

Topic: Prayer

Aim: To show that God really does hear and answer prayer if we will only ask, see, and knock.

1. Matthew 7: 7-11.

2 Prayer - most of us understand but don't understand. Andrew T. Richie, in his book *Thou Shalt Worship the Lord Thy God*, calls prayer a "will -o-the-wisp, pg. 97.

3. Will God hear and answer our prayers? Can we expect to receive, find and have it opened to us?

I. Let's look at Mt 7:7-11, then draw some conclusions.

A. First the context of the instructions to ask, seek, knock. Context is sermon on Mount.

1. Some have called the sermon "The Ethics of Kingdom" That is, a commentary on discipleship.
2. Note two verses: Matthew 5:20 (compare 6:1-4), Matthew 5:48 (perfect is complete, mature).
3. This business of prayer is a vital part of the mature Christian life, the righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees.

B. While not a Greek scholar it is worthy to note:

1. These verbs are all present tense and imperative.
2. This implies, as other verses teach, the need to be continual in prayer, persistent.
3. The word for seek emphasizes that. Seek: "to search for, to strive..."
4. See: Luke 15:8, Matthew 13:45, 6:33.

II. But what about this will-o-the-wisp called prayer? Will God answer, will he supply?

A. Before we answer, must note that prayer to be effectual must be of right kind, from the right life.

1. Prayer is not a spiritual fire extinguisher.
2. Sign in school principal's office: "In the event of nuclear attack, fire, or earthquake, the ban on prayer is temporarily lifted."
3. Prayer grows from a relationship developed over time - we would not talk intimately with a stranger or casual acquaintance – why should we expect to deal with God in such a manner?

B. Secondly, we need to be reminded prayer is worship regardless of where it is offered.

1. Ancients had concept of "reverence" down. Are we too casual in our approach to God?
2. Look at Habakkuk 2:20 in context. We do not make demands on God as one might an idol of one's own making.
3. Yet consider Hebrews 4: 14-16.

III. Does prayer work? Will we receive, find and have it opened to us?

A. How we answer that question may be telling more about our faith in God than in prayer!

1. Faith in prayer depends whether or not we believe God!
2. If we have little faith in prayer we have little faith in God!
3. Look again at Mt. 7:7-11.
4. We are dealing with a promise from God!
5. Jesus argues for the validity of prayer based on goodness of God!

B. But testing it is difficult if not impossible.

1. But don't ask the man of the world or the nominal or novice Christian if prayer works.
2. To test it ask:
  - a. Moses, Hannah, Elijah, Daniel, Paul, the early church.
  - b. Jesus - 19 times in gospels Jesus prayed or talked about prayer!
  - c. Ask someone who has a relationship with God who has spent a lifetime cultivating the habit of prayer if it works.
3. James 5: 16 "The effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" NASV

C. If it works, if we believe in it - we need to do it!

1. Samuel Chadwick: "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray."

2. The church today does not need more gimmicks, and programs it needs men of prayer, mighty men of prayer.

3. Only when we begin to humble selves in prayer will we soar like eagles!

1. "God's Strange Answers"

He was a Christian and he prayed. He asked for strength that he might do greater things; but was given infirmity that he might do better things. He asked for riches that he might be happy; he was given poverty that he might be wise. He asked for power that he might have the praise of other men; he was given weakness that he might feel the need of God. He asked for all things the he might enjoy life; he was given life that he might enjoy all things. He had received nothing he asked for; but all that he hoped for. His prayer is answered, he is most blessed.

2. Matthew 7: 7-11.

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