



## Part 14 – Your Father who is in Heaven

### Matthew 7:7-12

Jesus explains that Christians have a rich relationship with the one true God. By his design, God's intention is to have a dynamic relationship with his people by faith. Jesus likens this right relationship to a father-son relationship. If you are a Christian, God wants you to come to him with your whole self, just as a son comes to his loving father with all his requests. And as a result, Christians should anticipate that their prayers will be answered by their Heavenly Father, who is the giver of good things. Since Christianity teaches that God is inherently good, our humble prayers are offered not out of hesitant fear, but out of eager expectation.

#### Persistent Prayer (v. 7)

- When Jesus gives the trifold command to ask, seek, and knock he is turning our attention to the pattern of our prayer life.
- First, we are to be persistent in prayer. We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thes 5:17).
- Secondly, we have direct access to our heavenly Father. It doesn't matter where we are, God is with us. He sees us, he protects us, he teaches us, he guides us, and now Jesus is saying he wants us to persistently speak directly to him.

#### Christians depend upon God for daily necessities.

- The regular Galilean meal of that time consisted of bread and fish, and any child knew that these daily needs came from his father's hand.
- We are not to lose the details in the analogy of the father-son relationship. We are to specifically pray for our daily needs (e.g. Give us this day our daily bread).
- We do not receive any of our daily necessities unless they first pass through the gracious hand of the Lord.

#### Christians have an eagerness for the priorities of heaven.

- Jesus made it very clear that we are to "seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things (basic necessities) will be added unto you" (6:33), and he highlighted that we are to have proper judgment (7:1-6). At our deepest and most fundamental level we need the things of heaven brought to us.
- The priority of Jesus is to conform us to the truth of God's written word (John 17:17)
- Are you genuinely seeking to understand and apply the words of life through a prayerful relationship with God? (Prov 2:2-5).
- We are to pray like the persistent widow of Jesus' parable in Luke 18 in which Jesus used "to the effect that you ought always to pray and not lose heart" (18:1). Let us not lose heart for the priorities of heaven.

#### Effectual Prayer (vv. 8-11)

- Jesus emphatically makes it clear that our prayers will be answered ("everyone who asks *receives*..."). In faith, our prayers are effectual. God purposes genuine prayer for the benefit of those who believe. This is not to say that God will answer your prayer in the way that you want it to be answered, but it is the case that God answers all your prayers.
- We live in a world of death and decay, where our very bodies are subjected to futility. And although we are no longer under the judgment of God, we still have remaining sin and weakness that must be changed. God's will through our trials, pain, and suffering, especially as we cry out to him, is to answer, comfort, sustain, and mature us. It is in this mysterious manner that God uses our effectual prayers to sanctify us.

#### From the lesser to the greater (vv. 9-10)

- Jesus makes the point to trust our Heavenly Father using a lesser to greater argument. Jesus already applied the same method of reasoning (6:27, 30).

- In Jesus' analogy, we see the obvious wickedness of a father who would give his son a stone or serpent when his son asks him for bread or a fish. The world should shudder when a father neglects his child because deep down, we know that a child needs the loving care of his or her father.
- "If you then, who are evil..." Often is the case that our perception of God's goodness in answering our prayers is hindered by our lack of self-awareness. We tend to believe we're not *that* bad.
- The doctrine of depravity states that we are born in sin and *cannot not* sin. This does not mean that at this present time we are as bad as we could be, but it does mean that in comparison to God we are evil. This truth must undergird our disposition toward God as we pray (Lk 18:19; Rm 3:12; Jer 17:9)

#### **Your Father who is in heaven (v. 11)**

- Your Father's good gifts are far greater than any gift you can give.
- Your heavenly Father gives good gifts because he is good. In other words, he not only gives good things to his children, but he himself *is* good. He can never harm you in his giving because he is the fullness of goodness.
- "Let not your goodness be as the morning cloud and early dew, when the goodness of God endures continually."<sup>1</sup>

"Lord, why is this?" I trembling cried,  
"Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?"  
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,  
"I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ  
from self and pride to set thee free,  
and break thy schemes of earthly joy  
that thou may'st find Thy all in Me."

~ "I Asked the Lord that I Might Grow," John Newton, 1791

#### **Go and do well unto others (v. 12)**

- "...every person is morally responsible to recognize how he or she ought to treat every other person."<sup>2</sup>
- Often referred to as 'the golden rule,' Jesus positively summarizes the expectation of those who have received the goodness of God by faith in Christ.
- "Only the person who sees that he is a beggar before the Lord and has nothing to offer - but has discovered that he is an heir of the grace of God - will be sufficiently set free from the self-centeredness of character to put others first and to do to them what he would appreciate receiving from them."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William McEwen, *Delighting in God and All His Ways: Doctrinal and Practical Meditations in Divinity*, ed. Gordon J. Keddie, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2023), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009) 249.

<sup>3</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Life in a Fallen World* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987) 137.