

The Prayer Promise

By J.R. Miller (1840-1912)

“Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened..” (Matt. 7:8)

THESSE are very positive promises, and yet they must be read intelligently, in the light of other scriptures which explain and qualify the words. It is not all asking that receives; for there is asking that is not true prayer. Some ask merely in word, with no real desire in their hearts. Some ask selfishly, that they may consume the divine gift on their lusts. Some ask rebelliously, without submission to the will of God. Some ask without faith, not expecting any answer. Some ask indolently [slothfully], not ready to do their own part. Some ask ignorantly for things which would not be blessings if they were granted. It is very clear that in these cases those who ask will not receive.

So not literally all who seek find. The seeking must be earnest. There is a remarkable word in one of the old prophets: “Ye shall seek me, and find Me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” The seeking must also be for good things. If our quest is for sinful things, or for worldly good, that would work in us spiritual harm, God will not give us what we seek. Then we must live right. “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” The thing itself must be good; and we must walk in paths of obedience, or there is no promise of reward for our quest.

In like manner it is not to all knocking that God opens the door. There are timid knocks that indicate neither desire nor faith, as when mischievous children ring a doorbell and then run away, not wanting to enter. It is when we knock at the right door, and knock with expectancy and faith and importunity, that the door is graciously opened. Thus in interpreting this wonderful prayer-promise we must read into the words their true meaning. The asking, seeking, knocking, must be true prayer.

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