

Ask and You Will Receive

Jack Hughes

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 11. Imagine that. See if you can imagine this, [though]: we're actually going to go through verses 5 through 13 this morning, which is eight whole verses packed [with] yummy truth. You can turn [to Luke 11] and we'll be getting in[to] the text in a minute.

Most of you who are parents want to do what's best for your kids. When you're a parent, a lot of times you make rules. These aren't biblical mandates, but they're rules for your kids and your household that you make because you feel that [they will] be good for [your children] to one degree or another. The problem is that sometimes you wonder if you should bend those rules or not, because [although] the Bible doesn't say you have to eat your crust, there is a principle there [about which] you feel passionate. And so, you get [into situations like] this:

"Mom, can I have a soda with dinner?"

"No, son."

"Oh, why not?"

"Well, because you have already had enough sugar today. Besides, the caffeine is going to keep you awake all night."

"Oh, please, Mom. Please? You know caffeine doesn't bother me."

"No."

“Tomorrow there isn’t going to be school, [so] if it keeps me up [it doesn’t matter]. Please, please, please?”

We’ve all been there. Sometimes their persisting and their pleading kind of wears you down, and you’re thinking to yourself, “You know, the Bible doesn’t say, ‘Thou shalt not have soda with dinner,’ and just because it would keep *me* up all night doesn’t mean it’s going to keep him up all night. [Besides, even if it does], maybe it would be good for him to stare at the ceiling all night, [to] teach him a lesson.” You start going through this [thought process], and maybe you say, “OK, OK. You can have it.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you!”

Now, you already told him “no”—you already told him “no” twice. So, why did you give in? Well, [it is] because you want to please him. You want to give your kids good things. Parents want to do that. Maybe it was because you were tired of saying “no.” His persistence wore you down. Maybe it’s just [that] you’re a weak parent [and] you’re more concerned about your own comfort than what’s best for your kids.

God is nothing like an imperfect, sin-cursed parent. God is not fickle. He *always* does what is best. If He makes a rule, He never breaks it. If something is wrong, it’s wrong. If it’s right, it’s right. God knows in His mind the very best thing for you, and He’s sticking to that plan. But God does like it when we’re persistent. He likes persistent, importunate praying, when we come to Him and we just really go after what we think He wants. He really likes that, which we are going to learn this morning in our text.

Now, as we’ve been going through Luke 11, we have seen that Jesus is teaching His disciples how to pray. He gives them the Lord’s Prayer—the Disciples’ Prayer—to learn the great priorities of prayer—how we are to pray for certain things as a priority, very broad things, very important things, encompassing things. There’s a lot of information, as we have seen, in the Lord’s Prayer, but not only that, there is more information still that we need to know. Jesus continues to teach on prayer in the text before us [in Luke 11:5–13]. He actually gives two parables [in this text]. The first parable is [very] similar to a parable we’re going to encounter if we ever

live to see Luke 18. The second parable is [there] to help interpret that first parable and teach us a little bit more. Jesus, in these two parables in this section that we're going to be looking at this morning, is going for the attitudes, emotions, and expectations that we should have in prayer. So, look in your Bibles at Luke 11:5 and follow along as I read down through verse 13. This is just so convicting and so great. You're going to love this—at least, I did.

Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

From this section and these two parables, we're going to learn about two important aspects of prayer. I'm going to touch on a couple of other ones that we've already mentioned, but [we're going to cover] two major aspects of prayer, facets of prayer—whatever you want to call them—attitudes, emotions, expectations in prayer that we need to have when we

pray so we can give God the glory He deserves and pray in a way [in which] we are blessed and God's name is hallowed.

The first [aspect of prayer] is: We need to be persistent in prayer. Let me just transport you back in time because a lot of times when we talk about somebody in [a] house [in the time of the Bible], you might think of a house like you live in. Let me just take you back to the ancient Near East to the average house in one of the little villages along the outskirts of Jerusalem. You live in a one-[room] house. There [are] no dividers, there [is] no entryway, living room, dining [room], family room, kitchen, bathroom, [or] bedroom. There's none of that. [There's a] dirt floor, OK? Maybe in one corner or on one wall there is a little fireplace set up so you can cook in there, and the smoke will go out [the chimney]. At nighttime, when you're tired, you come into this place, you spread out mats, and you lay on the dirt floor on the mat[s]. That's where you [and your family] sleep, covering up most of the floor. In the morning, you get up and roll up your mats, and tuck them away so you have some room to walk around. People didn't spend a lot of time in their houses. They were not [very] cozy places, but they [might have had] a table, and a place where you could get out of the rain [or] the sweltering heat. But mostly, you would spend time outside, and just go [inside] in case of bad weather, and/or to stay warm, and/or to sleep.

So, keep that thought in your mind, and look at [Luke 11:]5: "Then He said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves."' Just stop there for a second. The Greek literally reads here, as the English Standard Version has it: "Which of you who has a friend," or it might be paraphrased as, "Can you imagine having a friend?" That's the whole idea. This lets us know that Jesus wants us to picture in our mind[s] the scenario I just explained to you. He wants us to think about the average home at that time and what it would be like in the middle of the night when everybody is sleeping. [Imagine that] a friend comes and begins to pound on your door and you're fast asleep because it's midnight.

