

Prevailing Prayer

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Text: Luke 11:5-13; Luke 18:1

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Series: Prayer

Introduction: Open your Bibles to **Luke 11:5-13**. This evening, we are going to be looking at the various approaches to God in prayer. Today we are looking at prevailing prayer, and the title of the message is: “Prevailing Prayer”.

Prayer is like a diamond. There are many different sides and angles to it. The light shines one way into it, and out of it comes a prism of colors that dazzle the eye. And so it is with prayer. All prayer is union and interaction and communion with God. But like that diamond there are various sides and approaches to prayer that shine through a Christian’s life. We could look at *public* prayer, and *private* prayer, and also *pardonning* prayer. We wrestle with God and experience Him in prayer in these ways.

But this evening, we are going to begin by looking at a forth approach to prayer that I’m calling **Prevailing** Prayer. True prayer, guided by the Holy Spirit, is persistent, and it grabs hold of God until it secures an answer. It never gives up!

Remember Jacob in the Old Testament, it says he wrestled with God all night long. And the sun was starting to come up. And we read in **Genesis 32:26**, that the Angel of the Lord said to Jacob, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” Jacob secured an answer! God blessed him, changed his name to Israel, and changed his nature! We are still talking about him and his descendants today. Jacob prevailed in prayer.

True prayer has never been about a show of religion for genuine Christians. We want an answer! True prayer keeps asking and knocking and seeking until the answer comes. With that in mind, would you stand with me as we look at **Luke 11:5-13**?

Let’s read beginning with **Luke 11:5–13** (ESV) — “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, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 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’? 8 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. 9 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. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 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!””

In this story, Jesus teaches us that we should NEVER give up on God.

Illustration: I pulled into to the Annex driveway the other day to drop something off. Now I was barely in the driveway, just enough to get out of oncoming traffic, but I realized very quickly that I had made a big mistake. I went to pull out, and I realized my

car had hydroplaned about six inches above the concrete suspended on the snow. I had a task ahead of me. Essentially, I had to take out all the snow from underneath my car. Every so often I would get into my car and put it in reverse to back out. Every time there was absolutely NO movement. NOTHING! So I would shovel some more. An hour into it, my wife called and offered to help. She grabbed a bucket of salt and headed out, while I pondered calling a tow truck! Finally, the entire car was dug out, except for the six-inches of snow directly under the tires that were acting as pegs to suspend my car in the air! About the time my wife arrived, there was a bit of movement and my car came off the snow pegs to the ground—*finally!* But though it looked like dry ground under my car—there was nothing but ice, and still I could not make it the four feet out of the driveway edge and into the street. I was glad Jill had arrived with the salt! After about an hour and a half, the salt went down and my car *finally* came out. I was so glad I had not given up. I wanted to about every ten minutes as the cold was seeping into my bones. But I didn't give up until I secure the desired result!

My plea to you, is don't give up on God! He'll answer you! He says, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

I. The **Pull**: Giving Up on Prayer (Luke 18:1).

Luke 18:1, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint".

In my flesh Paul said "dwelleth no good thing". Our spirit may be willing in prayer, but the flesh is weak. Jesus would never have told us to keep praying and to pray and not to faint, if there were not a constant temptation to give up on God. And some of you have given up. You wonder why God is not answering your prayers. If you were honest, you'd admit that you used to pray for certain things, but God didn't answer, so you gave up.

Some of you here today are frustrated, joyless Christians because you've seen little answered prayer. You pray little because you don't believe God will answer. I can promise that you will experience nothing but frustration if you are not seeing answers from God. Have you ever seen an unhappy child riding his new bicycle on his birthday? No way! The child asked. Jesus said, "ask, and ye shall receive, that **your joy may be full**" (John 16:24). He says in our passage in **Luke 11:9** (ESV) — "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

We need to pray until we get an answer or until God clearly leads us to stop praying. We ought to pray and not to lose heart as **Luke 8:1** says.

II. The **Practice**: the Life of Jesus (Luke 11:5–13).

I want you to see that the Life of Jesus is the greatest **TESTIMONY** that you should never give up on God. He gave us the example of seeing answered prayer in His own life.

- It was Jesus custom to pray - He was the Son of God – **Luke 11:1** (ESV) — “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.”
- Even though He was the Son of God, Jesus prayed while He was on earth. He was constantly in prayer to His Father.
- He was praying when the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove (**Luke 3:21**).
- He began his ministry with forty days of prayer and fasting in the desert wilderness in Galilee (**Luke 4:1-15**).
- During many times in His life, Jesus withdrew from His disciples and the crowds to be alone to pray. He often went up on a mountainside or to solitary places to pray.
- Sometimes He even went to pray very early in the morning, while it was still dark (**Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, 6:46, Luke 5:16**). Sometimes Jesus spend whole nights on the mountainside or in the Garden of Gethsemane in prayer (**Luke 6:12**).

Jesus Himself during His life on earth was in constant prayer! These habits of Jesus teach us an important truth about prayer. This is amazing because it tells us of *our deep need of prayer*. If even the Son of God needed to pray, how much more do we stand in need of prayer! He prayed. If prayer was central in Jesus’ life, I want it to be central in my life. I want to be more like Jesus. I want to be a man of prayer more than I’ve ever been in my life.

III. **The Perseverance: our motivation** (Luke 11:5–13).

And as far as giving up on God is concerned, I want you to thirdly catch the **TEACHING** of Jesus on this matter. We read in **Luke 11:1**, that when Jesus “was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray”. And so Jesus did! Now when the God of the universe gives you advice about prayer, you had better listen. And His advice is found in **verse 9**: keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking!—until you get the answer!

