

The Sermon on the Mount

"Asking, Seeking and Knocking" (Matthew 7:7-11)

INTRODUCTION:

- I. One of the most popular theological teachings today – especially among Charismatic circles – is what is more commonly known as the Prosperity Gospel, or as it is sometimes called the Health and Wealth Gospel.
 - A. The proponents of the Prosperity Gospel believe that God wants Christians to be "abundantly" successful in every way – especially in the area of financial prosperity.
 1. Those who promote this particular belief not only point to the way God blessed and prospered the lives of many Biblical characters, but also offer several Old and New Testament passages of Scripture in support of their beliefs.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 8:18** – *"And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."*

- b. **Jeremiah 29:11** – *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*
 - c. **Malachi 3:10** – *"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."*
 - d. **John 10:10** – *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*
 - e. **Romans 8:28** – *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*
 - f. **3 John 2** – *"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."*
2. Two of the most popular verses promoting this philosophy of the Prosperity Gospel are both taken from the Gospels – one from Matthew and the other found in Luke.
- a. **Matthew 7:7-11** – *"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!"

- b. **Luke 6:38** – *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*
3. Those who oppose the precepts of the Prosperity Gospel, which includes myself, contend that these passages have not only been taken out of their proper context, but have been grossly misapplied and misinterpreted to serve the selfish, self-centered, materialistic goals of those who promote this philosophy among believers today.
4. Among those who preach this Prosperity Gospel are false teachers like:

- a. Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch, T.D. Jakes, Robert Tilton, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen, Rod Parsley and a whole host of others who are proponents of the neo-Pentecostal and neo-Charismatic movements in America today.
- B. In fact, the Prosperity Gospel can trace its roots back to the metaphysical religious beliefs concerning the powers that come from positive thinking – a philosophy that first began to be advocated in the 1800's by the American psychologist/philosopher William James, the father of PRAGMATISM, and by other American and European philosophers.
1. James contended in his famous lecture "*The Will To Believe*," that BELIEVING something strongly enough will eventually bring about the EVIDENCE to support that belief.
 - a. I think we would call this BLIND faith!
 2. Over time, this philosophy was further modified to say there is immense power in belief, and that whatever we can believe we can achieve – a saying that is popular among many “Positive Thinking” followers.

- a. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Neoplan Hill, and virtually every success and motivational writer and speaker today holds to this philosophy.
 - b. In religious circles, this philosophy is perhaps best championed by Dr. Robert Schuller of the famed Crystal Cathedral and his son Dr. Robert Schuller Jr. (Schuller Sr. was a student of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale).
3. However, today, this philosophy has found WIDE acceptance among Charismatic and neo-Pentecostal groups who content that FAITH in the promises of God to be a blessing to His people will bring about health and healing, as well as wealth and prosperity.
- a. Basically, the doctrine teaches that if you BELIEVE God will bring health and healing to your life, or if you BELIEVE God will bring wealth and prosperity into your life, then God WILL do all those things – but only for those who TRULY BELIEVE!
 - b. And as PROOF of your belief you must first GIVE to the ministries and false teachers promoting the Prosperity Gospel.

- c. The devastating impact of this heresy is that many DO believe God will bring health and healing, and wealth and prosperity, and have spent a lifetime giving hard-earned cash to these so-called Health and Wealth ministries.
 - d. But when health and wealth DOESN'T come, these poor souls often turn away from believing in God and Jesus Christ altogether.
- II. In our study this morning, as we continue looking at the teachings of Jesus found in The Sermon on the Mount, we want to attempt to understand one of the key passages often used by those promoting the Health and Wealth Prosperity Gospel heresy.
 - A. We want to understand what Jesus REALLY meant about ASKING, SEEKING and KNOCKING.
 - 1. Hopefully, we will not only clarify the teaching of Jesus in **Matthew chapter 7, verses 7-11**, but we will also come away with an even greater appreciation for prayer in the life of every Christian.
 - B. So, let's begin by taking another look at the verses in question:
 - 1. **Matthew 7:7-11** – *"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!"

