

THE NEED FOR TRUSTING PERSISTENCE

Intro: I don't know any part of the Bible that challenges us to a higher lifestyle that Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon we called upon to practice a righteousness that far exceeds expected human standards. In the beatitudes Jesus challenges us to practice poverty of spirit, genuine penitence, meekness, dire thirst for righteousness, genuine mercy & purity of heart, love for the souls of others even when we are being persecuted by them. But that is not enough Jesus continues: We are to be lights in a world of darkness, salt in a world of corruption. We are urged to put away selfish anger and replace it with loving confrontation, put away lust and replace it with enduring purity and commitment, put away dishonesty and replace it with transparent holiness, put away hatred and replace it with God-like love! But that is not enough. We are urged to do all this for the right reason, never for the praise of men but to the glory and approval of God. We are urged to escape the world's materialistic stranglehold into the peace and priorities of kingdom living. We are asked to avoid being judgmental while not being too lenient with the treasures of truth we possess.

Such requirement challenges us! But more than that, perhaps they leave us feeling extremely inadequate! We ask, "Who can live it? Who is sufficient and able to live by this standard?" Who is wise enough and strong enough to live this level of living? Why don't we all just give up in despair and frustration? Those are good questions! Hard questions! I want to help deal with these feeling today, that I myself have also felt and continue to feel! How can we live up to the standard God has given! I believe that Jesus answers that question in part in the section of study now before us! (Mt. 7:7ff).

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT NEGOTIABLE!

There is nothing in the word of God to make us believe that God expects anything less of us than what Jesus here clearly enjoins! It would be tempting to say that these requirements are just ideals for which we strive but that none of us must achieve! Such a view however misses the real potential of human beings made in the image of God! It is this fact that leads Jesus to say, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect!"

WE ARE ENTIRELY INSUFFICIENT IN AND OF OURSELVES!

The answer to God's requirement is not to "pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps". This clever figure of speech imagines that a person can get a hold of his boots and if he pulls hard enough, get higher off the ground! Such is physically impossible. The figure calls attention to the strength of effort we put forth to achieve something! But in spiritual things, even this is insufficient! Relying on human strength alone, we will not attain the standard of righteousness God requires! The sooner we realize this, the better we will be able to grow and develop in our faith! Jesus said, "Apart from me, you can do nothing! (Jn. 15:4-5).

WHAT GOD ASKS OF US IS WHAT HE GIVES TO US!

To be what God requires that we be, we need gifts He gives. We need answers He gives. We need the opportunities He gives! If the Bible stresses anything, it is that we do nothing for God but everything with Him! Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 2:13

Those gifts, answers, and opportunities are granted to us by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit! Lk. 11:13ff. It is interesting to observe that everything that God wants he gives by His Spirit! Gal. 5:22 the attributes of righteousness are called the fruit of the Spirit! Cf. also Rom. 8:12-13; Rom. 8:16 All led by Spirit are children of God. Phil. 1: Provision by the Spirit! But how do we know God will give such to us! The same reason we know we would not give our children "snake" for supper or a "rock" sandwich!

GOD'S GIFTS, ANSWERS, & OPPORTUNITIES CAN ONLY BE ATTAINED BY A TRUSTING PERSISTENCE!

Now at last we come to the human side working with God! We must have the trusting persistence to use what God has given us!

We need to pray about our spiritual lives! Col. 1:9-12

We need to seek for answers in God's word! 2 Pet. 1:3

We need to walk through the doors God opens! Rev. 3:8

And we need to do so with a trusting persistence! Not ask just once, but again and again! Not seek just once, but again and again! Not knock just once but again and again!

ONLY CHRIST'S SACRIFICE CAN BRING FORGIVENESS FOR OURS SINS!

I will tell you at finally that though you strive with all your heart to live to exalted standard God has set before you, you will fail to live it perfectly.

Righteousness is not a trophy to attain and set on shelf, it is a continuous effort out of your reach.

By asking, seeking, and knocking we come to realize all the more our own inadequacy and unrighteousness. It causes us to see the need for something outside ourselves for our sins.

By faith in Christ we are able to receive what we cannot attain by perfection! Righteousness by the forgiveness of sins. Such forgiveness however instills within us a love that makes us want to please God and follow His law, not as a means of salvation but as an expression of faith!

Conclusion: We could never ask you to be perfect. We can ask you to join with us in striving for yet falling short of perfection. We can ask you to receive God's pardon for sins of the past and His help for life in the present!