

Introduction: Welcome to 2021. This month 141 years ago a patent was filed for a product that we all use, and can't imagine life without it. 141 years ago, was 1880, and the year Thomas Edison filed a patent for the light bulb. The story of his plight in this important invention is well known.

Thomas Edison and his lab associates conducted thousands of experiments to develop the electric light bulb. The greatest challenge was coming up with a material that could serve as a long-lasting filament. They tested thousands of materials, including over 6,000 types of plant growths, looking for the best substance. Edison later wrote. "I was never myself discouraged, or inclined to be hopeless of success. I cannot say the same for all my associates. Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time..." Finally, Edison experimented with a carbonized cotton thread filament, which was able to produce over 13 continuous hours of light, and Edison then filed his first light bulb patent on January 27, 1880.

I can identify with the associates. Who would not be discouraged and tempted to give up after thousands of failed experiments? This morning we are going to look at an area in the Christian life that we can often more resemble Edison's associates, than the persistent Edison. The area is prayer. Prayer is an area where all Christians are tempted at times to give up, where we all can feel that we have had many failed attempts... and often fight discouragement over unanswered prayer.

Jesus, in a short section from the sermon on the mount, addressed prayer. As we read it together, we will see that Jesus is encouraging us to pray, and to not give up. Unlike Edison's direction to his associates, Jesus is encouraging us to focus upon something different than our discipline alone, to fuel our practice of prayer. Jesus directs us to look outside of ourselves and be encouraged by, what this passage says about the God who is calling us to pray. The God who invites us to come in prayer, and makes promises to answer our prayer.

Main Idea: Pray, and keep on praying, because God will hear and answer every prayer.

Scripture: Matthew 7:7-11 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 the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are 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!

I. An Invitation from God (7)

- A. ⁷ *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*
- B. Inherent in this command for us to pray, is the invitation to come. To come to Him in prayer expressed in ... **asking, seeking, and knocking**. This is God calling us to come to Him in prayer. **This is His invitation to His children**. Let's consider this for a moment.... God, the creator of the universe, the creator of you and I, is inviting us to spend time with Him, not listening to Him, but **Him listening to us**. He invites us to come to Him with our prayers.
- C. When we read this passage, the **first step is to focus** upon what the passage is instructing us to do. It is instruction to us about prayer, certainly, but as we look carefully, it is also giving us reasons to pray. We can read this passage and only see the instruction to pray, and **miss the invitation** that our Father holds out to us to come to Him in prayer.
- D. **Are we to pray, yes**, we see that as a command in this text. **Are we to pray and to not give up?** Yes, we are. But all too often we can only focus on what this passage is saying about us, and **miss what this says about God**. It reveals aspects of His care towards us, seen in his invitation to come in prayer. Our Heavenly Father graciously invites us to come to Him in prayer.
- E. Prayer expressed in these commands to us of **Ask, Seek, Knock** are not just suggestions. They are **commands** to us. These verbs communicate more than just a single request, but **a continual, on-going action**: You could translate this...*to ask and to Keep on asking, to seek, and to keep on seeking, to knock and to keep on knocking...* All three of the commands should not be viewed as distinct but as the **same command: prayer** made to God the Father.
- F. But we can all identify times that these different expressions of prayer are applicable. When we can **simply ask** our heavenly Father something as we feel His presence is close by. Or times when we are under trial or duress and God does not seem close, and we must **seek Him** in prayer. Or times where we can even feel separated from God and need to figuratively **knock, to press in to experience His presence**. Whatever situation in life we find ourselves in, we are called to be persistent because, regardless of what we feel, He is always there, always available to us.

G. However, when we read this passage, **how can we be tempted to hear it?**

H. **Is this saying that we need to pray more for God to respond to our prayer?** whatever our level of prayer is, it needs to be more....

No... See what this says about God. He is focusing our attention on the **continual availability of God** the Father to His children. Do you see how God invites His children to come, at any time, to ask over and over again, never tiring of hearing the same requests.

I. **Is this saying that we need to be more persistent in our prayers for God to know what we need and how important it is to us?...** We need to pray more consistently for God to respond to our prayer....

No... See what it says about God. God is focusing us on His **love of God for us**, seen in the invitation to lay every need before Him, and on the **desire of God the Father** to bless His children, desiring this relationship expressed in dependent prayer.

- Matt. 6:7,8 - ... *for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

J. Do you see how amazing this invitation is, that is expressed in our call from God to come in prayer?

K. I am a **Dallas Cowboys football fan**. My favorite player was the quarterback from 1969 through 1980. He took them to 5 Super bowls, winning two of them. His name, Rodger Staubach. He was quite the celebrity to me. In 1972, Charlotte and I were in our second year of marriage, and we were in the Dallas area visiting friends. About halfway through the evening our friends asked, did you know our next-door neighbor is Rodger Staubach? Would you like to go meet him? **What an invitation!** I could not wait until we could get over there. He met us at the door, welcomed us in and introduced us to his family. **He was someone special**, not us, but he made us feel special...

L. An even **more special invitation**, from the greatest Celebrity in all of history awaits us each and every moment of each and every day. Let's view prayer as that gracious invitation that we simply cannot refuse.

