

Matthew 7:7-12 (NKJV)

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Last week we focused mostly on verses 7 and 8. I shared with you what I believe this is saying.

When we are driven by our love for Jesus to do what Jesus says and when that pursuit requires God's provision, that which we ask for we will always obtain.

It is important to add what Luke's version of this says. I believe it strengthens what **we** are saying.

Our verse 11 says

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Luke 11:13 (NKJV)

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

The asking and seeking and knocking, **in context**, is not to fulfill fleshly lusts, although sometimes it may involve material goods needed for the Kingdom.

The good things being both **sought** and **promised** are with a spiritual aim in mind. They are for our **growth** and **God's glory**. They are driven with the best of motives. We are praying for that which we need.

But wait. Don't we already have what we need?

2 Peter 1:2-4 (NKJV)

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and

godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is in the world through lust.*

Does this not say that we already have what we need? **His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain to life and godliness?***

Well **yes** and **no**. We have **access to the resources**. They are **in our reach** now through knowing and communing with Christ, through knowing and believing the promises. We have **the access** we need. We have the **thought fuel** we need for Godliness. We have the **spiritual power** to overcome. When we know Jesus, we know the one that provides for us. And being **in relationship with Him** is what we need most. **Believing Christ** allows us to overcome. But this is not an **inactive** thing. It is like needing food and being given the key to the grocery store. You could say that key has met our greatest need. But we must actively **make use** of that resource. **Having** the promises and **believing** the promises are not the same thing. **Having them** gives us access to what we need. But **using them** applies the resource to our need.

We still need to actively **ask and seek and knock**.

Now if you are like me, we sometimes think wrongly about this.

Is God not sovereign? And if He is sovereign, isn't he going to do exactly what He is going to do no matter what we do? If so, then why ask or seek or knock? Won't we get the same thing whether we ask or whether we don't?

Well, I cannot explain how God's sovereignty and my responsibility work out. I don't know how that plays out in heaven. But I know one thing. **Scripture says that what I do matters**. What **I do** has some relationship to **what God does**. It does not change what He has in mind. But it plays some kind of part. If we ever come up with an understanding of God's sovereignty that says that **prayer does not matter**, one thing is for sure. That is the wrong understanding. Jesus commanded us to do it in our text. And we are to **keep doing it** until we obtain what we are asking for. We are to **keep doing it** even when we feel like stopping, when we begin losing heart.

But what happens if we stop?

Look what James says.

James 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ **Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members?**

² **You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You**

fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Clearly, in James, these believers need something that they do not have because they are not asking for it. They **are** asking for stuff. But they are asking for stuff that their **flesh** wants. They are driven by worldly desires rather than spiritual ones. And they are lacking of the **spiritual provisions** because they are not asking for them.

We need to understand. If we do not **ask and seek and knock**, we will **lack those things** that would be gained by **asking and seeking and knocking**.

This is not the place to apply the concept of sovereignty. This is a place where we **assume God's sovereignty** and **apply our responsibility**. We **trust** as though it all depends upon God and we **work** as though it all depends upon us. Correct faith always drives diligent effort.

There is a very good quote from brother Jones here.

The importance of this element of persistence cannot be exaggerated.

You find it not only in biblical teaching, but also in the lives of all the saints. The most fatal thing in the Christian life is to be content with passing desires. If we really want to be men of God, if we really want to know Him, and walk with Him, and experience those boundless blessings which He has to offer us, we must persist in asking Him for them day by day. We have to feel this hunger and thirst after

righteousness, and then we shall be filled. And that does not mean that we are filled once and for ever. We go on hungering and thirsting. Like the apostle Paul, leaving the things which are behind, we 'press toward the mark'. 'Not as though I had already attained', says Paul, 'but I follow after'. That is it. This persistence, this constant desire, asking, seeking and knocking. This, we must agree, is the point at which most of us fail.¹

The million dollar question for our lives then is, what are we **lacking** in our Christian lives that **we do not have** because **we do not ask**? What do we want to **see happening** in our lives for the glory of God **but we don't**? What changes do we think are God's will in our lives, but **they aren't changing**?

Now let's ask, how many days in a row have we asked for it? How much desperation do we display in our pursuit of it. How serious would a person looking on think we were by how we go about our asking?

¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, [*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#), Second edition. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 517.

Maybe if we got more serious about **asking for it**, God would get more serious about **providing it**.

