

PRAYER CERTIFIED OF SUCCESS

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened.”
Luke 11:9-10.

TO seek aid in time of distress from a supernatural being is an instinct of human nature. We say not that human nature unrenewed ever offers truly spiritual prayer, or ever exercises saving faith in the living God; but still, like a child crying in the dark, with painful longing for help from somewhere or other, it scarcely knows where, the soul in deep sorrow, almost invariably cries to some supernatural being for succor. None have been more ready to pray in time of trouble than those who have ridiculed prayer in their prosperity, and probably no prayers have been more true to the feelings of the hour than those which atheists have offered under the pressure of the fear of death. In one of his papers in the *Tattler*, Addison describes a man, who, on board ship, loudly boasted of his atheism. A brisk gale springing up, he fell upon his knees and confessed to the chaplain that he had been an atheist. The common seamen, who had never heard the word before, thought it had been some strange fish, but were more surprised when they saw it was a man, and learned out of his own mouth, “That he never believed till that day that there was a God.” One of the old sailors whispered to the boatswain that it would be a good deed to heave him overboard, but this was a cruel suggestion, for the poor creature was already in misery enough—his atheism had evaporated, and he, in mortal terror, cried to God to have mercy upon him. Similar incidents have occurred, not once nor twice. Indeed, so frequently does boastful skepticism come down with a run at the last that we always expect it to do so. Take away unnatural restraint from the mind, and it may be said of all men that, like the comrades of Jonah, they cry every man unto his God in their trouble. As birds to their nests, hinds to their coverts, so men in agony fly to a superior being for succor in the hour of need. God has given to all the creatures He has made some peculiar form of strength—one has such swiftness of foot that at the baying of a hound it escapes from danger by outstripping the wind. Another, with outspread wings, is lifted beyond the fowler. A third, with horns, pushes down its enemy, and a fourth, with tooth and claw, tears in pieces its adversary. To man, He gave but little strength compared with the animals among which He placed in Eden, and yet man was king over all, because the Lord was His strength. So long as he knew where to look for the source of his power, man remained the unresisted monarch of all around him. That image of God in which he shone resplendent sustained His sovereignty over the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea. By instinct, man turned to his God in Paradise; and now, though he is to a sad degree an uncrowned monarch, there lingers in his memory shadows of what he was, and remembrances of where his strength must still be found. Therefore, no matter where you find a man, you meet one who in his distress will ask for supernatural help. I believe in the truthfulness of this instinct, and that man prays because there is something in prayer. As when the Creator gives His creature the power of thirst, it is because water exists to meet its thirst, and as when He creates hunger there is food to correspond to the appetite; so when He inclines men to pray it is because prayer has a corresponding blessing connected with it.

We find a powerful reason for expecting prayer to be effectual in the fact that it is an institution of God. In God's word we are over and over again commanded to pray. God's institutions are not folly. Can I believe that the infinitely wise God has ordained for me an exercise which is ineffectual, and is no more than child's play? Does He bid me pray, and yet has prayer no more result than if I whistled to the

wind or sang to a grove of trees? If there is no answer to prayer, prayer is a monstrous absurdity and God is the author of it—which it is blasphemy to assert. No man who is not a fool will continue to pray when you have once proved to him that prayer has no effect with God, and never receives an answer. Prayer is a work for idiots and madmen, and not for sane persons, if it is indeed true, that its effects end with the man who prays!

I shall not, this morning, enter into any arguments upon the matter; rather, I am coming to my text, which to me, at least, and to you who are followers of Christ, is the end of all controversy. Our Savior knew right well that many difficulties would arise in connection with prayer which might tend to stagger His disciples, and therefore He has balanced every opposition by an overwhelming assurance. Read those words, “*I say unto you,*” I—your Teacher, your Master, your Lord, your Savior, your God—“I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”

In the text our Lord meets all difficulties—first by *giving us the weight of His own authority*, “I say unto you”; next by *presenting us with a promise*, “Ask, and it shall be given you,” and so on; and then by *reminding us of an indisputable fact*, “Everyone who asks receives.” Here are three mortal wounds for a Christian’s doubts as to prayer.

