



This week in the Word
based on the International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching
Sponsored by - The First Seventh Day Baptist Church of Toronto



Perseverance in Prayer

Study Scripture: Luke 11: 5 – 13

Background Scripture: Luke 11

Lesson 13 February 22, 2020

Key Verse

So I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given to you, seek, and you will find, knock, and it will be opened to you.

Luke 11: 9

INTRODUCTION

An unnamed disciple observed that Jesus' ministry was inextricably connected with His prayer life and so when he remembered that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray he asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Note that this was not a request to teach them a prayer, one that they could repeat in a rote ritual.

The substance of what we call the model prayer in Matthew is given a shorter form to this prayer in Luke and we note that since the wording is different in each prayer so obviously Jesus is not giving us a prayer to be memorized and recited

It is also to be noted that Jesus did not say anything about the posture of prayer, the place of prayer except to say that it should be done in secret, and the times you pray.

Jesus aims therefore so teaches His disciples a prayer which shows what the person praying thinks God is like. So this prayer model given by Jesus shows us we should be imagining who God is and how God operates at the same time as we are completely confident in our declarations that God always hears, always provides, always protects us, always forgives us, and always recognizes that we are in His family.

So your prayer is really showing whether you think God is merciful, forgetful, too busy, always way ahead of you, or whether you think He is ready to reconstruct and reorder the entire universe to make you happy.

We acknowledge therefore by praying that we believe that we have many needs which we can only partially meet. Our recognition of our total amounts of needs must lead us in our prayers to recognize that He may put us in situations that overwhelm us. We therefore understand that given our total needs we have no choice but to pray.

In our Lesson Study we hope that you would be impressed with the importance of Jesus' saying, ***How much more will your heavenly Father give you.***

So when you are speaking from a place of hurt, pain, and loss do not forget that the context of the Lesson points to God.

We often say "How **much more**" when we feel abandoned and rejected, and when the family pressures and the demands of our church life are sky high. When we look around at the violence, racism, terrorism and mounting difficulties in the world, we should remember the promise of the Father of "how much more I promise to be with you".

It is really a testament to our shameful attitudes that we forget that when we pray we are praying to our Father in Heaven with whom we are in an intimate and inseparable relationship. The Father's name is holy and it should be maintained unblemished and honourable by our conduct and our reputation.

So we pray and think about what we are believing when we say.

May your Kingdom come.

Thy will be done.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins.

Bring us not into temptation.

Deliver us from the evil one.

Remember therefore that we are looking at a context of a practice of John the Baptist and so it is not just talking to God or saying anything that crosses your mind to God. There is a direct aim. And so the request presupposes that there is an actual mental disposition that is appropriate to when a person prays, and what the person praying suppose about God. One writer gives an illustration of how some Christians show their belief in prayer. It states as follows:

"A tale is told about a small-town that had historically been 'dry', (so liquor sale allowed) but then a local businessman decided to build a tavern. A group of Christians from a local church were concerned and planned an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene. It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground. The owner of the bar sued the church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible, but the church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible. The presiding judge, after his initial review of the case, stated that, "no matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer, and the Christians do not".

This account in Luke on Jesus teaching His disciples to pray and His comments on prayer stirs up strong emotions and invites difficult questions for Jesus seems to be telling us that believers can and should ask for anything they need and count on God to answer these prayers in the affirmative. This raised questions in believers on the nature, power, and efficacy of prayer. The verses raise the question of unanswered prayer and this has led for many to a huge crisis of faith putting people who are certainly believers in a quandary. One writer states:

The Prayer of Jesus

“Take for instance how two young boys in my first congregation who prayed everyday that their dad be cured of cancer. He wasn’t and they wanted to know why.

Or consider the young woman in another congregation who told me of years of sexual abuse by her father. She told me she prayed and prayed that it would stop. It didn't, at least not for many years, and she wanted to know why.

Unanswered prayer, in light of these verses creates a huge crisis of faith. It puts honest believers into a bind between wondering whether God failed or they did. Most of us, believing it’s unfaithful to fault God, blame ourselves instead. We must not have had enough faith, or we didn't have a sufficient number of other Christians praying for us, or we just didn't pray the right way. Take the young woman I mentioned. She couldn't understand why God hadn't answered her prayers. She was just a little girl, defenceless and hurting. What had gone wrong? Eventually she concluded that she must not have prayed correctly. Since then, she said she is very, very careful about how she prays”.

