights: Public Domain.

The Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale Publishers.

<http://www.whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Why.God.Used.D.L.Moody.html>

Application Points...

1. Is our BFG on a spiritual "mountain top" or in a spiritual "valley?" What is the evidence of your answer?
2. If a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, why is it important that my prayer life be unhindered...
 - o for my sake?
 - o for my family's sake?
 - o for my church's sake?
3. How willing are we to...
 - o humble ourselves and pray?
 - o seek the face of God?
 - o turn from our wicked ways?

Why God used DL Moody... by RA Torrey

Henry Varley, a very intimate friend of Mr. Moody in the earlier days of his work, loved to tell how he once said to him: "It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to Him." I am told that when Mr. Henry Varley said that, Mr. Moody said to himself: "Well, I will be that man." And I, for my part, do not think "it remains to be seen" what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to Him. I think it has been seen already in D. L. Moody.

If you and I are to be used in our sphere as D. L. Moody was used in his, we must put all that we have and all that we are in the hands of God, for Him to use as He will, to send us where He will, for God to do with us what He will, and we, on our part, must do everything God bids us do.

There are thousands and tens of thousands of men and women in Christian work, brilliant men and women, rarely gifted men and women, men and women who are making great sacrifices, men and women who have put all conscious sin out of their lives, yet who, nevertheless, have stopped short of absolute surrender to God, and therefore have stopped short of fullness of power. But Mr. Moody did not stop short of absolute surrender to God; he was a wholly surrendered man, and if you and I are to be used, you and I must be wholly surrendered men and women.