

## Sunday, January 14, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

### Week 8 | Luke 11:5-13 | "The Perfect Prayer, Pt. 2"

Last week, we began to unpack the perfect prayer. By studying the principles that underpin the Lord's Prayer, we learned what makes the "Perfect Prayer" perfect. Specifically, there are seven principles that every prayer ought to incorporate: the Benevolence Principle (We are to think of God as a *loving Father*.), the Reverence Principle (We are to *worship* God.), the Acceptance Principle (We are to *desire* God's will be done above all else.), the Sustenance Principle (We are to ask God to provide for our daily *needs*.), the Repentance Principle (We are to *confess* our sins.), the Lenience Principle (We are to be *merciful* towards others), and, lastly, the Guidance Principle (We are to *acknowledge* God's leading).

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Today, we'll move from exploring the *unique principles* that make up the perfect prayer to highlighting its *distinctive features*. Knowing the components of prayer is all well and good, but we also need to know what the finished product is supposed to *resemble*. In the same way that it is hard to judge the *success* of a meal when you don't know what it's supposed to look like, it is difficult to evaluate the *efficacy* of our prayers when we don't know what they're supposed to emulate.

Using two parables, the Lord will demonstrate that those who pray perfect prayers display *two key characteristics*. And should we want our prayer life to thrive, we ought to exhibit these traits. After all, it should come as no surprise that *effective* prayers are *scriptural* prayers—i.e., they *mimic* biblical examples. In fact, while encouraging his readers to pray through the Book of Psalms, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "If we are to pray aright, perhaps it is quite necessary that we pray contrary to our own heart. Not what we want to pray is important, but what God wants us to pray.... The **richness** of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the **poverty** of our heart."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, if you compare your prayers with the examples given in the Bible, how would they measure up? Would they be the inspired supplications of a mind steeped in the Word? Or would they be uninspired ramblings of a mind steeped in the world? The former is well-versed in the actual language of prayer, while the latter speaks in a bizarre prayer language that is as incoherent as it is uninformed.

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<sup>1</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Psalms: the Prayer Book of the Bible*, (Minneapolis, IL; Broadleaf Books, 2022), p. 14-15.

To pray the perfect prayer, we must possess **two** things:

i. **A correct disposition before God.**

**READ:** Luke 11:5-10 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, "Which of you who has a **friend** will go to him at midnight and say to him, '**Friend**, lend me three loaves, <sup>6</sup> for a **friend** of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup> and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?' <sup>8</sup> I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his **friend**, yet because of his **impudence** he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

<sup>9</sup> And I tell you, **ask**, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; **knock**, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who **asks** receives, and the one who **seeks** finds, and to the one who **knocks** it will be opened.

When we pray, we ought to be as **shamelessly bold** as someone who comes to their friend in the middle of the night, asking for some food.

Jesus' parable marries two kinds of cultural expectations: **issues of hospitality** and matters of **camaraderie**.

Here's what I mean.

Notice that three friends are referenced here. "Friend A" comes to "Friend B" looking for assistance because "Friend A" had a friend, we'll call him "Friend C," who showed up unexpectedly in the middle of the night. Thus, while "Friend A" is so concerned with being a proper **host** that he's willing to offend "Friend B," "Friend B" is concerned with how he can get rid of "Friend A" as quickly as possible so that he can go back to bed.

Arguably, "Friend B" could try to convince "Friend A" to leave by saying something like, "**Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything.**" However, "Friend A" would've already known this; and if it didn't stop him from coming in the first place it would convince him to leave. What is left for "Friend B" to do? **The quickest way to get rid of someone so presumptuous would be to give him what he wants.** Thus, Jesus is admonishing us to be as **bold** and **brash** with our prayers as "Friend A" was with his request for food. We need not worry about propriety and manners when we come to God.

In Luke 18, Jesus tells the disciples a similar parable to the one found here in Luke 11. However, rather than a **needy friend**, this story is about a **needy widow**. And instead of the requests being

between peers, the widow is making her request before an unjust king. In the story, the poor woman comes before the king over and over again, pleading for his help, but he is reluctant to help. Why? He cares little for the widow. Yet, in a surprising turn of events, Jesus tells us that the wicked king finally gives in and grants the widow's request. Why? **Because, as with the parable of the two friends, it was the only way he could get rid of her.** The story's point was to teach the disciples that they **"ought always to pray and not lose heart"** (cf. Lu. 18:1). **Or, as we might say, "the squeaky wheel gets the oil."**

Now, to be clear, both parables only illustrate a ***believer's*** disposition. **We are not to correlate God with the unjust king or "Friend B."** Unlike the unjust king, God is just, and, unlike "Friend B," **he is quick to help.** The Lord will not give you excuses for why he cannot help when you come to him in the middle of the night, looking for help. Psalm 46:1 states, **"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble."** Instead of viewing him as being like the unjust king or "Friend B," as we'll see in a moment, God is more like a Father who gives good gifts to his children.

