

"Ask ... Seek ... Knock"

Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13

3. It is interesting to learn the Bible's teaching concerning the kinship between God and man (Romans 8:16-17); 1 John 3:1-3), as well as the contrasts between them (Isaiah 55:8,9; 59:1,2).
4. McGarvey correctly points out the danger in the fallacious reasoning of some in concluding that, because God's feeling for his children is like ours in the one particular Jesus here mentions, that, therefore, because the paternal feeling in man would prevent him from punishing his own children with eternal punishment, God's paternal feeling for his children disproves the reality of the eternal punishment which God himself threatens. "The fallacy of the argument consists in assuming that the feeling in question must work the same results in every particular in God that it does in man. But revelation teaches that such is not the case." — J.W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew-Mark*, p.71.
5. "Luke 11:13, in the parallel passage, says, instead of 'good things,' 'the Holy Spirit,' as though this is heaven's greatest blessing." —B.W. Johnson, *People's N.T. With Notes*, I, p.47.

CONCLUSION —

- I. It is a mistake to think God cannot answer prayer without working a miracle. God is able to provide for his children (Matthew 6:26-33), and he does grant their requests, but it is according to his laws—spiritual and natural.
- II. "*Knocking*" is a must for our prayers to be answered: To "*knock*" means (1) asking, (2) plus effort, (3) plus persistence in seeking, according to Jesus, in the parable of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-13).
- III. Because our requests are sometimes amiss, unwise, lacking in fervency, and because the nature of some requests means a necessary delay, it is essential that we persist in prayer.
 - A. "*In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer...*" (Philippians 4:6,7).
 - B. "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17; cf. Ephesians 6:18,19).

—Charles E. Crouch

INTRODUCTION —

- I. This text is a tremendous declaration of the Lord Jesus concerning a basic rule of life: Fervent, persistent prayer.
- II. It, together with its parallel in Luke 11:9-13, affirms the wonderful truth that there is divine wisdom and divine aid available for the asking, to the child of God who seeks for it earnestly, persistently, and according to the will of God.
- III. This lesson is an emphatic encouragement to heed the admonition in Luke 18:1: "*That they ought always to pray, and not to faint.*"
- IV. The Bible teaches over and over (1) that God hears prayer (1 Peter 3:12); (2) that prayer unlocks the door to heavenly treasure to the people of God (Mark 11:22-24); (3) that God answers the fervent prayers of his children who cry to him day and night (Luke 18:7); (4) that persistent prayer, by the righteous, is essential and certain to be rewarded (I John 5:14,15; Hebrews 4:14-16).
- V. There is power in believing prayer to change your life (John 15:7; James 1:5-8).

DISCUSSION —

- I. **THE NATURE OF EFFECTUAL PRAYER.** (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9)
 - A. **Jesus encourages prayer:** "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" (7)
 1. Though not limited to prayer, the principle taught here by the Lord has to do primarily with earnest, persistent, Christian petition to the throne of grace.
 2. The terms "*ask...seek...knock,*" express progression in intensity of desire.
 3. "*Asking*" with the voice simply expresses desire for what one

needs; "*seek*" describes pursuit or search with the entire being; "*knock*" is emphatically asking for admission through a door hitherto locked against him who seeks entry in spite of hindrances.

- B. The supreme tragedy of today is perhaps the fact (1) that there is such an abundance of heavenly supplies available for the asking, (2) that Jesus has such great authority and desire to grant these supplies to all who ask, seek, and knock, (3) that needy humanity is suffering in such dire spiritual poverty, but (4) that there is such tragic failure to pray, largely because they feel no need of prayer, have no high hopes or lofty spiritual ambitions or noble dreams, and are satisfied, evidently with life just like it is. Feeling no need of anything from God, recognizing no spiritual hunger, they ask for practically nothing. Their burning desires are directed toward "things which are seen" and cannot satisfy.

II. THE POWER OF PERSISTENT PRAYER. (Matthew 7:8; Luke 11:10)

- A. **Assurance repeated:** "*For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" (8)
1. The precept enjoined is triple; the assurance of Jesus is six fold.
 2. "*Every one*" of those included in the category of whom Jesus was speaking: i.e., his true disciples, who can say, "*Our Father who art in heaven*" (6:9).
 3. "These words are far more than a promise to answer prayer; and, depending on what men pray for, they may be even a threat." —Coffman.
 4. Though not stated here, the conditions of prevailing prayer elsewhere taught are necessarily implied here (Matthew 6:14,15; James 1:6,7; 4:3; 1 John 5:14).
- B. The effective power of prayer to God's child is herein repeated.
1. To "*ask*" implies an admission of need and a sense of dependence, definitely expressed to a person who can supply said need.
 2. To "*seek*" is to engage in the divinely approved method of pursuit by which God has promised to supply our needs; **it is**

committing oneself to the whole-hearted effort necessary to receive (1 Peter 4:19).

3. To "*knock*" is to use "the golden key that unlocks God's great store house" (cf. Luke 11:5-8).
- C. Let us not limit God's ability to supply our needs (Philippians 4:19) by lack of living faith or failure to pray (Luke 18:8).

III. STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY. (Matthew 7:7-11; cf. Luke 11:11-13)

- A. **What man:** "*Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone?*" (9)
1. This argument from analogy is in the form of a rhetorical question.
 2. It depends for its force upon the known feeling that fathers generally have for doing good to their children.
 3. Far from denying his child the necessary food for which he asks, earthly fathers normally are eager to give them good blessings.
- B. **Serpent for fish:** "*Or if he shall ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent?*" (10)
1. Luke 11:12 adds: "*Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he give him a scorpion?*"
 2. The Lord's argument here, from predictable human conduct, affirms God's likeness to man who was created in his image (Genesis 1:27).
 3. This is true even of sinful men, who readily give what they consider good gifts to their children who cry to them.
- C. **How much more:** "*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*" (11)
1. God's wisdom in giving is here emphasized rather than his willingness: Omniscient God "*knows how*" to give good gifts to his children much more than human fathers, "*being evil.*"
 2. God is much more knowing than earthly parents (Romans 11:33-36); much more kind (Psalm 27:10; 1 John 4:8); and much more wealthy in his ability to bless (James 1:17; Ephesians 3:20; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 2:18; 7:25).