

## “Lord, Teach Us to Pray” (Luke 11:1–13)

### **“Alone, Yet Not Alone!”**

When John Paton and his wife Mary arrived in the New Hebrides (now called Vanuatu) on November 5, 1858, they represented the fifth known attempt by missionaries to establish a church on the chain of eighty islands in the South Pacific. Nineteen years earlier, in 1839, John Williams and James Harris landed on the beach on the island of Erromanga, and within minutes they were beaten to death with clubs and eaten by cannibals. “Thus were the New Hebrides baptized in the blood of Martyrs,” wrote Paton in his autobiography, “and Christ thereby told the whole Christian world that He claimed these Islands as His own.”<sup>1</sup> The second team of missionaries arrived in 1842, and they lasted seven months before being driven off the island of Tanna by the native population. But the next two—John Geddie, a Presbyterian from Nova Scotia who arrived in 1848, and John Inglis, a Presbyterian from Scotland who landed in 1852—found success on the island of Aneityum. By 1854, half of the population of that island (about 3,500 people) had been converted.

In 1857, as Paton was concluding his theological education in Glasgow, he sensed an irresistible call to the island chain: “I continually . . . heard the wail of the perishing Heathen in the South Seas; and I saw that few were caring for them, while I well knew that many would be ready to take up my work in Carlton [a district of Glasgow where Paton ministered as a city missionary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland]. . . . The Lord kept saying within me, ‘Since none better qualified can be got, rise and offer yourself.’”<sup>2</sup> Not everyone was pleased with his determination to sail to the other side of the world in the service of the gospel—“nearly all were dead against the proposal.” His home church, Green Street Church, tried desperately to persuade him to stay, even to the point of offering him money and a house. One elderly gentleman in the congregation, a Mr. Dickson, exclaimed, “The Cannibals! you will be eaten by Cannibals!” Paton’s response is classic:

---

<sup>1</sup> John G. Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography Edited by His Brother* (1889; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), 75. I am indebted to John Piper’s short biography of John Paton, which I follow throughout this introduction alongside Paton’s autobiography; John Piper, “John G. Paton: ‘You Will Be Eaten by Cannibals!’: Courage in the Face of Fierce Opposition,” in *21 Servants of Sovereign Joy: Faithful, Flawed, and Fruitful* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 531–53.

<sup>2</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 52–53.

“Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honouring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.”<sup>3</sup>

And so it was that Paton and his pregnant wife, Mary, arrived on the island of Tanna in November of 1958. Four months later, Mary and their newborn son died of fever. “Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me; as for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows!”<sup>4</sup> Paton dug two graves and buried his wife and child next to his house. He wrote:

Stunned by that dreadful loss, in entering upon this field of labor to which the Lord had Himself so evidently led me, my reason seemed for a time to almost give way. The ever-merciful Lord sustained me . . . and that spot became my sacred and much-frequented shrine, during all the following months and years when I labored on for the salvation of the savage Islanders amidst difficulties, dangers, and deaths. . . . *But for Jesus, and the fellowship he vouchsafed to me there*, I must have gone mad and died beside the lonely grave!<sup>5</sup>

The next four years found Paton in almost constant danger, both from disease (he contracted fever fourteen times) and from deadly foes. When in 1862 a measles epidemic swept through the islands killing thousands, the natives blamed Paton and the other missionaries scattered across the New Hebrides. Paton soon found himself on the run one night as hundreds of natives hunted him. Paton recorded:

I climbed into a tree, and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if it were but of yesterday. I heard the frequent discharging of muskets, and

---

<sup>3</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 55–56.

<sup>4</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 79.

<sup>5</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 80, italics added.

the yells of the Savages. Yet I sat there among the branches, as safe in the arms of Jesus. Never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me, and speak more soothingly in my soul, than when the moonlight flickered among these chestnut leaves, and the night air played on my throbbing brow, as I told all my heart to Jesus. Alone, yet not alone! If it be so to glorify my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree, *to feel again my Saviour's spiritual presence, to enjoy His consoling fellowship.* If thus thrown back upon your own soul, alone, all, all alone, in the midnight, in the bush, in the very embrace of death itself, have you a Friend that will not fail you then?<sup>6</sup>

