

CONTENTS AND OUTLINE

PREFACE	2
The Scripture Text	3
HONEST MOTIVATION FOR HONEST PRAYER	4
The Occasion for Jesus' Teaching on Prayer	4
The Request	7
As John Also Taught His Disciples	7
A Comparison	9
Analysis of the Text	9
PART I: THE OPPORTUNITIES OF HONEST PRAYER,	
<i>Luke 11:1-4</i>	11
Requirements for <i>Asking</i> and <i>Receiving</i>	12
I. DAILY COMMUNION	13
II. DAILY WORSHIP	14
III. DAILY SERVICE	15
V. DAILY PHYSICAL NEEDS	15
V. DAILY SPIRITUAL NEEDS	18
VI. AVOIDING DAILY DANGERS	21
PART II: THE IMPORTUNITIES OF HONEST PRAYER,	
<i>Luke 11:5-13</i>	24
Specifics and Speculations in Prayer	25
Guarding Against Discouragement in Prayer	26
I. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER OFTENTIMES SEEMS REQUIRED BY CIRCUMSTANCES,	28
<i>Luke 11:5-8</i>	
What is Importunity?	28
Importunate Prayers and Motivation to More Prayer	29
Contrasts in this Parabolic Illustration	29
Concerns for Others Lead to Importunate Prayer	30
Propriety in Prayer	32
Choices in the Parabolic Illustration	33
Another Parable	34
II. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER IS SOMETIMES REVISED BY CONTINUANCE,	35
<i>Luke 11:9-10</i>	
Real Importunity	35
The Progressive Element of Ceaseless Honest Prayer	35
The Progressive Maturation through Prayer	36
The Value of Continuous Importunity	37
III. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER IS ALWAYS REWARDED WITH CARE ,	39
<i>Luke 11:10-12</i>	
IV. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER IS DIVINELY REWARDED WITH COMMUNION ,	42
<i>Luke 11:13</i>	

From the Honest Prayer Series

HONEST MOTIVATION FOR HONEST PRAYER: THE OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPORTUNITIES OF HONEST PRAYER

PREFACE

⁹And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

¹⁰For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Luke 11:9-10

Asking, seeking, and knocking in prayer! My, what encouraging words from our Lord Jesus are these. Every one that asks will receive; and every one that seeks will find; and to every one that knocks it shall be opened. Every Christian has gained much motivation to pray because of this most delightful promise. Motivation is defined as “to provide inner drive and to give impulse to do something or act in a certain way.” Jesus in these words, and in those that immediately preceded and followed them, means to give stimulus to His disciples to pray regularly and continuously to His Father, because He is now our heavenly Father.

Our purpose in writing and publishing this exposition is to place before His disciples this teaching of Christ that will serve to do what these words were indeed meant to do. God has His program to carry out to completion, and fortunately He has included us Christians in the effecting of this agenda. Prayer is a very major part in His campaign on earth. Its value to God’s glory will be more evident as we consider together this teaching as recorded by Luke. May God bless Jesus’ teaching to us all, so that Christ’s reason for teaching this and God’s reason for including it in His Word will be fulfilled in each of us. This completion will become a reality in us when we ask, seek, and knock continuously in prayer. God grant to each of us the motivation to do just that. Amen!

Some years ago I first discovered the prayer truth in this precious Scripture of our Lord's teaching. Only after praying for years for a certain thing, and only after repeated attempts at fulfilling that certain thing, did I finally settle for God's best from Him that did not include that certain thing. If only I had known and applied the realities of this blessed and so helpful divine truth in this teaching from Jesus, much sorrow and pain would have been avoided.

Therefore, we send out this important and essential study on motivation for honest prayer with the assurance that its truth will correct and comfort those of Jesus' disciples who need this instruction on honest prayer. May He bless this effort to His glory!

We must from the very nature of our appreciation and respect, take renewed notice of the help from Mrs. Norma Calvert in finalizing this published study. Some years ago she proofread our initial publishing draft. Her dedication and time spent has gone unused until this present publishing, when now we are using her proficient corrections and suggestions to our exposition. We thank her and her Savior for that long ago work "just" now used.

Rogers County, Oklahoma, January 2007

SCRIPTURE TEXT

¹And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. ²And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

³Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation. ⁵And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

⁶For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

⁷And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

⁸I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

⁹And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

¹⁰For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

¹¹If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

¹²Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

¹³If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Luke 11:1-13 KJV

From the Honest Prayer Series

**HONEST MOTIVATION FOR HONEST PRAYER
THE OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPORTUNITIES OF
HONEST PRAYER**

Men seem to have built into them some instinctive desire for prayer. They seem to sense that prayer is the source of power with God, that it actually brings manifestations of God into the lives of us humans. Consequently, even though the image of God in us sons of Adam is marred somewhat, most of mankind does have this inner craving to worship and to communicate with God, though for mostly base and selfish reasons. Yet the aspiration is there for divine connection to one degree or for one corrupt reason or another. If this be true, then we all have opportunity to choose a better, or honest, outcome for prayer in our lives; but we seem sometimes to lack the proper motivation for the real prayers, the honest prayers. Therefore, God sometimes sends difficulties into our experience in order to bring us to our knees. However, Jesus, through the teachings of our text verses, desires us voluntarily to learn the value of prayer. May we comprehend from Jesus something of honest prayer that will stir us up to make steady honest prayers a part of our daily activity.

The Occasion for Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

The preceding incident in *Luke 10:38-42* has significant bearing on our understanding Jesus' teaching here. *Chapter 10* closed with Luke's account of how Mary worshipped Jesus while Martha prepared a meal. *Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word (v. 39)*. When questioned by Martha why Mary communed with Him instead of helping with the meal, Jesus said that, *Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her (v. 42)*. It was a case of Mary seeking communion with Jesus while *Martha was cumbered about much serving (v. 40)*. Fittingly, beginning *Chapter 11*, Luke recorded the incident of our text, that of Jesus' praying—partaking of His spiritual portion at the feet of His heavenly Father—together with the disciples' inquiry concerning prayer and their similar desire for real communion with God. Luke placed this incident touching prayer just here because of the similarity

between Mary and Jesus' seeking spiritual communion with God. In a sense Mary was praying to Jesus. Mary was seeking a closer relationship with and a greater spiritual portion from God through Christ, so also Jesus was seeking a closer relationship with and a greater spiritual portion from His heavenly Father through prayer.

We may learn from this: First, as Christ sought strength and spiritual awareness from the Father through prayer, just as did Mary, even so, we are to seek the Holy Spirit in our lives through the act and practice of honest prayer at Jesus' feet. Second, if Christ needed strength through prayer so as to be seeking that good portion at His Father's feet, how much more do we need the good portion available to us for our asking and seeking at His feet. Third, as Mary sought spiritualities at the physical feet of Jesus before the Holy Spirit came to indwell the church, so are we today to ask for and to seek the Holy Spirit's presence and power through prayer to God now that Jesus has left and given His Holy Spirit. These truths ought to motivate us to honest prayers; and indeed, through His response to the disciples' inquiry about prayer, Christ means to do that very thing.

The Request

Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

Luke 11:1b

The disciples saw in Jesus the perfect example of honest prayer, and desired to be enabled to pray as He prayed. The Greek has a present infinitive in their request, making it *Lord, begin to teach us to be praying*. This is an infinitive of result, that is, of "conceived result."¹ This question asked and answered resulted in more honest and real prayer in the lives of the questioners. Therefore, we would render this request in the following rather amplified way, *Lord, begin to teach us to be praying, which teaching will result in our habitual prayer as we see in You*. This request was not seeking the "how," or even the "way" of prayer, but in effect was,

Lord, begin to teach us, inspire us, incite us, prompt us, stimulate and arouse us, to be praying. Provoke us, animate us,

¹ Dana-Mantey, Greek Grammar, p. 215.

and motivate us so that we shall be praying as you pray. Lord, please help our weakness, and give us reasons to pray, even as John taught and in that way gave reasons for his disciples to be praying.