Now, a lot of people, I realize, today, stay up pretty late. Some people are late-nighters. But what if you didn't have a TV? What if you didn't have any electricity or any lights except for a small candle and a little oil lamp? Most people just went to bed because [when] you [went] inside it was dark, and there [weren't] a whole bunch of gadgets to keep you awake all night. When it got dark, people would eat, and then [they] just [went] to sleep. That was kind of the standard thing. So, at midnight, pretty much everybody was sleeping. But we learn here in the text that there is this needy man, and there is this friend who is sleeping. The sleeping man, as we shall see, represents God in certain aspects, who answers prayer. The man asking [for the bread] represents all of us who are in need of having our prayers answered.

We've gone over this before, but I just want to bring it up again. You have to be a friend of God if you want to have your prayers answered. You must be reconciled to God. These two men were friends. The point is that you have to be the friend of God if you ever expect to have your prayers answered. There are all kinds of praying going on in all sorts of religions, faiths, cults, and even [among] non-religious people—when a big enough tragedy happens, a lot of those people pray. But the Scriptures make it clear [that] God does not hear their prayer[s]. You must be reconciled with God, have a relationship with God through faith in Christ, otherwise the only prayer God is ever going to listen to is the prayer of repentance and faith in Christ.

So, keep that in mind. We've talked about that in great detail in previous sermons. But look at [Luke 11:]6. The needy man in the parable is now going to explain why he is bothering his friend at such an inconvenient time—midnight. He says: "For a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him." Now, you might be thinking to yourself: "Well, Jack, come on. It's the middle of the night." I mean, what would you think if I came up to your house in the middle of the night, and said, "Hey, can I have [three] slices of bread?"

You [would ask], "What are you doing here?"

“I need some bread!”

“Can’t you wait until morning? What are you doing here?” It just seems so weird that the guy is bothering his friend. When [the verse] talks about three loaves, [it’s] probably talking about three little rolls—something you’d make a little submarine sandwich out of—[something] small. What is he doing in the middle of the night waking up his friend looking for bread? The reason we don’t understand what’s going on here is [that] we don’t understand the devotion to hospitality that was [the norm] in the ancient Near East. They [were] serious about hospitality.

The greatest example of this, I think, is found in the book of Genesis. If you remember, God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and sent the angels down there to the city, and the homosexual men of Sodom wanted to have relations [with]—to rape—the angels. [The angels were] hiding inside of Lot’s house, and Lot offer[ed] to give his two virgin daughters to the men of the city in order to appease them so they [wouldn’t] bother the angels [who were] under his roof [see Genesis 19:1–8]. We think of that, and [say], “Whoa! That is extreme!” Well, that’s the whole deal. [Lot] had such a huge sense of responsibility [for the angels] that he didn’t know what to do. He *had* to protect his guests. It was just the way it was back then. When you brought somebody under your roof, you were responsible to take care of him, protect him, provide for him—it was a universally understood thing, which today, in America, we hardly know anything about. We just hit the garage door button, open up the garage door, [quickly] close it behind us, [and] take the secret passage to our house. If anybody comes [to our door], we say, “It’s an inconvenient time, make an appointment with us on our calendar or call us later. Bye.” That’s it.

I have friends who are missionaries in the Middle East, who said, “Yeah, one of the hardest things there is the sense of hospitality [of the Middle Eastern people].”

I [wondered], “Well, why is that hard?”

[The example my friends gave is this]. It's three [o'clock] in the afternoon, you're walking down the street, and [someone on the street] says, "Hi! How are you doing?"

[You answer], "Fine."

"Come in, come in, come in."

"Well, I'm really busy."

"Just come, come, come, my friend." He grabs your arm and takes you into his house. Then he gives you coffee, which makes espresso taste like water with lots of sugar in it—[it's] about a fifty/fifty mixture. So, you're drinking this, and pretty soon you're talking really fast. You're having these discussions and you're talking, [and he says], "So, tell me about your wife. Tell me about your son. Tell me about your daughter. Tell me about your uncle. Tell me about your aunt. Tell me about your business. Tell me, how are you doing?" [You're] just talking, talking, talking, talking. Meanwhile, there are all these people in the back who are scurrying around frantically.

You [ask], "What's going on?"

"You're staying for dinner. We're preparing a feast for you."

"I was going to go. I wasn't..."

"Oh, no, no, no, no, no. We are going to feed you." So, then, you stay there, and he brings out all the best he has, at great sacrifice to himself.

And then you [say], "OK, I'm going to [go]."

"No, no, no! You're staying for dessert," and there are more people, [even some] neighbors running around outside.

You think, "What's going on here?" Finally, at eleven o'clock at night, [you say], "Thank you! Thank you!" You're all wired up on coffee—I mean, this stuff is jet-fuel coffee—and you leave. You [have] now experienced hospitality in the Middle East.