BODY:

- I. Throughout The Sermon on the Mount Jesus has been introducing His disciples to the GOSPEL of the KINGDOM.
 - A. These are the divine principles – the timeless, eternal principles – God has always intended for His people to live by.
 1. These principles are DIVINE, because they COME FROM God deal with our relationship with God and our relationship with one another.
 2. And they are time TIMELESS and ETERNAL because they are not just for those who heard Jesus speak over two-thousand years ago – they are principles of righteous conduct and living for all men everywhere, regardless of what period of time, or dispensation, they live in – including US TODAY!

- B. In THIS section of our studies in The Sermon on the Mount we have been looking at principles concerning our relationship with one another.
1. Last week we took a close look at the teachings of Jesus regarding our need to avoid judging one another.
 - a. If you remember, Jesus specifically condemned TWO types of judging in **Matthew 7:1-6**:
 - (1). Judgment based on double-standards – one standard for YOU and another for ME.
 - (2). Judgment that is blind to our own faults – the kind of judgment where we can see sins in the lives of others, but are blinded to sin in our own lives.
- C. As we move into the next several verses – **Matthew 7:7-11** – we find that Jesus is STILL discussing the subject of judging others. Only NOW He addresses the need to judge with WISDOM.
1. In the verses immediately PRECEEDING **Matthew 7:7-11** Jesus speaks of the need to avoid HYPOCRITICAL judgment, but says there ARE TIMES when it becomes necessary for us to make SOME KIND of judgment.
 - a. There are times when we must approach a brother or sister who may need to be reproved or even rebuked for

sin in their lives – just like Nathan the prophet did with David, or the apostle Paul did when rebuking Peter.

- b. And there are times when we must exercise discernment, or judgment, when deciding if reproof or rebuke should be AVOIDED altogether, such as with some individuals who may totally REJECT our efforts to encourage them, and TURN ON US in the process – not only mocking that which is holy, but turning their wrath on us.
 2. No doubt that left questions in the minds of those hearing Jesus on that occasion – wondering how we go about knowing when and how to approach someone with sin in their lives.
 3. How do we get the wisdom to know how to handle these kinds of situations?
 4. The answer – ASK, SEEK and KNOCK!
- D. James, the Lord's brother, offered a similar solution to first-century Christians who were seeking wisdom in knowing how to deal with trials and tribulations.
1. **James 1:2-4** – *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."*

2. But how can we develop the ability to look at trials with JOY, and how can we be PATIENT during those times, so that we may grow spiritually?
 3. **James 1:5-8** – *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."*
 4. Therefore, it shouldn't surprise us that Jesus would tell His hearers that when it comes to exercising the proper WISDOM in handling discretionary judgment in a POSITIVE way, we should ASK for wisdom through prayer.
- E. However, the teaching of Jesus in **Matthew 7:7-11** goes MUCH DEEPER than merely asking for wisdom in handling issues requiring judgment.
1. The central theme in these verses deals with the same theme regarding pray taught by James – prayer that is based solidly on FAITH, because prayer that is based on a solid foundation of FAITH is prayer that will be PERSISTENT!

2. So, in essence, we could say Jesus is stressing the need for His disciples to PERSISTENTLY pray prayers of FAITH.
- II. Persistent praying is a common theme throughout the teaching of Jesus.
- A. Luke records an event in the life of Jesus when His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray.
 1. The model pray Jesus gave His disciples on this occasion was the same one He taught in The Sermon on the Mount.
 - a. But immediately following that lesson on prayer, Jesus continues to teach about the need to be persistent in our prayers.
 2. **Luke 11:5-8** – *And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? 8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.*

3. And, immediately following this parable dealing with persistence in prayer, Jesus said: **Luke 11:9-13** – *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 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!"*
 4. This is the very same thing Jesus taught in The Sermon on the Mount about the need to be persistent in our prayers.
- B. Luke records another occasion when Jesus taught this same principle of persistent praying.
1. At the end of the **17th chapter of Luke**, Jesus speaks to His disciples about the impending destruction of Jerusalem – in the same manner as He did in **Matthew chapter 24**.
 - a. Unfortunately, when the Bible was divided into chapters and verses, they made a division here where there shouldn't have been one – because Jesus is continuing

with the same remarks concerning the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

- b. How are His disciples going to give the strength to endure such a terrible, earth-shaking event? Through persistent prayers of faith.