I. First, then, OUR SAVIOR GIVES TO US THE WEIGHT OF HIS OWN AUTHORITY, “*I say unto you.*” The first mark of a follower of Christ is that he believes his Lord. We do not follow the Lord at all if we raise any questions upon points whereupon He speaks positively. Though a doctrine should be surrounded with 10,000 difficulties, the *ipse dixit* of the Lord Jesus sweeps them all away, as far as true Christians are concerned. Our Master’s declaration is all the argument we need, “I say unto you,” is our logic. Reason! We see you at your best in Jesus, for He is made of God unto us wisdom. He cannot err, He cannot lie, and if He says, “I say unto you,” that is the end of all debate.

But brethren, there are certain reasons which should lead us the more confidently to rest in our Master’s word upon this point. There is God’s power in every word of the Lord Jesus, but there is special force in the utterance before us. It has been objected to prayer that it is not possible that it should be answered, because the laws of nature are unalterable, and they must and will go on whether men pray or not. Not a drop of water will change its position in a single wave or a particle of infectious matter be turned from its course, though all the saints in the universe should plead against tempest and plague. Now, concerning that matter, we are in no hurry to make an answer—our adversaries have more to prove than we have, and among the rest they have to prove a negative. To us it does not seem necessary to prove that the laws of nature are disturbed. God can work miracles, and He may work them yet again as He has done in days of yore, but it is no part of the Christian faith that God must work miracles in order to answer the prayers of His servants. When a man, in order to fulfill a promise, has to disarrange all his affairs, and so to speak, to stop all his machinery, it proves that he is but a man, and that his wisdom and power are limited. But He is God, indeed, who without reversing the engine, or removing a single cog from a wheel, fulfils the desires of His people as they come up before Him. The Lord is so omnipotent that He can work results tantamount to miracles without in the slightest degree suspending any of His laws. He did, as it were, in the olden times, stop the machinery of the universe to answer prayer, but now, with equally godlike glory, He orders events so as to answer believing prayers, and yet suspends no natural law.

But this is far from being our only or our main comfort. That lies in the fact that we hear the voice of one who is competent to speak upon the matter, and He says, “I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you.” Whether the laws of nature are reversible or irreversible, “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find.” Now, who is He who speaks thus? It is He who made all things, without whom was not anything made that was made. Cannot He speak to this point? O You eternal Word, You who were in the beginning with God, balancing the clouds, and fastening the foundations of the earth, You know what the laws and the unalterable constitutions of nature may be, and if you say, “Ask and it shall be given you,” then assuredly, it will be so, be the laws of nature what they may. Besides, our Lord is by us adored as the sustainer of all things, and seeing that all the laws of nature are only operative through His power, and are sustained in their motion by His Might, He must be cognizant of the motion of all the

forces in the world—and if He says, “Ask and it shall be given you”—He does not speak in ignorance, but knows what He affirms. We may be assured that there are no forces which can prevent the fulfillment of the Lord’s own word. From the Creator and the Sustainer the words, “I say unto you,” settles all controversy forever.

