

LEARNING TO PRAY

Luke 11:1-8

Intro: This passage (down to verse 13) has to be one of the most delightful, one of the most encouraging, one of the most instructive, of all of the passages that we have in the Gospels.

It is delightful because:

- 1) Of what it teaches us about our Lord while He was here on earth.
- 2) Of what it teaches us about one of the disciples.
- 3) Of what it teaches us about God.
- 4) Of what it teaches us about prayers and about praying. The Lord not only taught them about the content of their praying, but their determination in prayer.

It is delightful, in other words, because you find the Lord here in a most amazing occupation. You find Him saying amazing things about God. And you find a marvelous opportunity opened to this disciples (whoever he was), and consequently to all of us who are the people of God.

Now we must remember that there is more about prayer in the Bible than we have here. What the Scriptures teach us about prayer is revealed progressively as is every other doctrine of Scripture. But this was the foundational teaching of our Lord on this subject while He was here on earth. He taught other things, e.g., in the Upper Room Discourse, but nothing that was more foundational than this.

Let us seek to learn what the Lord will teach us from this passage. It may be that we have gotten away from some of these most basic truths regarding prayer.

First . . .

- I. THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD: "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased . . . (Luke 11:1).

The Lord praying? Does this not amaze you? If He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Word Who was in the beginning, the One who made all things, the One Who possesses every divine attribute, does HE need to pray?

The answer is, Yes! If He did not need to pray, then He would have been guilty of hypocrisy -- and it would be blasphemy to accuse our Lord of such a thing!

Notice what Luke alone has to say about the prayers of our Lord:

- 1) Luke 5:16.
- 2) " 6:12.
- 3) " 9:18.
- 4) " 9:28-36.
- 5) Here in Luke 11:1-13.
- 6) Luke 22:31, 32.
- 7) " 22:39-46.
- 8) " 23:46 (cited from Psa. 31:5).

What could be more of a rebuke to us, and therefore an example to us than the thought of our Lord praying -- a ministry which He, by the way, now continues at the right hand of the Father!

It was this that prompted "one of his disciples" to make the request that we have in this first verse of Luke 11.

II. THE REQUEST OF THE DISCIPLE: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

We have no record in Scripture of John's disciples asking him to teach them, nor of any of his teaching on the subject of prayer, but this is enough to indicate that he did teach them about prayer.

However, note

A. The desire: "Teach us to pray."

This is the desire of a truly redeemed heart. Before it is stated in Scripture that Paul preached, it is said by none other than the Lord Himself, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11b). Undoubtedly Ananias went to him as an answer to his prayer. But the significant thing was that he prayed.

Why is it that there is so little desire to pray among professing Christians? Some never pray at home, or any place else. Could this be another evidence of the superficial way we have gotten people into our churches? Oh, as I said this morning about delighting in the Word as an evidence of salvation, surely the same thing must be said about prayer -- that it, too, is an evidence of salvation! Such a request, when it comes from the heart, has to be God-given, because such desires are not natural to the human heart. Men may go through forms, but it would never occur to them that there are certain ways in which we must come to God!

This unnamed disciple, probably speaking for the others, sensed his need to be taught.

The second thing to note about this request was:

- B. The One to Whom the request was made: "One of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

This in itself is a prayer, isn't it? The disciple was addressing the Son of God, and prayer means to come to God, and to speak to Him! That is what this disciple was doing.

If I were to ask the question, How many of you are satisfied with your praying?, I doubt if a single hand would be raised. We all know that we could pray more, that we could pray more effectively, that we have much to learn about prayer.

But let me ask another question: Have you ever asked the Lord to teach you to pray -- like this disciple did? You have read books about prayer. You have heard others speak about praying. You may have been struggling with your prayers, and trying out things that others have suggested. But have you ever asked Him to teach you? Do you believe that He would? Do you believe that He would take such time with you?

