

Monday Week 35 Teaching of Jesus (4)

Bible Reading: Matthew 7:7-12

Q 137 How does God respond to our requests?

A. God gives us good things when we ask.

A Christian man was shopping for shoes. The pair he was looking at was on a shelf near the floor. As he knelt down to look at the shoes a small girl walked up to him. "I got new shoes!" she said, and she skipped away. She was happy. Soon she came back. "I got new shoes," she said. And off she ran. When the man stood up and walked toward the check out, he noticed the little girl again. This time she was on the shoulders of her father. The man was big and tough looking. But she was smiling. "I got new shoes!"

The Christian man thought of what Jesus said. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11). God loves His children more than any earthly father loves his kids. If you trust in Jesus, God will give you good things. Jesus taught us to ask God for the things that we need. God the Father loves you.

Thinking Deeper

Not all fathers show love to their children. In fact, as many as one third of the children in America are raised without both parents in the home, and often the single parent is the mother. Too many fathers are absent. Worse than that, when there is a man in the home who is not the father, the rate of child abuse soars. These children don't know the love of a father, and see adult males as sources of pain and fear. The results too often are devastating. Troubled children often come from homes without a dad. They are more likely to be involved in criminal activity, drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity, suicide and death.

Not all children in fatherless homes go bad, however. Many mothers do a great job raising their children alone. Yet statistically children without fathers at home tend to have long-range problems.

This causes some children to have a difficult time relating to God as the heavenly Father. They don't have a good father image. Yet there is great help. God cares deeply about the fatherless. Jesus taught us that God's love is great. He is listening for those who call out to him. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Tuesday Week 35 Teaching of Jesus (4)

Bible Reading: Matthew 7:13-20

Q 138 Does the broad way or the narrow way lead to life?

A. The narrow way leads to life.

A hunter was in the Alaskan mountains on a goat hunt. He and his guide were coming down a very steep part of the mountain when they came to a very narrow passage with a rock wall on one side and a steep cliff on the other side. The guide went ahead and carefully walked on the slippery rock that took him to a wider place. The hunter froze in fear as he looked at the empty space just a half step away. The guide watched him for a moment, and then said, "Here, give me your rifle." He took the rifle, set it on the ground, and then continued down the mountain leaving the hunter still on the other side of the dangerous passage. Now the hunter had to either go on, or leave his rifle and go back. He took a deep breath and took several very careful steps on the steep rock. Soon he was past the danger zone and on his way down. It had been a very narrow place, but it was his way down the mountain.

Jesus taught his followers that the way to life was a narrow way. Only a few would find it, while many went on the broad way to destruction. The Jesus way is not the most popular way. But it is the way to heaven.

Thinking Deeper

During the 1960s and 1970s there was a popular saying regarding things like the increase in recreational drug use and promiscuity among young people. "Everybody's doing it," was the excuse. The unsupervised college campus atmosphere and rock festivals such as Woodstock seemed to prove the cliché. But there was a response that some wise parents picked up on. "No, everyone is *not* doing it." In fact, in conservative Christian homes there was an unwritten rule that went something like this: if everyone else is doing it it's probably wrong. And in the cases of drugs, promiscuity, cheating on tests, honoring evil men like Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, and the Beatles, that advice has been largely proven correct.

That stand of conservative Christian parents was based on the Bible truth from the Old Testament that said "thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Jesus echoed that in his teaching about the broad and narrow ways. If you follow the crowds, you'll follow them to destruction.

We don't follow the narrow way just to be different. We don't follow it just to be confrontational. We follow the narrow way because that's how Jesus taught us to walk. He knows the best way to live. He knows the way to safety. He knows the way to life. It's a narrow way, but it's the only way to heaven.

Wednesday Week 35 Teaching of Jesus (4)

Bible Reading: Matthew 7:21-23

Q. 139 Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?

A. Those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven.

It was at a kid's camp and the kids were divided into teams. Their team leader told them that on their next activity, they were to follow the leader and not listen to anyone but him. "Just do what I say." If they did, they would get a reward. The leader began to walk through the camp with his team following. But some other adults at the camp would come up to the kids and tell them they needed their help with something. They sounded like they really did need help. Some of the kids followed them and left their teams. But when they rejoined their team, they were not given a reward. They hadn't listened to their leader. The team members who listened to their leaders were rewarded.

Jesus taught us that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must do the will of the Father. We can't go off on our own doing just what we want to do. We must do what God wants us to do. One thing God tells children to do is obey their parents. Disobedient children are not doing the will of the heavenly father. Do you obey your parents? If you do, you are doing what God said to do.

