

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!

Luke 11:1-13

TEXT: *One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: "'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. "' Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

One of the more popular doctrines of Scripture is the subject of prayer. A quick examination of many bookstores, especially those sporting the name "Christian bookstore," have many shelves full of books discussing the subject. Many have turned prayer into a most complicated and curious activity.

Before us is the Lord's own instruction on how to pray, and it's not complicated. It's as simple as breathing, for many of our best prayers are sighs of our own spirit directed heavenward. It's as simple as breathing because prayer is a fruit of faith. Yet, at the same time, since it is a fruit of faith, it is a work of man, a good work. And since the Christian still has the Old Adam, all that we do needs to be guided by God's Word.

We, like Jesus' disciples, will be in earnest in regard to our Lord's own instructions on prayer so that we pray as He teaches us to pray and with a trust that is instructed by His Word.

Contrary to human reason, unbelievers cannot pray. It's not that they cannot utter words toward God. It's that God refuses to listen to their prayers. When Judah, for example, fell from faith, He told the prophets to tell them: ***When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Is 1*** Jeremiah was sent to warn them: ***Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Jer 11*** That is because the Jews, as a nation, had fallen from faith. David writes in Psalm 24: ***Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.***

The same is true for the New Testament Church. The Apostle Paul directs Timothy: ***I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer...*** 1Ti 2 There must be a relationship between God and man that is uncorrupted by sin of any kind. So without

faith in God's Savior Jesus, whose blood has made us clean from our sins, and whose righteousness is ours through faith in his name, a person remains in his sins.

In fact, God commands such people NOT to pray, because when they pray, they are sinning against God. The many prayers of the Jew, the Muslim, the Buddhist, the Mormon, the man who uses a form of generic prayers, leaving out the name of Jesus in order not to offend those religions who do not accept Jesus as the Christ, all are committing sin against God who requires that no one even speak to Him unless he is holy and sinless.

Only the Christian can pray, because through faith in Jesus his sins are paid for as the Word of God declares. The promise of Holy Baptism assures him that he has clean hands, a pure heart and a clean conscience before God, as Peter writes: *...baptism (is) ... the pledge of a good conscience toward God.* 1Pe 3:21 Through faith in Jesus, forgiven sinners are declared righteous, and are elevated to the high position of DISCIPLE, PRIEST, and CHILD OF GOD as Paul declares: *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* Ga 3 Everyone who knows of this relationship established with the Almighty God through Jesus will also have the holy desire to pray, that is, to speak to God who is become our Father through Jesus His Son.

In fact, when they asked him, Jesus even told His disciples: *When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name...."* You are allowed to call the Almighty, Father, because I have made you His sons and daughters, and He wants you to live holy lives as His dear children.

So prayer is a natural projection of faith that moved Jesus' disciples to ask Jesus for help in their praying to God. And it's a fruit of our faith to perk up our ears to listen carefully to what our Savior teaches His disciples. So put away all the HOW TO PRAY books and pick up your Bible to read and re-read this very simple Chapter 11 of Luke, which is Jesus' own simple instruction on how to pray Our Father.

He starts out by teaching us WHAT to pray. These words have become the world's most famous prayer: The Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus himself has taught us to pray. These seven petitions cover all that is necessary for life here on earth and for salvation. We don't have time to study this today. But may we all teach it to our children and learn to pray it daily!

Then our Savior teaches us HOW to pray. With an amazing parable He teaches us to be like little children who have no doubts concerning the relationship that is ours with the Almighty God who is OUR FATHER through faith in His name. It's an amazing parable because Jesus portrays God to be a man who is highly inconvenienced by his neighbor who has a relatively minor, but embarrassing, problem: *Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.* Nevertheless, Jesus says: *I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.* The teaching is simple: be bold and persistent in your prayers. Pray until you get an answer! *I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.* An answer is assured, because you are God's redeemed child! And as the Bible says: *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be*

called children of God! And that is what we are! 1Jo 3 Be bold and persistent in praying our Father, as Jesus who has made us God's children through His own blood, teaches.

Finally, the Son of God who has made us holy with His blood and calls us His brothers and sisters through faith in His name, now teaches us HOW God the Father answers our prayers!

We often get lazy in our talking to God. For prayer is hard work. It takes thought. We rattle off the Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus himself has taught us to pray, without thinking because we know it so well. But Jesus has paid for the sin of laziness as well, and teaches us that His Heavenly Father will not treat us as our sins deserve, but ***as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him...***Ps 103 This means that God answers prayer. He never does not answer our prayers.

But because we are weak sinners, lazy and thoughtless in praying as we should it is important to know HOW He answers. Jesus' teaching goes on: ***Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*** This, too, is simple to understand even though it is often difficult to accept. If earthly fathers and mothers who love their children even though we have a sinful nature that clouds good judgment in how we raise our children, know how to give them good things, when to say "Yes" or "No" or "Yes, but later on, when you're older..." then will not God know how to answer our prayers always in ways that are best for His children? The answer is "of course!"

Consequently, the BEST gift of God to each of us who prays is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to trust His grace and wisdom when we pray, and who gives us patience and wisdom for us to wait for His best answers and to accept them with a trust that says, "What God wills for me is always best, and even though I am taught to come to him with the bold persistence of a child who begs and begs and begs, I must learn to trust my Heavenly Father's good and gracious will."

What a privilege we are given through Jesus to approach the throne of the Almighty King like His favorite little child! In fact, the Bible says: ***Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*** Heb 4 Isn't this simple? We are to behave like children when we pray, trusting Him who shed His blood to make us His own. What else is there to do about this great work of faith but to pray, and as the Bible says: ***Pray continually...*** 1Th 5:17

You don't need any "how to pray" books if you know Jesus. Know Jesus, and you not only know God, but also know Him as OUR FATHER who wants us to talk to Him and promises to answer all our prayers. Amen.