But another objection has been raised which is very ancient indeed, and has a great appearance of force. It is raised not so much by skeptics, as by those who hold a part of the truth. It is this—that prayer can certainly produce no result because the decrees of God have settled everything, and those decrees are immutable. Now, we have no desire to deny the assertion that the decrees of God have settled all events. It is our full belief that God has foreknown and predestinated everything that happens in heaven above or in the earth beneath and that the foreknown station of a reed by the river is as fixed as the station of a king, and, “The chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses.” Predestination embraces the great and the little, and reaches unto all things—the question is, why do we pray? Might it not as logically be asked why we breathe, eat, move, or do anything? We have an answer which satisfies us, namely, that our prayers are in the predestination, and that God has as much ordained His people’s prayers as anything else! And so when we pray, we are producing links in the chain of ordained facts. Destiny decrees that I should pray—I pray. Destiny decrees that I shall be answered and the answer comes to me. Moreover, in other matters we never regulate our actions by the unknown decrees of God, as for instance, a man never questions whether he shall eat or drink because it may or may not be decreed that he shall eat or drink—a man never inquires whether he shall work or not on the ground that it is decreed how much he shall do or how little! As it is inconsistent with common sense to make the secret decrees of God a guide to us in our general conduct, so we feel it should be in reference to prayer, and therefore, we still pray. But we have a better answer than all this. Our Lord Jesus Christ comes forward, and He says to us this morning, “My dear children, the decrees of God need not trouble you, there is nothing in them inconsistent with your prayers being heard. ‘I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.’” Now, who is He who says this? Why it is He who has been with the Father from the beginning—“The same was in the beginning with God”—and He knows what the purposes of the Father are, and what the heart of God is, for He has told us in another place, “The Father Himself loves you.” Now, since He knows the decrees of the Father and the heart of the Father, He can tell us, with the absolute certainty of an eyewitness, that there is nothing in the eternal purposes in conflict with this truth, that he who asks, receives, and he who seeks, finds. He has read the decrees from beginning to end—has He not taken the book and loosed the seven seals thereof, and declared the ordinances of heaven? He tells you there is nothing there inconsistent with your bended knee and streaming eyes, and with the Father’s opening the windows of heaven to shower upon you the blessings which you seek. Moreover, He is Himself God—the purposes of heaven are His own purposes, and He who ordained the purpose here, gives the assurance that there is nothing in it to prevent the efficacy of prayer. “I say unto you.” O you that believe in Him, your doubts are scattered to the winds, you know that He hears prayer.

But sometimes, there arises in our mind a third difficulty, which is associated with our own judgment of ourselves and our estimate of God. We feel that God is very great and we tremble in the presence of His majesty. We feel that we are very little and that, in addition, we are also vile, and it seems an incredible thing that such guilty nothings should have power to move the arm which moves the world. I wonder not if that fear should often hamper us in prayer. But Jesus answers it so sweetly. He says—“I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.” And I ask again, who is it that says, “I say unto you”? Why, it is He who knows both the greatness of God, and the weakness of man. He is God, and out of the excellent majesty, I think I hear Him say, “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.” But He is also Man, like ourselves, and He says, “Dread not your littleness, for I, bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, assure you that God hears man’s prayer.” The words come to us with the harmony of blended notes! The God, the Man, both speak to us—“Dread not My majesty, your prayer is heard. Fear not your own weakness. I, as a man, have been heard of God.”

And yet, again, if the dread of sin should haunt us and our own sorrow should depress us, I would remind you that Jesus Christ, when He says, “I say unto you,” gives us the authority, not only of His

person, but of His experience. Jesus was known to pray. Never any prayed as He did. Nights were spent in prayer by Him and whole days in earnest intercession—and He says to us, “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.” I think I see Him coming fresh from the heather of the hills, among which He had knelt all night to pray, and He says, “My disciples, Ask, and it shall be given you, for I have prayed and it has been given to Me.” I think I hear Him say it with His face all bloody red and His garments as if He had trod the wine vat, as He rises from Gethsemane with His soul exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. He was heard in that He feared and therefore, He says to us, “I say unto you, knock and it shall be opened to you.” Yes, and I think I hear Him speak thus from the cross, with His face bright with the first beam of sunlight, after He had borne our sins in His own body on the tree, and had suffered all our griefs to the last pang. He had cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me,” and now, having received an answer, He cries in triumph, “It is finished!” And in so doing, He bids us, also, “Ask, and it shall be given you.” Jesus has proven the power of prayer. “Oh but,” says one, “He has not proven what it is to pray in trouble like mine.” How grossly you attest the Savior’s trouble was not as bad as yours. There are no depths so deep that He has not dived to the bottom of them. Christ has prayed out of the lowest dungeon and out of the most horrible pit. “Yes, but He has not cried under the burden of sin.” How can you speak so thoughtlessly!? “Was ever such a burden of sin borne by any man as was laid on Him?” True, the sins were not His own, but they were sins, and sins with all their crushing weight in them, too! Yet was He heard and He was helped unto the end. Christ gives you, in His own experience, the most divine proof that the asking shall be followed by the receiving, even when sin lies at the door.