In America, we can't even understand this, but this is what's happening in our text [in Luke 11]. This is why the guy is there at [his neighbor's house at] midnight. He has this friend who has come to him in the middle of the night—unexpected[ly] [because they didn't] get on [their] cell phones, call up, and say, "Hey, I'll be there at 11:30 [p.m.]" A lot of times people

would travel at two times during the day: they would travel in late afternoon through about midnight, then they would sleep and travel in the morning, and then kind of sleep in the afternoon, and kind of do dual shifts, [trying] and travel during the cool part of the day. This person [who shows up at the man's house] is probably traveling at night, shows up at maybe 11:30 [p.m.] or so, and bangs on *his* door, wakes *him* up, wakes *his* wife up, wakes *his* children up, and says, "I'm here!"

"Oh! Uncle whatever! Glad you are here!" and then that Middle East[ern] tension comes in, [and the host thinks], "I have to take care of him! I have to give him my best! We don't have any food! Where can I go? The market's closed—[it's] not open in the middle of the night. I know! I can go to my neighbor." So he says, "Here, sit down, sit down." Pretty soon, the whole house is up, catering to the traveler. [The host] says, "I'll be right back," [and] off he runs. He runs and he gets to his friend[*'s* house], and [knocks on the door, crying,] "Friend! Give me three loaves! A friend of mine has come to me on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him!" This is a panic situation. "I *have* to show hospitality!"

Look at [Luke 11:]7: "And from inside he," the sleeping neighbor, "answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'" The guy [was] sound asleep. His wife and children [were] sound asleep. It's the middle of the night. They're spread out all over the floor on their mats. [The man is saying], "I can't get up and get you anything! I'd have to crawl all over my kids and my family, step on everybody, turn on the light, make all this noise, wake everybody up, open the door, and let the cold air in. Hello! Go away!"

Keep in mind here that the issue is not the bread. The guy is more than willing to give his neighbor three loaves of bread, and he's going to [as we'll see in a few verses]. When he gets up, he gives [the needy man] as much as he needs. The bread is not the issue. The issue is the inconvenience. It is very inconvenient to get up at this time [of night] for some loaves of bread.

Now, husbands, try this sometime. Some Saturday, when you're wife is really tired and wanting to sleep in, get up real[ly] early, before it's light, get ready, and at 5:30 a.m., wake her up, and say, "Honey! Honey! Wake up! Wake up! I want to take you out to breakfast right now. Just get dressed and we'll leave right now."

Now, what do you suppose she's going to say? She's going to look at you with those squinting eyes, look at the clock, and say, "It's 5:30! It's not even light outside! Go away! Leave me alone—I'm trying to get some sleep." It's not that she doesn't want to go to breakfast. She would *love* to go to breakfast with you—later. She's not fine with the timing. She's not fine with the consequences. She doesn't want to be running around outside without her face on and her hair done so she can go out to breakfast with you. So it is in our text. Again, bread is not the issue; it's the inconvenience associated with the request [that is the issue]: "The door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed [Luke 11:7]. I can't get up and give you anything. Sorry."

Henry Ironside, commenting on this, said:

This is used only as an illustration of what, to our poor finite minds, might seem to be the attitude of God when we do not receive immediately the answer to our prayer. No request of ours can ever be a trouble to Him. His delays are not denials, but are meant to test our faith."¹

So, what does the man do? [Does] he say, "OK, he won't get up. I guess I'll go home and be shamed in front of my guest"? Not on your life. [He bangs on the door, and says], "Come on! Just get up. I'll leave you alone, but I'm not leaving until I have those three loaves."

"Oh, go away! Go away!"

"I need three loaves! You [have] the loaves, I need the loaves, give me the loaves!" Something happens between [Luke 11:]7–8. That's implied

¹Henry A. Ironside, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2007), p. 365.

by what Jesus says in verse 8: “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend,” notice [that] friendship isn’t enough here. “You want me to get up and give you three loaves in the middle of the night? Sorry, pal. Friendship isn’t enough.” Your wife loves you. Your wife is your best friend, but that isn’t enough to get her up at 5:30 [a.m.]. [If there’s an] emergency, fine, [but for] breakfast, no way. Look at [Luke 11:]8. Jesus says: “Though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his *persistence* he will get up and give him as much as he needs” [emphasis added]. [The needy man] is banging [on the door, and saying,] “I’m not going away. I’m out here. I’m out here. Bread! Bread! Bread! I’ll wake up your whole family! Bread! Bread!”

Ironside says:

He refuses to be denied. He will not take “no” for an answer ... one can imagine his friend saying to his wife, “We shall have no sleep tonight unless I attend to his plea.” So he goes to the pantry and gets the bread, and gives it to his persistent neighbor.²

[The neighbor] opens the [door], and says, “Here! Goodnight!” The word translated “persistent,” as the New American Standard [version] has it, is translated “boldness” in the NIV, and the English Standard Version [has it] translated [as] “impudence.” It really means “shamelessness.” The guy is shameless, [banging on the door and shouting], “Not going away! Not going away! I want my bread! I want my bread and I want it now! Give it to me and I’ll go away.” He keeps begging until the guy gives in.