It is very important for us to be honest about these difficult matters concerning prayer. We do not understand a lot about it and we certainly do not understand very much about the will of God. We will look at this issue about the will of God in our Text later and how some theologians approach the problem.

But we have to keep some things in mind.

First, God wants us to pray. In addition He wants us to ask for anything. The word that some Bibles translate as "**persistent**" is actually better translated as "**shameless**". So Jesus has really told us that our petitions to God should be **shameless, bold, audacious**.

The problem of course is that we want so many things and we want to know how to get them. We want the formula so that we can practice and get what we want. So we tend to treat prayer as a mechanical thing and forget to whom we are praying, ignoring the fact that God loves us as a parent.

And as a parent often does to us, we are forced to struggle, to learn, to become more mature, and grow in our understanding of our dependence on God. One writer therefore reminds us:

“Prayer is more than asking for things, of course. Prayer is praise; prayer is thanksgiving; prayer is conversation; prayer is questioning; prayer is arguing; prayer is lamenting. Prayer is all these things and more. But prayer is also-- and perhaps fundamentally-- asking God for what we most need and desire—shamelessly”.

It is interesting to note that it was not Jesus that raised the subject of prayer, even though He knew its vital importance. We know that Jesus strongly believed in prayer and prayed frequently but there is no record that He initiated the teaching on the subject of prayer.

Maybe it was because He wanted to disciples to learn on their own about the importance of prayer for their spiritual life from their observing His practices. Sometimes it is good for people to come to some conclusions on their own and not be told everything.

When a disciple or believer asks a teacher to teach them, it indicates that their motivation for learning and improving spiritually is very high. When there is little, limited, or no interest in learning about the things of God, we know that the believer is in serious danger.

It should be noted that Jesus' disciples, except for those that were disciples of John the Baptist, had never been shown in the Gospels as men of prayer. They hardly seemed to have practiced it, or if they did it was not reported. When Jesus often went to pray, He withdrew Himself and prayed alone without the help of His disciples.

On the one occasion when He asked them to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, they all fell asleep. But at least on this occasion they seemed to have been aware of the importance of prayer, for at least one of them sought help from Jesus and instruction on how to pray.

Many writers have pointed to the weakness in the prayer life of modern believers. It has often been said that not only is their extensive failure to pray, but there is a failure in prayer. So they have cautioned believer that: **“the secret of our failure is our failure in secret prayer”**.

Every Christian will jump to tell you right away that there's a great need to pray and that prayer is very important. Everyone will admit that it is a priority and a necessity. So clearly every Christian recognizes and accepts intellectually that prayer is very important.

The subject of prayer is actually the most popular subject for authors. There are more books written on prayer than probably on any other subject. In addition, people, saved and unsaved, ask for prayer on the time.

But though people talk about it and how necessary it is, in reality many spend very little time in prayer as compared to the time we spend on other activities including entertainment. This fact is revealed by almost every research and polling among professing Christians. The practice of disciplined heartfelt prayer is generally only taken seriously when professing believers are in serious trouble. At other times prayers are perfunctory, irregular, brief, with much less time spent as compared to say watching TV. We'll fortunately only needle at prayer.

This Study is intended to remind us that if we are children of God and if we have that childlike quality of openness and dependence in which our Saviour and God the Father delights, then perseverance in prayer would be of immeasurable help to us.

But if however we are too smart, too proud of ourselves, too wise and learned to be taught, or too much of a hypocrite to even believe that Jesus or God the Father can help us to turn away from our darkness, then we are wasting our time when we pray.

Proverbs 15:8 states:

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness”.

And the Psalm of David in Psalm 138 1- 3 adds to our instruction and encouragement:

***“I will praise You with my whole heart;
Before the gods I will sing praises to You.
I will worship toward Your holy temple,
And praise Your name.
For Your lovingkindness and Your truth,
For you have magnified Your word above all Your name.***

The Prayer of Jesus

*In the day when I cried out, You answered me
And made me bold with strength in my soul”.*

THE TEXT

Having revealed to His disciples that the nature of God was that of a Father, that they should consistently and with perseverance pray to the Father for the coming of His Kingdom, that He would provide for their daily physical needs and make provisions for them, so that sin would not harm them, Jesus told two parables or stories which directed them to why they should be motivated to pray with perseverance.

