

Knock, and It Shall Be Opened

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." – Luke 11:9

Summary:

Jesus sums up prayer's duty and privilege in one familiar word: knock. Through Christ, we may approach God at any time with every need, especially our need for spiritual blessings. Prayer must be sincere, earnest, and persistent. Though delay may test us, need and trembling hope should keep us at mercy's door, trusting the promise that it will open. The needy sinner claims no former riches, innocence, or lack of need, but confesses lifelong poverty, guilt, and dependence on all God can give. Those who receive mercy should gladly direct other needy souls to the same inexhaustible store.

Outline:

1. **Christ is the door of prayer**
 - We approach the Father through Jesus Christ, the only way, truth, and life.
2. **Prayer belongs to every time and need**
 - Believers should pray continually, bringing every request to God and seeking spiritual blessings first.
3. **Knocking must be earnest and persevering**
 - Sincere need and hope sustain prayer through delay, weakness, ridicule, and discouragement.
4. **The sinner pleads only for mercy**
 - We cannot claim former riches, innocence, independence, or a merely trifling need before God.
5. **Received mercy should be proclaimed**
 - God delights when grateful recipients tell others of his abundant grace and invite them to come.

Text

This action plainly refers to prayer. Notice the simple, familiar comparisons that made the common people hear him gladly. Though volumes have been written on prayer, he who spoke as no man ever spoke sums it up in one word: “knock.” He describes someone seeking attention and relief: he knocks.

Where should we knock? “I am,” says the Saviour, “the door.” “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

When are we to knock? “Evening, and morning, and at noon,” says David, “will I pray, and cry aloud.” “Pray without ceasing,” says Paul. And says our Lord, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

What should we ask for? We can make all our requests known to God through prayer and supplication. But above all, we should ask for spiritual blessings, for these bless the soul and endure for eternity. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

How should we knock? Forcefully—we cannot knock too loudly. Prayer must be sincere and earnest; God will not heed what we do not feel. Jacob said, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;” and prevailed.

How? Perseveringly. The Lord may not bring joy immediately. David says, “I waited patiently for the Lord,” and at last “he inclined his ear unto me, and heard my cry.” “Blessed,” it is said, “are all they that wait for him.”

Though it is good for a person not only to hope, but also to wait quietly for God’s salvation, this is often no easy task. The delay is trying in itself, and circumstances can make it harder. While waiting at the door, the weather may be foul, passersby may laugh and insult—for they are full and have need of nothing—or the applicant may be weak and ready to faint.

While weary and faint, what keeps us knocking and waiting? Only a sense of pressing need and hope. Though hope may be weak—even a mere possibility—it keeps him from abandoning his suit and from asking, “What should I wait for the Lord any longer?”

More is desirable and attainable. Say to him, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." The command: "knock." The promise: "it shall be opened."

But how shall I plead? I knock, longing for an audience, yet draw back, afraid to be seen. What can I say? What does a beggar say? He knows fine words are unnecessary—and would be scorned. Yet his needs and feelings make him eloquent.

- How often does the beggar plead his former condition —"He has seen better days, and once had a sufficiency for himself and others." But he must not speak of this; he must plead his own worthlessness.
- How often does the beggar plead, "I have been reduced, not by my fault, but by misfortune; and deserve pity rather than censure." But he must approach the Lord acknowledging his sin and relying on God for goodness.
- How often does a beggar plead that his case is unusual —"This is not my practice: it is the first, and will be the last time of my request." He must not; instead, he must come often, relying continually and eternally on the Lord.
- How often does the beggar plead that his need is small —"A very little will suffice me: I ask only a trifle." But his language must look to the vastness of the Lord's abundant bounty and willingness to give.

Often, our resources are so limited that we worry we'll receive more requests than we can meet. So we ask those we help to keep our support private. But that should never be the case with our Redeemer and Lord of creation. He invites us to carry the message to the ends of the earth, telling everyone of his riches and his willingness to give.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises (January 23, Morning), first published in 1854.