

## "I Never Knew You" Part 3

By Wayne Vasilenko

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The focus of this series is on the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 7. I started out by pointing out some of the distractions we face, especially in the age we live in. Not only are we constantly bombarded with a constant stream of advertising as merchants try to get our attention, but Satan does everything he can to take up any time remaining in our daily lives. Satan's main goal is to keep us from the truth concerning God, also to hinder and ultimately destroy our relationship with God and others. Those of you who use a "Red Letter Edition" of the Bible may have noticed that the entire chapter 7 in Matthew except for verse 28 (the last verse) is in red! For those of you unfamiliar with the significance of the Red letter additions of the Bible, the Red Letters denote direct quotes of the words of Jesus Himself. These words are the very words He spoke during His ministry on earth! The passages we are dealing with in this series are a part of what is called, "The Sermon on the Mount" - AKA The Beatitudes... it actually begins in Chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel. It is interesting to note that during His ministry, Jesus spent twice as much time teaching rather than preaching... something ministers might consider today! (More on that later) Let us now look at verses 7 & 8 of Matthew Chapter 7.

### **Matthew 7:7-8 (New King James Version)**

<sup>7</sup> "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Many who read these particular verses might have visions of acquiring a giant mail order catalog and a check book balance without limits. Imagine... being able to fill in an order form with your heart's desires and "Poof" there it is, delivered to your door! Sounds great doesn't it? I sense already that someone's imagination is headed off the chart... Ask and it will be given to you... WOW - sign me up for this Christianity thing! But wait a minute... I know Christians who prayed for stuff that never came to pass! So what is the real deal here? Perhaps "Faith" is the issue... the Bible does say we must have faith... **Matthew 21:22 (English Standard Version)** And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith." My question is, "How much faith does it take for a Lincoln Town Car if it only takes faith the size of a mustard seed to move a mountain?" I know that making a Lincoln a lot easier for God than moving a mountain! You would think that even a relatively new Christian would have faith the size of a mustard seed! So what's the story here... why do some prayers go seemingly unanswered? Let's look at another passage that may shed more light on the subject:

### **Mark 9:23-24 (New King James Version)**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes." <sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Many people get confused when they read this passage... how is it possible to have faith (belief) and at the same time have un-belief? The best explanation I have heard related this to a tug of war. If you had two people of equal size, equal weight, equal strength and stamina engaged in a tug of war what outcome would you expect? Being that all things remained equal the result would be a stalemate. One side cancels out the other! The same is true when we pray for something. Most Christians would agree that God is capable of performing any miracle. However, when people get a bad diagnosis from the doctor they fall apart. Why, because fear comes over them as they think of other things they may have prayed for that did not come to pass. Doubt (unbelief) begins to overwhelm faith tipping the balance towards unbelief. It's easy to say I believe God will get my blood sugar back to normal, but Cancer... I don't know if He can handle that one most of us would think to themselves! Unbelief can be

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summed up in the word... but. We've all heard people say something like, "I believe God can heal... **but**... we're talking about something serious!" That little three-letter word (but) is a faith killer! I would say that eternal damnation because of sin is a serious problem too, but God took care of that didn't He? So it seems to me that Matthew 7:7-8 may be more seriously misunderstood than we imagined. It is not about us getting anything we desire to satisfy our lusts; it does say anyone who asks receives however there is a clause. Consider the following:

### **1 John 5:14-15 (New King James Version)**

<sup>14</sup> Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

The key here is obvious... the phrase "According to His will." God grants our prayers according to His will, not ours. If we ask for something that goes against the Word of God He will not grant it. This would be like praying to God to help you to rob a bank. This goes against His word!

### **Exodus 20:15 (New King James Version)** "You shall not steal.

So here we have a few illustrations as to why some prayers seem to go unanswered. God promises to provide for our needs... if we have a need all we have to do is ask and it will be done. It may not happen the way you have in mind but the need will be taken care of. As for the rest of the issues addressed in Mt 7:7-8 i.e. "Seeking & Knocking," Jesus is saying that anyone seeking knowledge will find it in God's word and all who go to God seeking fellowship with Him will not be turned away. I have heard preachers use these passages in the past telling people God is obligated to give us whatever we desire. God is obligated only to Himself and His Word. People who go through life expecting God to grant all of their desires are not only in for disappointment in this life, but they may have a surprise when they face God and find out that they were following the god of the world (Satan) all along. Not the God of the Bible. What God has shown me over the years is that when you come across a passage such as Mt 7:7-8, make sure it fits in with the rest of God's word. Something taken out of context can be not only confusing, but it can end up with you adhering to a completely false doctrine. Join us again as we continue this study in the coming weeks.