Jesus deals with the character of God. If they properly understood God's character they would understand that God **always** graciously responds to the needs of His children. Prayer therefore is never ever useless.

In this section of our Study, Jesus begins to explain and illustrate some of the finer points of what is meant by prayer, and also how it can be directly applied to what we do in our lives and how our lives can be better by it. He addressed the disciples personally, bringing them into the story in order to teach them how to operate effectively. He asked them to visualize an event, and placed them in the thick of things.

Verses 5-7. To illustrate that God can't be trusted to respond our prayers Jesus told the story of a man who comes to his friend and neighbour, in need of a favour. Note that these people are friends. But this friend calls on his friend at midnight a most opportune time. But note that his calling is not for himself, but for a friend of his, but nevertheless for someone else's benefit.

It is important to note that in the times of Jesus, in the near East, customs in that part of the Biblical world was not like our present customs. Hospitality was of tremendous importance in that world and when a guest came to visit even without warning, even at midnight, there was no question about the fact that hospitality had to be extended. In the ancient Near East everyone had a sacred duty to be hospitable, and visitors to the home had the right to lodging and food.

In the story the host found himself in a most embarrassing position and had to ‘take shame from his eyes’. But it was midnight and the host had nowhere to turn for help. He remembered that he had a friend living close by and he expected that this friend would be his saviour.

The times in which Jesus lived were very different in many ways from the times in which we live. There were no Supermarkets, all night Convenience stores, Pharmacies or Drugstores. People in the villages or towns would bake bread, and we know that bread was the most important basic food, and they would only prepare food enough for their families and close friends. They prepared only enough for daily needs for they did not have refrigerators to keep food fresh.

So when they went to bed that was it. It was only on rare occasions that they had surplus food. And besides that, when they went to bed and locked the door it was hard to get them out of their deep sleep to provide food for others.

But Jesus told the story of this man in the village who after he had gone to bed was awakened by a visiting friend. His visiting friend was hungry. But this man in the village had no food to give the visiting friend who was hungry.

He knew very well that it was bad manners to try to wake up his friends in the middle of the night to be begging for food for his visiting friend. Though they were all friends they might even refuse to help him and tell him that he should have always kept extra food at home to meet emergencies. Coming to this friend would wake up everybody in the household and wives and children would stop certainly not appreciate that.

Remember now that a lot of traveling would take place in the evenings to avoid the heat of the afternoon sun and we should therefore expect that travelers would sometimes come late in the night. But nevertheless visitors who have no electricity in those days were going to bed early.

So what would you do? How hospitable are you? How far would you go to help out a bad situation? Would you want to get out of your comfort zone to help out a desperate friend in a desperate and embarrassing situation? Consider that carefully.

As part of the details, Jesus also gives important information about the state of the neighbour who is in a position to help. This person is in bed with his children; the rest of the household, servants and animals are all at rest. Experts on life in that part of the world tell us that in the typical one room Palestinian home the family and even the household animals all slept near each other. Any movement would result in breaking up the peace of the entire house, which at this hour midnight is not even an option to be considered.

But he was desperate. With that in mind, the host to the midnight visitor decided to visit the neighbour whose sleep and domestic tranquility would be interrupted. His visiting friend was very hungry. So with a prayer on his lips He went and knocked on his friend's door to ask him for some food.

As expected the man refused to open the door to him telling him that he had already gone to bed with his children and he couldn't provide any food for him. The neighbour in need had asked for three loaves of bread from the beginning and explained his need. But still the answer was "no". The normally friendly but now unfriendly neighbour did not just say "no" but explained why he was saying "no". His friend was being unreasonable for asking that kind of a favour that was "impossible" to grant.

But our begging friend was very persistent and Jesus said this man shamelessly, given his great need, continued knocking on the door begging for food. The man did not give up his persistent and shameless knocking, and eventually his reluctant friend opened the door and gave him some food for his late night visitor.

The knocking bore fruit. The once "sleeping neighbour" did not want news of his own inhospitable behaviour to be spread abroad. So he was motivated to act and help his friend.

