

**PRAYER AND OUR TREATMENT OF OTHERS**  
**MATTHEW 7:7-12**

**INTRO.:**

1. There are both productive, and non-productive ways to live the Christian life.
  - a. In Matt. 7:1-6 Jesus has just dealt with one of the non-productive ways.
  - b. As we live the righteousness that exceeds, Jesus said we must not judge others with unrighteous judgments, or motives.
2. Starting in vs 7-12 Jesus calls for us to redirect our energies in a positive way, as we continue to talk about man's relationship with his fellow man.
  - a. Here we find Jesus dealing with both the subject of prayer, and how we are to treat others.
  - b. The point is that there is nothing that will neutralize a judgmental spirit quicker than praying for the other person and treating them the way we would like to be treated.
  - c. You cannot be angry very long with those for whom you are praying and seeking their salvation or best interests.
3. Thus, let us read what Jesus says to us about living the righteous life in a positive way: Vs. 7-12: (Read).
4. This AM I want us to go back and notice several points from this passage that will help us to be productive in our daily walk as Christians.

**LESSON:**

- I. 1<sup>st</sup>: Notice that Jesus began this section by dealing with what should be our attitude toward prayer.
  - A. Previously, in Matt. 6:5-15 he dealt with prayer and its abuses.
    1. In that section He gave us the "How to's" of prayer.
      - a. He told us how not to pray if we want to be heard by God.
      - b. And He told us how to pray and gave us a model to follow.
    2. In the section before us today, we find Jesus going more in depth as he deals with the individual and their heart as they approach God in prayer.
  - B. The first thing that Jesus shows us here is that we must be persistent, or consistent in our prayers.
    1. Jesus used three different words, two times to emphasize His point: "*Ask, Seek, and Knock.*"
    2. The words He chose to use are in the present imperative in the Greek language.
      - a. "*Ask and keep on asking.*"
      - b. "*Seek and keep on seeking.*"
      - c. "*Knock and keep on knocking.*"
    3. In the context of Matt. 7:1-6, Jesus said:
      - a. Rather than persisting in the criticism of others, He calls for us to pour out our efforts in earnest, heart-felt prayer.
      - b. Rather than constantly looking for what is wrong in another person's life, Jesus calls for us to actually pray for and ask God to bless and work in that person's life for good.
    4. As we look at each of these words we also notice that they express a growing intensity in our prayers.
      - a. "*Ask*" – Make a request or petition.
        - 1) This requires faith on our part.
        - 2) Refers to asking from a position of helplessness, like the widow in the Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8).
          - a) It is realizing that there are some things (needs and blessings) that we cannot obtain ourselves, and that must come from God.
          - b) I.E. Forgiveness of sins.
          - c) We need to be asking God for great things, big things, for He has the power to answer.
        - 3) Asking implies our dependence upon someone who can supply our needs.

- b. “*Seek*” – Earnestly look for, seeking, searching, pursuing.
    - 1) This requires desire on our part.
    - 2) Means we must get involved.
      - a) We must put our feet into our prayers.
      - b) I.E. When we ask God to change our city, it will require our going to our neighbors, friends, etc.
    - 3) Seeking engages us in actively pursuing, or committing ourselves whole-heartedly to the things we are seeking.
    - 4) ASK: How often do we pray for something once or twice and then forget about it?
      - a) That is not the type of prayer Jesus taught here.
      - b) If we are not honestly seeking an answer to our prayer, then don’t pray in the first place.
  - c. “*Knock*” – Asking for admission through a door that is shut, seeking entrance despite the hindrances.
    - 1) Notice the illustration used here:
      - a) Why do you knock on a door? – So someone will answer.
      - b) How long do you keep knocking? – Either until someone answers, or it becomes obvious no one is home.
      - c) The same goes for prayer.
    - 2) Knocking requires persistent effort on our part.
      - a) Prayer requires diligence.
      - b) ‘Knocking’ implies that God may answer our prayers, but we must also work in order to obtain the desired blessing.
    - 3) Knocking reminds us of the Parable of the Householder and his neighbor who needed bread at midnight (Lk. 11:5-8).
    - 4) Knocking is the golden key that unlocks the door to God’s storehouse.
- C. When we approach prayer this way, notice what Jesus says will happen.
1. “*Ask... given to you (receive).*”
    - a. When we bring a request before God, and it is in His will, He will give it to us.
    - b. God is pleased to deliver your requests.
    - c. Phil. 4:19: “*And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*”
    - d. 1 John 5:14: “*And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*”
    - e. Simply: Do you have a need? Just ask God who can abundantly supply all things.
  2. “*Seek...find.*”
    - a. When we pray seeking, we will not wander aimlessly searching for what we are seeking.
    - b. Jesus tells us we will find what we are looking for.
    - c. We will discover what we have been searching for.
  3. “*Knock...opened.*”
    - a. We are to continually knock on doors, and leave it to God to open the right ones.
    - b. When we think something is in the will of God, we should keep knocking on the door until God opens it, or we get a firm “No.”
  4. NOTE: The main thing Jesus is trying to teach here is that we need to ask God if we expect to get anything from Him.
  5. Simply,
    - a. If you ask you will receive; if you don’t you won’t get anything.
    - b. If you seek you will find; if you don’t you won’t find anything.
    - c. If you knock doors will be opened; if you don’t they won’t.

