

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness

K. Christ's Instruction To Those Who Enter His Kingdom

1. Replacing False Prayer With Effective Prayer

(Matthew 7:7-11)

I. Introduction

- A. After critiquing the Pharisees' false righteousness, Christ addressed those who desired to enter His Kingdom in Matthew 7:7-29 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 186).
- B. Matthew 7:7-11 is part of that address, and in it, Jesus directed believers to replace the false prayers of the Pharisees with effective prayer that God loves. We view this passage for insight, application and blessing:

II. Replacing False Prayer With Effective Prayer, Matthew 7:7-11.

- A. By way of review, Christ had critiqued the Pharisees for praying with proud motives to impress others in how they prayed and for using vain repetitions to manipulate God for their own ends (Matthew 6:5-6, 7-8).
- B. In great contrast, Jesus taught believers to pray out of a sense of urgent need for God's help, Matthew 7:7-11:
 - 1. Effective prayer is given with persistence that arises from one's sense of urgent need, Matthew 7:7-8:
 - a. The Greek verb for "ask" is *aiteite*, the present imperative form of *aiteo*, "ask, request" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 22; The Analy. Grk. Lex., 1972 (Zon.), p. 10), so Jesus emphasized the need for persistent prayer to God for one's needs. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 34)
 - b. At first glance, such persistency might seem like the vain repetitions of the Pharisees, but in the case of believers who enter the Kingdom, the motivation is very different! The Pharisees used vain repetitions to manipulate God, but true believers persist in prayer out of a sense of urgent need, seen in the following verbs "seeking" and "knocking," Matthew 7:7b. Both of these verbs are **also** in the present tense (*zeteite* and *krouete* respectively, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analy. Grk. Lex., p. 182, 241; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.), so the one doing the persistent praying is urgently, persistently seeking answers to that prayer and is busy knocking on supposed doors of opportunity to see where God's solution might be!
 - c. For this reason, every believer who asks God for answers receives them, everyone who seeks God's answers finds them and everyone opens doors of perceived opportunity finds God's answers, Matthew 7:8.
 - 2. Such prayer is effective due to God's nature, for He as the believer's heavenly Father loves to provide for his urgent needs like an earthly father loves to provide for his children who urgently need his help, v. 9-11:
 - a. Jesus explained that any father in His audience would not give his son a stone if he urgently requested some bread to satisfy his pressing hunger (Matthew 7:9) nor would he give his son a serpent if he asked him for a fish to quench his pressing hunger (Matthew 7:10).
 - b. Accordingly, if we sinfully imperfect, earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to our children who urgently sense their need for our provisions for them, how much more will our righteous, loving Father in heaven give good things to us if we likewise ask of Him with a sense of urgent need, Matthew 7:11.
- C. A great illustration of this kind of prayer is given in the life of Israel's patriarch Jacob in Genesis 32:24-33:28:
 - 1. Before he was born, Jacob struggled with his brother Esau in their mother's womb, Genesis 25:21-26.
 - 2. After birth, Jacob competed with Esau, taking his birthright and blessing so that Jacob had to flee to Haran to live with his uncle Laban to escape Esau's threat to kill him, Genesis 25:27-34; 27:1-29:14.
 - 3. However, Jacob competed with Laban so that he had to part company with Laban, Genesis 29:15-31:55.
 - 4. In returning to Canaan with his family and possessions, Jacob heard that Esau was coming with 400 horsemen, terrifying Jacob, Genesis 32:1-8, so he prayed in desperation for God's help, Genesis 32:9-12.
 - 5. The Preincarnate Lord Jesus then wrestled with Jacob, and upon touching Jacob's thigh, He crippled him, leaving Jacob helpless to defend himself from Esau, Genesis 32:13-25. Jacob clung to the Lord, not letting Him go unless He blessed Him, and the Preincarnate Christ renamed Jacob "Israel," meaning "he . . . persists with God" (in prevailing prayer)" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Genesis 32:25-28).
 - 6. The Lord then led Esau not to harm Jacob as Jacob had finally prevailed with God by prevailing prayer!

Lesson: For believers who enter Christ's Kingdom, we are not to pray to God with proud motives but bring our requests to Him in a sense of pressing need, persistently praying for His help that He loves to supply.

Application: May we who are entering Christ's coming Kingdom abandon prayer that is given out of proud motives to pray with an awareness of great, pressing need to be effective in our prayer lives with the Lord!