As John Also Taught His Disciples

Notice that this request referred to John the Baptist, *as John also taught his disciples*. Nearly every firsthand disciple of Jesus had previously been a disciple of, or most certainly was familiar with, John and his teaching ministry concerning prayer, *And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers. (Luke 5:33)*. Obviously, it was common knowledge that John emphasized fasting and prayer. But John stressed the need of prayer, and it was that kind of teaching which was being sought from Jesus. It was, *Teach us the need for prayer as John also taught his disciples; and by that teaching we will be inspired to prayer more like we see in You*.

John had verbally taught his disciples to be praying, but his influence upon his disciples was also largely due to his example—his life-style and his demeanor. His very appearance brought men to consider that John really believed his own message, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,*

And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey.

Mark 1:6 KJV

His appearance said to all who saw and heard him: *I believe the kingdom is near; I do not live for this world, but for the King's coming and for His kingdom's coming glories*. Also since John's basic message was *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, there was a motivation and inspiration for prayer in that message for believing Jews. To hear from a man who looked like he lived only for another kingdom, for another philosophy, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight* brought men to their knees. They were moved to seek God in order to be ready for the coming King

and His kingdom. John taught his disciples to be praying by his life-style and demeanor, as well as by his message. These all worked together to bring his disciples to seek God in prayer, because his whole life testified to the validity of his message.

Thus it was John's ministry as a whole, and then his person in particular, by which he motivated his disciples to honest prayer. John had encouraged his disciples to pray for the kingdom and for its coming King. All spiritually minded Hebrews would have been receptive to John's encouragement to pray in light of their Messiah's soon coming. John had taught in a particular way that drove multitudes to their knees, especially those Jews who were later to become His personal disciples. It was that kind of fervent prayer that the disciples of Jesus were now seeking from the ministry of Jesus as well. They had just witnessed Jesus praying, and desired not just to be taught how to pray, but taught to do it. "They did not want a philosophy of prayer, or the interpretation of a method. They wanted somehow to be able to pray like he prayed."²

Furthermore, the disciples of Jesus were desirous to elevate or advance to the higher level of prayer that they now saw in Jesus' life. John's ministry had taught his disciples by example—by his message to the multitude and by his manner of living—as though he did indeed believe the King was *at the doors*. Now they desire the King Himself, concerning Whom they had experienced a certain level of spiritual prayer under John's ministry, to begin to teach them personally to be praying on a higher level—on His level—the ultimate in honest prayer. As John taught prayer at the level of his own capacity, so now they sought from Jesus prayer in accord with Jesus' higher spirituality. The request says in effect, *Begin teaching us to be praying as you pray. Lift our prayer life to Thy level of prayer. Teach us the opportunity of the ultimate prayer as you pray. Motivate us to pray honest prayer as You pray.*

² Campbell Morgan, *Studies in the Four Gospels* (Fincastle, Virginia: Scripture Truth Book Co., n.d.), p.142.

A Comparison

Some have confused this teaching of Jesus with His teaching on prayer in His Kingdom Manifesto as recorded in *Matthew 6:9-15*. However, while being similar, they are two entirely different occasions with similar teachings. Our text in Luke is a response to a question by a disciple, while Matthew's recorded prayer is in the middle of Christ's uninterrupted discourse on His kingdom's ways. The prayer in Matthew seems to be a model of the magnum opus—the greatest possible—and so the manner, of honest prayer. It was the manner of the Pharisees' prayers, as full of superficial and vain repetition, which He used as diametric or opposite to His model of honest prayer (*Mt. 6:6-8*). Matthew emphasized honest prayer as frank confession of human weakness and of divine strength in private communion. Luke recorded His nearly identical words of prayer, not concerning manner, but concerning motivation for prayer. The emphasis in the prayer of Matthew is the procedure of prayer, while our text emphasizes the form or content of God-pleasing or honest prayer, thus giving to Christians reasons to pray. The one shows us how to pray, while our text shows us why we should pray.

Analysis of the Text

The text for dealing with Opportunity in Prayer, *Luke 11:1-4*, is closely connected to the immediately following teaching on prayer in *Luke 11:5-13*, covered in our second heading, The Importunity of Honest Prayer. The entire section, *Luke 11:1-13*, is one lesson on honest prayer with those two fundamental reasons for prayer, opportunity and importunity; therefore we place here an analysis of the entire passage. The central thought or main theme of the entire passage of Jesus' teaching on prayer, *Luke 11:1-13*, is *verses 9 and 10*,

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Luke 11:9-10

This promise concerning *asking, seeking, and knocking* is the paragon of arousal to prayer. None other teaching in the Bible so prompts men to pray as do these words from Jesus. They have a quality which suggests to every man, *Pray, pray, pray, because God said to be asking, be seeking, and be knocking; and he that asks receives, he that seeks finds, and he that knocks will have it opened unto him.* These words are inspirational for all men. Remembering that these words are central to real motivation to prayer, and in keeping with these words—*asking, seeking, knocking*—we would analyze our text thusly:

First, Jesus teaches what we are to be asking in *verses 2-4*. We receive always when we *ask* for those things that He has promised. This list in verses two through four is a motivation for prayer, because these requests are always answered in the affirmative. When petitioned by His children, God normally says yes to every one of these requests. *Ask and ye shall receive* what Jesus has listed in verses two through four.

Second, Jesus teaches what we are to be seeking in *verses 5-10*. He does this using a contrastive parabolic illustration of the importunate seeker. In that story, there are contrasts both to God's ways and to man's ways concerning prayer. Basically, it teaches that we are to be seeking from God those things that are within the limits of propriety. By that we mean, what is proper, fitting, or suitable. True prayer seeks what is in conformity with reverence toward God. God will most likely answer in the affirmative those prayers brought to Him which have in their request consideration for His own purposes and His ways of dealing in the affairs of mankind.

Third, Jesus teaches at what prayer door we are to be knocking in *verses 11-13*. God customarily opens the door that is spiritually profitable for us; *Knock and it will be opened unto you.* God is predisposed to open the door of prayer which can best be used by the Holy Spirit, and which will most bless us with the presence and influence of His Personal Presence in the Holy Spirit.

MOTIVATION FOR HONEST PRAYER:
PART I
THE OPPORTUNITIES OF HONEST PRAYER

¹ *And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.*

² *And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.*

³ *Give us day by day our daily bread.*

⁴ *And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation.*

*Luke 11:1-4 ASV*³

Presently in this first part, The Opportunities of Prayer, we are concerned only with the first of these analyses as given above, dealing with *verses 2-4*. Therefore, we shall take note only of the numerous opportunities which prayer affords each disciple. These together will be an inspiration to us to be more in prayer.

This teaching from Jesus consists of certain promises, when taken back to God in prayer, will most certainly be *received* from God, because Jesus assures, *He that asks [for what I have listed here] receives*. Jesus' list suggests that prayer provides opportunity for our daily communion with our heavenly Father, our daily worship to God, our daily physical needs to be met, our daily spiritual requirements to be provided, and our being able to avoid daily dangers in our spiritual welfare. Jesus promises all these things to us as we daily pray. Knowing these and believing these as promised will be a great incentive to be more in prayer.

³ Because of the spurious additions to the Greek text in *Luke 11:1-4* as exhibited in the Authorized Version, the Scripture quotations of our text verses throughout this first section are from the American Standard Version, which more accurately represents the original Greek manuscripts. These additions as found in the King James Version were caused no doubt by some copyist who inserted portions of the Model Prayer as found in Matthew, which differed from Luke's prayer. See this important difference explained under the head, A Comparison, p. 6.

Notice He said, *When ye pray, say*. In his similar model prayer, Matthew records Jesus as saying, *After this manner therefore pray ye*. In Matthew's parallel passage the manner of prayer as being humble, concise, brief, and to the point is emphasized. But here in Luke the emphasis is upon the form of proper prayer. This is Jesus telling us what to ask for. Our assurance of affirmatively answered prayer could not be greater than for Jesus Himself to show us for what we are to ask, and then promise us that we shall indeed receive it! Here are specific requests that always without exception meet with God's approval. Jesus means for us to understand these as opportunities in prayer, which will in turn inspire us to ask. He that asks for these things will receive these things, provided he meets the other requirements for prayer as also given by Jesus. These are the supplications for which the Son of God—the Perfect Man—has told us to ask; and in so doing, He is guarantying that these will be God's will to grant repeatedly, because His Son has instructed us thus to pray. He particularizes these opportunities in order that we would be stimulated to more honest prayer.

