

Note from Pastor Steve

There is a phrase that has been stuck in my head over the last few months. The phrase is said to me everyday by an audio devotionals I listen too. "Listen to the Bible it is good for the soul." This phrase speaks a truth that we need to hear in a days like this. It is hard to not see the problems of the world around us and wonder what is going to happen. The feeling of helplessness can overwhelm us. This is where scripture can provide something that we need and truly can not find anywhere else. A story that has suffering throughout it, but hope is always just around the corner. There is a promise of something better to come. We can rest in the fact that no matter what is going on in our lives and the world around us that there is something better yet to come.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. —1 Peter 1:3-9

"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."
— C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

What to Do? By Oswald Chambers

Everyone who asks receives... —Luke 11:10

Ask if you have not received. There is nothing more difficult than asking. We will have yearnings and desires for certain things, and even suffer as a result of their going unfulfilled, but not until we are at the limit of desperation will we ask. It is the sense of not being spiritually real that causes us to ask. Have you ever asked out of the depths of your total insufficiency and poverty? “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God...” (James 1:5), but be sure that you do lack wisdom before you ask. You cannot bring yourself to the point of spiritual reality anytime you choose. The best thing to do, once you realize you are not spiritually real, is to ask God for the Holy Spirit, basing your request on the promise of Jesus Christ (see Luke 11:13). The Holy Spirit is the one who makes everything that Jesus did for you real in your life.

“Everyone who asks receives....” This does not mean that you will not get if you do not ask, but it means that until you come to the point of asking, you will not receive from God (see Matthew 5:45). To be able to receive means that you have to come into the relationship of a child of God, and then you comprehend and appreciate mentally, morally, and with spiritual understanding, that these things come from God.

“If any of you lacks wisdom....” If you realize that you are lacking, it is because you have come in contact with spiritual reality— do not put the blinders of reason on again. The word ask actually means “beg.” Some people are poor enough to be interested in their poverty, and some of us are poor enough spiritually to show our interest. Yet we will never receive if we ask with a certain result in mind, because we are asking out of our lust, not out of our poverty. A pauper does not ask out of any reason other than the completely hopeless and painful condition of his poverty. He is not ashamed to beg— blessed are the paupers in spirit (see Matthew 5:3).

...seek, and you will find... —Luke 11:9

Seek if you have not found. “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss...” (James 4:3). If you ask for things from life instead of from God, “you ask amiss”; that is, you ask out of your desire for self-fulfillment. The more you fulfill yourself the less you will seek God. “...seek, and you will find....” Get to work— narrow your focus and interests to this one thing. Have you ever sought God with your whole heart, or have you simply given Him a feeble cry after some emotionally painful experience? “...seek, [focus,] and you will find....”

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters...” (Isaiah 55:1). Are you thirsty, or complacent and indifferent— so satisfied with your own experience that you want nothing more of God? Experience is a doorway, not a final goal. Beware of building your faith on experience, or your life will not ring true and will only sound the note of a critical spirit. Remember that you can never give another person what you have found, but you can cause him to have a desire for it.

“...knock, and it will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9). “Draw near to God...” (James 4:8). Knock— the door is closed, and your heartbeat races as you knock. “Cleanse your hands...” (James 4:8). Knock a bit louder— you begin to find that you are dirty. “...purify your hearts...” (James 4:8). It is becoming even more personal— you are desperate and serious now— you will do anything. “Lament...” (James 4:9). Have you ever lamented, expressing your sorrow before God for the condition of your inner life? There is no thread of self-pity left, only the heart-rending difficulty and amazement which comes from seeing what kind of person you really are. “Humble yourselves...” (James 4:10). It is a humbling experience to knock at God’s door— you have to knock with the crucified thief. “...to him who knocks it will be opened” (Luke 11:10).