Thus much is certain, if you, who are believers, cannot believe in the efficacy of prayer on the very word of Christ, it has come to a strange pass, for, O beloved, you are leaning all your soul’s weight on Jesus! If He is not true, then you trust a false Savior! If He speaks not truths, then you are deceived. If you can trust Him with your soul, you must of necessity trust Him with your prayers.

Remember, too, that if Jesus our Lord could speak so positively here, there is a yet greater reason for believing Him now, for He has gone within the veil, He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and the voice does not come to us from the man of poverty, wearing a garment without seam, but from the enthroned priest with the golden belt about His loins, for it is He who now says, from the right hand of God—“I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.” Do you believe in His name? How, then, can a prayer that is sincerely offered in that name fall to the ground? When you present your petition in Jesus’ name, a part of His authority clothes your prayers. If your prayers are rejected, Christ is dishonored—surely, you cannot believe that? You have trusted Him, then believe that prayer offered through Him must and shall win the day!

We cannot speak longer on this point, but we trust the Holy Spirit will impress it upon all our hearts.

II. We will now remember that OUR LORD PRESENTS US WITH A PROMISE.

Note that the promise is given to several varieties of prayer. “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.” The text clearly asserts that all forms of true prayer shall be heard, provided they are presented through Jesus Christ, and are for promised blessings. Some are vocal prayers men *ask*—never should we fail to offer up, every day and continually, the prayer which is uttered by the tongue, for the promise is that the asker shall be heard. But there are others who, not neglecting vocal prayer, are far more abundant in active prayer, for by humble and diligent use of the means, they *seek* the blessings which they need. Their heart speaks to God by its longings, strivings, emotions, and labors. Let them not cease seeking, for they shall surely find. There are others who, in their earnestness, combine the most eager forms, both acting and speaking, for *knocking* is a loud kind of asking and a vehement form of seeking. If our prayers are vocal speech with God, or if they are the practical use of means ordained, which is real prayer—or if they should, best of all, be the continued use of both, or if they are expressed only by a tear or a sigh, or even if they remain quite unexpressed in a trembling desire, they shall be heard. All varieties of true prayer shall meet with responses from heaven.

Now observe that these varieties of prayer are put on an ascending scale. It is said, first, that we ask—I suppose that refers to the prayer which is a mere statement of our needs in which we tell the Lord

that we need this and that, and ask Him to grant it to us. But as we learn the art of prayer, we go on further to seek—which signifies that we marshal our arguments, and plead reasons for the granting of our desires, and we begin to wrestle with God for the mercies needed. And if the blessings come not, we then rise to the third degree which is knocking—we become persistent. We are not content with asking and giving reasons, but we throw the whole earnestness of our being into our requests, and practice the text which says, “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” So the prayers grow from asking—which is the statement, to seeking—which is the pleading, and to knocking—which is the persistence. To each of these stages of prayer, there is a distinct promise. He who asks shall have—what did he ask for? But he, who seeks, going further, shall find, shall enjoy, shall grasp, shall know that he has obtained! And he who knocks shall go further still, for he shall understand, and to him shall the precious thing be opened. He shall not merely have the blessing and enjoy it, but he will comprehend it! He shall, “Understand with all saints, what are the heights and depths.” I want you to notice this fact, which covers all—whatever form your prayer may assume, it shall succeed. If you only ask, you shall receive, if you seek, you shall find, if you knock it shall be opened. In each case, according to your faith, shall it be unto you. The clauses of the promise before us are not put, as we say in law, jointly—he who asks and seeks and knocks shall receive, but they are put separately—he who asks shall have, he who seeks shall find, he who knocks shall have it opened. It is not when we combine the whole three that we get the blessing, though doubtless if we did combine them, we should get the combined reply; but if we exercise only one of these three forms of prayer, we shall still get that which our souls seek after.