Requirements for Asking and Receiving

Before beginning to look at these specific requests, we must point out what at first glance would seem to be obvious. That is, what Jesus named in verse two are in one sense His requirements for honest prayer which, when met, will indeed experience the *Ask and receive* mandate. Notice first there is confirmed relationship in the address to God as *Father*. Truly, one must know Him to be one's *Father* in order to *Ask and receive* from Him anything good. This presupposes a personal faith in Jesus Christ's substitutionary death, and an active life of obedience to Him as Lord.⁴ Second, there must be true sensitivity about the hallowness of God's Person, and even for His name, *Hallowed be thy name*. Approach to God in any other demeanor may *ask* but will not *receive*. Third, there must be present a yearning for His kingdom and for its ideals

⁴ *Galatians 3:24*

to be literally present here on earth, such yearning being voiced to God in the prayer, *Thy kingdom come*. This necessitates earnest desire for an end to the present world system that is so opposed to God and His Son's ways. No request that *asks* from a heart in love with the kingdoms of satanic opposition to God will ever *receive* from the heart of the One Whose Son was hated and crucified by those kingdoms (*John 15:18*). Included in Jesus' promises in this model prayer are these three incontrovertible requirements for all who *ask* and then expect to *receive*.

I. DAILY COMMUNION

Father

This is of primary consideration in prayer, when God can be addressed as our *Father*. If through faith in Jesus Christ He is our *Father*, then our daily communion with Him is a chief reason to be praying. The privilege of holy and intimate converse with the Living God is incentive enough! That we can share our thoughts and emotions with God, and in common participation mutually exchange our desires with one another on a daily, hourly, even minute by minute, basis is ground for excitement about prayer.

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knoweth not.

Jeremiah 33:3

The greatest benefit of prayer is this communion where we not only communicate to God our thoughts and emotions, but He communicates to us His thoughts and emotions. The word *mighty* in *Jeremiah 33:3* means hidden things, things that are fenced in. This interchange with God, our Father, through honest prayer is a mutual exchange to God and from God. That ought to motivate us to be praying. God will actually speak to us what was previously hidden to us, but only through prayer. This communion with our heavenly Father will be ours as we are praying daily.

II. DAILY WORSHIP

Hallowed be thy name.

This prayerful admission to God tends to alter what is mediocre prayer into honest favorable prayer at His throne of grace, having considerable involvement with The Third Commandment of God's Holy Law, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain (Exodus 20:7)*. Kenneth Wuest translated it, *Father, cause your Name to be set apart as sacred and the object of veneration*. This kind of reverence for God's name, which seeks in honest prayer for more reverence for God's name, will be affirmatively answered. This reverence for His name will be granted to the petitioner who *asks* for it to be revered in him more and more; he will receive.

When we pray that His name would be looked upon with feelings of deepest respect, then God grants to us personally this request; and in the process we will find the ear of God opened to any accompanying honest prayer. While others may disregard His holy name, we ourselves who pray for His name's veneration will be transformed by that very prayer to hold His name as very sacred in ourselves. As with this prayer, every prayer that is in such accord and harmony with the Spirit of God so as to seek the very best of God's will, will find God somewhat pleased to grant a hearing ear toward our every petition (*I John 5:14-15*). The Spirit of God will Himself be able to draw familiarly intimate, so much so that we will be influenced by His close Presence to grow in our own veneration of His matchless name.

This is the real value of this opportunity in prayer. God will honor His name as reverent, and He will grant to us through this honest prayer more veneration and esteem for His reputation and character. Oh! To be among such spiritual men as Moses, David, Daniel, the Apostle Paul, John the Beloved, and other of the Bible's personalities, who each in his own special way hallowed the name of God. And this they did in spite of their faults because they experienced this kind of honest prayer. This prayer will be answered affirmatively because God desires His glory to be preserved among

all the inhabitants of the earth. This promise to be enabled to revere His name properly, and increasingly, is a great inducement to *ask and receive*.

III. DAILY SERVICE

Thy kingdom come

Jesus teaches that to pray for His kingdom to come to earth is always an accepted prayer. When prayed in earnest and in sincerity, it will be answered with a "Yes." God's whole purpose is to produce His will on earth, and in so doing, to reveal His glory and grace among men. *Thy kingdom come* is an invitation for Him to take the life of the one so praying and to use it actually to accomplish the very thing being prayed for. This prayer will be answered as the one praying it does the work that will further His kingdom on earth now. To pray *Thy kingdom come* is to ask, *God, make me an agent of Your kingdom. Lead me to do what I can do daily in serving You in order to promote your kingdom down here on earth today. Thy kingdom come* will be answered eventually when King Jesus comes again, but that is not all that is involved in this request; this request is much more than just to ask for Jesus' soon return to set up His kingdom. It is to pray that every opportunity for the kingdom's manifestation on earth be realized. It is to pray for His kingdom's progress and success in order that its actual fulfillment might be known here on earth. This is not to suggest that is how the kingdom will be literally and physically established on earth, but this is to suggest that our daily driving desire and motivation in this life ought to be to further Christ's kingdom on earth. That kind of prayer will result in a life that has had imparted into it a vital disposition for its realization. To *ask* for this realization in honesty will be to *receive* it in one's own daily life.

IV. DAILY PHYSICAL NEEDS

Give us day by day our daily bread.

Jesus here, in telling us to pray for our daily food, makes these ordinary physical needs to be spiritual opportunities to gain

much more than mere temporal nourishment. When the disciples asked of Jesus to teach them in such a way that would result in increased prayer lives (*v.1*), they would never have guessed that mere food for humans' animal bodies could become somehow a motivation to more prayer and to spiritual prayer. Yet that is precisely what Jesus is teaching here. He instructs us as God's children to *ask and receive* what is necessary for our physical lives. Many of us take for granted our food. Food is much like our health; we assume it until good health is taken away. It is, therefore, only when we suffer loss of health or food that we find spiritual increase and spiritual edification connected with our physical necessities, because usually those are the only times when we make our physical needs a matter of earnest prayer. This ought not so to be! Jesus would have us daily to turn our physical needs into opportunities for spiritual advancement and experience. That is what He has promised as possible in this instruction.

This is prayer which is sure to be explicitly answered, and that is precisely why there are such spiritual possibilities in this kind of common, honest prayer. What opportunities to gain real answers to real prayer, to see with spiritual eyes, to hear with spiritual ears, to feel with spiritual sensibilities, the hearing ear of God while He turns it toward us during prayer! Of all the spiritual experiences we could have with the living God, this is the most likely to be experienced, consequently likely for two important reasons. First, because Jesus has promised it. We have His Word on it. God will without exception or evasion accompany this prayer with His blessed Holy Spirit, to the experiential blessing of the one who so prays, both in the experience of praying and in the experience of *receiving* when *asking*. And secondly, all this is ours daily, because ordinarily, with only infrequent exception, we daily ingest food in order to sustain our lives. This means that under almost all circumstances this unique "at a bargain" prayer exists as an *asked and receive* opportunity. We can always *ask and receive* our daily bread. No one can exclude himself from this opportunity for honest prayer.

Several years ago, I was as many of us Christians. I took for granted these physical necessities, especially since I always had adequate resources. They were not the point of my daily praying. However, when seeking preparation for ministry, I was diagnosed with cancer and received x-rays and chemotherapy treatments. I was left with no money, having no insurance of any kind, and no means of support. I had no food in the house; and I was physically unable to work. Much to the displeasure of God, I had sought welfare from the government for our daily needs, but had been refused. God seemed to close every door for our help. That last night, when we had nothing in the house to eat for the next (to me my last) day, nor did we have any resources or device left for our help, finally and as a last resort, I prayed according to Jesus' teaching in our text. How sad that I had tried every other known vehicle of the world before simply *asking and receiving* from my heavenly Father. How sad that this kind of honest prayer had not been the habit of my life. If honest, real, and habitually genuine prayer for daily needs had been prioritized in my life, then without any fleshly seeking from this world God would have given with ease that which He is pleased and glorified in providing for His children. But late as it was, and desperate as I was, and forced as I was, still, God had a hearing ear. I left it in His hands and went to bed, still not knowing what we would do the next day.