So guys, just try that with your wives sometime. No, [you] better not. “Honey, let’s go to breakfast! Come on! Please, please, please, please, please, please?” Just get ready [because] if there’s anything she can throw at you, she probably will.

²Ibid.

The lesson taught [in Luke 11:5–8] is absolutely critical to prayer: God wants us to be persistent in prayer. He loves it when we're persistent in prayer because persistence is an attitude, it is an emotion, [which] is coupled with faith that God has what we need—and He does—and He will give it to us, and that we must have it if we're asking for it for His glory. Why would He deny it?

Notice that the inconvenience the sleeping man had to go through in order to give [the bread to the needy man] is a huge issue. The request was a difficult one to make, as the needy man had to run out in the middle of the night himself, right? He had to run to his neighbor's. It was actually more difficult [for] the guy asking here than [it was for the] guy giving, right? He had to get up [and] he had to run to his neighbor's. And so, he's [basically saying], "Hey, listen. Don't tell me you're sleeping, pal. I had to run over here in the middle of the night in my jammies."

Jesus is teaching us here that even if you have a need that seems too great, too minor, or too inconvenient, just ask it anyway. God is not like a sleepy neighbor. God is not like a neighbor who, with persistence, *might* give in to you. If you're persistent with God, He *surely* will give you what you ask. That's the whole point here. God loves us to ask in passionate persistence because it demonstrates to Him that we believe we need Him, that He has what we need, and that He can give it to us. He loves that kind of faith, coupled with emotion, coupled with action.

If you have a brand-new car, you get up, you're eating breakfast, and you pray, "Thank You for the food. Lord, please help my new car make it to work today," that's not a very good request. Sometimes [new cars] conk out—a module goes bad or something—but usually not. But, if you have one of those real gem[s] of a car, those piece-of-junk cars, the ones that you have to have the wire hanging outside the window to open the latch from the outside, the speedometer is broken, smoke comes out, it makes all kinds of funny noises, the floorboards are kind of rusted through—you can see the road going by [underneath you]—[and] everywhere you park it there's a pile of oil underneath it, one of those cars where the mechanic

says, “Listen, this thing is beyond its last leg. Don’t get in it or it’s going to break down and you’ll be stranded,” and then you’re eating your breakfast, and you say, “Lord, help me get to work again,” and God keeps doing that day after day after day for a whole year, [that’s the kind of request we’re talking about]. [You tell people], “Listen, this is a miracle car here. It looks like a piece of junk, but man, it is a miracle.” You just praise God, you tell everybody about how your mechanic said [you shouldn’t even try to drive it], but God’s done that—[He has kept your car running].

God is able to amplify His name being hallowed, His name being glorified, because we are willing to ask Him. Whether it is a huge, just jaw-dropping prayer request, or whether it is some minor, seemingly insignificant request, or anything in between, just ask. *Just ask*. Jesus is saying, “Ask, and ask persistently.” [Though] the sleeping man in the parable is paralleled with God, God is no sleepy, reluctant neighbor. He never sleeps, He never slumbers, and He loves to give good gifts to His children. He loves to do it.

Look at [Luke 11:]9. Here’s kind of the punch line of the first parable: “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” The Greek is really good here. Jesus uses an emphatic statement here. He says, “I myself am telling you,” and then He gives three present-active imperatives. These are commands: “I myself am commanding you, keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.” That’s what He’s telling us here. Isn’t that amazing? He’s begging us to ask, seek, and find. He’s commanding it. He *wants* us to do it so He can answer. Think about that.

There is an escalation in [this verse]. Asking is when you acknowledge that you need God. We talked about this before. When Jesus said, “You pray in this way,” you have to humble yourself, [acknowledging] that you can’t do it, that God *can* do it, that you need God, that He [has] the resources, so you ask. Seeking, though, is everything asking is but put into action. Now you’re making effort. Knocking is kind of the intensity that goes with your asking and seeking. So, it might be like this, [in increasing

volume]: ask, *seek*, **knock**! Like that. That's what Jesus is saying: "Go for it!" which means that when you pray, you need to be passionate. You need to be zealous. You need to have faith that is coupled with crying out and begging and pleading with God.

Ironside says:

It is for our own soul's good that we become earnest in our supplications, pouring out our hearts in unremitting intercession, literally storming the gate of the storehouse of blessing until the answer comes. God will never deny the prayer of faith. "Ask," "Seek," "Knock," are degrees of importunity. As we continue to besiege the throne of grace we shall be moved to heart-searching and to self-judgment that we may pray according to the will of God.³

I don't know [how this sermon will affect] you, [but] this just beat me [up] all week. I was telling somebody [that] I felt like I was a giant, [besieged] castle all week, studying this because I just realized how many prayers I've prayed that were not like this. How many sleepy prayers have we prayed? We come to God in this cold, lifeless, ritualistic boredom that we call prayer but really is nothing more than an offense to our great God and King. Remember that when you pray, you enter into the throne room of God. Think about that. You approach what the author of Hebrews calls the "throne of grace" in prayer [see Hebrews 4:16].

