

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Matthew vii 6*

THUS, WE ARE NOT OURSELVES, saith He, to strive alone, but also to invoke the help from above: and it will surely come and be present with us, and will aid us in our struggles, and make all easy. Therefore He both commanded us to ask, and pledged Himself to the giving.

However, not simply to ask did He command us, but with much assiduity and earnestness. For this is the meaning of *seek*. For so he that seeks, putting all things out of his mind, is taken up with that alone which is sought, and forms no idea of any of the persons present. And this which I am saying they know, as many as have lost either gold, or servants, and are seeking diligently after them.

By *seeking*, then, He declared this; by *knocking*, that we approach with earnestness and a glowing mind.

Despond not therefore, O man, nor show less of zeal about virtue, than they do of desire for wealth. For things of that kind thou hast often sought and not found, but nevertheless, though thou know this, that thou art not sure to find them, thou puttest in motion every mode of search; but here, although having a promise that thou wilt surely receive, thou dost not show even the smallest part of that earnestness. And if thou dost not receive straightway, do not even thus despair. For to this end He said, *knock*, to signify that even if He should not straightway open the door, we are to continue there.

And if thou doubt my affirmation, at any rate believe His example. “For what man is there of you,” saith He, “whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?”

Because, as among men, if thou keep on doing so, thou art even accounted troublesome, and disgusting: so with God, when thou doest not so, then thou dost more entirely provoke Him. And if thou continue asking, though thou receive not at once, thou surely wilt receive. For to this end was the door shut, that He may induce thee to knock: to this end He doth not straightway assent, that thou mayest ask. Continue then to do these things, and thou wilt surely receive. For that thou mightest not say, “What then if I should ask and not receive?” He hath blocked up thy approach with that similitude, again framing arguments, and by those human things urging us to be confident on these matters; implying by them that we must not only ask, but ask what we ought.

“For which of you is there, a father, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he give him a stone?” So that if thou receive not, thy asking a stone is the cause of thy not receiving. For though thou be a son, this suffices not for thy receiving: rather this very thing even hinders thy receiving; that being a son, thou askest what is not profitable.

Do thou also therefore ask nothing worldly, but all things spiritual, and thou wilt surely receive. For so Solomon, because he asked what he ought, behold how quickly he received. Two things now, you see, should be in him that prays, asking earnestly, and asking what he ought: “since ye too,” saith He, “though ye be fathers, wait for your sons to ask: and if they should ask of you anything inexpedient, ye refuse the gifts; just as, if it be expedient, ye consent and bestow it.” Do thou too, considering these things, not withdraw until thou receive; until thou have found, retire not; relax not thy diligence, until the door be opened. For if thou approach with this mind, and say, “Except I receive, I depart not;” thou wilt surely receive, provided thou ask such things, as are both suitable for Him of whom thou askest to give, and expedient for thee the petitioner. But what are these? To seek the things spiritual, all of them; to forgive them that have trespassed, and so to draw nigh asking forgiveness; “to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting.” If we thus ask, we shall receive. As it is, surely our asking is a mockery, and the act of drunken rather than of sober men.

St John Chrysostom, Homily XXIII *On St Matthew*,  
NPNF, First Series, Vol X, pp. 160–61

HE WHO DOES NOT RECEIVE AT ONCE, is the more kindled through God’s delay and patience, and the more desirous of the good things of Heaven, and every day adds to his longing and diligence, his running and striving, and every disposition of virtue, his hunger and thirst after that which is good, not slacking for the sinful suggestions which are present in the soul, or turning aside to despise or forget or despair; nor again under pretence of patience will he give himself over to slackness, using this argument, that “Some day or other I shall receive the grace of God,” and from this enticed by sin into carelessness. On the contrary, so long as the Lord Himself in His delay is patient over him, testing the faith and love of his will, the man himself ought the more keenly, the more laboriously, without giving in, without turning faint, to seek the gift of God, having once for all believed and assured himself, that God is true and cannot lie, Who has promised to give His grace to those who ask with faith to the end, in all perseverance.

St Macarius the Great, tr. Mason, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,  
Homily XXIX, §3, p. 219

## Pearls

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