And if we are asking regularly and consistently and fervently, will we **keep doing it**, trusting that God knows what He is doing? Are you at a point where you feel you are losing heart in this struggle to overcome an obstacle. Do you feel like **"this will never change"**. Well if you believe it is God's will, this is not the time to quit. Jesus is encouraging you to **keep on keeping on**.

There is nothing passive about asking, seeking and knocking. They are diligent words. They are work. They are effort. And they are purposeful. When you do those things, **you are doing Kingdom work**. You are moving things. You are lining yourself up with God's work. And the results are promised by Jesus himself.

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Notice how Jesus says it twice. Why? Why say it twice? Wasn't the first time clear enough? And he even uses three words that I think are essentially describing the same process. Why would Jesus do that?

I believe this is for emphasis. It is to spur us on. It is like Jesus is saying, **I really mean this**. These aren't **just words** friends. You hear words from people who say hopeful stuff, but you don't take it to heart. **Well take this to heart because I am saying it**. This stuff **really happens**. This is reality in the Christian life. You can live expecting these results. When you align yourself with what God wants and you ask for it you will get it.

And why don't we ask more? What is a **main obstacle** to asking?

OK, let's move on to verses 9-11

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Have you ever been promised something that **very much appealed to you**, but what was **given to you** was completely different than what you wanted? Suppose Eli and Wyatt ask Mark to take them fishing. Then Mark tells Eli and Wyatt, "C'mon get your poles and lets go fishing". But then instead of taking them fishing he ends up taking them to some work project. And imagine that Mark would think that is the funniest thing in the world, the way his sons

trusted him but how greatly he had fooled him. Imagine him finding pleasure in their disappointment.

That is the idea here.

Who would be so cruel? Oh surely there **are** people out there like that. But I hope it is safe to say none of us would be that way. That is exceptional cruelty. Even **we** are better than that. I mean, even as sarcastic as I can be at times, even I would not laugh at **my child's disappointment due to trusting me**.

In verse 9 we have a son asking for bread. And as a **cruel joke** the father hands him a stone that probably **looks** like a loaf of bread. Now one could see that as being funny if it were just a joke, and then the father hands him a real loaf of bread a moment later. But that is not the intent here. This hypothetical father is pretending to be loving and caring but at heart **he is just cruel**. He is getting pleasure from having the child **get all happy** about getting some bread and then realizing that he really isn't **getting anything to eat at all**.

Then in verse 10 I have always thought that this hypothetical father was giving the child a **live serpent** that could kill him. It could be that. But given that the first gift was a mean trick of deception, this might be the same thing. It could be that what the father is offering this Jewish child is a snake cooked and prepared in such a way that it looks like a fish. This would be a despicable evil in that it would trick a child to eat unclean food. Then after the child eats it the father could reveal what it really was. What kind of father would get pleasure in that? What kind of father would trick his child into a spiritual demise?

Even my kids would not accuse me of being that bad. And that is the point.

¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Jesus is saying, **even as evil as you are** (and it is interesting that Christ does not soft sell this. He is saying that we are **naturally evil**. And he doesn't miss a beat) even as evil as you are, (and notice He does not include himself here.) we generally want to give **good stuff** to our kids. We generally want to **see our kids happy**. We generally want to provide them stuff that puts a smile on their face and makes them feel warmly toward us.

Well if we are **bad**, but we are **good to our kids**, how much better will God be toward His kids?

Now why is Jesus saying all this?

We were just told by Jesus to ask, seek and knock in prayer. We are told to **persistently** keep asking God for these good things. And keep asking until we get them.

What is the one idea that would most keep us from doing this?

God is a jerk.

If we doubt the goodness of God, if we doubt **that God loves us**, if we doubt that God actually **wants us to thrive**, if we think he **takes pleasure** in our disappointments and failed expectations, if we think that God really **does not want us having good things**, then we will **quit** asking and seeking and knocking. In fact we might not even start.

A **lack of trust** in the character of God is probably **one of**, if not **the single** biggest detriment to prayer.

Why would we pray to a God who does not love us?

So Jesus lays out an argument that is impossible to beat.

God is good.

We are far less good. (evil)

We give good gifts for good reasons.

Therefore God must give better gifts for better reasons.

Therefore we have reason to **expect good results when we pray**.

We have good reason to ask and seek and knock.

