

Session 4

February 11, 2024

PRAYING FAITH

Luke 11:1-13

In Luke 18, Jesus “spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and to faint not.” The apostle Paul echoed the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, instructing the church there to “Pray without ceasing;” and again in 1 Timothy 2:8, when he told the young pastor, “I will therefore that men pray everywhere.” Those are great instructions for the mature in the faith, but how does the average person get there? We have been very good at telling people that praying is “just talking with God,” but if that’s the case, then why did Jesus see the need to instruct His disciples in how to pray? There are plenty of applications in this week’s lesson, so forgive me if I stray a bit!

A plea (v. 1). While much of this passage looks like the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.5-7), it happened at a different time and under different circumstances. There, the Lord was speaking to a crowd of people. Here, He is with His disciples alone. Clearly, Jesus prayed often. Luke himself included several incidents of prayer (see Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28; et al). Hence the “model prayer” was modeled in both content as well as lifestyle. And His disciples noticed. That John had also taught his disciples indicates that teachers saw the benefit of helping young disciples. The one making the request should not be seen as one “trying to fit in,” but rather as one dedicated to being the best “pray-er” he could be. Obviously, Jesus was best qualified to teach the discipline of proper praying. For reflection: *Unfortunately, the simple idea that praying is “just talking to God” has produced a generation of believers who begin public prayers with things like “Hey God...” or “Dear Daddy...” I know I’m old fashioned, but why do you think such informality bothers me so much? What insight does this passage add to this discussion?*

A pattern (vv. 2-4). While there are both wording and format differences from the model prayer in Matthew, the same general ideas are present: the reverence inherent in God’s name and submission to His divine purpose (v. 2); a request for ongoing, daily provision (v. 3); recognition of personal sin and the need for forgiveness both received and offered to others (v. 4); and the plea for divine help with protection from temptation (and no doubt, the sin that so easily accompanies it) (v. 4). As a pattern, the prayer is not meant to be a rote memorization. But there is certainly nothing wrong with quoting it, either! For reflection: *How do we know the model prayer is not meant to be simply quoted verbatim? In what ways could the model prayer be used as a teaching tool in churches today?*

Perseverance (v. 5-10). I love this illustration! It almost sounds like God answers prayer just to shut us up! But the principle is that God answers the prayers of people who are serious about praying. It’s a picture of perseverance. While it’s true that God already knows what we need before we ask (see Matt. 6:8), this text indicates that God has particular respect for those who come to Him firmly and consistently. First, such praying *indicates* faith. When we pray like that, it’s because we truly believe that God has the answer and will provide that answer. But second, such praying actually *increases* our faith. The more we go to Him, the more we see Him at work in our lives. For this reason, Jesus said to “Keep asking, and it will be given to you” (v. 9). For

reflection: *We can use the acronym “ASK” to remember the principles taught here and Matthew 7:7, in order: A is for “ask,” S is for “seek,” and K is for “knock.”*

Product (vv. 11-13). The inquiring disciples were rewarded with more than a pattern for praying, as they were treated to hear of the pleasure that God receives by giving “good gifts” to His children (see James 1:17). Notice the contrast offered in verse 13. If even our imperfect, earthly fathers can give decent gifts to their children, then shouldn’t we assume that our perfect, heavenly father will do the same? The final phrase is a bit awkward. This verse does not teach that we have to ask for the *person* of the Holy Spirit. He enters us fully and completely at our new birth! Rather, this verse refers to the *products* of the Holy Spirit; those good gifts (and benefits) that the Holy Spirit brings into our lives with Him. For reflection: *Take some time to list those gifts and benefits we receive from the Holy Spirit when we are saved. How many are given for personal benefit? How many are given to be used in His service?*