What do you suppose the King thinks about the attitude of a person who comes and [says with a yawn], "Lord, I've got some needs. Maybe You'll answer them, maybe You won't." I'm sure the cherubim standing on one side of the throne look over at the seraphim on the other side of the throne as if to say, "Should we tell him not to pray that way? It is disrespecting and dishonoring to our King." But there you are, apparently oblivious to the great privilege that Christ *died* to give you: access into the presence of God

³Ibid., n.p.

Himself, anytime you want, to talk to God about anything you want for as long as you want. Just because you have access to the throne room of God at any time you want doesn't negate the fact that Jesus is still the great King [and] that you need to honor and respect [Him] when you approach Him.

Think about it. I don't know how many of you have had a private conversation with the president, but just think of [talking to] the *president*. What if the president call[ed] you up and [said], "Listen, I don't know why, but anything you want to talk to me about, anything that's important, anything that you think will help our country, you can call me anytime you want. Here's the number. Interrupt me in any meeting, [in] anything I'm doing—even if I'm giving the State of the Union address, I'll stop to talk to you. Anytime, for as long as you want to talk." That would be a pretty huge deal, wouldn't it? What if you were to call him up, and he said, "Oh, I was just in the war room."

"Oh, yeah," [you reply with a yawn], "I had to call you."

"What do you need?"

"Well, I don't know. I don't know if this is..."

[The president would say], "Listen, pal, you're wasting my time. I didn't give you this privilege so you could dribble on in front of me. What do you want? What are you in earnest about?"

When we are born again, when we know Christ, when we've repented of our sins, placed our faith in what Jesus did on the cross to save us, and believe[d] in His resurrection, we then have access into the very presence of God. We can enter into the Holy of Holies. We each of us are our own priest, and we come in the blood of Jesus into the presence of God, approaching the throne of grace to find help and mercy in a time of need [see Hebrews 4:16], anytime we want, as long as we want, whenever we want. But this is no excuse to slight God or treat Him disrespectfully, with cold, lazy, ritualistic prayers.

J.C. Ryle said: "Whenever we begin to feel careless about our private prayers, we may depend on it that there is something very wrong with the

state of our souls. There are breakers ahead. We are in imminent danger of shipwreck.”⁴

Thomas Watson [in] *The Godly Man’s Picture* said:

Prayer without fervency is like incense without fire. . . . The reason why so many prayers suffer shipwreck is because they split against the rock of unbelief. Praying without faith is shooting without bullets. When faith takes prayer in hand, then we draw near to God.⁵

He goes on to say:

Let us, then, close ranks and with our Savior pray yet more earnestly (Luke 22:44). Let us be importunate suitors, and resolve with St. Bernard that we will not come away from God without God. Prayer is a bomb which will make heaven’s gates fly open.⁶

And then he finally explains the attitude that we need to have in prayer, when he says:

When we are zealous in devotion, and our heart waxes hot within us, here is a fire from heaven kindling our sacrifice. How odious it is for a man to be all fire when he is sinning, and all ice when he is praying! A pious heart, like water seething hot, boils over in holy affections.⁷

This is what God wants, man. He wants *seething hot* prayers. He *loves* seething hot prayers. He doesn’t want you coming in there, [whining],

⁴Available at: <http://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/111.htm>

⁵Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 1992), p. 89–90.

⁶Ibid., p. 96.

⁷Ibid., p.

“Lord, please save so-and-so, and bless the green beans.” [No, He wants you to shout], “I *love* these green beans! Thank You!” [Put] some *passion* in there. May God give us prayers that are seething hot and boiling with affection. That’s what we’re after—asking, seeking, knocking. We want to see God glorified, we want to see His name hallowed, we want to see His kingdom come [see Luke 11:2]! We want to see Him supplying our daily needs [see Luke 11:3] and forgiving us our sins [see Luke 11:4].

What if you do come to God that way? What if you have that kind of prayer life? What can you expect? Look at [Luke 11:]10: “For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.” God is not a man asleep in heaven! He doesn’t say, “OK, bolt the gates of the storehouses of heaven and put the cherubim in front of it with the flaming sword so no one can get anything out of there—maybe a grain of sand underneath the door, but nothing else!” No, man, [those gates] are just wide open. He has already said, “I have given you every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” [see Ephesians 1:3], grace upon grace, or grace following grace [see John 1:16], “having all sufficiency in everything. . . for every good deed” [2 Corinthians 9:8]. What more do you want?” God is saying, “Just ask! No request is too great, and no request is too small.” God wants us to ask. He wants us to ask about everything, to “pray without ceasing” [1 Thessalonians 5:17].