These three methods of prayer exercise a variety of our graces. It is a gloss of the fathers upon this passage that faith asks, hope seeks, and love knocks, and the gloss is worth repeating. Faith asks because she believes God will give; hope, having asked, expects, and therefore seeks for the blessing; love comes nearer and will not take a denial from God, but desires to enter into His house, and to sup with Him, and therefore, knocks at His door till He opens. But, again, let us come back to the old point—it matters not which grace is exercised, a blessing comes to each one! If faith asks, it shall receive; if hope seeks, it shall find; and if love knocks, it shall be opened to her.

These three modes of prayer suit us in different stages of distress. There am I, a poor beggar at mercy’s door, I ask, and I shall receive—but I lose my way so that I cannot find Him of whom I once asked so successfully. Well, then, I may seek with the certainty that I shall find! And if I am in the last stage of all, not merely poor and bewildered, but so defiled as to feel shut out from God, like a leper shut out of the camp, then, I may knock and the door will open to me.

Each of these different descriptions of prayer is exceedingly simple. If anybody said, “I cannot ask,” our reply would be, “You do not understand the word. Surely everybody can ask.” A little child can ask. Long before an infant can speak, it can ask—it need not use words in order to ask for what it wants, and there is not one among us who is incapacitated from asking. Prayers need not be fine. I believe God abhors fine prayers. If a person asks charity of you in elegant sentences, he is not likely to get it. Finery in dress or language is out of place in the street. I heard a man in the street one day, begging aloud by means of a magnificent oration. He used grand language in very pompous style, and I dare say he thought he was sure of getting piles of coppers by his borrowed speech. But I, for one, gave him nothing. I felt more inclined to laugh at his bombast. Is it not likely that many great prayers are about as useless? Many prayer meetings’ prayers are a great deal too fine. Keep your figures and metaphors and parabolic expressions for your fellow creatures, use them for those who want to be instructed, but do not parade them before God. When we pray, the simpler our prayers are the better—the most plain, most humble language which expresses our meaning is the best.

The next word is seek, and surely there is no difficulty about seeking? In finding, there might be, but in seeking there is none. When the woman in the parable lost her money, she lit a candle and sought for it. I do not suppose she had ever been to the university, or qualified as a lady physician, or that she could have sat on the School Board as a woman of superior sense—but she could seek. Anybody who desires

to do so can seek, be they man, woman, or child; and for their encouragement the promise is not given to some particular philosophical form of seeking, but “He who seeks finds.”

Then, there is *knocking*. Well, that is a thing of no great difficulty. We used to do it when we were boys, sometimes too much for the neighbors’ comfort. And at home, if the knocker was a little too high, we had ways and means of knocking at the door even then; a stone would do it, or the heel of a boot, anything would make a knocking. It was not beyond our capacity by any means. Therefore, it is put in this fashion by Christ Himself, as much as to tell us, “You need have no scholarship, no training, no talent, and no wit for prayer—ask, seek, knock—that is all and the promise is to everyone of these ways of praying.

Will you believe the promise? It is Christ who gives it. No lie ever fell from His lips. O doubt Him not. Pray on if you have prayed, and if you have never prayed before, God help you to begin today!

III. Our third point is that JESUS TESTIFIES TO THE FACT THAT PRAYER IS HEARD. Having given a promise, He then adds, in effect—“You may be quite sure that this promise will be fulfilled, not only because I say it, but because it is and always has been so.” When a man says the sun will rise tomorrow morning, we believe it because it has always risen. Our Lord tells us that, as a matter of indisputable fact, all along the ages, true asking has been followed by receiving. Remember that He who stated this fact knew it. If you state a fact, you may get the reply, “Yes, as far as your observation goes, it is true,” but the observation of Christ was unbounded. There was never a true prayer offered unknown to Him. Prayers acceptable with the Most High come up to Him by the way of the wounds of Christ. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ can speak by personal knowledge and His declaration is that prayer has succeeded—“Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds.”

Now, here we must, of course, suppose the limitations which would be made by ordinary common sense and which are made by Scripture. It is not everyone who frivolously or wickedly asks or pretends to ask of God that gets what he asks for. It is not every silly, idle, unconsidered request of unregenerate hearts that God will answer. By no means—common sense limits the statement so far. Besides, Scripture limits it again, “You have not because you ask not or because you ask amiss”—there is an asking amiss which will never obtain. If we ask that we may consume the good things upon our lust, we shall not have them. If we ask for that which would not be to our good, we shall be heard by receiving no such answer as we desired. But those things being remembered, the statement of our Lord has no other qualification—“Everyone who asks receives.”