At about 9:30 a.m. the next day, the President and the Registrar of the seminary I attended came to our house with a check for \$50.00 that had come unsolicited from an anonymous donor "for some worthy student in need." God provided us with our daily bread, but only when I asked Him in desperation, and had taken Jesus' promise back to Him. That became a special occasion to me, but the whole point of this promise from Jesus is that this affirmative answer to honest prayer is to be our daily experience from the gracious hand of God. It can be and should be our habitual spiritual experience to *ask* from God our daily bread and to *receive* it daily from our caring heavenly Father. This is what He does daily, though we really fail honestly to appraise it that way. That is what Jesus

promises in our text, and it is a source of encouragement and motivation for us to be praying always to God for *our daily bread*.

V. DAILY SPIRITUAL NEEDS

And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

This without doubt is the greatest incentive to honest prayer compared to all the others listed here by Jesus. He is granting every learner of Him an open door to forgiveness of sin as we forgive others. Sin with its accompanying guilt is man's biggest problem. Of all requests placed before God, none other is so universally needed and felt to be needed. Every honest soul knows that everything is not right between man and his God. *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*⁵ Sin is the difficulty facing every man. Jesus grants a *carte blanche*, unlimited authority, for every asker for forgiveness, with only one certain qualification: That the seeker of forgiveness from God similarly forgives others who sin against him.

But why is such a qualifying requirement placed on forgiveness by Jesus just here? Other Scripture has no such requirement mentioned. Notice the following references:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:9

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess by transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

Psalms 32:5

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Proverbs 28:13

In each of the above quoted Scriptures the only qualifying requirement for Christians' forgiveness is honest and complete confession of sin to God. Nothing else is required for Christians' forgiveness. Then why does Jesus qualify forgiveness in this proper

⁵ *Romans 3:23*

form of prayer as being only possible for those who also forgive others? The answer to that question lies in the two real qualifications for forgiveness of sin with God. They are: one, confessing one's sin; and two, making one's approach only through Jesus Christ and His work of the cross⁶ as the basis for forgiveness. Confession is easily enough understood; that is the very subject matter in this motivation for prayer in our text. And the approach through Jesus is a "given." That is, Scripture always qualifies forgiveness as possible through Jesus only,

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
Romans 3:24

And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:32

But this still leaves Jesus' unique qualifying requirement that we must forgive others as God's condition for forgiveness of our own sin. This begins to be clearer when one remembers that Jesus makes no qualification concerning forgiveness being only through Himself in our text. He substitutes the qualification of forgiving others instead. The confession remains untouched, that is, it remains just as valid and necessary as before, but any allusion to His work of the cross is replaced with a reference to forgiving others. That is also the key to understanding His requirement for forgiveness of others before obtaining forgiveness from God. It is only as one knows the cost of forgiveness, knows the blood required in Jesus' sacrifice, that one will instinctively be disposed to forgive others for infractions against oneself.

When one knows and fully perceives Jesus' sufferings for his own sin, then the dwarfishness of the harm brought to oneself from others' sins against oneself becomes evident. Forgiving others becomes an insight of one's new nature. Those who know Christ in

⁶ The work "of the cross" is more than the work "on the cross." Though the latter is included in the former, the former suggests resurrection, ascension, exaltation, reigning, intercession, returning, i.e. all His resultant works emanating from His work "on the cross."

His free pardon of sin through the redemption in the cross can forgive others with that same kind of forgiveness granted to them. A failure to grasp the great truth of the cross will exhibit itself in an unwillingness to forgive others. To fail to possess a forgiving nature is to fail to have perceived the method of God's forgiveness granted to all repentant men. That failure of perception marks that person as unable to obtain forgiveness from God, because he has never apprehended Christ's work of the cross in mind or in reality. God cannot forgive the most impassioned confessor of his own sin if he has never appreciated his own forgiveness in Christ. To fail to forgive others is a certain sign that Christ's work on the cross has never been fully appreciated.⁷ That perceptiveness about forgiveness, or lack of it, is the reason for Christ's qualification of one's own forgiveness being dependent upon one's own capacity to forgive others. If one cannot forgive others, then that one will not be forgiven, because Christ's work of sacrifice has not been his method of approach to God.

This promise of forgiveness through Jesus is a motivation to prayer; it is the most significant opportunity afforded to men simply to *ask and receive* from God, being as it is the pure, concentrated essence of honest prayer. To have one's sins entirely removed from before God, from His presence and memory, just by confessing them together with an acknowledgement of the cross, is the blessed power of the gospel. The honest consideration of Christ's work on the cross is the gospel's power for obtaining removal of personal guilt for sin. Forgiveness is keyed upon both confession of sin and confession of Christ. The confession of Christ can be evidenced through a humble forgiving spirit in one's heart and life toward others. When men forgive others for their wrongdoing against them, that is evidence that Christ's forgiveness has truly been experienced by them. One may be of a forgiving

⁷ At the foundation of Christ's and Scripture's overriding qualification concerning forgiving others there is His absolute doctrine of: "Lack of forgiveness equals lack of salvation." In the end of Christ's personal reference here concerning forgiving others there exists His absolute doctrine of: "Lack of forgiveness toward others equals lack of salvation." Q.v. *Matthew 18:23-35*, esp. v.34, *til he should pay all* equals eternal judgment.

nature that may not be evidence of anything spiritual. One may forgive others without forgiveness from God, but one cannot be forgiven by God and refuse forgiveness toward others. Additionally, the absence of forgiveness toward others is the evidence of only a theoretical knowledge of Christ's work of grace on the cross. An unforgiving heart reveals an unforgiven heart, unaware of true obligation for sin removed. The promise of the gospel arouses us to forgive others, and its continued provision of forgiveness for lingering sin arouses us to more prayer to such a wonderful and gracious God. This opportunity for forgiveness kindles prayer to God. It kindles Christ's disciples to be always *asking* forgiveness, to be always *receiving* forgiveness, and to be always granting forgiveness.

VI. AVOIDING DAILY DANGERS

And bring us not into temptation.

Jesus' final special motivation to pray is the opportunity which prayer furnishes men to circumvent or avert evil. Honest prayer is an honest preventive. This kind of prayer is made prior to possible difficulties that threaten us because of our presence in an evil world. Jesus promises this kind of honest prayer stops the possible evil in its course and thereby makes temptations ineffective as sources of sin in our lives. Prayer, as Jesus instructs us here in these words, *And bring us not into temptation*, is the best anticipatory measure for defeating any foreseen or unforeseen temptation that might come our way. Jesus promises an affirmative answer from God when we ask Him for release from the temptation to sin.

This request in prayer has to do with God's control of our lives so that we will not be placed in compromising positions. Because of the innate weakness of our flesh, we often find ourselves in a situation where our propensities toward sin are severely tested, then we shall possibly, and most likely, sin and fall from our steadfastness, bringing reproach upon our heavenly Father. This fall God never desires for any of His children. As we pray for deliverance from this kind of difficulty, we reveal a heart not desiring or delighting in sin. If we can truly pray to God sincerely

desirous of not sinning then God will grant *a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it* [victoriously].⁸

This prayer acknowledges God's Sovereign and Universal and Providential Government. All creatures are at the sovereign disposal of their Maker. He has the same absolute control over evil as over good, else why would this prayer be any motivation for us to pray? If it is a worthless and meaningless prayer to ask God to control the evil around us so that we will not be tempted by it, would Christ tell us to pray that we be spared it in any way? Would Jesus instruct His disciples to pray to God for that which He cannot or will not do? But God can and does often restrain evil or lead His children from evils and from circumstances by which, because of our depravity, we would be brought down from a spiritual walk with Christ. But this is assured us only as we pray daily, *And bring us not into temptation*. Only as we *ask* according to this specific opportunity will we *receive* this specific management of the evil around us. As long as we, as children of God, continue in the prayer-Presence of the Indwelling Christ, we will appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit in order to experience this authority over evil. As we pray, God will direct the evil away from us, or us from it, in order to spare us its temptation. This places the ordering of all temptations in the hands of our all wise and loving Father in heaven.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

I Corinthians 10:12-13

Our wickedness is such that God would be perfectly just to allow sin to swallow us up into oblivion and destruction with Satan. This prayer recognizes His mercy toward our suffering weakness and His

⁸ *I Corinthians 10:13*

provision of grace toward us in Christ Jesus. Knowing this, we have a motivation to pray, because in this prayer, *Bring us not into temptation*, our weakness is acknowledged and His strength is promised. We must not be faced with any opportunities for sin, because we know our own predisposition to sin when faced with its temptations; therefore we must *ask*, *Bring us not into temptation*, so that we will *receive deliverance from evil*.

