



April 27, 2022

Ask, Seek, and Knock . . . but Don't Pretend

"Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart" - (Psalm 26:2)

While three kinds of faith have been mentioned—of propriety, desperation, and sufficiency—there are in fact many degrees of faith, and many stages through which we pass. It is a continual progression as we experience more of the reality of God; our faith grows according to our vision. In turn, as our vision grows, our will—our ability to decisively act—grows, and we become increasingly capable of choosing and doing the good. We must never forget that faith is a gift. Like any gift, faith must be received. It must be wanted. God very rarely just dumps it on people who do not want it. There is a distorted teaching about the gift of grace in which grace is just randomly poured out on whomever God chooses, regardless of the receptacle.

We might think of God's grace coming upon us like that of a soda bottle that moves along a conveyor belt in a bottling factory. It goes under one machine that squirts water into the bottle, and the next that squirts syrup, and the next that places the cap on it. A lot of people believe that's how God dispenses faith, grace, and other blessings. They think that is what a church service ought to be—just bring your empty bottle (yourself), sit down, and wait for the pastor to squirt it full of whatever it is you need. Then you leave all full of juicy, fizzy stuff that will hopefully last until the next Sunday.

That is not the way of God. It is asking, it is seeking, it is knocking.

The truth of God's grace is that we never merit the good that is done to us. Grace is opposed to earning, but it is not opposed to effort, because effort is action and earning is attitude. That point is important. You cannot do justice to the teachings of Scripture unless you understand that if you do not rise and go after God's blessing, God will rarely just give it to you. I say "rarely" here because at times God does decide he's going to pour something good on you without being asked. But that's unusual, and if we want to work with God, we must determine what is normal for him in dealing with people and set our expectations realistically. When we aim for the unusual and glorious things to happen, that can damage our faith. We must take the faith we have, act on it, and grow toward the faith of sufficiency.

Reflect: *If you want faith, ask God for it. And when you ask God, be willing to let him take you through what is necessary to prepare you for it. Take this opportunity to join with the psalmist in saying, "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart" (Psalm 26:2).*

Notice how personal this type of interaction is: "Examine me, O Lord". You may even find yourself saying, "Wait a minute, God! I didn't count on this being revealed!" That's all right; I guarantee that once you've gone through it, you will never regret it. Job never regretted it. Job wanted God; he wanted to trust God. He persevered and came out trusting.