Let it be remembered that frequently, even when the ungodly and the wicked have asked of God, they have received. Full often in the time of their distress, they have called upon God and He has answered them. “How can you say that?” asks one. No, I say not so, but so says Scripture. Ahab’s prayer was answered and the Lord said, “See how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son’s days will I bring the evil upon his house.” So also, the Lord heard the prayer of Jehohaz, the son of Jehu, who did evil in the sight of the Lord. (2 Kings 13:1-4). The Israelites also, when for their sins were given over to their foes, cried to God for deliverance and they were answered—yet the Lord Himself testified concerning them that they did but flatter with their mouth. Does this stagger you? Does He not hear the young ravens when they cry? Do you think He will not hear man, who is formed in His own image? Do you doubt it? Remember Nineveh. The prayers offered at Nineveh, were they spiritual prayers? Did you ever hear of a church of God in Nineveh? I have not, neither do I believe the Ninevites were ever visited by converting grace—but they were, by the preaching of Jonah, convicted that they were in danger from the Great Jehovah—and they proclaimed a fast and humbled themselves, and God heard their prayer, and Nineveh for a while, was preserved. Many a time in the hour of sickness, and in the time of woe, God has heard the prayers of the unthankful and the evil. Do you think God gives nothing except to the good? Have you dwelt at the foot of Sinai and learned to judge according to the law of merit? What were you when you began to pray? Were you good and righteous? Has not God commanded you to do good to the evil? Will He command you to do what He will not do Himself? Has He not said that He, “Sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust,” and is it not so? Is He not daily blessing those who curse Him, and doing good to

those who despitely use Him? This is one of the glories of God's grace, and when there is nothing else good in the man, yet if there is a cry lifted up from his heart, the Lord deigns full often to send relief from trouble. Now, if God has heard the prayers even of men who have not sought Him in the highest manner and has given them temporary deliverances in answer to their cries, will He not much more hear you when you are humbling yourself in His sight and desiring to be reconciled to Him? Surely there is an argument here.

But to come more fully to the point with regard to real and spiritual prayers, everyone who asks receives without any limit whatever. There has never been an instance yet of a man really seeking spiritual blessings of God without his receiving them. The publican stood afar off and so broken was his heart that he dared not look up to heaven, yet God looked down on him. Manasseh lay in the low dungeon; he had been a cruel persecutor of the saints. There was nothing in him that could commend him to God, but God heard him out of the dungeon, and brought him forth to liberty of soul. Jonah had, by his own sin, brought himself into the whale's belly, and he was an ill-tempered servant of God at best, but out of the belly of hell he cried and God heard him. "Everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened." *Everyone!* If I needed evidence, I would be able to find it in this tabernacle. I could ask anyone here, who has found Christ, to bear witness that God heard his prayer. I do not believe that among the damned in hell there is one who dares say, "I sought the Lord and He rejected me." There shall not be found, at the last day of account, one single soul that can say, "I knocked at mercy's door, but God refused to open it." There shall not stand before the great white throne, a single soul that can plead, "O Christ, I would have been saved by You, but You would not save me. I gave myself up into Your hands, but You did reject me. I penitently asked for mercy of You, but I had it not." Everyone who asks receives. It has been so until this day—it will be so till Christ Himself shall come. If you doubt it, try it, and if you have tried it, try it again. Are you in rags?—that matters not, *everyone* who asks receives! Are you foul with sin?—that matters not, *everyone* who seeks finds! Do you feel as if you were shut out from God altogether?—that matters not, either "Knock, and it *shall* be opened to you, for *everyone* who asks receives." "Is there no election there?" Yes, yes, doubtless there is, but that does not alter this truth which has no limit to it whatever—"Everyone!" What a rich text it is! "*Everyone* who asks receives."