Forced to flee the island of Tanna, Paton returned to Australia and then to Great Britain, spending the next four years mobilizing more missionaries to give their life for the sake of Christ in the New Hebrides. In 1864, Paton remarried; and two years later, he and Margaret return to the New Hebrides to stake their claim upon the tiny island of Aniwa (“It measures scarcely seven miles by two”<sup>7</sup>). They found the natives on the island identical to those on nearby Tanna, from which Paton had been forced to flee four years earlier—they, too, practiced cannibalism, infanticide, and widow sacrifice (the killing of widows so they could serve their husbands in the next world). But this time around, God blessed their efforts with a tremendous awakening upon the island. Paton learned the language, translated the Scriptures, built orphanages, planted a church, and trained up native teachers whom he sent out to surrounding villages. Within fifteen years, the entire island had been converted to Christ. “I claimed Aniwa for Jesus, and by the grace of God Aniwa now worships at the Savior’s feet.”<sup>8</sup>

Paton’s autobiography testifies to a man who enjoyed consistent, intimate communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, such communion was the foundation of his courage, his perseverance, his joy. Near the end of his life, Paton wrote, “I pity from the depth of my heart every human being, who, from whatever cause, is a stranger to the most ennobling, uplifting, and consoling experience that can come to the soul of man—*blessed communion with the Father of our Spirits, through gracious union with the Lord Jesus Christ.*”<sup>9</sup> Do you know something of this communion with the God the Father through Christ the Son? Do you want to?

---

<sup>6</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 200, italics added.

<sup>7</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 312.

<sup>8</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 312.

<sup>9</sup> Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 359, italics added.

## The Prince of Prayer

I do not think it coincidental that immediately following the story of Martha and Mary and the “one thing necessary” in Luke 10:38–42 that Luke records Jesus’ instruction to His disciples regarding prayer. As I have mentioned before, much of the material between Luke 9 and Luke 19, from Jesus’ transfiguration to His triumphal entry, is organized thematically rather than chronologically. After relating Jesus’ teaching on the absolute necessity and priority of communion with Himself (remember that last week we defined communion with Christ as “hearing the word of Christ in the presence of Christ” [10:39]), Luke decided to relate a time when Jesus instructed His disciples regarding prayer. Why? Because prayer is the second essential component of communion with Christ, along with reading/hearing/meditating upon the word of Christ. We can now expand the definition of communion with Christ to include prayer: *Communion with Christ is hearing the word of Christ, and praying in the name of Christ, all in the presence of Christ.* In many ways, then, this morning’s sermon functions as the sequel to last week’s sermon.

What prompted the disciples’ question on prayer? It was watching the Prince of Prayer in action. Let’s read v. 1:

*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” (11:1)*

More than any other Evangelist, Luke emphasizes Jesus’ prayer life. Luke alone records that Jesus was praying after His baptism when the heavens opened and the Spirit descended and the Father declared, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased” (3:21–22). Luke writes that Jesus “would withdraw [ἦν ὑποχωρῶν (would *often* withdraw)] to desolate places and pray” (5:16). Jesus prayed all night before appointing the twelve apostles (6:12). Jesus prayed alone before making his first passion pronouncement (9:18). It was while Jesus was praying that He was transfigured (9:28–29). Jesus prayed at the return of the seventy-two (10:21–22); He told Peter at the Last Supper that He had prayed for him (22:31–32), and He exhorted His disciples to watch and pray while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:39–46). Luke is the only Evangelist to record Jesus’ two prayers from the cross (23:34, 46). And only Luke records three parables on prayer: the Parable of the Unexpected Guest (11:5–8), the Parable of the Persistent

Widow (18:1–8), and the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-collector (18:9–14).<sup>10</sup> Luke presents Jesus as a man of prayer—as the Prince of Prayer. Usually, Jesus prayed “alone” (κατὰ μόνους), in “desolate places” (ταῖς ἐρήμοις). Here, however, Jesus apparently prayed within sight or earshot of His disciples, for they appear to have waited for Him to finish (ὥς ἐπαύσατο), before one said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” I think that request is shorthand for: “Lord, teach us to pray like You pray, for we have never heard anyone pray the way You pray” (cf. Mt 7:28–29; Jn 7:46).<sup>11</sup> The Lord consented, and what follows are His instructions.

