



Ray Edwards Show, Episode 317

New Year, Now What?

Ray Edwards: *Ray Edwards show*, episode 317. New year, Now What? Well, it is January 1 as this is being released. I'm recording a little before January 1, but it's January 1st; new year's day for most people who are listening to this on the day it's released. And you may be wondering, how in the world am I going to achieve the things this year that I want to? Maybe you went through an elaborate goal setting process, maybe you have made some resolutions for the year, maybe you just have a notion of the changes you want to see in your life in the coming year and you wonder, "How is that going to happen?" Because even most people who set goals don't have a really detailed plan about how to get them done. And I believe that that's okay.

That may surprise you, but I might as well go ahead and tell you right now. This episode is going to be completely a spiritual foundations kind of episode. It's not going to be about marketing, or copywriting, or how to make a website. It's going to be about the spiritual foundations of what makes all that stuff successful, what makes it work, principles of spirituality from a Christian worldview. So if you don't like that, if you don't want to hear that, then maybe the best idea is to tune out of episode 317 and wait for episode 318, which will be back to more of a normal podcast.

You can't get mad at me now because I warned you ahead of time. Let us dive in. There's a quotation from the apostle Paul in Galatians 5 where he's writing to this church that he oversees and he says, "You were running so well. Who hindered you?" In some translations it actually says, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" They are not persevered in the faith. That's what Paul is writing about. He's writing about perseverance. And perseverance is a theme that falls throughout the Bible, and it applies to us in the new year.

If we have goals that we are seeking to attain in the new year, we must persevere in order to see them happen. I think we all know that intellectually, but I'm not sure we know it in our gut, and that's what this podcast is designed to help you do; understand this in your gut. And it's not an uncommon theme in the Bible. Jesus told the story about the sower, the parable of the sower, who sows the seed and he says, "One who --" Seed is the word of god, the truth.

And Jesus describes one of the people who receive the seed as the one who, "Hears the word and immediately receive it with joy, yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while." So, in other words, he does not persevere. Perseverance shows up in the New Testament in the book of Ephesians 6:18. It says, "Keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints," meaning pray for all the saints.

It's a quality of Christian character, it should be. If you're a believer, it should be a fruit of the Spirit's work in your life. And we must frequently apply it when we are in



trial and trouble, we're in sickness, we have problems. We have to persevere through those things, and we usually persevere in prayer. Now, towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns to the subject of perseverance and prayer. This is where I believe we find the three keys to achieving the results, the prosperity, the peace that you're looking for in this coming New Year.

There are three keys, they really are. This is a case where, really, is a three-step system. It really is as Jesus said so. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, toward the end, in Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus says the following things, and this is a literal translation. Now, your translation may say it differently, but this is how it would literally be translated, "Keep on asking, and it will be given to you; Keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you," that's verse seven.

It's important to understand that keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking really must be translated that way because those verbs in the original language are present imperatives according to the research I did on the Internet, and I did on reliable internet sites, not just any internet sites. I know how to look things up in multiple places to make sure they're true. Present imperatives. That means it's likely that they're not just a repetition of the same idea over and over again. More, think of them as three commands: to ask, seek, and knock. And they're commands of progressive intensification.

Repeatedly asking for something requires perseverance and still more perseverance if you going to continuously seek something. If you persistently knocking, that seems like a very intense desire to get in, to breakthrough. This could be in the area of health. If someone you love is suffering from cancer for instance, we don't just casually asked God, "Hey, could you help them out?" We're asking, we're continually asking, we're continuously seeking an answer, and we're knocking until the doors open unto us.

If you look in the Gospel of Luke, in this point in Jesus's teaching, the parable of the persistent friend is taught. This is the friend who comes to the the door at midnight and refuses to be put off because he's asking for bread. I don't know if you remember this story or not, but he's asking for bread, and he's bothering his neighbor, his friend, in the middle of the night for bread. Jesus says because of his persistence he got the response. But if you look closely at each of Jesus' in this paragraph, ask, seek, and knock, then you have the answer to perseverance. This is in Luke now, Luke 11:5-13.

Asking is the most common way we know to get things from God. We ask him for what we need, and we usually ask him for things we feel we can't supply ourselves because, funny humans that we are, we figure, "If I can do it myself I will, I don't need God to help with this." That may be a bad idea [laughs], but as you will. We usually are asking God for things we don't feel like we can supply ourselves. Jesus tells a story in Matthew 7:9, he says, "Which one of you if his son asks for bread will give him a stone?" The father likes to give good gifts to his son, not just any gifts, not just regular old gifts, but good gifts.



In the case of our heavenly father's gifts, there's a perfection about the giving that brings us into a new place, these gifts are perfect. Now, here's a question that comes up a lot on this asking business when it comes to prayer. I've had this question myself, so don't feel bad if you've wondered, "Why do we have to ask? God already knows." I'll admit this, I'm not proud of it, but I'll admit it, at times when I'm frustrated because I don't feel like I'm getting the answer to the prayer I want, I will say-- I have in the past, I don't plan to do this in the future, but I didn't plan to do it in the past either and I did.

I got frustrated and I said, "God you know what I want, you now what I need, you know where I am, so anytime you're ready, knock yourself out." Fortunately, God forgives us for all of our weird ideas of how he operates. Why does God need us to ask before he gives? I think there's a couple of reasons we should think about, I don't pretend to have the full answer to this, because I don't, but I have a couple of answers that I think are useful, they're helpful to me anyway.

