

ASKING AND RECEIVING

Matthew 7:7-12

Intro: Some expositors are of the opinion that what we call the Sermon on the Mount was more of a collection of some of the sayings of our Lord instead of a message. I could not ever agree with such an idea. I believe that we have the message here, and that one part follows the previous part, and that all of the parts are firmly connected with each other. I believe, as I have been emphasizing with you, that the Lord was teaching His disciples and giving them connected instructions which were to prepare them for the work that the Lord had called them to do.

I hope you have noticed that the Lord did not have a section on how to lead people to Christ, nor how to prepare and deliver messages. We might have traces of those truths which we can pick up from the manner in which our Lord spoke to His disciples. But, for the most part, the Lord was dealing with the disciples themselves, what He wanted them to be, and how He wanted them to live. The focus was on the disciples, not primarily upon the work that they would be doing. The disciples were to be living examples of what all of the people of God should be. We could almost say that *they were the message*.

We need to keep this fact in mind. We are to teach the great doctrines of Scripture, but our teaching must not stop there. One of the man purposes of doctrinal teaching must always be that the *truth transforms*.

This idea of change is present throughout our Bibles, but I am thinking today about what Paul said the uses of the Word were to be. You will find it in the last two verses of 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17:

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Who is the man of God? It could be any child of God, but Paul undoubtedly had Timothy in mind when he wrote this. The teacher of the Word must be undergoing the transforming power of the Word of God if he is to expect that the people to whom he ministers are going to be transformed by his ministry of the Word.

Now look back with me at the verses we considered together last Sunday

(verses 1-6 of Matthew 7). What did we learn (hopefully). We learned that the disciples were not to be harshly critical of others. We learned that they should not be trying to take a speck out of someone's eye when they had a plank of lumber in their own eye. And then in verse 6 we saw that they were to know when *not* to minister the Word.

Prior to that they were told that they were not to worry about anything, starting with what they were going to eat, or what they were going to drink, or what they were going to wear.

Do you remember when our Lord was talking to His disciples about forgiving a brother? You will find the incident I am referring to in Luke 17:3-5? Let me read that passage to you, and notice how it began:

3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

How would you describe the words, "Increase our faith"? It is a prayer, isn't it? And why did they pray that short prayer after what the Lord had said to them? *Because they knew that only the Lord could enable them to do what He was asking them to do.*

That is the same kind of situation that you have here in Matthew 7, only it is the Lord Who introduced the subject of prayer here in the Sermon on the Mount. *The Lord knew, and they should have known, that only by the Lord's grace in answer to prayer could they ever do what He was telling them to do.*

It is not easy for us to pass judgment on ourselves. We all have been guilty of criticizing others when we have had a much bigger problem than that person has whom we may try to help. It is only a very godly person who will pass judgment on himself.

The Lord had already spoken to the disciples about prayer in this Sermon, but now He comes back to the same subject again. And most of us know these first two verses of our text, verses 7 and 8, that we could quote them without referring to our Bibles. (Read Matt. 7:7-8.)

What do we have in these verses? We have:

I. COMMANDS AND PROMISES (Matt. 7:7-8).

It is not just one command, but three. And not just one promise, but three. And in verse 8 we have the three promises repeated. So if there is anything that the Lord wanted His disciples to understand it was that prayer was to have a major part in their lives if they were to serve Him, and He also wanted them to know that their prayers would be heard, *and answered!!!*

Let's look at these verses.

I think that probably most of us have been inclined to interpret "ask" and "seek" and "knock" as all meaning simply "ask," but using different words for to emphasize the need for asking. But is that really what the Lord was doing? Or should we not believe that "seek" and "knock" were used by our Lord to indicate how we should ask.

How many times have we all asked the Lord for something, or asked Him to do something, and then have gotten up and practically forgotten five minutes later what we have asked Him to do? Are you guilty? On the other hand, have you ever been so burdened about another person, or about some particular need, that you couldn't get it out of your mind, and so you keep praying and praying throughout the day? That is what it means to seek. You have asked, but that does not seem to be enough, and so you intensify your asking until it can only be described as seeking. But still the problem is there, and the burden is not lifted. And so you take another step to increase the intensity of your request, and you start knocking!

In Matthew 6:33 the Lord had spoken about seeking when He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God ..." When you are seeking in prayer, you are moving that request up to the head of all of your requests. It was like Jacob wrestling with the Lord, and saying, "I will not let Thee go, except bless me" (Gen. 32:26).