Do you want to know the communion with God in prayer that John Paton knew? Do you want to enjoy the communion with God in prayer that the Lord Jesus Himself enjoyed? I do. Then let us listen to the Lord Himself as He teaches us this morning. The main point of this sermon may be stated as follows: *A God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer life is one that is disciplined, structured, audacious, and confident.*

## **I. The Discipline of Prayer**

The first essential element of a God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer life is discipline. I don’t want to make more of the opening phrase than warranted, but I cannot help but notice that Jesus began His instructions with the words “*when* you pray” (ὅταν προσεύχησθε), as though Jesus assumed that prayer would be a staple in the life of discipleship, an essential component of vital communion with Him. At the end of last week’s sermon, I mentioned three common hindrances to communion with Christ. As prayer is a vital part of such communion, these hindrances obviously pertain to this week’s passage as well. If we are going to pray, we are going to have to combat and conquer these hindrances. So what keeps us from prayer? It is usually one of three things:

*Distraction*—our life can become so busy with good things that we have no time for the “one thing” that is actually necessary. This was Martha’s problem, as Luke pointed out in v. 40 (“But Martha was distracted with much serving”) and Jesus pointed out in v. 41 (“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things”) of last week’s text. Many of us can

---

<sup>10</sup> David E. Garland, *Luke*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 459–60.

<sup>11</sup> “Impressed by something about the way Jesus prayed, one of his disciples asked for guidance of the kind John the Baptist had given”; Leon Morris, *Luke*, TNTC (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1988), 211. “[The disciples] were in awe of his prayer life, and they wanted to know the secret of closer communion with God. Thus they asked Jesus how to pray”; Philip Ryken, *Luke, Volume 1: Luke 1–12*, REC (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 568.

relate. Between all of the duties, responsibilities, and necessities of life, we can find no time for the “one thing [that] is necessary,” the “one thing” that actually makes all the other things fruitful, the “one thing” apart from which everything else is vanity—a chasing after the wind. We have got to drill into our souls the truth that Jesus spoke to His disciples in John 15:

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him [communion with Christ], he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. . . . If you abide in me, and my words abide in you [Scripture], ask whatever you wish [prayer], and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” (Jn 15:5, 7)*

But we do not really believe that, it seems. If we did, we would not be so often prayerless. Nobody wants to work in futility, to parent in futility, to minister in futility. Yet that is exactly what we will do if we do not abide in Christ and pray for the power to bear fruit. Do not let distraction keep you from prayer; prioritize it over all else. If you find that you do not have time to pray, remember that you do not have time *not* to pray.

Lack of *discipline*—here I am distinguishing between prayerlessness that results from distraction with service (like Martha) to prayerlessness that results from a failure to discipline ourselves, instead frittering away precious time on meaningless trivialities. John Piper said, “One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time.”<sup>12</sup> I am convinced that most of us want a vital, consistent, joyful, fruitful prayer life, but we simply have not disciplined ourselves to make it happen. But I am not letting us off the hook, because, of course, in the final analysis, we do what we want. Therefore, a consistent failure to pray can only ultimately be attributed to one thing: a lack of desire to pray. Which brings me to the third hindrance...

Lack of *desire*—a lack of desire for communion with Christ is an unspeakably dangerous thing, for it may indicate the absence of spiritual life. The dead don’t desire; the spiritually dead don’t desire spiritual communion with Christ. There are two kinds of people who lack the desire to pray. There are those who do not desire to pray, and are content with this state of affairs. These people do not desire to pray because they are dead. And there are those who do not desire to

---

<sup>12</sup> John Piper, tweet from October 20, 2009; <https://x.com/JohnPiper/status/5027319857?lang=en>.

pray, and are profoundly discontent with this state of affairs. In other words, they desire to desire, and that desire to desire is a sign of life. . . but also of sickness. John Piper is probably the most direct spiritual descendent of the Puritans in our generation in terms of the attention that he gives to the affections (his ministry and seminal book is, after all, called *Desiring God*). In *Desiring God*, Piper distinguishes between three levels of worship, which can appropriately be applied to prayer as well, for prayer is worship.

