

Session 19 Persevering in Seeking God's Help (Mt. 7:7-14)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Jesus addressed seeking to walk out the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle (Mt. 5-7) in the context of relating to people with different values who trouble us (7:1-20). Our challenge is to seek first the kingdom (6:33) or to love God with all of our heart even when we are tempted to be critical of others (7:1-5) or when we are criticized by others (7:6).

³³***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” (Mt. 6:33)***

³⁷***Love the LORD your God with all your heart...***³⁸***This is the first and great commandment. (Mt 22:37-38)***

- B. This passage applies to seeking the Lord's help in two overlapping issues—maintaining a kingdom lifestyle in the context of responding to and solving relational tensions. In other words, we are to respond rightly to people who annoy us and to the people who are annoyed by us.
- C. Jesus called us to pray for God's help with perseverance and confidence (Mt. 7:7-12). Prayer is a most amazing privilege, in which we obtain an audience with the Majesty on high. Yet the fact remains that we neglect to engage in this privilege.

⁷***“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...***¹²***Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them...” (Mt. 7:7-12)***

- D. We are not to trust our natural strengths but to continually seek God for sustaining grace (7:7-8). Wholehearted pursuit of loving Jesus requires persistent asking, seeking, and knocking in our pursuit of a greater breakthrough spiritually and relationally.

1. ***Ask***: for God's supernatural intervention to touch you and those you are in tension with

2. ***Seek***: for God's wisdom on how to walk in the 8 beatitudes and/or to solve tensions

3. ***Knock***: to overcome obstacles (closed doors) that hinder our growth and/or reconciliation

- E. The disciple's abiding relationship with God (Jn. 15:5) is the key to breakthrough. In view of our weakness, we pray with perseverance for God's help or we maintain our dialogue with Him.

- F. To be poor in spirit (Mt. 5:3) is to recognize our inability to walk out kingdom values or solve relational problems in our own natural strength.

³***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:3)***

- G. Faith refuses to be denied. All who ask in God's will are sure to receive, all who seek will find, and all who keep knocking will eventually see the opening of the door and the obstacle removed.

- H. There is always a greater measure of grace to experience—renewing grace, enlightening grace, and empowering grace, etc.

⁶He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God...gives grace to the humble.” (Jas. 4:6)

¹⁶Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may...find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16)

- I. The Father uses prayer to draw us into deeper relationship with Himself and to produce in us gratitude, humility, and love. God is not unaware of or unconcerned about our needs.
- J. We ask God to reveal our deficiencies in the relationship. Before going to a brother or sister, we ask the Lord to show us where we contributed to the wounded relationship. Ask the Lord how He sees the other person and to give us insight on how we can humble ourselves.

II. SEEKING GOD WITH PERSEVERANCE (MT. 7:7-8)

- A. We are to persevere knowing that we will be answered in God's timing and way. Jesus called us to ask and keep on asking, to seek and keep on seeking, and to knock and keep on knocking. The verbs are in the continuous present tense indicating that it is something we are to do consistently.

⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

⁸Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Mt 7:7-8)

- B. There is an asking which is casual, where we put little effort into seeking God, because it is not something we value. When it is highly prized, we search for it as hidden treasure.

¹³You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. (Jer. 29:13)

⁴If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. (Prov. 2:4-5)

- C. Paul called us to pray with all perseverance (Eph. 6:18). He also exhorted us to “strive” (Rom. 15:30), “labor fervently” (Col. 4:12), and “wrestle” (Eph. 6:12) in prayer.

¹⁸Praying always...with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. (Eph. 6:18)

III. SEEKING GOD WITH CONFIDENCE (MT. 7:9-11)

- A. As children we ask our Father with confidence in His goodness (7:9-11). Our view of God is so important. He is not reluctant but is our heavenly Father who gives good gifts in answer to prayer.

⁹What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹If 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!” (Mt. 7:9-11)

- B. Human fathers are evil or selfish compared to God's standards of perfect love.