In Luke's account of the words we have here in Matthew 7, he preceded it with that parable which I want to read to you now. You will find it in Luke 11:5-8. Listen while I read those verses to you.

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

That is an illustration of knocking, and it was the Lord Who gave it.

Our Lord's words were used to describe what we will do when we really recognize our need, or the need of someone else that we are really concerned about. The Lord wants us to ask, but He wants us to ask, seeking. And if the answer has not yet come, he wants us to add knocking to our asking and seeking.

When Charles Simeon preached on this passage many years ago now, and it was probably at the university church on the campus of Cambridge University in England, that he said this about our text:

Hence the command of God is, "Pray without ceasing"; "Continue instant in prayer"; "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Vol. 11, pp. 251, 252).

Is the way we pray? Or could we be giving the Lord the idea that we've asked Him, and that's all we are going to do. If He answers us, we will be thankful, but we have done our part. Now it is His to do His part. If that is our attitude, then we haven't learned the first lesson in prayer which is that we know in our hearts how completely dependent we are upon Him. And we humbly, and yet persistently, come to Him knowing that He is the only One Who can meet the need we are bringing to Him. Have you prayed this way about deliverance from your own sins?

And, as I have mentioned to some of you more than once before, the same idea as is conveyed by "ask" and "seek" and "knock" is in the verbs themselves, all being in the present tense. They could be translated, "ask, and keep on asking; "seek," and keep on seeking; "knock," and keep on knocking.

Now it was not Matthew who said this (although it is in Matthew's

Gospel). Nor was it Luke who said this (although it is also in Luke's Gospel). *These words come to us on the highest possible authority; they are the words of none other than our own Lord Jesus Christ!*

Now we could stop right there, and we would have all of the evidence that we need to come to the God, our heavenly Father, asking, seeking, and knocking, confessing to Him how miserably we have failed to pray as we should. But to further strengthen our faith, the Lord Jesus went on to ask:

II. THREE QUESTIONS (Matt. 7:9-11).

And these are questions having to do with our own families. The first two questions are for us to answer. The third question brings us to a conclusion that we all need to make.

A. Question 1 (Matt. 7:9).

The man that the Lord included in His question was a father, and it is a question for all fathers to think about, and for all children to answer concerning their own fathers.

No father who is worthy of the title would give his son a stone if he asked for bread. An uncle might do that, or give something else which would be even worse. **Illus:** My Uncle Bud when he was a boy, and the plug of chewing tobacco which was put in his stocking at Christmas.

B. Question 2 (Matt. 7:10).

Bread and fish were staple foods of the day. So these were not unreasonable requests, but represented real needs. Would a father whose son asked for a fish, give him a serpent? Absolutely not! Someone else might, but not a father.

C. Question 3 – the Conclusion (Matt. 7:11).

If a father who is a sinner would give his son bread when he asked for bread, and a fish when he asked for a fish, "how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Will you stop right now and let your mind and heart dwell on those words, "your Father"? When we come to God in prayer, we are coming to One

Who is not only God; we are coming to *our Father!* Fathers, we need to think about this. And all of us have had fathers. This gets down to some basic truths, doesn't it? If my earthly father would meet my needs, and work so that he could, "how much more" can we be sure that our heavenly Father would give good things to them that ask (there is our word again) Him.

Sometimes I think we read our Bibles too fast, so fast that we don't take time to think about what we are reading. How did God become my Father? He chose me, and Christ died for me, and the Holy Spirit brought me into the family of God by the new birth. How blessed we are! Cf. 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love ..."

The last verse of our text gives us

III. THE APPLICATION (Matt. 7:12).

We live in a very evil world. It is a world lacking in justice, and certainly lacking in love. Why did my Father take care of me when I was a child? Because he loved me. Why does my heavenly Father answer my prayers and my seeking Him, and my knocking at his door. Because he loves me. And I can wish that everybody in the world would treat me like my earthly father cared for me, and like my heavenly Father has always cared for me. But the world is not like that. But by God's grace I can treat others like God has treated me, and cared for me.

"This is the law and the prophets." The Apostle Paul expressed his agreement with our Lord's words when he wrote to the church at Rome, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8).

Concl: Paul also wrote to the Roman church the following words:

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19-21).