- The highest stage is *delight*— “we feel an unencumbered joy in the manifold perfection of God—the joy of gratitude, wonder, hope, admiration. . . . In this stage we are satisfied with the excellency of God, and we overflow with the joy of His fellowship.”<sup>13</sup> This highest stage, as it relates to prayer, is when we sense and enjoy communion with God in prayer; it is when prayer is not a duty, but a delight.
- The prior stage is *desire*— “we do not feel fullness, but rather longing and desire. Having tasted the feast before, we recall the goodness of the Lord—but it seems far off. We preach to our souls not to be downcast, because we are sure we shall again praise the Lord (Psalm 42:5). Yet, for now, our hearts are not very fervent.”<sup>14</sup> In this stage, prayer is a discipline and a duty, but yet a hopeful one, for it is infused with the desire for communion with Christ. Piper adds, “Even though this [stage] falls short of the ideal of vigorous, heartfelt adoration and hope, yet it is a great honor to God. We honor the water from a mountain spring not only by the satisfied ‘ahhh’ after drinking our fill, but also by the unquenched longing to be satisfied while still climbing to it.”<sup>15</sup>
- The lowest stage of worship (and prayer) is the *desire to desire*—this is, Piper says, “where all genuine worship starts, and where it often returns for a dark season— . . . the barrenness of soul that scarcely feels any longing, and yet is still granted the grace of repentant sorrow for having so little love.”<sup>16</sup> We must not despair when in this stage... but we must take it very seriously and seek immediate treatment, because the corpse and the person in a coma look the same from a distance.

---

<sup>13</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, Revised Edition (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2011; orig. 1986), 96.

<sup>14</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 96.

<sup>15</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 96.

<sup>16</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 97.

Again, Jesus began His instruction on prayer by saying, “When you pray,” thereby assuming that prayer would be a staple in the life of discipleship. Yet Jesus also knew of the reality and danger of the hindrances of distraction, lack of discipline, and lack of desire, which means Jesus also must have assumed that His disciples would combat and conquer these barriers. Let me read to you one final time from Piper, and then we will proceed with Jesus’ instructions. Piper writes,

Unless I’m badly mistaken, one of the main reasons so many of God’s children don’t have a significant life of prayer is not so much that we don’t want to, but that we don’t plan to. If you want to take a four-week vacation, you don’t just get up one summer morning and say, “Hey, let’s go today!” You won’t have anything ready. You won’t know where to go. Nothing has been planned.

But that is how many of us treat prayer. We get up day after day and realize that significant times of prayer should be a part of our life, but nothing’s ever ready. We don’t know where to go. Nothing has been planned. No time. No place. No procedure. And we all know that the opposite of planning is not a wonderful flow of deep, spontaneous experiences in prayer. The opposite of planning is the rut. If you don’t plan a vacation, you will probably stay home and watch TV. The natural, unplanned flow of spiritual life sinks to the lowest ebb of vitality. There is a race to be run and a fight to be fought. If you want renewal in your life of prayer, you must *plan* to see it.

Therefore, my simple exhortation is this: Let us take time this very day to rethink our priorities and how prayer fits in. Make some new resolve. Try some new venture with God. Set a time. Set a place. Choose a portion of Scripture to guide you. Don’t be tyrannized by the press of busy days. We all need midcourse corrections. Make this a day of turning to prayer—for the glory of God and for the fullness of your joy.<sup>17</sup>

Before prayer can become a delight, it must become a discipline. So discipline yourself to pray. Establish a time; establish a place; establish a method. There are plenty of good tools available. I mentioned one last week (*Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson<sup>18</sup>), but that certainly isn’t the

---

<sup>17</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 182–83.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Gibson, *Be Thou My Vision: A Liturgy for Daily Worship* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021).

only one. I also recommend Donald Whitney's *Praying the Bible* and D. A. Carson's *Praying with Paul*.<sup>19</sup>

## The Components of Prayer

The second essential element of a God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer life is the proper components. Look again beginning in v. 2:

*And he said to them, "When you pray, say:*

*'Father, hallowed be your name.*

*Your kingdom come.*

*Give us each day our daily bread,*

*and forgive us our sins,*

*for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.*

*And lead us not into temptation.'" (11:2–4)*

Before we look at these five components of prayer, there are a few introductory matters that bear mentioning.

First, if you are looking for the familiar Lord's Prayer that you memorized as a child, that occurs in Matthew's Gospel (6:9–13). Don't let the differences trouble you. There is an abundance of scholarly debate as to why these two accounts exist.<sup>20</sup> The simplest solution is that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray on a number of different occasions; remember, Jesus had a larger group of "disciples," and a smaller group of "apostles." The setting of Matthew and Luke's accounts certainly appear different: Matthew's version occurs in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount near the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry; Luke's version occurs (or, at least, is set) in the midst of His final march to Jerusalem near the end of His Galilean ministry. The fact that the prayers differ ought to tell us that Jesus did not intend this prayer to be repeated verbatim, but rather to serve as a model showing the different components of prayer.

