

Intro:

We are going to take one more look at prayer before Christmas. Our next message in this series will be in January.

In response to the heart-felt prayer of a disciple, Jesus taught again the lesson of the Lord's Prayer, the model prayer.

The Lord did not stop with the model but gave more teaching. His intention was to encourage prayer.

In praying, men are tempted to discouragement by various 'senses' they have about prayer:

1. A sense that God does not hear (or is not there) [almost a pagan notion]
2. A sense that God does not answer (or does not care)
3. A sense that God will not answer exactly as I ask

Each of these senses betrays a faulty view of God, but today we won't spend time on that. Today we want to look at one encouragement the Lord Jesus gave us to pray. He did it by telling a parable intended to make this point:

"The Saviour did not merely give a model prayer to His followers, but taught in a striking manner *the certainty* of answer to prayer."¹

Read Lk 11.5-10

Proposition: God, by promising the certainty of his answers, intends to encourage the persistence of his children.

I. The Parable (5-8)

A Scottish preacher, Alexander Whyte, retold the parable this way:

"It is night. It is midnight. The night is dark. All the lights are out, and everybody is in bed. 'Friend! lend me three loaves! For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him!' He knocks again. 'Friend! lend me three loaves!' He waits awhile and then he knocks again. 'Friend, friend! I must have three loaves!' 'Trouble me not: the door is now shut; I cannot rise and give thee!' He is dumb, for a time. He

¹ Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 324. [emphasis mine]

stands still. He turns to go home. But he cannot go home. He dare not go home. He comes back. He knocks again. 'Friend!' he cries, till the dogs bark at him. He puts his ear to the door. There is a sound inside, and then the light of a candle shines through the hole of the door. The bars of the door are drawn back, and he gets not three loaves only but as many as he needs, '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.'"²

A. The parable as an extension of the teaching

1. The NAS introduces the parable this way: "Then He said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend...'"
2. The parable is intended to give a *further* impression concerning the Lord's attitude towards our prayers

B. The situation of the parable

1. A man has a friend arrive late at night
2. He has no food in the house

Ancient hospitality considered it improper to feed a guest from a loaf of bread already broken open, so one could have food for his family, but not 'proper food' for his guest.

3. He rouses a friend out of sleep in the dead of night, 'Give me three loaves'
4. The friend refuses – it is inconvenient to open the door, wake the children [one room homes], rouse the whole house, and give him the bread
5. The asking friend doesn't give up – he'll wake the whole house by himself if he has to
6. The giving friend will give in, not for the sake of friendship, but for peace and quiet

² Alexander Whyte, *Teach Us to Pray*, online edition, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/whyte/pray.vi.xi.html> (accessed 12.9.2007)

C. The assumptions of the parable

1. Friendship – a relationship exists

“In the parable the host’s shameless persistence showed how strongly he regarded his friend’s friendship. It shows how much he dared to ask and to expect from his friend. This persistence moved the friend to grant his request. The secret to the host’s success was his persistence.”³

2. Propriety of request – the friend wasn’t banging on the door for no good reason

“I’m hungry, give me some bread!”

Just as in the parable a relationship existed and the request was appropriate, so our prayers are not to ignore these factors, willfully claiming the promise of God to answer and thus turn him into a genie to meet our beck and call.

- a. In the relationship of creature to Creator, it is always appropriate to cry out to God for salvation from sin through Jesus Christ.
- b. In the relationship of believer to Father, many needs, ministries, missions are appropriate matters of prayer

II. The Principle (9)

A. The principle of persistence [present tenses]

1. Ask and keep on asking
2. Seek and keep on seeking
3. Knock and keep on knocking

See Jas 4.2

“Men, when they ask anything of God, often give over seeking. They go *once*, and if it is not granted they are discouraged. It is not so when we ask anything of men. *Then* we persevere; we take no denial; we go again, and *press* the matter till we obtain it. So we should of God.”⁴

³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). Lk 11:7.

⁴ Barnes, *Notes on Luke and John*, p. 73.

Rory as a 5 yr old – ‘If I keep on asking, Dad might give in.’