Let me ask you another question: If the Lord did teach you, how would He do it? We are not like His disciple -- we cannot see the Lord standing before us; we have not seen the Lord Himself praying. How would He do it?

May I answer that question?

The Lord would take you to the very words which He spoke to that disciple who made that request while He was here on earth. And He would also take you to the other prayers of Scripture. We have everything that we need in Scripture itself to answer all of the questions we have about prayer! Do you believe that? Oh, that we would come to the Lord FIRST, and that we would turn to the Word FIRST, not only in prayer, but in everything else -- and then we would learn a lot faster than we do!

It should encourage us to see that the request of this disciple was not denied. Let us note just a few details about

III. THE ANSWER THE LORD GAVE TO THE DISCIPLE (Luke 11:2-8).

We do not have time to take up every detail, but let me just mention the outstanding points. As we look at them, let me give a word of caution.

I am sure that a person can pray this prayer from the heart. But I am equally sure that the Lord did not intend for His

people just to memorize this prayer and never pray anything else. We have no instance in Scripture of this prayer ever being prayed -- either by the Apostles, by elders or deacons, or by the churches. The Apostle Paul never prayed this prayer, as far as we know. This was intended to be a pattern to show the vital parts of prayer, the character of true praying. Memorize it if you like, and pray it if the Lord leads you to do so, but don't just pray this. And let us not make hypocrites out of some people by asking a whole congregation to pray this prayer when there are probably always some present who cannot with a sincere heart call God their "Father."

But let us look now at the prayer. What did the Lord teach His disciples?

- A. First, that when we pray we are to talk to God: "Say, our Father."

Prayer is not just an attitude, or a feeling of some kind; prayer means that we go to God and speak to Him! There is a lot of sentimental nonsense that is being given to Christians these days, but this only qualifies as prayer. You are a person, and you are coming to the greatest of all persons; speak to Him.

- B. Second, since only God's children can truly pray, or even want to pray, call Him, "Father" -- "Our Father" -- which suggests how He loves for us to address Him.

NOT PROMINENT
IN THE C.T.

There are times when it is good to recognize in prayer the glorious attributes of God, but this is what He wants to hear first.

It not only indicates that we know what our relationship to Him is, but also that we know the tenderness and love with which He considers us.

And what father is there who cannot understand this? Look at Luke 11:11-13.

- C. Third, our prayers need to be God-centered.

We begin our prayers thinking about Him -- in two ways:

1. We are to worship Him: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."
2. Then we are to be concerned about His will, the accomplishment of His purposes in the earth: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

If you stop to think about the implications of this request, you will discover that this has to do with the preaching of the Gospel, the building up of the saints, and concern for the fulfillment of God's will for men.

So not only does our concern for the glory of God come before our own requests, but so does our concern for the work of God in the hearts of others precede our personal requests.

D. Fourth, requests for ourselves (Luke 11:3, 4).

A. For our daily bread -- and all temporal needs.

This means that, if I need work, I can pray about it. It also means that, if I have work, I should recognize that the bread on my table comes to me from the Lord on a day by day basis.

B. For our spiritual needs -- two requests:

1. Our need for forgiveness -- which is daily.
2. Our need for protection from "evil," or as some translate it, from the Evil One.

These represent the main needs that we have.

But there is one other thing in verse 5 through 8 which is continued on into the latter part of the passage (through verse 13).

E. The importunate character of our praying.

This is the place where we so often fail -- we stop praying when the answer does not come immediately.

But, you say, should I continue to bother the Lord even though I know that I am praying according to His will? He wants you to! He could have stopped with what we have in verse 4, but He continued on. This is a vital part of being taught how to pray. It indicates that often you will find what appears to be a great reluctance in God, your Father, but He only designs to strengthen your faith and to keep you coming to Him.

Concl: Matthew concludes (Matt. 6:13b) with another expression of worship: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Our prayers need to be started with worship, and concluded with worship. May this coming year bring us rich lessons from the Lord in the joy that He intends for us to have through prayer!