---

<sup>19</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015); D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014; orig. 1992).

<sup>20</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 329–31; Garland, 460; Morris, 211.

Second, note that the prayer is addressed to God as “Father” (Πάτερ). This is a reminder that God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer can only be offered by those children of God to whom God relates as Father. An unbeliever, a sinner outside of Christ, has no access to God in prayer, not without first repenting of his sin, laying down his arms, and ending his rebellion. The prophet Isaiah declared,

*Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,  
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;  
but your iniquities have made a separation  
between you and your God,  
and your sins have hidden his face from you  
so that he does not hear. (Is 59:1–2)*

God only attends to the prayers of His children, for only His children have the right of access to His throne. And who are the children of God?

*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (Jn 1:12–13)*

No one is born a child of God; you must be born again into God's family. Only the children of God—those born of God and believing on Christ—can pray God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayers, for only the children of God are the recipients of the atoning, cleansing work of Christ that grants them access to the throne of God.

*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he has opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10:19–22)*

If you are not born of God and believing on Christ, your prayers will fall upon deaf ears.

Third, over the last two weeks I have been emphasizing personal, daily communion with Christ, but I do not want us to neglect the vital importance of corporate, weekly communion with Christ. You will notice that Jesus framed this prayer for a corporate setting: “Give *us* each day *our* daily bread, and forgive *us our* sins, as *we ourselves* forgive everyone who is indebted to *us*. And lead *us* not into temptation.” All that I have said this week and last applies corporately as well as individually. The corporate prayer life of First Baptist Nixa has been a point of emphasis over the last year and a half, and will remain so, for it is vital to our health as a church, as well as our health as Christians.

Jesus provided five distinct components of God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer. These are not the only components (for example, thanksgiving is not mentioned [1 Thes 5:18]), but these are essential components. The first component is *adoration*— “hallowed be your name.” Although this phrase is technically a petition (ἀγιασθήτω [aorist passive imperative]), it is more an expression of praise. It is the verbalizing and vocalizing of our desire that God’s name and God’s fame would be acknowledged and revered throughout creation. Why would we desire this? Because He is worthy of every knee bowing before His majesty and every tongue confessing His sovereignty and every heart enjoying His glory.<sup>21</sup> And because we love Him and enjoy His glory, we desire to see His glory displayed. There is a personal petitionary aspect in this phrase as well, in that we are praying that God would hallow His name within our own soul, that we might reverence and enjoy Him more.<sup>22</sup> Before we ask anything in prayer, we worship, we exult, we adore; and we express our desire that both ourselves and the whole of creation would see and savor the glory of God. If you need help with this element of adoration, I suggest praying through a psalm, or some other praise-filled passage of Scripture. A

---

<sup>21</sup> “The ascription is both praise of God’s holiness and kingdom, and a prayer that God will so make himself known that humanity will rightly acknowledge, confess, and honor him in this world”; Edwards, 333. “When we pray for God’s name to be hallowed, therefore, or ‘made holy,’ we are acknowledging the purity of his eternal being. We are declaring that God’s character is set apart from sin, that his attributes are absolute in their perfection”; Ryken, 574.

<sup>22</sup> “We offer this prayer first of all for ourselves, asking that our lives would demonstrate God’s holiness. This means being careful not to dishonor God’s name by using it in a profane or casual way. More than that, it means treating everything that pertains to God with complete seriousness. It means listening to what he says in his Word. It means showing reverence for him in worship. It means living with the kind of personal purity that is in keeping with his character. When we ask God to hallow his name, we are praying that he would enable us to obey the words of Peter, when he said: ‘in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy’ (1 Peter 3:15)”; Ryken, 574.

good resource like *Be Thou My Vision* will also lead you through a prayer of adoration. God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer begins with God, not us.