- II. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Jesus now states the real motive for our being persistent in prayer – God is our loving Father, and He is dependable (Vs. 9-11).
- A. Notice the argument Jesus made here.
1. If your physical child asks you for bread, you will certainly not give him a rock.
    - a. You will give him bread, because you love him, and you want your son to have good things which are beneficial to him.
    - b. Hence when your child asks for something that is good for him, you will do whatever you can to give it to him.
  2. Likewise, if he asks for a fish (to eat), you would certainly not give him a scorpion (which would be harmful to him).
  3. Our natural desire, as his father, is to give him good things.
  4. The emphatic application is that compared to God, we are evil.
    - a. Yet, even though we are evil, and sinners, we still know and desire good things for our children.
    - b. Now what do you suppose is the case with God, who is sinless?
    - c. If we, evil, can do such good things for our children, how much greater good can God, who is sinless, do for His children?
  5. The point of the argument is very strong.
- B. No loving father would deceive his son and refuse to give him food when he asked for it; and God is the same way.
1. As a loving father you would not give your child a steady diet of candy bars & bubble gum; but rather the type of food needed to make him strong and healthy.
  2. So also, God in His infinite wisdom and power gives us all that we need.
  3. It is up to us to accept the fact that what God gives us is for our own good.
  4. Probably, all of us have prayed for something and then were glad later when God did not give us what we asked for.
    - a. Win a million dollars.
    - b. Paul and the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:8-9).
  5. While God may not give us what we want; He will give us all that we need for our spiritual well-being: 1 Jn. 5:14: *“And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”*
- C. The underlying theme here is that God is willing to give His children good things.
1. If earthly parents, who are sinful by nature, know how to give good things to their children; will not God be able to give us all the good things we ask for.
  2. And just like an earthly parent, God can see the things that will harm us, and refuses to give them to us.
  3. Notice also, that Jesus is not giving us a license for greed, or self-centeredness.
    - a. God has not obligated Himself to grant our every wish, or selfish desire.
    - b. In fact, James 4:3 says: *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*
    - c. But when we are truly seeking His kingdom first (Matt. 6:33), and our desires are to be controlled by His will; He will grant our requests.
    - d. That is His promise to us, as a loving Heavenly Father.
- III. 3<sup>rd</sup>: Now we come to the final part of our text as we look at what we have called, “The Golden Rule.”
- A. Here is the real challenge to our living the Christian life and our practicing the righteousness that exceeds.
1. It is simply treating others the way that we want to be treated.
  2. While this is an easy passage to quote, and while it may sound simple and easy; fulfilling it is not.
  3. In this verse we find one of the most powerful challenges God has given us.
    - a. If the world would live by this rule, then most of the problems among people would be solved.
    - b. If the church would practice this rule, then the world would truly see us as followers of Jesus.

4. To answer this challenge means that we must become people who really, genuinely, sincerely care for one another.
  5. To practice this verse means that I try putting the interests of other people ahead of my own, just as Jesus did for us (Phil. 2:1-8).
  6. The bottom line is that we can become people who care because of what God has done for us.
    - a. We are freed to care for others because God has revealed His care for us.
    - b. Knowing that our needs will be met when we ask, seek, and knock; frees us to help meet the needs of others.
    - c. Being the recipients of the Father's love, frees us to love one another.
  7. Our commitment to Jesus will determine how much we care for and respond to the needs of others.
- B. The Golden Rule is the culmination of all that Jesus has taught about "*the righteousness that exceeds.*"
1. It is like a pocketknife that we can carry with us wherever we go.
  2. It is something that is always there ready for us to use.
  3. If we will treat others the way that we want to be treated, it is unlikely we will ever do the wrong thing.
  4. APPLY: When someone says something unkind, or does something bad to you; you do not need to respond with the silent treatment, or have the attitude that you need to get back at/ even with them; rather we are to respond in the same way that we would want to be treated, or in the way that we would want God to treat us.
  5. If we would extend to other the same type of mercy, compassion, and forgiveness that we want to receive from God, then we would be practicing the Golden Rule.
  6. SIMPLY: It is the Golden Rule because it has as its basis and example God's love and treatment of us.
  7. As children of God we are to treat others as He treats us.
  8. That is the real "*righteousness that exceeds.*"

CONC.:

1. In this passage, and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has given us several admonitions on what it means to have the righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees.
2. How does your life measure up?
  - a. Do you see some areas that you need to change?
  - b. Are you willing to do so today?
3. In our dealings with our fellow man Jesus said:
  - a. Be careful in your judgment of others (7:1-6).
  - b. Be prayerful, always looking to God for help in making the right decisions (7:7-11).
  - c. And then treat others the way that you want them to treat you (7:12).
4. When we do these three things we will truly be considered sons of our Heavenly Father, who are practicing the righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.