But note this: “Jesus was contrasting, not comparing, God’s attitude with the friend’s attitude (vv. 9–13).”⁵

You will not persuade God by persistence, but God will mold you.

In the model prayer, we are taught to pray for our daily bread. How often should we pray for daily bread?

- Every day
- When we don’t have bread
- When we do have bread
- Every day

Suppose God simply gave you what you wanted when you wanted it. How often would you pray? — only when you wanted something.

But God wants you to pray without ceasing. So he teaches you to pray by waiting to answer.

B. The principle of intensity in prayer

“Asking, seeking, knocking, are ascending rounds in the ladder of successful prayer.”⁶

1. Ask is the first rung
2. Seek is the second rung
3. Knock is the third rung

How intense would be the praying if God gave you your request immediately on the first ask? God intends for you to pray, and to keep on praying.

Blind Bartimaeus, Mk 10.46-52

⁵ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). Lk 11:7.

⁶ E. M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, ch. 7, online edition <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bounds/necessity.i.viii.html> (accessed 12.9.2007)

- C. The principle of delay in prayer
1. There will be delay according to God's will
 2. God calls you to pray through the delay

Consider Jacob's prayer at Bethel (Gen 28.18-22)

How many years intervened before God answered Jacob's prayer? 20

What else intervened? An experience of wrestling with God all night as he returned home (Gen 32.9-12, 24-28)

III. The Promise (10)

- A. The promise is uttered twice: first as Jesus introduces the principle (9a)

"Jesus introduced this promise with a phrase that underlined its reliability and gave His personal guarantee. Everyone who asks of God will receive from Him, not just the persistent (*cf. Matt. 7:7-8*)."⁷

- B. Second, as he repeats the asking, seeking, knocking with assurance (10)

"Verse 10 gives the justification for the promise in verse 9. It sets forth the absolute certainty of what Jesus just said. God will definitely respond to the prayers of His children. A stronger promise is difficult to imagine."⁸

"The response of many Christians to this promise is: I asked but did not receive. I sought God but did not feel I got through to Him. I knocked at His door, but He did not admit me. However the unusual strength with which Jesus gave this promise should encourage us to believe Him in spite of appearances. We may not have received yet. We may not feel that we got through to God, but Jesus said we did. We may feel that we are knocking on heavens of brass, but Jesus promised that God entertained our prayer."⁹

⁷ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). Lk 11:9.

⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). Lk 11:9.

⁹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). Lk 11:9.

- C. The reason we are to persist in prayer is that Jesus said the Father answers such prayers: do you have faith in God?

Conclusion:

Alexander Whyte in his sermon on this passage imagined that the parable came out of the Lord's own experience. That isn't necessarily true, but Dr. Whyte shows that the Lord himself believed his own lesson by the way he prayed:

“Our Lord Himself was often like that importunate poor man, out at midnight, knocking for bread. When He was a child, He had lain, full of fear, and had heard all that knocking at midnight at Joseph's door. And, when He became a man, He remembered that sleepless midnight, and spiritualised it and put it into this parable. And often, when He was full of all manner of labours, and all manner of temptations all day, He called to mind that midnight in Nazareth, and knocked again and again till He got as much as he needed. There are things in the Gospels written there—without emotion and without exclamation—at which our hearts stand still, when we suddenly come upon them. ‘He went up into a mountain to pray: and when the evening was come He was there alone.’ And, again, ‘He departed again into a mountain Himself alone.’ And, again, ‘It came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.’ He continued all night. Do you see Him? Do you hear Him? Can you make out what He is asking? He stands up. He kneels down. He falls on His face. He knocks at the thick darkness. All that night He prays, and refuses to faint, till the sun rises, and He descends to His disciples like a strong man to run a race. And in Gethsemane all His past experiences in prayer, and all He had ever said to His disciples about prayer,—all that came back to His mind till His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. No,—we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. ‘Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears ... And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.’ And in nothing more than in importunate prayer.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Alexander Whyte, *Teach Us to Pray*, online edition, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/whyte/pray.vi.xi.html> (accessed 12.9.2007)