The second component of God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer is *mission*—“Your kingdom come.” This is a petition asking God to establish His rule (“Thy kingdom come”) and reign (“thy will be done”) on earth as it is established in heaven (cf. Mt 6:10). The kingdom of God is present wherever God’s rule and reign is joyfully acknowledged. Therefore, God’s kingdom exists presently in heaven, where the King reigns upon His throne, and on the earth wherever the church is gathered (Mt 18:20). The prayer that God’s kingdom would come, then, is a prayer that His kingdom would extend where it has not yet come—those places where there are no churches, no kingdom embassies, no gospel witness. I suspect there is also a personal aspect to this petition as well, by which I mean two things. I mean “Your kingdom come” is a prayer that people would recognize Christ as King and submit to His rule and reign. So under the heading of “mission,” I also mean “evangelism.” This is the place in our prayer where we pray for the unconverted. But I also acknowledge that we live in the tension between the “already” and the “not yet,” meaning that even within the heart of believers there are rebellious realms that need to be conquered by the King. So under the heading of “mission,” I also mean “mortification”—the subduing of rebellious pockets of resistance within our own hearts. God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer necessarily includes prayer for Christ’s kingdom to extend throughout the world, throughout my friends and family and network of relationships, and throughout every last realm of my own heart.

The third component of God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer is *provision*—“Give us each day our daily bread.” The image of “daily bread” (τὸν ἄρτον τὸν ἐπιούσιον) calls to mind the daily provision of manna during Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness (Exodus 16).<sup>23</sup> The idea, then, is one of petitioning God for our needs in humble recognition of our continual dependence upon Him. We do not live on a once-for-all deposit of grace; we live on a daily supply of grace. And this petition is more than a reference to material provision; Jesus employs the image of “daily bread” simply to call to mind the daily provision of manna; the larger meaning is “give us all that we need to live faithfully this day to your glory.” This petition

---

<sup>23</sup> The meaning of ἐπιούσιον is difficult to ascertain, as it occurs in the NT only here and in Matthew’s version of the prayer, and nowhere else in extrabiblical Greek outside of the Father’s discussions of this verse; Edwards, 333–34. See the discussion in Edwards, 333–34 (“bread of the morrow”); Garland, 463 (“essential bread”).

thus includes not only material needs (food, shelter, job, transportation, health, etc.), but spiritual needs (wisdom, discernment, courage, etc.). Even if your pantry and fridge are full of food, and your body is healthy, it is a good idea to pray for God's supply, for it reminds you that what you have comes from Him, and it prompts you to give thanks for His abundance. At this point in my prayer, I think of what lies before me that day. Am I teaching/preaching? I ask God to supply me with power. Am I writing? I ask God to supply me with diligence and insight into the text. Am I counseling? I ask God to supply me with wisdom. Am I confronting someone in sin? I ask God to supply me with courage and compassion. You get the point... whatever I need to serve God faithfully that day, I ask Him to supply. I don't get too far ahead; I rarely think about tomorrow. I will ask for tomorrow's needs tomorrow. This is prayer for what I need *today*.<sup>24</sup>

The fourth component of God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer is *confession*—“and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” Confession of sin is an essential element of a healthy, daily prayer life, and of joyful communion with God. Someone may ask, “Why is daily confession and forgiveness of sin necessary when our sins have been forgiven once for all in Christ? I have two answers to that question, neither of which is completely satisfactory on its own, but together I think they get at the truth. First, while it is true that our justification is not in the least diminished by our ongoing sin, for our justification is grounded in the perfect righteousness and once-for-all atoning sacrifice of Christ, yet our communion with God is affected by our ongoing sin. A helpful analogy may be the relationship between a father and a disobedient child. A child's disobedience in no way alters his status as a son, though until the child confesses his sin and seeks his father's forgiveness, the relationship is in some ways fractured. And yet, who feels this fracture the most? It is not the father, who does not *need* his son's obedience in order to remain who he is. Furthermore, the father is wise enough to know that children are inherently foolish and they learn through reaping the consequences of their errors. His son's childish disobedience has not altered the father's long-term plan to raise his son and make him a man; in fact, his child's disobedience and his fatherly

---

<sup>24</sup> Ryken reminds us, “In this petition Jesus is also teaching us that our true needs are few. All we really need is bread, a basic necessity. . . . What he has taught us to pray for every day (and what he has promised to provide) is bread. This implies that we should be content with what God provides—even if he provides only the bare necessities of life—and not crave what God has not promised to give. This does not mean that we can never pray for anything that goes beyond our daily bread. Out of the abundance of his grace, God often gives us even greater gifts, and we may pray for many good things in life. But the Lord's Prayer teaches us to know the difference between our needs and our ‘greeds.’ In the daily life of prayer, our main petition is for things we truly need”; Ryken, 576–77.