II. Promises from God (8)

- A. (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 the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened."*
- B. Do you hear the promises of God to the one who comes in prayer? There are 6 promises in these 2 verses:
1. Ask and **It will be given** to you
 2. Seek and **you will find**
 3. Knock and **it will be opened** to you
 4. For everyone who asks, **receives**
 5. and the one who seeks, **finds**
 6. and the one who knocks, **it will be opened**
- C. They are genuine promises from God. Promises of how He will respond to our prayers. Does this seem too good to be true?
- a. "Here he is simply making emphatically the central point, that prayer to a loving Father is effective. The point is not that human persistence wins out in the end, but that the heavenly Father who loves his children will certainly answer their prayer." Leon Morris
- D. Are you tempted to think that this has not been your experience, this **must not be referring to you and your prayers?** Can you really read this passage with these promises directed to you as a believer?
- E. **Let's review the text - Who is the 'you' referring to?** Each time 'you' is used in this passage, it is *plural*, meaning it is directed to all of the followers of Christ. God is calling his children to pray, and promising that God will respond to every prayer from each of his children. If we insert the plural YOU's, as believers, you could read it like this.
- a. Ask and it will be given to **'All Ya'll'**, seek and **'All Ya'll'** will find, knock and it will be opened to **'All Ya'll'**.
- F. Then in verse 8, this is emphasized by the inclusive language of **'everyone.'** He responds to **'everyone' who asks, seeks and knocks:** The everyone is every one of His children. His promises are for those who are part of his kingdom,

part of his flock, those who know his voice. **None of His children are excluded.**

- G. This passage is focusing our attention, **not at our technique in praying**, but at God. He wants us to see the **trustworthiness of God** in how God regards every prayer from His children. Jesus is not emphasizing persistence as the technique used to get an answer to prayer, but focusing on the God who is being asked, and that there will be a response from Him to our every prayer. He responds with the **language of promise**.
- H. Do we believe that God will answer your prayer? Do you believe God is able to fulfill these promises for **your** prayers? How do you view God? Is he able?
- a. **God is infinite**, He has no beginning, no end and no limitations. We are finite, with all of the limitations of humanity.
 - 1. ***Isaiah 40:12** - Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?*
 - b. **God is present everywhere**, and we are located in space, just look at 'find your friends'. When you feel that God is not with you, not hearing you, that is not true. We are never separated from God. Wherever you are, He is there with you.
 - 1. ***Psalms 139:7-10**; Where shall I go from your Spirit, Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*
 - c. **God is all powerful**, there are no constraints on His decisions, He can do all His holy will decrees. We are limited to human strength and ability. When you feel that your prayer is asking the impossible, it is, but also remember that God accomplishes His holy will by His unlimited power...
 - 1. ***Ephesians 3:20** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power*

at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- I. And this God, our Father, invites us to come to him in prayer. To keep asking, to keep seeking, to keep knocking because we trust a God who calls us to pray. He will never tire of hearing us, and of responding to us. **He promises to respond and He cannot fail to fulfill His promises to us.**

III. Answers from God (9-11)

- A. *⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are 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. Here Jesus concludes this exhortation on prayer **with an example**. He contrasts the response of the **earthly Fathers** to the Heavenly Father. He is saying that even our earthly fathers know how to give us what we ask for. The example is that if our son asks for food, bread, or a fish, their father will not deceive or trick him and give his son something unwanted or even harmful. **How much more** does our heavenly Father know what we need, and also knows how and when to give to us what is best for us?
- C. **Does God hear every prayer?** Yes, He does. **Does God answer every prayer?** Yes, He does. That does not mean that we always receive what we ask for, when we ask for it. No. But this shows that as God answers our prayers, we will always receive, in his answer, **what is best or us**. His best for us are the 'good gifts' from our heavenly Father. God is certainly able to give us all things, but also knows what is best for us.
- D. As parents, would never be able to give our children all that they ask, but even that would not be good for them. We hear from our children what they want, and can easily **see what is good now, what needs to wait for them to mature**, and **what would not be good** for them. How much more our heavenly Father.
- E. Jesus who gave the '**sermon on the mount**', encouraging persistent prayer as a part of daily life, was less than three short years later **on another mount called Calvary**. The same Jesus who challenges us to pray in this passage, was

the very one who made the way possible for us to pray. Jesus secured access to God by taking the penalty for our sin upon himself, so that we can have peace with God and therefore access to Him through prayer.

- a. Hebrews 4: 14-16: *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

- F. Through Christ we have salvation and **peace with God**. Through Christ we have gained **access to God in prayer**. As His children, we are invited to come to Him in prayer, to experience his good gifts. **Why would we not pray?**
- G. **If you are not a believer**, please respond to the gospel call to place your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, the one who died for your sin. As you do these promises of answered prayer can be your promises as well.

IV. Application:

A. For 2021 - Have a goal to Pray about everything

1. When the unexpected happens, pray.
2. When confronted with the impossible, pray.
3. When the news distresses you, pray.
4. When fearful things happen, pray.
5. When blessings occur, pray.
6. When you want something, pray.
7. When your friend comes with a need, pray.
8. When finances are tight, pray.
9. When any need comes, pray! Let the time between being aware of a need and prayer for that need, become shorter and shorter.
10. Ask and keep on asking, Seek and keep on seeking, Knock and keep on knocking

B. Hymn - What a friend we have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. - Fanny J. Crosby

- C. God has extended His **invitation**, He has **promised** to respond, and He will only give **good gifts**. Let us ask and **keep on asking**, let us seek and **keep on seeking**, let us knock and **keep on knocking**, knowing our prayers will be heard and responded to by our all-powerful Heavenly Father.

Pray

Benediction - Ephesians 3:20 - *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*