When this disciple asked, *Lord, begin to teach us in order that we will be moved to more prayer like we see in You*, Jesus' answer becomes a great incentive to prayer. These several opportunities in prayer given us by Jesus are meant to motivate us to more and more prayer. This "model of prayer" promises its supplicants: (1) communion with God, (2) true spiritual worship, (3) fruitful service, (4) daily physical needs met, daily forgiveness of sin, (5) leadership of the Holy Spirit to avoid temptations to sin, and finally, (6) victory over the evil around us. All of these precious riches are brought about through prayer. Jesus desires that through the study of His teaching on prayer, we would spend more time and effort to *ask*, as He has taught. Then, the prayer that thus accords with His model prayer *receives* what He promised. Jesus guarantees it! Amen!

HONEST MOTIVATION FOR HONEST PRAYER

PART II

THE IMPORTUNITIES OF HONEST PRAYER

⁵ *And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;*

⁶ *For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?*

⁷ *And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.*

⁸ *I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his, importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

¹⁰ *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

¹¹ *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?*

¹² *Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?*

¹³ *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* *Luke 11:5-13 KJV*

Jesus is in the midst of answering the question of a disciple found in *verse 1, Lord, begin to teach us to be praying.* Part I—Opportunity for Prayer constituted the first portion of His answer; He disclosed several opportunities for prayer, which were meant to answer a disciple's quest to learn to practice prayer as a daily part of his life. Jesus now adds importunity to opportunities for prayer as also a motivation for more prayer. Jesus encourages continuous prayer, even in areas not fully covered or provided for in His list of opportunities just given in verses two through four. One's continuous habit of prayer is the main thrust of Jesus'

answer found in our Scripture text for this section, *Luke 11:5-13*. Christ seeks to impress upon us that continuous prayer will be rewarded, and through that promise of finding what we seek in prayer and having opened to us on what door of prayer we knock, He intends for us to be induced to more constancy in prayer.

Specifics and Speculations in Prayer

Christ answered this disciple's desire to learn to pray more, first by giving the specifics of prayer in *verses 2-4*. He dealt with *asking and receiving*. In those definite and well-defined areas we are to pray regularly and have from God those requests. They are opportunities for prayer. Christ named several explicit prayers that shall always be answered by God with an affirmative. These are promises that are more or less guaranteed by Christ, that is, when we pray according to His instructions found elsewhere in the Scriptures. When prayed in sincerity, and when prayed in keeping with the fundamentals of an abiding relationship with Him, those specific requests will be granted. *He that asketh receiveth*.

But now Jesus moves to prayer that is not *asking* according to specifics, but is *seeking to find* and is *knocking* to have *opened*; this is an altogether different sphere of prayer. There arise in the lives of men various circumstances of Providence, which bring God's children to ask for things not covered in Christ's list of opportunities in *verses 2-4*. One can imagine all kinds of numerous requests for help from God that are not in that list of our opportunities. They might fall under their broad categories, but they are not really in the list of things that we are promised when we pray. For example, Christ has promised to *give us day by day our daily bread* when we ask. Now we know that our employment fits broadly under that category. Our jobs are the means for God to supply us with our daily bread. But what of a change in employment? When confronted with an opportunity to change jobs, when challenged with two jobs to choose between, should we ask God for this one or that one? Or perhaps by way of another example, what about one's desire to serve God as a missionary. One

wants to go to Africa, but finds it very difficult to raise support for such a work, or discovers that the Mission Board has no present need. Therefore, he begins to pray and *seek* from God, “Lord, send me to Africa; open a door.” Where is the promise concerning this in the list of opportunities for prayer in *verses 2-4*? One might answer back, “Well, it is in the area of *Thy kingdom come*, that is, of service. Surely God will answer affirmatively that request.” But has God really promised specifically to say “Yes” to every such request to serve Him? What if it is not God’s will to send this would-be missionary to Africa, but to India? Many similarly ask God for much and never receive what they ask for. Why not? Does He not promise, *Ask and ye shall receive*? But that “asking” applies only to specific requests. There are areas of speculation in many of our prayers because we have no specific Word from God on them. We surmise a thing as being good. It appears to be good to us. From our vantage point it is proper for God to grant a particular request, but it receives a definite “No!” from Him. He never grants it. Why? Jesus anticipates these kinds of difficulties in prayer, as well as the possible discouragement to continue in prayer that they might cause; therefore He provides us the answers to these kinds of difficulties about prayer in our text, *Luke 11:5-13*.

First, Jesus deals with prayers that *seek* to *find* what is not fully known as God’s will (*verses 5-10*). **Second**, He takes up prayers that *knock* to have doors opened that have no promise from God upon them (*verses 11-13*).⁹ In both cases—either *seeking* to *find* or *knocking* to have *opened*—the Holy Spirit¹⁰ is the key to understanding the Lord’s answer for the aforementioned difficulties about prayer.

Guarding Against Discouragement in Prayer

Since Jesus is seeking to motivate us to be more in prayer, He anticipates our possible discouragement because of the “No” or “Wait” that we sometime receive. A “No” and a “Wait” are a real

⁹ A review of the analysis of these verses in Part I—Opportunity in Prayer, *Analysis of the Text*, pp. 6 ff. might prove helpful.

¹⁰ As the Holy Spirit is the ultimate goal and supreme answer to prayer, *v. 13*.

part of the prayer experience. Therefore, He will teach us that every “No” is really a “Yes,” and that prayer will result always—whether a yes or no is received for our specific request—in the very best affirmative action possible by God.¹¹ Jesus is providing a baffle against discouragement by showing us that prayer always is answered affirmatively,¹² if and as we really continue in prayer. A continuance in prayer is the key. Jesus now illustrates this kind of continuous prayer to God, calling it importunity in prayer. Whereas Christ had just given our opportunities in prayer in *verses 2-4*, now He gives to us our importunities in prayer in *verses 5-13*; and Jesus shows how God will handle all requests from His children, even those prayers that are not respectful of His ways and will.

To explain and to follow Jesus’ own rationale concerning this kind of importunate prayer, we shall examine *Luke 11:5-13* directed by the following stimulating and unfailing truths:

First, Importunate Prayer Oftentimes Seems to be

Required by Circumstances, verses 5-8.

Second, Importunate Prayer is Sometimes

Revised by Continuance, verses 9-10.

Third, Importunate Prayer is Consistently

Rewarded with Care, verses 11-12.

Fourth, Importunate Prayer is Divinely

Rewarded with Communion, verse 13.

¹¹ Cp. Paul’s same word of affirmative approval as relates to all matters, prayer or otherwise in *II Cor. 1:20, For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us*. Every action, or what seems to us sometimes to be inaction, by God is really a *Yes* and an *Amen* for our best good and for others’ best good and for His best good.

¹² See this truth expounded in Chapter 1, Honest Prayer to the Honest God, pp. 21-25.

I. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER OFTENTIMES SEEMS REQUIRED BY CIRCUMSTANCES

⁵ *And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;*

⁶ *For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?*

⁷ *And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.*

⁸ *I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his, importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*

[Added emph.] *Luke 11:5-8*

What is Importunity?