**So what's the *point* of the parable?** It does not matter timing or the type of our need, we ought to be quick to come to God and ask for his assistance and we ought to do so without preamble or pretense.

**READ:** James 4:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. **You do not have, because you do not ask.**

Some of us are put into impossible situations that made even more difficult simply because we do not go to God in prayer, begging for his help. **God's door is unlocked; we need only knock.**

**Not only must we have the correct *disposition* (boldness) to pray the perfect prayer, we must also possess...**

ii. **A correct *perception* of God.**

**READ:** Luke 11:11-13 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> What **father** among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; <sup>12</sup> or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give **good gifts** to your children, how much **more** will the **heavenly Father** give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

When we pray, we ought to be as **hopeful** as someone who asks their Father for a good gift and **never doubts** whether they'll receive it.

We ought to come before like a child comes before their father.

However, it is crucial to realize that the "good gift" being asked for is **the Holy Spirit**. Has there ever been a more perfect example of a good prayer request than for the petition to be focused on the Holy Spirit? **When we make such a request, we're asking God to fill a legitimate *need* rather than trying to get him to satisfy our *greedy* appetites.**

In fact, part of maturing in your Christian walk is knowing the difference between a need and **greed**. You need more of the Holy Spirit; you do not need more stuff. God is a good Father. He knows what you need and knows what you do not need. He won't give you a serpent if you ask for fish, and he won't give you a scorpion if you ask him for an egg. Likewise, he will not satisfy the greedy appetites of his children, even if they ask him politely. **As it is, our greed, if left unchecked, can be far deadlier than a serpent or a scorpion.**

James cautioned about asking for the wrong things:

**READ:** James 4:3 (ESV)

You ask and do not receive, because you ask **wrongly**, to spend it on your **passions**.

You may have wondered, **"Why does God never answer my prayers?"** It may be that you're asking for the *wrong* things; **it may be your prayers are too greedy**. Of course, this is not always the case. But who among us cannot think about something we prayed for and then later realize that was the wrong thing to ask for?

The Greek term translated as "passions" is **ἡδονή** (*hay-don-ay*), and *hay-don-ay* is the root of hedonism, a philosophy which espouses that "pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life."<sup>2</sup> And, if you were to listen to some prayers, you would not doubt that the one who is doing the praying thinks of prayer as a means to be happy. **Prayer is not a means to *happiness* it is a means to *holiness***. It is to commune with God, pouring out your petitions to him so that you might draw closer to him, as a child might to their father. And, as he is the best father, the Lord wants us to come to him and ask him for what **he** wants us to have.

I can already hear you saying, **"But how could we possibly know what is a good thing to ask for and what is a bad thing?"** Read the Bible! The Lord wants the content of our prayers to match

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<sup>2</sup> "Hedonism," Merriam-Webster.com, Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hedonism> [Accessed 5 Jan. 2024].

the content of the Scriptures. And in light of our passage, there is no better thing to ask for than the Holy Spirit.

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

The perfect prayer is **bold**, like the demands of an **unapologetic** friend,

**READ:** Hebrews 4:14-16 (KJV)

Let us therefore come **boldly** unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

and **hopeful**, like the requests of an **optimistic** child.

**READ:** Romans 8:14-16 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are **sons** of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the **Spirit of adoption** as **sons**, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children** of God...

Those who are hopeful in their prayers are those who perceive God as their Father. Sad to say, many Christians are guilty speaking to God as anything but their father. We must see ourselves as children coming to their Father, or we will not come to God like he wants us to. Tim Keller frames the issue like this, "The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 a.m. for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access."

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

The perfect prayer is **bold**, like the demands of an **unapologetic** friend, and **hopeful**, like the requests of an **optimistic** child.

## Video Description

### **The Road to Redemption | Week 8 | "The Perfect Prayer, Pt. 2" (Luke 11:5-13)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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Podcast Details:

Season 38 | 8