discipline is part of his long-term plan. The child, on the other hand, feels utterly broken by the perceived rift in the relationship. So it is, I suppose, between God the Father and His children. The second answer to that question is that we must daily confess our ongoing sin because this is integral to our growth in that holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14). In other words, if do not confess our sins daily (or at least regularly), it is supremely doubtful that we are actually children of God, in which case we are not justified to begin with. Jesus also hitched God's forgiveness of us to our forgiveness of others. In fact, in Matthew's version, immediately after concluding the prayer, Jesus explained,

*“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you.” (Mt 6:14–15; cf. 18:21–35)*

This does not make God's forgiveness of us conditioned upon our forgiveness of others; that would put the cart before the horse. But the cart of our forgiveness is hitched to the horse of God's forgiveness, and they cannot be separated. Forgiven people forgive people. Those who know mercy show mercy.<sup>25</sup> So let us make confession of sin a daily component of our prayers, and at the same time, examine our hearts for any unforgiveness or bitterness toward others.

The fifth component of God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer is *protection*—“and lead us not into temptation.” This is one of those places in the Bible when we must allow for different modes of expression and various figures of speech. Jesus was not saying that God leads people into temptation, at least, not in the sense in which James plainly says that God does *not* do this (Jas 1:13). God does not *tempt* people, but He does *test* people (the Greek word *πειράζω* can mean both). The difference is motive. Were God to *tempt* us, that would imply that He desires to see us fall, and that would be evil. For God to *test* us implies that He desires to see us stand, and that is good. Nevertheless, I think the best way to understand this final petition is

---

<sup>25</sup> “One of the strongest proofs that we have received such forgiveness from our Father is our own commitment to forgiving others, no matter what they have done. It is simply a fact: the children of God forgive their debtors. By forgiving our debtors, therefore, we show our family resemblance to our Father in heaven”; Ryken, 577. “This does not make a human action, the forgiveness of others, the ground of forgiveness. The New Testament is clear that forgiveness springs from the grace of God and not from any human merit. Rather the thought moves from the lesser to the greater: since even sinful people like us forgive, we can confidently appeal to a merciful God”; Morris, 213.

simply as a figure of speech indicating the need for protection. In fact, this is brought out in Matthew's version, where "lead us not into temptation," is immediately followed by "but deliver us from evil" (Mt 6:13). This petition is an affirmation that though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. I pray this daily because I know that I will encounter opportunities to sin throughout the coming day, and I need God's strength to endure and the Holy Spirit to warn me of the danger. Some days, I may be able to pinpoint which temptations are likely to arise, and I pray specifically for deliverance from those. Other days, I have no idea what lies before me, and I simply pray for God's general pastoral protection. But I know that I need my Shepherd; I cannot navigate a day without His protective care.

A God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer life will include all five components, and it will do so daily. This is why I said that we need to discipline ourselves not only to establish a time and a place to pray, but also a method. For clear, it matters *how* we pray. If we desire the Lord's communion, we must follow the Lord's prayer.

### **The Audacity of Prayer**

A third essential element of God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer is audacity. This is the point of the parable Jesus told in vv. 5–8:

*And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs." (11:5–8)*

I struggled over which word to use to describe the point of this parable. Is the point that we must be persistent in prayer? Although unstated, it is implied that the man refuses to go away until his friend has granted his request. Or is the point that we must be audacious in prayer? It is a rather audacious thing to pound upon a neighbor's door at midnight, even if that neighbor is a friend. Both ideas are probably present. But I decided upon audacity because I think that is more the

sense of the word Jesus employed, which the ESV translates as “impudence” (ἀναίδειαν)—“because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.” This word occurs only here in the entire Greek NT, but it occurs over 250 times in extra-biblical Greek, *every time in a negative sense*.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Edwards writes that this word

has a thoroughly pejorative meaning: asking rudely—even acting rudely—to get a request at any cost, without thought of propriety or shame. . . . The accent falls on approaching God with a not-to-be-deterred attitude. Prayer is not a polite religious sentiment; it is something on which people must be willing to stake their lives, the determination not to give up until God has heard us.<sup>27</sup>