Jesus introduced importunity in prayer through a parabolic illustration of it, and in His explanation of the parable in *verse 8*, *Yet, because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth*. His subsequent teaching through the remainder of our text to *verse 13*, is meant to motivate us to continue always in prayer by explaining and clarifying this kind of importunate prayer in which all Christians take part. The word, importunity, is taken from the common word for “modesty, reverence,” but it has the negating alpha privative prefixed, giving it the opposite meaning of “no modesty, no reverence.” Jesus’ illustration concerns actual “impudence” in prayer. We might render this Greek word as “irreverence” in the use of it by Jesus in *verse 8*. Our prayers are sometimes really “irreverent” toward God as far as His eternal purpose and eternal love are concerned. Therefore, the word, “importunity,” is a very bad word; by that I mean, it connotes a bad attitude, a thoughtlessness, which ideally should never characterize any approach to God. But because of our circumstances and limitations, Jesus sanctions even importunate prayer, lest we not pray at all, and lest we not *find* or not have *opened* the door of God’s

help at all. Our sinful and ignorant state hampers our approach to God in prayer; it is not always strictly correct. We fail consistently to understand God's ways and will in many matters spiritual and physical; and we do not always honor God's will and purpose in our prayers. That is importunity in prayer.

Importunate Prayers and Motivation to More Prayer

Importunate prayer does not understand what God's will is in the specific area of a particular prayer or prayers. It is prayer that may, even though it seems to be good to us, be irreverently and thoughtlessly and immodestly prayed, because it disturbs God's set plans for others or for us. Jesus is teaching us that even that kind of prayer is likely to be prayed by "one and all" Christians at one time or another. We must not become discouraged against praying for what our circumstances seem to dictate must be prayed, even though we might be considered immodest and irreverent and impudent when viewed from God's eternal scheme of things. The danger of our prayers being out of sorts with God's perfect will is not a detriment to prayer, but it is an encouragement to prayer, according to the teaching of Jesus in our text. Jesus' teaching to us is this: If we will take care of the praying, then God will take care of all the rest. We are to let God move Himself to fit our praying, or move our praying to fit His will; if we continue in prayer for a thing, one or the other will occur. Jesus' word on importunate prayer guarantees it.

Contrasts in this Parabolic Illustration

This parable is one of contrast. If the friend in bed represents God in the story (he does not, but the overall teaching of the parable contrasts the ways of God.) then one would have God sometimes slumbering, lacking understanding, having to be persuaded by argument, taken by surprise, taking from the comfort of His other children (those already asleep in the story) in order to help other of His children, and on and on and on would the ridiculous pictures go. No! The parabolic illustration is just that, an earthly illustration which is meant to contrast the ways of God with the actions of the persons in the story. God never troubles unnecessarily one of His children in order to help another. He does

not have to do that ever. He might choose to trouble one in order to help another if the trouble for the one would end up correcting and helping him. But since God controls everything to benefit each of His children to the maximum, He never is “forced” to do anything. The friend in bed did not at first care enough for his friend who called at midnight even to help him. God is not like that. He cares always for His children and responds just because He, unlike the friend in bed, is always willing and ready to help us—His children—because He is our true friend; and that friendship is why He always is ready to answer our honest prayers.

Concerns for Others Lead to Importunate Prayer

This parabolic illustration shows how God understands our limitations in prayer. Obviously, we do not see all that God sees, and because of our rather limited vision of the eternal, God allows us a certain latitude in our prayers, which at times may even border on disrespect and disregard for His plan and purpose. In this parable Jesus tells the story of a man who is visited unexpectedly by a friend very late at night. The friend has been on a long journey, perhaps traveling all day until midnight, and needs something to eat. Since his arrival was unexpected, the host has no bread prepared for the late-night meal. Therefore, he goes next door to his neighbor-friend at that late hour and knocks at his door. His neighbor-friend is already in bed, has bolted the door, the children are finally at rest and would be disturbed if he rises; therefore he speaks from his bed through the closed door, “You are too much trouble. Wait until morning; I cannot rise and give it to you now.” But the man continues seeking and knocking at his door. He does not have to say anything more but just stood outside the door and continued knocking. The neighbor-friend inside realized that this might go on indefinitely; therefore he arose and gave to him the three loaves, not because of his friendship, but because of his *importunity*—irreverence, immodesty, impudence (*verse 8*). What made the request effectual and successful? It was his thoughtlessness, his impudence, his disregard of the time, place, and persons involved that brought to him his desired request. What does this teach us concerning our own prayers which may be just as

thoughtless of God, just as impudent and irreverent of His will, plan, and purpose? It was the concern (love) which the importunate seeker had for his needful friend that made the difference in this illustration of importunate prayer.

God allows from us the same kind of rude and thoughtless disregard for His sensitivities and for His eternal program, and even encourages these kinds of prayers from us. We cannot see His elect nor His Providential Government agenda.¹³ We know neither the bounds nor the schedule of His provisions for His own people. For these reasons God encourages us to pray for the good of others. That is the only gauge for a proper estimation of the value of any prayer. Assuredly, it would be great if we all could pray in perfect accord with the will of God. And there is great value in and great rewards accompanying that kind of praying. Jesus gave us certain guidelines for that very reason in *verses 2-4*, and elsewhere in Scripture, just to assist us in praying in the will of God. But we are down here, and we see not the infinite, but only the finite. We see not the overall picture from the heavens, but only see the immediate world around us. We see the hurting, the crying, our neighbor-friends' needs for *three loaves at midnight*, so to speak. Jesus says to go ahead and pray for those things as we see need. We are even to be immodest and impudent and attempt to force God through prayer to give what we desire and what we have determined would be good and needful for Him to grant.

Human need may be the only criteria that we have for much of our prayers. We shall not be reproved for praying immodestly or even irreverently as far as God's great program is concerned, if the prayers we take to heaven's throne are for others' needs as we honestly see them. We can pray for mercy for the hurting, for grace for the undeserving, and for love gifts for the unloving. God's will

¹³ *Deuteronomy 29:29*, *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God*, thus are we limited in always knowing His will and plan that is happening right around us. But this verse continues, *but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law*, which law (Word) contains the parameters of our responsibility in works, in attitudes, and in our prayers.

for us is to be asking for those needs that arise, to be seeking for those things required, and to be knocking at His door of provision when confronted with the needs of others. Christ would rather have us swept up in the quest to help someone else without regard for God's plans or program than to hesitate "lest we offend God with a request too brash, too bold, or too insensitive of His eternal will and program." We do not need to know God's eternal plan or eschatological timetable or governmental counsels. All we need to know is our neighbor-friends' needs, and that we may *trouble* God at any and at all times with honest prayer for honest needs.

Propriety in Prayer

But on the other hand, God should be approached in reverence always and with regard for His will and way and Word when possible. All prayers should be appropriate and in general conformity with what is proper and fitting for God to grant. The parabolic illustration contrasts what ought to be modest regard with what is a flagrant disregard for God's best for His other children. We should never approach God in prayer asking from Him what we know will only bring discomfort and disarray to other of His children, as brought upon the man asleep and his children in the parable. In that story the importunate seeker humiliated the one friend by placing the priorities of another of his friends ahead of the other. We are never to do that with God. We should never wholly disregard God's dignity for the benefit of any man, even for our most beloved family or friends. The picture in Christ's illustration is of our annoying, or having an inclination to spite, God in order to help man. While we may do this in prayer, it should not purposely be done as in the parable. God's ways are not to be knowingly or purposely disregarded in our prayer lives. But this parable teaches that when we are intensely caught up in helping others, loving others, serving others, that even irreverent and flagrant disregard of God's comfort—His plan, purpose, and program—is a part of our prayers, then that prayer *seeks* and *finds*, *knocks* and *is opened*.

Christ's teaching by way of contrast would direct our praying to be always decent, seemly, decorous, and proper as far as we understand the will and way and Word of God. We must ever regard God's ways and will as higher than ours, for indeed they are. Christian's prayers are to conform to the accepted standard of what is right or fitting as is regarded from good motives. True prayer seeks observance of the proprieties and keeps within the bounds of what is appropriate or fitting to a son's relation to his Father. Our prayers of seeking something of our Father God are to be only of good taste, and not just from the immediate urgencies of any given situation. It is foolishness to demand of God what is not reasonable, no matter what the situation. It may not be immediately possible to discern what is up to His perfect ethical standards when we ask of God in prayer; therefore a *Thy will be done* is always in order in such cases.