In this passage, Jesus is teaching us about prayer. And everything Jesus prayed for He got. When Lazarus died, Martha said to Jesus, “I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” (**John 11:22**). And she was right. Jesus knew nothing of unanswered prayer.

He says in **Luke 18:1**, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint”. We often give up on God. Jesus says—Don’t faint—don’t give up! Pray! The word here “to pray” means to persist in prayer until the answer comes. Jesus commands us to pray, not simply to waste air molecules, but to see God’s amazing will be done—that we would pray until we see an answer.

I want to mention three things in this text that Jesus teaches us about praying—three directions based on three promises.

A. Jesus teaches us that prevailing prayer that never gives up is focused on God’s **Love**.

Jesus doesn't want us to feel insecure in our prayers. He shows this mainly by teaching us to call God Father when we pray to him. The prayer in **verse 2** begins, simply, “Our Father”. As a Father he will **provide** all our needs. He will **protect** us from temptation. He will forgive us of our sins. And then in **verses 11-13** he unpacks for us some of the security implied in this word, Father. God is your Father—of course He is going to answer you!!

Luke 11:5–13 (ESV) — “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, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 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’? 8 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. 9 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. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 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!””

The words “how much more” mean something utterly crucial for us. They mean that God is **much more** inclined to hear us and help us when we pray than earthly fathers are. You are accepted and loved by the Father! You are a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You ought never to feel unsure of your acceptance or that God would ever be unconcerned with anything you request. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (**Romans 8:32**).

Is all well with your soul? If you don’t sense the love of God for you, then you’ll give up on God. You can’t sustain a life of prayer if you believe God is stonewalling you or angry with you or even neutral to you. God is passionately for you! You were once His enemy, but now you are His child! **Romans 8:31**, “What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?” Prayer is sustained by the confidence that God is our Father and that he is more concerned about our life than we could ever be!! You need to understand that **He is MORE inclined to give what we need** than the very best human father is. How much do you love your son or your daughter? Would you do anything to meet their deepest needs? God is MUCH MORE INCLINED—a

billion times more inclined to meet your needs!! That's the promise. And the direction is: prevail in prayer with this sense of deep security in your heavenly Father's love.

B. Jesus teaches us that prevailing prayer that never gives up is focused on God's **Goodness**.

Jesus tells the story in verses 5-8 that this guy has an unexpected guest show up, and he goes to his friend's house because there isn't enough food in the house to feed him.

He asks his friend for three loaves of bread. His friend says, Don't bother me now! The door is locked, the children are asleep in my room!

But the guy keeps knocking and asking until *the man gets up*, not because of his friendship, but because of the man's prevailing, persisting, persevering knocking. We all feel that this is *a very unattractive image of the transaction of prayer*.

Now I know that the direction to prevail feels inconsistent with the love of our heavenly Father. We are prone to ask, *'If God is more caring than the best earthly father, then why would He sometimes be slow to respond to our prayer?'*

God is ready to answer you. He is willing to answer you. But part of prayer is waiting on God. And sometimes God says WAIT to our prayers. Why? It is not because He is not able to answer.

Immediately (in **verse 9**) Jesus says that there is a lesson to learn: "9 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." Three things here stress the importance of prevailing, not giving up in prayer.

- The **tense** of the verbs in Greek: present tense is continuous action; keep on asking, etc.

House Illustration: Asking (as it were, for the house); seeking (until we find it), then knocking (until the door is open). Asking is the simplest and requires no movement. Seeking turns asking into an activity of pursuit. Knocking on and on at the door again and again signifies utter earnestness and perhaps even desperation.

So Jesus clearly wants us to be like this friend who kept knocking. He want us to prevail in prayer. But then he makes a sudden turn in verse 11 and shifts from the image of a grumpy friend to the image of a caring Father.

Jesus qualifies his point in **verses 11-13** by saying that God is NOT like that friend. He is like the most caring Father imaginable.

Look at **verses 11-13**, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 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!"

A good father will only give his children what is good for them. This is the only answer Jesus gives to our question in this text: when the Father in heaven gives us a slow answer -- when he wills that we prevail for a season -- it is because he is giving us a fish and not a serpent. He is giving us what is good for us. There is something in the prevailing -- the asking and seeking and knocking -- that we need, that is good for us. And he knows best.

The promise that will encourage us in prevailing prayer is simply verse 10: “For every one that **asketh** receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened”. God is not unresponsive to prevailing prayer.

C. Finally, Jesus teaches us that prevailing prayer that never gives up is focused on God’s **Presence**.

Jesus teaches in verse 13 that our prevailing in prayer should be a prevailing for the Holy Spirit, “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!**”

It is no accident that Luke tells us in Luke 3:21 and following that while Jesus was praying the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove. Or that the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost came as the climax of a ten-day prayer vigil. Or (in **Acts 4:31**) that when the church had prayed, the place where they gathered was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Prevailing prayer is the pathway to the ***outpouring of the Holy Spirit***.

Conclusion: Have you given up on God? Do you sense the outpouring of the Spirit directing you in your life? Are you fixated on your life and your desires, or are you focusing on His sovereignty, His love, His goodness, and His presence? God controls all things. He loves you. He is good. He is faithful to give you His presence and guide you every step of the way! Are you seeing answered prayer? Are you asking? Are you seeking? Are you knocking? **James 4:2**, “**you have not, because you **ask not.**”** Get your focus off of yourself and onto His majesty! Prevail in prayer for His kingdom, and it will come!