The point of the parable is not that God is like the reluctant neighbor who only grants the man’s request in order to make him go away.<sup>28</sup> The point is that if audacious requests receive a positive response from a reluctant neighbor, how much more will audacious requests receive a positive response from God, who is anything but a reluctant neighbor. The point of the parable is not that you have to pester God to get what you want; the point is that if audacity receives a blessing from worldly friends, how much more will our audacious prayers receive the blessing of our heavenly Father. So be audacious in prayer! Once you have determined that a request accords with God’s revealed will (like the conversion of a friend, or the mortification of some sin), then beat down the doors of heaven until you receive it. Our prayers ought to be both insistent and persistent. Listen to John Newton’s encouragement:

Thou art coming to a King,  
large petitions with thee bring;  
for his grace and pow’r are such,  
none can ever ask too much.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, 337n173. Edwards translates ἀναίδειαν as “shameless audacity.”

<sup>27</sup> Edwards, 337. Garland believes ἀναίδειαν refers to the neighbor, not the host; Garland, 467–70. I do not find Garland’s arguments convincing [see Ryken, 585n4]; but either way, the “how much more” argument still works.

<sup>28</sup> “The point of the parable is not solely about perseverance, however, for God is not like the reluctant sleeper who requires a melodrama of excuses before attending to requests”; Edwards, 337. For Ryken’s application of the parable, see Ryken, 584–87.

<sup>29</sup> John Newton, “Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare” (1779).

## The Confidence of Prayer

The final essential element of God-glorifying, joy-inducing, fruit-bearing prayer is *confidence*. Look at the astounding promise Jesus gave in vv. 9–13:

*“And I tell 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 the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”*  
(11:9–13)

It is well-known that the three verbs (ask, seek, knock) in v. 9 are present imperatives (αἰτεῖτε, ζητεῖτε, κρούετε), indicating ongoing action—ask *until* you receive; seek *until* you find; knock *until* the door is opened.<sup>30</sup> This again points to the element of persistence. I could have split vv. 5–13 into three sections: audacity, persistence, and confidence. And maybe that would have been better. But we will have opportunity to highlight the persistence of prayer when we get to the Parable of the Persistent Widow in Luke 18:1–8. Besides, I think the emphasis in vv. 9–10 falls upon the promise that those who ask will receive, those who seek will find, and to those who knock the door will be opened. This promise of answered prayer is intended to inspire our confidence in prayer, which is then the point of vv. 11–13. Again, Jesus employed an argument from the lesser to the greater. If human parents, who are inherently “evil” (πονηροὶ) and selfish, give good gifts to their children, how much more confident may we be that our heavenly Father will respond to our prayers with that which is good?<sup>31</sup>

Luke 11:13 is a load-bearing verse for me. It supports all of my confidence in ministry. For in it, Jesus promised that God the Father will answer my prayers with the gift of His Spirit, who will accomplish in me all that is good. This is an absolute, unconditional promise—though I must remember that Jesus did not provide a timeframe for the answer (hence, the need for

---

<sup>30</sup> Likewise, they are present participles in v. 10 (ὁ αἰτῶν, ὁ ζητῶν, τῷ κρούοντι).

<sup>31</sup> See Edwards’ interesting discussion on the relationship between the snake/scorpion imagery in Lk 10:19 and Lk 11:11–12; Edwards, 339.

persistence in prayer). But this is a promise on which I can bank; this is promise on which I can erect my confidence. Do I need the fruit of the Spirit that I may love those who are unlovable? that I may be joyful and peaceful and patient in tribulation? that I may be kind and good when my flesh is resisting it? that I may be faithful when it is hard? that I may be gentle when I want to be harsh? that I may be self-controlled when my flesh wants to indulge in sin? I can ask my Father, and He will surely give me the Holy Spirit, who will surely bear His fruit in me. Do I need wisdom to counsel, or power to preach, or courage to lead? God will surely give me the Holy Spirit. This is why I say that powerlessness—in ministry, in the fight of against sin, in marriage, in parenting, etc.—is a sure sign of prayerlessness. For Jesus has promised that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. If you do not have the power of the Holy Spirit operative in your life, it is because you are not asking. Of if you are asking, you are not asking audaciously and persistently. Ask! . . . until you receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Seek! . . . until you find the power of the Holy Spirit. Knock! . . . until the door is opened, and you find communion in Christ by the Spirit.