Choices in the Parabolic Illustration

Another great truth concerning choices is presented in Jesus' parabolic illustration. The man who did the *asking, seeking, and knocking* at the door of his one friend had another friend. Actually, he made a choice between the two friends. The one friend came to his home at midnight, tired and hungry, needing refreshment. The other friend was in bed, locked up for the night, also needing refreshment. He had a choice to make: let the one friend remain hungry until morning or until bread could be made—possibly about three hours—or disturb his other friend who was already in bed, possibly asleep already. Which friend should he have inconvenienced? He chose according to the cultural custom of his day. In the East a guest in one's home receives priority in any question of comfort. The Bible has examples of the Eastern extremes of this kind of priority; therefore we should expect that this story of real life in an Eastern culture would have the choice made as Jesus told it. But given all that, still Jesus means to illustrate the occasional inconsistencies of our requests in prayer for others and with God's dealing with them. The friend in bed made a choice to allow himself to be inconvenienced rather than to leave his neighbor's other friend to remain hungry. That is often the

way of importunate prayer to God. God has ten thousand times ten thousand requests which all intermingle with each other. Some pull against the other. If He should answer one worthy request exactly as requested, then its ripple effect would bring disaster down the line to another of His dear children who is *asleep at midnight* so to speak. God must make choices when these kinds of importunate prayer come before Him.

Another Parable

Several years ago a major corporation advertised a very good job opening which required special skills and education. The ads appeared nationwide seeking the best and most qualified man for the position. There were five men in the United States who did meet very well the qualifications required for the job. Two of the five were Christians, both needing employment, and both praying regularly and fervently for jobs. They both saw the same ad in different cities, and both applied for the same job. Notice God's position. He hears the *asking, seeking, and knocking* at His door at midnight, so to speak. "Lord, give me this job, because my family needs this. Amen and Amen!" And He hears this from both of His beloved children. Obviously, He cannot immediately say "Yes" to both. God will make a choice. He will give the job to only one, or perhaps to neither, but He cannot answer these two prayers exactly as these two Christians have *asked, sought, and knocked*. This is why Jesus gave the parable and its subsequent teaching in *verses 9-13* of our text. These verses show to us God's way of handling such a circumstance as just described. The illustration of the two jobs, and indeed, the two friends in the parable, are over-simplifications to be sure. God's prayer requests intermingle ten thousand times ten thousand more conjointly than either the parabolic illustration or our illustration of the two jobs. The ripple effect and the causal compounds of every action among men are multiplied millions more difficult than the simple choice between two simple requests. But to be sure, all the functional workings of prayer and their final issue fit into God's daily Providence and eternal plan. That is why Christ teaches us to continue *asking, seeking, and knocking* in prayer.

II. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER IS SOMETIMES REVISED BY CONTINUANCE

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Luke 11:9-10

The *And* which begins *verse 9* is signally important. It connects these two central verses on prayer to the immediately preceding illustration. This *asking*, *seeking*, and *knocking* in prayer has just been illustrated for us in the importunate asker, seeker, and knocker in Christ's parable.

Real Importunity

First of all, it must be noted that the *ask*, the *seek*, and the *knock*, of *verse 9*, and the *asketh*, the *seeketh*, and the *knocketh* of *verse 10* are all in the continuous present tense in the original manuscripts. The main thought overall is the continuous *asking*, the continuous *seeking*, and the continuous *knocking* without letting up and without restraint. Jesus is emphasizing prayer that is perpetual and never-ending. It is a never slacking, and even an importunate, *asking*, *seeking*, *knocking* which insists its own way before God, at least in its beginnings. That was the picture presented in the parable also.

The Progressive Element of Ceaseless Honest Prayer

Furthermore, there is a progressive element in the three varieties of prayer here given by Jesus. It goes from *asking* which is the statement of our requests, to *seeking* which is our wrestling with God and our constant efforts to get close to God in our *asking*, to *knocking* which may be our importunate disregard for God's comfort or rationale—i.e. God's eternal counsel, will, plan, and program—in our *asking* and *seeking*.

The promises of *verse 10* are progressive. **First**, one *asks* and simply *receives*. **Second**, one *seeks* and *finds*. **Third**, one *knocks* and has it *opened* unto him. **First**, the reception for *asking* is a passive act of having it handed to you. **Second**, the *finding* is the pleasure of discovery and excited surprise in His personal and present response. **Third**, the *opening* of the door is the freedom and unrestrained access to the favors and treasures of God's storehouse. Again, note the progression: first, it is only things that we *ask* for and *receive*. But secondly, constancy in prayer moves the petitioner up higher, because it is God Himself that we *seek* and discover in prayer. Until thirdly, at the highest point of prayer, it is God's richest treasures in Himself and of Himself that are behind that prayer *door*, but are unreservedly opened up to us as we *knock* in prayer. Those are the successive promises associated with constancy in prayer which motivate Christians to more and more prayer.

The Progressive Maturation through Prayer

This importunate prayer is the constant casting ourselves before His throne without regard for His other considerations no matter how important or profound they might be. Yet these verses assure our having His door of blessings opened in the end. **First**, Christ is encouraging us to be *asking* for what He promises is ours; this we will *receive*. **Second**, we are to move up from *asking* for what is literally promised to *seeking* out God personally and drawing close to Him in obedience—perhaps fasting—with His personal holiness in mind and care for His close Presence; this (Him) we will *find*. **Third**, we can move up to *knocking* at His prayer door with requests that may have mostly human need in view, but will have become infected with the promises of His Word (*asking*), and influenced with the contagion of His presence sought (*seeking*), finally to be found at His door, awaiting His response (*knocking*). This ideal in prayer may begin without regard to what might be inconsistent with God's eternal considerations, but through this continuing progression, entrance is made into God's innermost loving will. God would have us pray to Him for what we consider human needs

that can only have a supernatural fulfillment, and let Him take care of the rest. Constancy in prayer—*asking and receiving, seeking and finding, and knocking and having it opened unto you*—changes the petitioner and thus his praying. The *asking* from His Word, and the *seeking* in His Presence, will in the end find us *knocking* at His opening divine door of heavenly and spiritual delights, namely, His perfect will (*it shall be opened unto you*). God never opens any door outside His marvelously beautiful will.

We are to be continuously *asking* God, *seeking* God, and *knocking* at God's door of stored reserves of Himself. It is He that we *ask for, seek after, and knock at to open*. This is a blessed motivation to pray above all other motivations for prayer, namely, the reward that is the Presence of God Himself.

The Value of Continuous Importunity

Jesus' language draws attention again and again to the continuous nature of true prayer. In the parabolic illustration, the friend continued to *ask, seek, and knock* at the friend's door. In the verses following it was an *asking, seeking, knocking* continuously in a constant present tense. He who continues *asking*, continues *seeking*, continues *knocking* will be continuously *receiving*, continuously *finding*, and continuously having it *opened* unto him. Christ means to make clear that the real value of importunity is the continuousness of it. To be purposely immodest or irreverent toward God in prayer will never really profit. All prayer must be in God's will to be answered affirmatively. If our prayers are in total disregard of God's purposes they will not be answered precisely as we have prayed them. This we touched on under the previous point. But more is involved. Here is a person who begins praying for a certain thing that is entirely out of the realm of possibility for God to grant and yet remain righteous. But to the one praying it seems good. Jesus promised even for that person if he keeps on *asking God*, keeps on *seeking God*, and keeps on *knocking at—contacting and touching—God* with his request, he will *receive God*, eventually *find God*, and have *God opened up to him continuously as well*. That will have changed his praying.

This is an aspect of real prayer that is most important. What Christ says is that the reception of God, the finding of God, the opening up of God to one in prayer will gain the prayer. Over a protracted period, through continuously receiving, finding, touching God Himself through prayer, the prayer will have been slowly changed by that same continuous reception, finding, and contact with God. God will change the prayer from what was first prayed into what God will finally grant. This is the promise made for continued importunity. The constant contact with God in prayer will change the prayer to fit God and will not in the end be at all what the seeker first thought was good. Thus, the guarantee of affirmatively answered prayer is possible because continuous contact with God assures a God-oriented prayer, which will be in accord with what is eternally good. What was first prayed for was perhaps a *stone*, a *serpent*, or a *scorpion*; but what was finally granted was *bread*, *fish*, or *eggs*. We will have changed our prayers because of the influence of a continuously received, found, and touched God through prayer. That is, all who *asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*, only because we have continuously prayed in the Presence of a God Who changes all who regularly and continuously attend His Presence.

