

"Ask, And It Shall Be Given You"

"Ask, and it shall be give you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Mt. 7:7f). Some view these instructions as actions which increase in intensity. Perhaps. It may simply be "parallelism": the same truth stated but with "different clothes on." Whatever, the Lord's promise is that those who ask, receive; seek, find; and knock find an opened door. To ask is a reference to prayer.

Just as prayer must be free from vain repetitions nor offered to receive the praise of men (Mt. 6:1, 5f); other factors that determine whether our prayers will be heard. Let us consider at least four such prerequisites.

To receive forgiveness when we ask, we must be willing to forgive those who have sinned against us. In the model prayer Jesus taught his disciples, they were to pray: "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mt. 6:14f). We cannot forgive those who trespass against us who neither ask, nor want that forgiveness, but we must always be ready to forgive when we are asked (Lk. 17:3). He who holds grudges against those who have acknowledged wrong and asked forgiveness, has not forgiven nor will he obtain forgiveness. For our prayers to be heard, we must ask in faith (James 1:6f). To pray in faith does not necessarily mean that we believe we will receive our petition; it means we believe God is able to do what we have asked, if it be His will. A distraught father sought Jesus to heal his son who was vexed with a demon. He said, "If thou canst do anything,...help us" (Mk. 9:22). This man doubted the ability of Jesus. Thus Jesus responded, "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk. 9:23). For some things we might ask for, God has already revealed His will. He has promised forgiveness to His sinful, but penitent child, thus when we have truly repented of sins we have committed and asked God's forgiveness, we must not doubt that He will forgive. But there are some conditions which we face in life where our will may not be His will. So we pray, confident He can do what we ask, but not certain that what we ask will be granted because we are not sure that what we have asked is according to His will.

Our Prayers must be prayed with the right motive. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures" (James 4:3). If our reason for asking is a for selfish purpose or for sinful

gratification, we are not promised God will grant that request.

Finally, all petitions must be in submission to the will of God. "And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1 Jn. 5:14). Jesus prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I wilt but as thou wilt" (Mt. 26:39). So must we pray. We cannot see the future. Those things which are best for us may be things we would not want. Our confidence must be that God will always do what is for our benefit and so in trust we submit our will to His. Jesus said: "Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? 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?" (Mt. 7:9-11). This assurance of Jesus is our assurance that God is concerned for our well being will and will do what is best for us, just as we will do what we believe is best for our children.

Prayer is a wonderful blessing. Use it often, but use it properly.

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