Thinking Deeper

John was a college student who was learning about the claims of Christ. He had made some strides toward following Jesus, including getting baptized. However, in his heart he was not completely settled. Would he really do the will of the Father in heaven? As he continued his journey, he came to a conclusion that is significant: "When I begin to doubt that Jesus is true, my moral life begins to slide. There is a relationship between what I believe and how I act!"

There are a multitude of beliefs and voices competing for our attention. Many of those voices lead people away from the truth. Secular psychology, sociology, scientism, humanism, and Marxism all call for people to follow their precepts. Underlying assumptions to these beliefs contradict the Word of God. Many Christian young people have studied these ideas and have lost their faith. Is it because the word of God does not stand up to these contrary beliefs? No. It is rather that these contrary belief systems allow for actions that are wrong. When secular beliefs assuage the conscience and give excuse for sins of the flesh, they are attractive. The flesh gravitates to that which will satisfy it. In all of this is the Word from God, calling us to follow the truth.

Jesus made it clear that the will of the Father is different than the popular systems of the world. He also made it clear that following God's Word is the only way to heaven. It's really rather simple. Follow the way of the world to destruction, or follow God's will to heaven.

Thursday Week 35 Teaching of Jesus (4)

Bible Reading: Matthew 7:24-29

Q. 140 How does a wise man build his life?

A. A man wise does the things that Jesus says he should do.

A house was built on the side of a mountain in a nice area. The family was happy to be living in their new home. What they didn't know was that the ground under the house was not solid. A storm came and it rained and rained. The ground on the mountain side became soaked with water. The water loosened the earth underneath the house. The more it rained, the more the ground was loosened. Then it started to move. The ground began slipping from beneath the house. Soon there was no ground under part of the house. The house began to tilt. Then it slid down the hill. When it stopped sliding it was ruined. The family was told that they had lost their house. The ground it was built on was not solid.

Jesus taught us that living our lives is like building a house. If we build it on the solid rock of how Jesus said to live, then we would be able to stand the storms of life. But if we build on sand – the advice of the world – destruction will come with the storms of life. Build your life on the Word of God.

Thinking Deeper

In Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Samuel Johnson responded to a skeptic's assertion that there is no difference between good and evil with this quote: "If he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, sir, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons." Johnson understood that ideas have consequences. What we believe profoundly affects how we live. If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and knows the truth about life, then we will take His Word seriously.

People who ignore the teachings of Jesus and live their lives a different way will experience the consequences of their lifestyle choices. Despite the effort of their lobbying to change laws, and despite the media approval of their lifestyle, and despite their attempts to mainstream their lifestyle, the homosexual life expectancy, according to a study done in 2005 by Dr. Paul Cameron, is in the early forties.

Jesus taught us how to live and when we violate his teachings, we suffer. Worse than suffering in this life, will be the suffering in the next, where "the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." On the other hand, there is eternal blessing for those who follow Jesus and live as He taught us to live.

Friday Week 35 Teaching of Jesus (4)

Review the Week's Questions:

Q 137 How does God respond to our requests?

A. God gives us good things when we ask.

Q 138 Does the broad way or the narrow way lead to life?

A. The narrow way leads to life.

Q. 139 Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?

A. Those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Q. 140 How does a wise man build his life?

A. A wise man does the things that Jesus says he should do.

Late one night a Christian young man went to a restaurant. He sat beside a man who had been drinking. Hoping to witness, the Christian started to talk about what happens when a person invites Jesus into his heart. "He'll change your life." The man looked at the Christian and responded, "You leave my wife out of this!"

Some people don't seem to understand plain words. There are people who call themselves Christians but who do not live according to the teaching of Jesus. Jesus asked some people like that a question: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Jesus taught us that following Him was more than just saying we are a Christian. It is living like a Christian all the time. It is being a Christian every day of the week, when people are watching and when no one is around. It is living for God from the heart.

Thinking Deeper

Grace is a wonderful concept and is at the heart of the Christian life. We are saved by grace and we are kept by grace. But there is an aspect of grace that is often overlooked in popular Christianity. That is that grace is the divine infusion into the believer of the desire and power to do what is right. By way of contrast some theories of grace give theological cover to lawless living. They promote grace as a whitewash, where God overlooks the sins in a person's life. That is the basis of antinomianism, or life without law. That is not the kind of grace that marks the humble Christian who loves the Lord Jesus and loves his Word.

One pastor was frustrated because he preached grace and then found that his people were continuing in lives of sin. The failure may have been a faulty understanding of grace. If people are told that they are bound to sin every day in word, thought and deed, they will probably follow what they are taught. If, on the other hand, they are taught to follow holiness, they should be more prone to seek the grace that enables the holy life. Jesus taught us how to live. Anything short of following in His way is sin that needs the cleansing blood. Seek the grace that enables. That grace comes freely to those who believe.