In my own life there have been prayers that I have prayed for years. I have asked God, sought God, and touched God with these requests. Yet some of my requests have changed over the years from what they were originally. Slowly, God granted my prayers by changing my prayers and me into what He desired in the first place. What He desired was good. What I began asking years ago was evil, though at first it appeared to me to have been good for His glory and for me. But through continued contact with God on these very issues, God changed my thinking into His thinking. Finally, in the end I received what I was asking for; I found what I was seeking; I had opened to me that door at which I was knocking. Through continued prayer, I received the finest gift, I made the greatest find, I had opened to me the most cherished door—God Himself and His perfect and loving will. Amen.

III. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER IS ALWAYS REWARDED WITH CARE

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

Luke 11:11-12

Again these verses begin with the small but important conjunction, *and*. Though not in the King James Version, it is in the Greek, and appears in the American Standard Version, *And*. This *And* connects these verses with the preceding importunate prayer which is promised affirmative reward in *verses 9-10*. Christ has promised in *verses 9-10* that every one who continuously is *asking* God, *seeking* God, and *impacting* God (*knocking*), will continuously *receive*, *find*, and have *opened* to him what is prayed. Through the constancy of the importunate prayers God will adjust and correct our prayers as we draw closer and closer to Him through prayer. Over the course of time, while praying importunately, God will amend those prayers that were in error with His ways into what will be His exquisite delight to grant. But now with these two verses Christ explains and conditions this whole concept of answered importunate and immodest prayer with certain limitations.

These two verses show to us why God must change our prayer in the very process of our praying as related in *verses 9-10*. Jesus uses three illustrations that have to do with a child's requests to his father. Christ is saying that our requests are somewhat similar to these three illustrations when we pray to our heavenly Father. Also he used three different items of food, which resemble certain dangerous creatures and objects that would prove hazardous to any child. There is *bread* asked for and a *stone*. There is *fish* sought and a *serpent*. There is an *egg* desired and a *scorpion*. The *stone* resembles a loaf of *bread* as it was baked in those days. The *fish* referenced is similar in appearance to the type of *serpent* suggested.

And an *egg* is close in appearance to the certain kind of *scorpion* when its tail is curled up under its off-white shell. Jesus is saying that God grants nothing that would harm His children, continued importunate prayer notwithstanding. He uses these resembling things to stress the difficulty His children sometimes have in determining what to ask for in prayer. God promises that we shall *receive*, *find*, and have *opened* to us what we pray for, but only in accord with what is best for us, namely, only what the filial love of our heavenly Father wills.

We children of God are as our own little children. Many small children might ask for a *rock*, thinking it to be *bread* because of its similarity in appearance. Or the child might seek to have a *serpent*, thinking it a *fish*, or might reach out to get an *egg* only to be bitten by a resembling deadly *scorpion*. In all three cases, a *stone* eaten, a *serpent* possessed, or a *scorpion* held, great danger would come to a child under those circumstances. Earthly parents watch out for their children. They do not give them hurtful things even when they *ask*, *seek*, and *apply* for them. Our children, through their weakness of understanding, may ask for what is really evil for them. We will not gratify their ignorance by giving them what they ask for if it would harm them. Likewise, neither will our heavenly Father give to us what is not suitable for us. He knows what we truly need and what is truly good for us. When we ask for what is *bread*, *fish*, or an *egg*, we can be sure to receive those sorts of good gifts of kindness from our heavenly Father. If, however, we in prayer ask any particular thing of God that may seem to be good and we receive it not, we may be assured that it was evil for us. What is good and profitable to us or to someone else under different circumstances might be evil for us in our present condition and place in life. We may conclude that such requests that do not result in our receiving them were only what we thought were good. We had asked for a *stone*, or a *serpent*, or a *scorpion*, while we thought we were asking for *bread*, *fish*, and *eggs*. The truth is that God answered our general desires for some good by denying our specific request. We *asked* God and *received* from God. We *sought* from God and *found* God. We touched and *contacted* God and He was *opened* up unto us.

Our heavenly Father, though He hears us crying for certain things that He knows would be harmful and in the end difficult for us to handle, will not give us those things. Even though our mouths *ask* Him, and even though our souls *seek* Him, and even though we gain constant *contact* with Him, He may deny the request. But He will grant the general design of our prayer, which design is to have what is good for us and good for Him. But let it be clearly understood that the promise is plainly given. When we ask for what is good and wholesome for us, and profitable for our welfare, and advantageous for our service to Him and for His own glory, we may be sure that God will be sure to give us our prayer's request. As an earthly parent will not deny anything to his children within his power to give if it would benefit them, so God will never deny what is good for His own children. He hears prayer and grants affirmative answer to His own.

*For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give
grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that
walk uprightly.*

Psalms 84:11

IV. IMPORTUNATE PRAYER IS DIVINELY REWARDED WITH COMMUNION

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Luke 11:13

Jesus finalizes His motivating lesson on prayer by promising the ultimate reward of prayer, namely, His Indwelling Presence in the Person of the Holy Spirit. He it is Who works the change in our importunate prayers and in us while we are *asking, seeking, and knocking* to obtain even *evil stones, serpents, and scorpions*. The Holy Spirit's communion influences our prayers for good when a continuous prayer life is lived out. He will make our prayers into the image of Jesus' prayers, which always sought of the Father what pleased the Father. Though we are not in perfect accord with God as was Jesus, still through the Holy Spirit our prayers can be truly *in the Spirit*.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Ephesians 6:18

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

Prayer in the Spirit is a reality for all regular and continuous supplicants at heaven's door. He Who inhabits the place will make His life within them a reality through prayer. Their prayers will be changed to match His mind as He permeates their souls. Then He Who knows the mind of the Spirit will hear and answer affirmatively because He maketh intercession according to the will of God.

This communion with the Holy Spirit is the ultimate affirmative answer to all true spiritual prayer. No greater answer could be granted. When this disciple asked Jesus for motivation for prayer in verse one, this promise of the Holy Spirit Who is given to all askers, seekers, and knockers is the grandest motivation possible. Is it not the end of all prayer, is it not the desired result of all prayer, is it not the very best that we could get from God? No matter what the circumstance or difficulty, is not what we ask and seek from God the very best He has to give to us? Of course it is! God's very best answer to prayer is the Presence of the Holy Spirit. God Himself within the soul of the supplicant is the most resounding "Yes" ever returned to the seekers of God's blessings. He is the revered reward of all the *asking*, all the *seeking*, and all the *knocking*.

Jesus compares God with us as we give to our children good gifts. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that are continuously asking him.* Note the underlined present tense from the Greek. The highest attitude in prayer is that which *asks* and *seeks* and *obtains* the Holy Spirit as an abiding Presence within one's life. "That is where we begin, and when we receive the Holy Spirit at first are born again; but the prayer life is the life that is always seeking and always receiving; the filling, the infilling, the overflowing of the Spirit."¹⁴ That comes as we continue in prayer constantly. He then fills one's life with His power and discernment, with His beauty and comfort, and with His wisdom and understanding. Through that process His Presence affects the same prayers through which His Presence was so keenly known. Selah!

It is because spiritual things satisfy most that Jesus Christ ended His teaching on motivation to real prayer as He had begun, namely, on a note of spiritual communion. He began with approach to God as our *Father*, thus establishing the relation between His children and their heavenly Father as a mutually profitable interchange of thoughts and emotions in prayer. Jesus first named

¹⁴ G. Campbell Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

earthly needs (*verses 2-4*), but reaches the highest level of motivation in this last verse by promising communion with the Indwelling Christ, the Holy Spirit of God, through prayer. The more of heaven there is in the soul, the less will earthly things content. "The joys of God's Spirit are heart-filling and heart-cheering."¹⁵ This is the ultimate life of prayer, to escape this earthly scene with all its trials and tribulations, its demands of the temporal and things, its temper of greed and material worth—all those things can be left behind. All those things can pale into insignificance. All those things—even those things which hurt and blight and scathe and injure us—become much less important, and not so much worthy of notice, when His joyous Presence becomes reality through continuing in honest prayer. Amen!

¹⁵ James Comper Gray, Gray and Adams' Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), V. & p. unknown