You remember what happened in Exodus 32, when Moses went up on the mountain. He was up there getting the Ten Commandments, and the people were kind of waiting, [saying,] “I think he may have died.” So, they got a bunch of gold together, and Aaron said, “Yeah, we threw it in the fire and out popped this golden calf” [see Exodus 32:1–24]. Sure. Then later on, in Numbers 14, the people were grumbling and complaining, “Did you [bring] us down here into the wilderness to kill us?” [see Numbers 14:1–3].

In both of those instances, God says, “Moses, get back. Get back from the people so you don’t get scorched when I wipe them out—right now.”

Do you remember what Moses prays? [Does] he say, “Oh, this would be inconvenient for me, Lord”? No. He says, “Lord, wait a second now. What

about Your name? What about Your reputation among the nations? [If] You kill Your own people right now, other people are going to say of You that You weren't able to bring Your people out of the wilderness and turn them into a nation, [and] that the only reason You delivered them was to kill them in the wilderness. This will be bad for Your reputation, for Your name among the pagans. Don't do it!" [see Exodus 32:11–14; Numbers 14:11–21]. With great passion, [Moses] plead with God, and what happened? God extended mercy and grace, and He didn't destroy them even though, get this, they were still a stiff-necked, stubborn, and obstinate people. God still blessed them every day, though they be rebellious sinners, because Moses interceded.

You remember Genesis 32:22–32. Do you remember that little story about Jacob when he got to the river in Jabbok? He arrived there late some night, and maybe they were setting up a tent, and he was just standing by a river, and all of a sudden, behold, somebody appeared. It was the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ. What did Jacob do? Did he fall down on his face, and say, "Oh, Lord, don't kill me!" No. Did he grovel in the dust? No. Did he say, "Oh, oh, angel!" Is that what he did? [No, instead] he tackled the angel! He grabbed hold of the angel of the Lord! Think about that. Would you do that? If you saw an angel, [would you shout], "Come here!" [and grab him]? That's what [Jacob] did.

Why would he do that? Well, he had already purchased the right of the firstborn from his brother, Esau, with a bowl of soup—a very shrewd business maneuver. Then, through some deception, he got the blessing of the firstborn from his father. Though he did [that] in an evil way, the good thing was [that] he wanted the blessing of God so much in his life [that] he ached for it. He knew that if he was going to be great and give God great glory, he had to have the blessing. At this point in his life [in Genesis 32], he had learned a lot of things, and come around full circle. When he saw that angel, he said, "I'm holding on to that angel and I'm not letting go." [Scripture] says [that] they wrestled and wrestled until it was almost daybreak. [Then] the angel of the Lord [smote] him in the hip. [Jacob] still

wouldn't let [the angel] go, and said, "I'm not letting you go until you bless me!" [see Genesis 32:26]. God liked that. God really liked that, and oh, did God ever bless Jacob after that time. You just read. [Jacob becomes] the father of the twelve tribes of the nation Israel [see Genesis 49], and was named Israel by God [see Genesis 32:28].

[Do] you remember Hannah? Old Hannah [was] barren, couldn't have a child, [was] scorned by the other wife, [and was] just miserable. Finally, she just had to have a son, so in 1 Samuel 1, she thought, "OK, I'm going to the temple, and I'm getting a boy." Think about that. [She said], "I don't care if I've been barren or not." And so, she went there and with great earnestness she plead to the Lord, she begged God. The text says: "She, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly" [1 Samuel 1:10]. As a matter of fact, she wanted a baby so bad[ly], she said, "Lord, if you give me a son, I will give him back to You. I will give Him away to You in Your service" [see 1:11]. Again notice [that] it wasn't about her. She just wanted to give that baby to the Lord. And so, she got pregnant, and then she had a son, her only son, whom she loved. She took that son to the temple, and said, "Here," as soon as he was weaned [at the age of] two or three or so, and just walked away from her son [see 1:19–28]. Think about that. That son, then, became the greatest judge, prophet, and priest of Israel: Samuel.

Do you remember Hezekiah, one of the few godly kings, [who was in power] right before the nation of Judah fell? He was, for the most part, a great guy. At that time, the world power was Assyria, and Sennacherib was the king (or, as one of my friends called him, "Sen-ah-cherub"). Sennacherib was the king, and historians don't know exactly how big his army was, but it was probably in the multiple millions. He was sweeping down the Mediterranean basin like locusts with his armies, and he was just wiping out every place he came to, without [a] problem. Sennacherib knew he was coming to Jerusalem, and though Jerusalem was not a gigantic city, it was a very fortified city, and historically was a place that was a great stronghold. So, he sent Rabshakeh, his servant, to talk to Hezekiah, and he read him this letter, which basically said, "Listen, your God isn't big enough to stop

us. Don't be deceived into trusting in your God because my king is coming, and we wiped out every nation before you, and we're going to come here, and we're going to take Jerusalem, so you might as well just open the gates and surrender, and let us plunder you." What did Hezekiah do? He marched to the temple, spread the letter out before the Lord, and this is what he prayed in 2 Kings 19:16–19:

Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. Now, O Lord our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O Lord, are God."