When our Lord spoke thus, He could have pointed to His own life as evidence—at any rate, we can refer to it now, and show that no one asked of Christ who did not receive. The Syro-Phoenician woman was at first repulsed when the Lord called her a dog, but when she had the courage to say, "Yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table," she soon discovered that everyone who asks receives. She, also, who came behind Him in the crowd and touched the hem of His garment, she was no asker, but she was a seeker—and she found.

I think I hear, in answer to all this, the lamentable wail of one who says, "I have been crying to God a long while for salvation! I have asked, I have sought, and I have knocked, but it has not come yet." Well, dear friend, if I am asked which is true, God or you, I know which I shall stand by, and I would advise you to believe God before you believe yourself! God will hear prayer, but do you know there is one thing before prayer? What is it? Why, the gospel is not—"He who *prays* shall be saved"—that is not the gospel! I believe he will be saved, but that is not the gospel. I am told to preach to you. "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he"...what?...*"he who believes and is baptized shall be saved."* Now, you have been asking God to save you—do you expect Him to save you without your believing and being baptized? Surely you have not had the impudence to ask God to make void His own Word! Might He not say to you, "Do as I bid you, believe My Son. He who believes on Him has everlasting life." Let me ask you, do you believe Jesus Christ? Will you trust Him? "Oh, I trust Him," says one, "I trust Him wholly." Soul, do not ask for salvation any more—you have it already—you are saved. If you trust Jesus with all your soul, your sins are forgiven you, and you are saved! And the next time you approach the Lord, go with praise as well as with prayer, and sing and bless His name. "But how am I to know that I am saved?" asks one. God says, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Have you believed? Have you been baptized? If so, you are saved. How do I know that? On the

best evidence in the entire world—God says you are! Do you need any evidence but that? “I want to feel this.” Feel! Are your feelings better than God’s witness? Will you make God a liar by asking more signs and tokens than His sure word of testimony? I have no evidence this day that I dare trust in concerning my salvation but this—that I rest on Christ alone with all my heart, soul, and strength. “Other refuge have I none,” and if you have that evidence, it is all the evidence that you need seek for this day. Other witnesses of grace in your heart shall come, by-and-by, and cluster about you, and adorn the doctrines you will profess—but now your first business is to believe in Jesus.

“I have asked for faith,” says one. Well, what do you mean by that? To believe in Jesus Christ is the gift of God, but it must be your own act as well. Do you think God will believe for you or that the Holy Spirit believes instead of us? What has the Holy Spirit to believe? You must believe for yourself or be lost. He cannot lie, will you not believe in Him? He deserves to be believed, trust in Him, and you are saved, and your prayer is answered.

I think I hear another say, “I trust I am already saved, but I have been looking for the salvation of others in answer to my prayers.” Dear friend, you will get it. “He who asks receives and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened.” “But I have sought the conversion of such a one for years with many prayers.” You shall have it, or you shall know one day why you have it not, and shall be made content not to have it. Pray on in hope. Many a one has had his prayer for others answered after he has been dead. I think I have reminded you before of the father who had prayed for many years for his sons and daughters, and yet they were not converted, but all became exceedingly worldly. His time came to die. He gathered his children about his bed, hoping to bear such a witness for Christ at the last that it might be blessed to their conversion—but unhappily for him he was in deep distress of soul. He had doubts about his own interest in Christ. He was one of God’s children who are put to bed in the dark—this, being above all, the worst fear of his mind, that he feared his dear children would see his distress, and be prejudiced against religion. The good man was buried and his sons came to the funeral—and God heard the man’s prayer that very day—for as they went away from the grave, one of them said to the other, “Brother, our father died a most unhappy death.” “He did, brother. I was very much astonished at it, for I never knew a better man than our father.” “Ah,” said the first brother, “if a holy man such as our father found it a hard thing to die, it will be a dreadful thing for us who have no faith when our time comes.” That same thought had struck them all and drove them to the cross—and so the good man’s prayer was heard in a mysterious manner. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but while God lives, prayer will be heard. While God remains true to His word, supplication is not in vain. The Lord give you grace to exercise it continually. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 11:1-13; PSALM 107:1-31.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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