2. **Luke 18:1-8** – *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" 6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

3. The only kind of FAITH that will see us through the kinds of trials first-century Christians faces is a ROCK-SOLID FAITH coupled with PERSISTENT PRAYING.

4. God WILL answer those prayers!
- C. Therefore, when we go back to **Matthew 7:7-11** and look more closely at the teaching of Jesus there, we find the same principle of persistent praying being taught.
1. The words in **Matthew 7:7** – "*ASK, and it will be given to you; SEEK, and you will find; KNOCK, and it will be opened to you*" are in a tense in the Greek that mean KEEP ON ASKING, KEEP ON SEEKING, KEEP ON KNOCKING!
 - a. It is a tense that implies CONTINUOUS action.
 - b. In other words, never let there be a time when we STOP asking, seeking and knocking!
 - c. This is the only kind of prayer that will get results – if we KEEP ON asking, it WILL BE given to us; if we KEEP ON seeking, we WILL find, and if we KEEP ON knocking, the door WILL BE opened for us.
 2. However, prayers that are THIS persistent require FAITH and CONFIDENCE that God WILL respond. So how do we KNOW God will answer those prayers?
 - a. The answer is simple.

- b. God is OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, and He is more LOVING and CARING than ANY father we have ever known on earth.
3. This is why Jesus continues: **Matthew 7:9-12** – *"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!"*
 - a. This is a classic method used by Jesus to drive home a point – it's known as an argument from the LESSER to the GREATER.
 - b. If a loving, caring, compassionate EARTHLY FATHER (the lesser) will answer our requests for things that are needful – such as food – HOW MUCH MORE will our HEAVENLY FATHER (the greater) give us those things that are ALSO needful.
4. Over and over again, the Scriptures teach us that God stands ready to grant our requests:
 - a. **John 14:12-14** – *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and*

greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. 13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

- b. **John 15:5-8** – *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."*
 - c. **1 John 5:14-15** – *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*
5. While the FIRST TWO passages in John are Jesus promising His apostles that God will grant them whatever they ask in the

context of their duties AS apostles, the LAST passage in 1st John is to YOU AND ME.

- a. **1 John 5:14-15** – *Now this is the CONFIDENCE that we have in Him, that if we ask anything ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we HAVE the petitions that we have asked of Him.*
- b. In other words, if we are asking for something that is in keeping with GOD'S WILL – not necessarily OUR WILL – we know He not only HEARS US, but we know He will GIVE US what we are asking for.
- c. We have that CONFIDENCE – that ASSURANCE, that FAITH!
- d. Why? Because our prayers are PERSISTENT, and our prayers are IN KEEPING WITH HIS WILL, and our prayers are prayed IN FAITH!

CONCLUSION:

- I. What kind of prayers do you pray?
 - A. Are you persistent in your prayers?

1. Do you pray knowing that God is your loving Father in heaven and cares about your needs FAR MORE than any earthly father ever cared – even the best of earthly fathers?
 2. Do you pray with the confidence of know that God will grant your request as long as it is in keeping with His will?
 3. And how often do you pray for wisdom – wisdom to face trials and tribulations, or the wisdom to know how to approach others who are in sin and who need to be lovingly confronted?
- B. Prayer is perhaps the most neglected privilege we have as Christians.
1. We would feel like something was missing if we went through a worship service without praying.
 2. We would feel uncomfortable if we sat down with other Christians for a meal without first praying.
 3. But how uncomfortable are we with the fact that we often neglect prayer in our everyday lives?
- C. Has prayer become a neglected privilege in your life?
1. If it has, there is Someone waiting to hear from you?
 2. If prayer has been an area of your life you've neglected as a Christian, then end that neglect now by going to your Father in heaven, confessing the fact that you have been negligent in

prayer, and start today to make prayer an important part of your life every day.

3. If you feel you're prayers haven't been answered because you've never truly surrendered your life to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can solve that problem today as well.
4. The Lord stands ready to receive you into His kingdom upon your faith in Jesus Christ, and upon your obedience to the gospel of Christ.