Notice [that] he's not praying for himself; he's praying for the glory of God. Immediately, Isaiah the prophet got a message from God, and sent it from another messenger to Hezekiah. The message was: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you'" [2 Kings 19:20]. Then you find out that when Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem [with his] gigantic army that is just devouring the land, [2 Kings 19:]35 says: "Then it happened that night that the angel of the Lord," the same one [with whom] Jacob wrestled, "went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead."

The text [goes on to say]: "So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home", and in the white spaces it says, "with his tail between his legs," "and lived in Nineveh" [2 Kings 19:36]. Jerusalem wasn't captured. [Sennacherib] went back to Nineveh and he [wrote about] the great defeat of Lachish, instead of Jerusalem, which would have been the prize city. We

got to see some of [his engravings] in the British Museum, [where] he had his scribes chisel, “We captured Jerusalem like a bird in its nest.” He didn’t mention that a huge chunk of his army was decimated for some unknown reason in the middle of the night.

God wants your prayers to come from a heart of passion, earnestness, [and] zeal. If you’re praying for the glory of God, like you’ve learned, then why wouldn’t you ask with passion? If you really want God to be glorified, why not beg God to answer? It’s all about His glory, [and subsequently] it’s going to be good for you.

I’m sure that if some rich person said, “[If] anybody begs me enough, I’ll give him a million dollars,” there’d be a lot of people pleading, wouldn’t there?

“Please, please, please!”

“No, you have to do better than that.”

“Oh! Please!” People would be groveling all over the ground.

[In these verses] we’re talking about the glory of God. We’re talking about eternal blessings in heaven. Moses prayed because he feared for the reputation of God. Jacob wanted God’s blessing so He would be glorified more, [and] so [Jacob’s] descendants could honor the blessing that was uttered to him previously. Hannah wanted to have a child, and she was willing to give it to the Lord. Hezekiah didn’t want the name of the Lord blasphemed among the pagans.

So does this mean that everything that we’ve learned about prayer is nullified? That if we’re going to ask, and seek, and knock that God’s going to give us everything we want so we can indulge our flesh and sin ourselves into the grave? No. Does it mean that you don’t have to pray for the glory of God? No. Does it mean that you don’t have to ask according to God’s will and if you don’t know what God’s will is that you don’t have to pray, “Yet not my will but Thine be done” [see Luke 22:42]? No. Does it nullify all the other instructions on prayer? No. It adds to them. Pray persistently, pray zealously, pray earnestly. [Jesus] is adding to what He has said [already about prayer], He’s not nullifying everything He has said before.

What if you do this? What if you prayed like this? Well, this leads us to the last little parable [and the second aspect of prayer]: Expect good answers to your prayers. Look at [Luke 11:]11–13:

Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

There are three pairs of parallelisms [in these verses]. You have the fish [and] the [snake], the egg [and] the scorpion, and good gifts and the Holy Spirit. The first parable and these first two parallelisms in this second part are all about food. The man wants three loaves [see Luke 11:5], the [son] wants a fish [see 11:11], the [son] wants an egg [see 11:12]. In the last part, He says, “Even an earthly father wouldn’t give a serpent to his son,” which would deliver a deathly [bite], “or a scorpion if he asked for an egg.” I mean, earthly fathers wouldn’t do that. R. Kent Hughes says it sounds like something from Stephen King.

The final parallelism, though, is what seems kind of out of place here. [Jesus] says, “So your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.” You think, “How did the Holy Spirit come in here?” Well, if you remember, Luke loves the Holy Spirit, so he sticks the Holy Spirit in wherever he can get him. But here, you’re thinking, “OK, so why do we have all these food issues and now we’re talking about [the] Holy Spirit?” The “good gifts” could be anything any man might be able to supply, but the Holy Spirit is a gift [that] only who can supply? God. That’s right.

“How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” What does that mean? Some have said, “Well, what we need to do is we need to ask for sign gifts, miraculous gifts. That’s what it’s talking about.” No, that’s not what it’s talking about. Spiritual

gifts are given, as we have learned, to believers when they believe at the point of salvation according to the Spirit's desires, not ours, and He gives as He wills. Sign gifts are only for certain times of history in certain limited places for a certain limited time.⁸ We've learned that and covered that, so that's not what He's talking about. So, is Jesus saying that the Father is going to give the Holy Spirit in the future at the birth of the Church? [Some people say], "That's it! When the Church is born in the future, believers are going to receive the Holy Spirit." Well, that is true, but that's not what He's talking about either because Jesus is telling them what they can have now. They don't even know anything about the Church yet.

