

• Luke emphasises prayer

1. The importance of prayer

- What to pray for
- The character of true prayer
- God's willingness to hear
- The greatest gift

2. A model prayer

- Begin by fixing attention on God
- Asking for what God wants
- Asking for things we need - physical needs
- To be kept from falling into sin

3. Persistency in prayer

- A parable with one clear point - we need to go on asking

More than any other gospel, Luke's Gospel is about prayer (see my remarks in chapters 18, 22 and 40).

1. The disciples realise **the importance of prayer**^{□1}. They have observed Jesus' praying, and it makes them realise that they need help in the matter of prayer, so they put a request to Jesus: 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples'^{□2}. It is interesting to note that John also made prayer a major part of his life. It is also worth noting that prayer can be taught. Yet we observe how Jesus gave teaching about prayer. In what follows^{□3} He does not say much about the externalities of prayer, the posture or place or the type of language that should be used. He does not say much about the gift of tongues (nor does He anywhere in the gospels). Tongues is a gift of the Spirit, and I pray in tongues myself, but we must not exaggerate its importance. Jesus never said much about it. The prayer He talked about was comprehensible and had definite content. He spoke mainly about what we should pray for^{□4}, the character of true prayer^{□5}, the willingness of God to hear us^{□6} and the greatest gift to pray for^{□7}. This was His idea of teaching people to pray.

2. **Jesus gave the disciples a model prayer**^{□1} in order to give them an idea of what to pray for. Luke's version is shorter than Matthew's^{□2} and Matthew's version might also be an abridgement of what Jesus said. Clearly He told them what to pray for, by giving them an example of what to pray for. As generally in the gospels, the written version is simply a summary.

What then should be the main content of our praying? It begins with the realisation of who it is that we are praying to ('Father...'). We begin by fixing our attention on God.

Our prayers are asking for things that God wants as well as things that we want. We are to make requests about His name ('Your name be sanctified') and His kingdom ('Your kingdom come').

Then we are allowed to ask for things that we need. We put to God requests in connection with our physical sustenance ('Our bread... give us'), our past sinfulness ('Forgive us...') and our future strength ('and do not lead us into temptation'). This last request is not a request that we shall never be tempted. Rather it is a prayer that we might never be brought into a situation where we cannot stand. We ask not to be brought 'into' temptation, into a situation where we are likely to fail the test and fall into sin.

3. Jesus is next led on to speak of the greatest need in our praying. He gives a parable about **persistency in prayer**^{□1}. Imagine, He says, that you are in a situation of serious need. A visitor arrives at your home and (in accordance with the courtesy of many parts of the world), you are obliged to feed the newly arrived visitor but you need some bread. So at midnight you go to your friend who lives nearby^{□2}. You explain to him your problem, calling to him from outside the house^{□3}. The nearby friend calls back from his bed where he is half-asleep. 'Don't bother me at this time of night,' he says. 'The children are with me in bed. I don't want to disturb them'^{□4}. But the caller at the door goes on asking and asking, pleading that he is desperate and needs help. Finally the man inside

□1 11:1-2

□2 11:1

□3 11:2-13

□4 11:2-4

□5 11:5-10

□6 11:11-12

□7 11:13

□1 11:2-4

□2 Matthew 6:9-13

□1 11:5-10

□2 11:5

□3 11:6

□4 11:7

gets up and helps him. Jesus comments^{Ⓜ5}, 'It was not friendship that made the man in bed get up and do something.' It was the 'importunity' – the shameless persistence – of the person asking for help that led to his getting an answer.

Ⓜ5 11:8

• *Persistence wins an answer*

It is only a parable and it is only making one point. It is not saying that God is not a good friend, or that God is half-asleep. The only point of the parable is that persistence wins an answer! Jesus goes on to say: 'Ask... seek ... knock' and promises that we shall be heard^{Ⓜ1}, and that what we shall be given will be good^{Ⓜ2}.

Ⓜ1 11:9-10
Ⓜ2 11:11-12

4. God's Goodness - the basis of confidence

4. The **basis of confidence** is the goodness of God. Even sinners have enough goodness in them so as to be able to give good things to their children. Will God not do even better? He is a good Father and when we come to Him making it clear what we need, by persistent steady praying, He will give to us an abundance of good things.

5. The greatest gift


• *For the help of the Holy Spirit*

5. The **greatest gift** for which we should pray is the gift of the Holy Spirit: '... how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!' ^{Ⓜ1}. It is not a reference to praying for the Day of Pentecost. Nor does it precisely refer to praying for the baptism with the Spirit. It is rather a prayer that disciples – ourselves included – ought to be praying all the time. The disciples needed the help of the Spirit. They had work to do for Jesus and they needed the constant daily empowering of the Spirit. Even before the abundant outpouring of the Spirit that came on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was working in the disciples, and they could ask for more of His working in their lives.

Ⓜ1 11:13

• *A constant prayer for Christians today*

Such praying is still needed in the life of the modern Christian. Even mighty spiritual experiences do not cancel out the need to go on praying for the work of the Spirit. Every time we minister for Jesus, every time we tell others about Him, every day we go out to work, we need to pray, 'Lord give me Your Holy Spirit.' And the Father will hear the praying of His children.

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