I love that Jesus appeals to our reason. He teaches us how to think. Because what **we think** ultimately determines **what we do**. He is saying- "**Think like this** and it will get you to the **right course of action**. I am not asking you to be stupid. Trusting me, obeying me is the smartest, most logical thing you can do."

But really, do we really need this lecture? Don't we all know that God is good?

Don't we all know that He is better than we are?

Short answer- NO we don't.

Have you ever been angry with God because He did something **to you** that you would **never do** to someone else?

Have you ever had trouble running to God because in your heart of hearts you think He **truly does not like you**? And ultimately you would be more benevolent to other people than **He is to you**?

When praying or caring for family members, have you ever inwardly wished that God cared about these people as much as you do?

I hope I am making the point.

We would never lay out a doctrine that says that we believe **we are better than God**. But we **do** tend to allow that thinking to have some traction in our living.

In evangelism, do we not sometimes wish God was as caring about people's souls as we are?

Jesus was right.

One of the biggest obstacles to prayer is our thinking that **we are better intending** than God is. Overcoming that obstacle is not as simple as it might seem. Yeah, God allows some very horrible things to happen to us and to those we love. That is all true. But the underlying truth is that **He loves those people who are his more than we ever will**. He loves them more truly, more fully, more wisely, more powerfully, more purely than we ever could. When we believe He is better than us **in every way in every circumstance**, we find many of our obstacles to prayer removed. We find that we are **more inclined** to run **TO** him than to avoid Him.

This passage is also telling us to regard **God as our father**. It is really that intimate and caring of a relationship. Our fathers may have been good or bad. They may have been intimately involved in our lives, or they may have been distant or not present at all. But God is **the good father** better than **any** human father.

Brother Jones says this:

This is one of our main troubles, is it not? If you should ask me to state in one phrase what I regard as the greatest defect in most Christian lives I would say that it is our failure to know God as our Father as we should know Him. That is our trouble, not difficulties about particular blessings. The central trouble still is that we do not know, as we ought to, that God is our Father. Ah yes, we say; we do know that and believe it. But do we know it in our daily life and living? Is it something of which we are always conscious? If only we got hold of this, we could smile in the face of every possibility and eventuality that lies ahead of us.²

Now how do we regard that God is our father? How do we know that? How do we think about it and consider it?

Naturally we go to what God has said.

John 1:10-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ He (Christ) was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, [*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#), Second edition. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 518.

We know that we are children of God because we have received Christ and Christ gave us the right to become a child of God. It is right there. It could not be any clearer.

Romans 8:14-17 (NKJV)

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

This is wonderful. This isn't just a technical truth. It is an emotional one, one that appeals to the core of who we are. We are set free from the fear inspired by Satan's world and **our heart gravitates to yell out for Dad** when we are most pressed or when we are most happy. We have relationship.

We have closeness. We have a bond we can depend upon.

And this Father of ours will never make a mistake.

Oh praise God, our text is not a promise for a smorgasbord of earthly delights. How quickly we would ruin ourselves. How quickly we would confuse **antifreeze** for **soda pop**. How quickly we would embrace relationships that would destroy us in the hopes they would save us.

No, our God loves us far too much to promise to give us every little thing our heart desires.

I want to finish with one more quote from brother Jones. It is lengthy but it says what I want to say better than I can.

What it means is this. Ask for any one of these things that is good for you, that is for the salvation of your soul, your ultimate perfection, anything that brings you nearer to God and enlarges your life and is thoroughly good for you, and He will give it you. He will not give you things that are bad for you. You may think they are good but He knows they are bad. He does not make a mistake, and He will not give you such things. He will give you things that are good for you, and the promise literally is this, that if we seek these good things, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the life of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, etc., all these virtues and glories that were seen shining so brightly in the earthly life of Christ, He will give them to us. If we really want to be more like Him, and like all the saints, if we really ask for these things, we shall receive; if we seek them, we shall find them; if we knock, the door will be opened unto us and we

shall enter into their possession. The promise is, that if we ask for the good things our heavenly Father will give them to us.³

Now next week, Lord willing, we will look at one of the easiest passages in scripture to understand and one that will give us a lifetime of difficulty to apply.

A great application for us this week would be to ask our selves a question regularly as we go about our week.

Am I regarding God this moment as if He loves me.

³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, [*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#), Second edition. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 520–521.