So, I think it's best to understand Jesus' statement to mean that when believers go to God in prayer, God is willing to give them Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit to help them. Remember that even in the Old Testament believers were born again by the Holy Spirit, weren't they? You remember Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John 3:10: "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?" that people are born of the Spirit? The Holy Spirit wasn't absent in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit led people to Christ. Nicodemus should have known that—[it was a] no-brainer. Even in the Old Testament, not only did God's Spirit come upon people to empower them for certain tasks, but [also] to help them with sanctification—living a godly life. You say, "Well, how do we know that?" [We know that] because of what Jesus tells the disciples in John 14:17, when He says: "He," that is, the Holy Spirit, "abides with you," now, "and will be in you," when the Church is born. Jesus says, "As believers in the Old Testament era, you have the Holy Spirit with you to help you live for the glory of God, but in the future, when the Church is established, He will be in all believers."

We know that from Romans 8:9: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." [Romans 8:]14 [says]: "For all who

⁸A sermon on the sign gifts can be found at:

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20050508>

are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” But the point is [that] both in [the] Old Testament era and [the] New Testament era, people were born again by the Spirit and were helped by the Spirit to live for the glory of God. That’s just kind of a standard, common factor. It’s a degree thing between what happened in the Old Testament and the New Testament, [but that’s not to say] that [those who were alive during] the Old Testament [times] were born again by the Spirit and then left the rest of the time to live their lives in the power of the flesh. That’s not how it was.

Jesus wants us to understand, though, when He says this that God isn’t like an earthly father. I mean, granted, what earthly father is going to give [his] son who wants something to eat a snake, a poisonous viper, or a scorpion? Earthly fathers won’t even do that. The point is [that] if God is our heavenly Father, and He is a perfect Father, He’s even willing to give the greatest gift that anyone could ever ask, and that is the ongoing assistance—help, aid—of the Holy Spirit. Think about it. Think about how we are able to walk in the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit, that we can understand the Word of God because of the Holy Spirit, that we are able to grow in Christ-likeness because of the Spirit, that the Holy Spirit convicts us because He is there dwelling [in us]. The whole point is that the Holy Spirit is God’s gift to us to help us, to nurture us.

Here’s the contrast: If God is willing to give us the greatest gift, then He is willing to give us everything down the line. It’s really similar to what Paul says, right, in Romans 8:32? “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

You see, if you have this multi-billionaire, and he says, “All my resources are at your disposal,” and you come to him, and you say, “Well, you know, can I have three slices of bread?” [It’s a] no-brainer.

[He would say,] “Here! I’ll buy you a whole chain of bakeries.” You see, if you have the Holy Spirit, you know you’re going to get everything lesser than that. [That’s] the whole point. That’s the contrast that Jesus is making here. So, when you pray to your heavenly Father, do not compare Him to

the sleepy neighbor [of Luke 11:7]. Do not compare him to the reluctant neighbor. Do not think of God as being inconvenienced. Don't think of God as giving you a serpent when you want a fish, or a scorpion when you want an egg. Think of Him as being willing to give you the greatest gift that anyone could ever receive, and that is the ongoing aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit and everything below that, which is everything.

Geldenhuis, in his commentary on Luke, makes this concluding remark [to this] parable:

No regenerate child of God should ever doubt that when he prays to God out of real need his prayer will be answered. He who doubts this does Him the greatest dishonor, for by not believing that He will give what we really need, we in fact appear to regard Him as less sympathetic and less faithful than an ordinary earthly father or even an ordinary earthly friend. Therefore unbelief in relation to the answering of prayer is not only a weakness, but a serious sin and utter folly.”⁹

I think [that] if we were convinced that God was always going to answer our prayers, we would pray much more and much more passionately. It is unbelief that keeps us from doing that. So, when you leave here today, I hope that you realize that, yes, all those other things [we've learned about prayer] are important, but in [your] praying for God's name to be hallowed, in [your] prayer for the kingdom of Christ to come, in [your] prayers for [your] daily needs and the needs of [your] neighbor, in [your] prayer for the forgiveness of sin and that others would be forgiven, in all of that, [you] need to do it passionately. [You] need to do it zealously. [You] need to come to God, and say, “OK, Lord, I think this is Your will. If not, then do Your will,” and then go at it. If [you] know it's His will, then just go at it. Even when all hope is lost, and we think, “Oh, well, He could never pull through now.” Oh, yes, He can. There [have] been so many times when God has

⁹Norval Geldenhuis, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), p. 325.

pulled through when [people were sure] it couldn't happen. He *loves* to do that. And so, pray, and do it persistently, do it zealously, and don't forget that your God always gives you good things, never bad things. We can always rejoice in whatever the answer is. If it's "yes," great; if it's "no," great; if it's "wait," great because we have a great God who is good and He always gives good things. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for what we learned in these two parables and this teaching here in Luke. Father, we just ask that You would make us men and women who come before the throne of grace with great reverence, with great fear, yet great earnestness, realizing that there is no reason to come before You unless it's important. Whether it's a large request or a small request, since You have told us to pray about all things, everything is important, so we must come before You, and yet do it persistently, to not give up on those things we are confident will bring You glory. And so, Father, help us to be a church of passionate pray-ers, that we might pray with diligence, with fire, seething hot, and then may we trust that You always will give us good answers, for You are a good God, and You love Your children more than any earthly father ever could. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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