IV. THE GOLDEN RULE (MT. 7:12)

- A. Jesus called us all to the "Golden Rule" (7:12) as He continued to talk about relationships.
¹¹"...how much more will your Father...give good things to those who ask Him! ¹²Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Mt. 7:11-12)
- B. "Therefore" looks back to what Jesus said about seeking God (7:7-11). Jesus gave a practical application of what He just said on praying for a greater breakthrough.
- C. ***The kingdom principle:*** Whatever we want others to do for us is what we are to do to them (7:12). Our actions are not determined by how people treat us, but by how we *desire* them to treat us (7:12) and by how graciously the Father gives to us (7:11).
- D. Love fulfills all that the Law and Prophets taught in Old Testament (Rom. 13:8). True spirituality is not only devout, but is kind to people. Some speak like an angel when praying to God, but speak like a devil when talking to the people who bother them.

V. ENTER THE NARROW GATE (MT 7:13-14)

- A. Those who profess to be believers seek Jesus in two very different ways. Some choose the broad way (7:13), others the narrow way (7:14). We are strengthened to enter the narrow gate by consistently asking, seeking, and knocking to experience more of God's help (7:7).
¹³"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many [it is popular] who go in by it. ¹⁴Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few [it is unpopular] who find it." (Mt. 7:13-14)
- B. The narrow way is difficult on our flesh, because it requires self-denial (Mt. 16:24) and thinking according to an unrenewed mind (Mt. 16:23).
²³He...said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan...for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men..."²⁴If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Mt 16:23-24)
- C. Jesus exhorted us to strive, or to exert effort, to enter the narrow gate of obedience. We do not strive to earn forgiveness, but rather to position ourselves for a greater breakthrough in the heart.
²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many...will seek to enter and will not be able." (Lk. 13:24)
- D. Striving has two very different meanings in the New Testament. We are not to strive *to earn* God's love. However, we *are* to strive in the sense of **putting effort** into our relationship with God, similar to how we put effort into our relationships with family and friends, etc. Striving, in this sense, is an expression of love. If we do not strive in this way, by putting effort into the relationship, then we are not loving God with all our heart and strength.

- E. **Wrong striving:** We must never strive to receive God's love (acceptance or forgiveness). It has been freely given to us because of Jesus' work on the cross. To strive to earn God's love denies the foundational truths of the gospel. It is also wrong to strive in the sense of seeking to establish our own agenda or to strive to make people respond to our ministry or ideas by pressuring them.
- F. **Biblical striving:** Jesus calls us to exert great effort in walking in the narrow way (Mt. 7:13-14). We strive to obey God (Lk. 13:24; Acts 24:16; Heb. 12:4) in ministry labors (Col. 1:29), in prayer (Rom. 15:30), for unity (Phil. 1:27) and in being diligent to enter God's rest (Heb. 4:11), disciplining our body (1 Cor. 9:27), and pressing into God (Phil. 3:12-15).
1. Jesus called us to make radical choices in our cooperation with the grace of God. He spoke of "cutting off our hand" or "plucking out our eye" (Mt. 5:29-30).
²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out ...for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Mt. 5:29)
 2. Paul exerted much effort in seeking to live without any compromise (Acts 24:16).
¹⁶I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. (Acts 24:16)
⁴You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. (Heb. 12:4)
- G. In what sense must we resist striving and in what sense must we embrace it? When we answer this in the wrong, we embrace errors that thrust us into legalism or compromise. Believers are to be diligent to renew their minds so that they can enjoy God's rest.
¹¹Let us therefore be diligent [make every effort, NIV] to enter that rest... (Heb. 4:11)
- H. **Easy yoke:** Jesus did not contradict Himself in Mt. 7:13 and Mt. 11:29. The truth is seen in considering both passages. Rest in this context is a spiritual rest for our soul and not a physical rest for our flesh. The opposite of rest is not diligence; it is restlessness with its emotional turmoil. Lazy people are often very restless, spiritually and emotionally.
²⁹"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Mt. 11:29-30)
1. Taking Jesus' yoke is not about receiving forgiveness but embracing meekness. We are to be yoked to Jesus and His lifestyle—which is difficult on our flesh but easy on our heart.
 2. The easy yoke is to have peace in our heart as we deny our flesh by ceasing to fight for our honor, recognition, and comfort, etc. Great freedom comes to our heart by renouncing all our agendas that compete with Jesus' perfect will in our life.
 3. The hard yoke is to live with rejection, fear, turmoil, and confusion.
- I. What is *difficult* to our flesh is often an easy yoke to our heart (spiritually and emotionally). What is *easy* to our flesh is often difficult on our heart (spiritually and emotionally). Some believers seek in vain for an "easy" path for their flesh that is also "easy" for their heart.