One reason he needs us to ask is that everyday he's giving us good things that we haven't even noticed, let alone ask for, like oxygen, food, clothing, other humans, stuff we haven't even thought about but we need, we didn't ask for it but we got it because He gave it to us. The scripture says, "Every good gift comes from the father." In Psalm 2, there's an interesting conversation between God the Father and God the Son, God the Father is explaining how the son will have the nations for His inheritance and the ends of the earth for His possession. And the father says to the Son, so Father God is saying to Jesus Christ, "Ask of me and I will give you."

If you don't believe me look at in Psalm 2:8. The only begotten Son of God is told to ask, we as the children of God who are adopted into the family should we be surprised we also need to ask? I don't know why God requires Jesus to ask, but it's in the Bible, so there, wrestle with that. How about seeking? This shows us something a little bit more about God to us, I think. The Bible says God response to those who seek Him and it also says in another place in Proverbs it says, "It's the pleasure of God to conceal a thing, it's a pleasure of kings to seek a thing out."

In some way, God takes pleasure in concealing things from us and having us look for them, hunt for them, seek them out, perseverance, seeking them. If you say, "Well, that was for kings, I'm not a king," Oh, yes, you are, faithful believer. The Bible says that, as believers, as the people of God, we are both kings and priests. It's the pleasure of God to conceal things from us and it's our pleasure to seek them out. By the way, I said that wrong, I don't believe God conceals things from us, I think He conceals them for us. How important is this seeking business?

In Jeremiah 29:13 God says, "You will seek Me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." I think it's pretty important. We've gone from asking, which is one level of perseverance or what we want from God, to seeking, which is another intensified level of perseverance, and finally, we move to knocking, which is yet another intensification. This is more of our heart and soul is poured into this than in merely asking and seeking, we're also knocking.



Think of somebody urgently knocking at the door in the middle of the night, waking you from sleep when you hear that knock. The man in the story who came to his friend at midnight was serious about knocking at the door asking for bread. So I think that knocking has something to do with the seriousness of our request. How serious are we in our perseverance? God responds to seriousness.

He responds to all of us through his grace, I don't think we work to get anything from God, so don't misunderstand me, but I think it's clear that those who ask, seek, and knock tend to receive more than those who don't. I don't think it's because these things are not available to everyone, but think of it this way, let's say that somebody had set up a room for you, and in this room they had created a table and filled it with gifts, all kinds of extravagant wonderful gifts, things that you want that you didn't even know you wanted are in this room on this table, it's a treasure trove.

But you never asked to see in the room, you never look to see where the room is, and you certainly never knock at the door to ask if you can come in. The gifts are available to you but you have to access them. They're probably not just going to be dropped in your lap, although some time to think he does that, it's because he delights in our reactions. But I believe that in this new year, whether the prosperity you seek is spiritual in nature -- Okay, I believe all prosperity spiritual, even the monetary prosperity.

Because Abraham, the father of our faith, was rich in cattle and silver and in gold, so says the Bible. It was important enough to God for us to know that he was rich in silver and gold that he included those words in the scripture. Apostle John says, elsewhere, "Beloved, I wish that you would prosper in all things and be in good health even as your soul prospers." So prospering in all things means everything, not just money, and it includes money, but it's not just money, it's everything; relationships, joy, happiness, fun, community, contribution, the house where you live, satisfaction with your job, satisfaction with your spouse, your lover.

Chances of whether you would prosper in all things and be in good health? As if the Lord knew that there would be people who would say, "Well, health is not part of salvation. Health is not in the atonement. You should stop being praying to be healed. Bcause if it's God's will for you to be sick, you should just be sick." Well, if it's God's will for you to be sick, why do you go to the doctor?

Seriously, if it's God's will for us to be sick, He's got a purpose in making us sick. Then we should not go to the doctor because we're working against God's will, we should just be sick and let it run its course. But we don't do that because, instinctively, we know this is not God's will. There's nothing good about cancer. There's nothing good about the flu. It's bad, it's evil. Where does it come from? All the good gifts come from God so where do the bad things come from? That's right. Satan perhaps? Correct.

I want you to prosper in all things and be in good health, even as your soul prospers. What is your soul? Pretty quickly it's defined as your mind, your will, and your



emotions, all together. Even as you are prosperous in your mind, your will, and your emotions, so will you be prosperous in all things and be in good health. Wow, modern science even confirms this. Amazing but not surprising to most of us who believe.

What's my point? My point is whatever you're seeking in this New Year, it is part of the overall prosperity that you are instinctively seeking in your life. It's part of the divine imperative that was built into your DNA, to seek prosperity. The more we prosper, the more everybody benefits. People sometimes get upset with me and say, "Ray, you're just preaching to fluent people in America. You're not preaching to the people in the developing world where they don't have food, no water, and medicine." No, I'm not. I'm speaking to the people who can do something about those things.

Some people will say, "Well, if God wants you to be prosperous, why doesn't He do something about those people who are poor, sick, and without protection?" I think God is saying, "Why don't you? I gave you the tools. I gave you the equipment, I gave you the mission. What are you waiting on?" I don't mean to heap any condemnation on you. I don't mean to make you feel guilty, I'm just trying to explain that this is a complex subject, it doesn't have simple answers, but I know one thing, God is good all the time, and He wants the best for us, He's made it clear.

He gave everything He had to make sure we got the best, who are we to refuse it. So persevere in this new year. I started by telling you it's a three-step process to get the things you want in this new year, and it is. And I'll quote Jesus again who says, "Keep on asking, and it will be given to you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you." Persevere my friend and happy new year.

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