Jesus said that the man did not really want to get up and help his friend and only did it because of his friend's shameless persistence. The man just would not go away empty-handed. Shameless Persistence certainly paid off.

The Prayer of Jesus

Jesus clearly was using this story to urge His disciples to persist shamelessly in prayer. This of course doesn't mean you should pray to God loudly and pray the same things over and over again all day but it meant that we have a God who keeps His door always open. God wants an occasion such as this and looks forward for the relationship to be displayed. So note that Jesus explained the situation and its connection to prayer. First, He talked about the attitude that the bread- rich neighbour displayed for being disturbed at this late time of the night. He really was saying that his friend should not be inclined to go to his door at that hour of the night.

Also, he was a little upset that he would be disturbed at such an hour. He expected that his friends would not push the envelope. They shouldn't want him to deprive himself of his beauty sleep just to help out. After all, enough was enough. Every excuse was given: the door is shut, the children are asleep, the servants are asleep, he will catch a cold if he rises out from under the blankets. Even the animals will be disturbed.

In regard to the neighbour knocking on the door of his friend, Jesus suggested that this man was bold, almost shameful, to such an extent that he would do such a thing, that is, begging for food at that time of night.

So note the situation carefully. Friend A, coming from a long journey, visits friend B late at night, evidently seeking help. Friend B, possessing insufficient resources himself, goes to his neighbour friend C for help on behalf of friend A. Friend C, however, though he possesses sufficient resources, is reluctant to rise and give help to friend B, but B is persistent and continues to ask on behalf of friend A. Finally, friend C who has the resources provides the requested resources because of the shameless persistence and perseverance of friend B.

Verse 8. Perseverance or persistence was rewarded. He succeeded because of boldness for the man so shamelessly asked his friend in the dead of night for help. He really wanted the bread.

Jesus' point is that men should pray and not faint. God is not like the *unjust judge* that will give in because he was no respecter of persons. God looks at the intent of our hearts, our seeking out God without any thought of surrendering until we have met with Him. God is pleased by such an attitude.

In prayer, we must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as the host who had had no bread for his guest. He had no intention of leaving without the goods he was requesting, because he knew that he was in no position to supply his visiting friend, and that was important to him. If it were midday, he was in no doubt that his request would have been granted with haste. Nevertheless, in his desperate need he chose a friend that could help.

Scholars point out that the keyword in this section occurs only here in the New Testament.

“From a lexicon the word means “the lack of sensitivity to what is proper”, and can be translated with “insolence, audacity, impudence, or shamelessness”.

The pronouns in this verse make it unclear who is acting shamelessly. Culpepper (*Luke, the New Interpreter's Bible*) makes these comments about this verse:

“Following the normal meaning of the term, we may understand verse 8 as posing a comparison between the obligation of friendship and those of the honour- shame code. The ambiguous pronouns leave room for debate over whether the petitioner is shameless for begging for food in the middle of the night or whether we are to understand that the sleeper would be shameless for refusing a neighbour's request. Further reading is possible, but the latter is preferable. The

situation is unthinkable not because of the petitioner's persistence but because honour demanded that a neighbour get up, awaken his whole family if necessary, and supply his neighbours need--if not from friendship, then at least to avoid being shamed. (p.236)".

Another scholar adds an additional view:

"It may be noted that shamelessness, even though a negative quality in society, is not necessarily so in the Gospel tradition. The "faith" commended in healing stories is a boldness that refuses to be stopped by social proprieties. He refers to comments on 5:20 and 8:47-48, and the widow who approaches the unjust judge (another example of prayer) is not only persistent but bold, even impudent (18:2-5). Although it is true that human requests of God may show ignorance and pettiness, this passage seems to deal with a different problem: an unwillingness to ask, out of fear or deference".

It is clear that we don't have to be afraid of approaching God properly with our prayers using right words at the right time and we can be bold and shameless by going to God at any time. But also note that God **does** not need to protect His honour by answering our requests, and not only does He tell us to pray for our daily needs but He tells us that praying for late-night visiting friends and caring for their needs is appropriate.

The Lord accepted Job when he prayed for his friends. (Job 42:10). Also Abraham prayed to God about the fate of Sodom and God heard him (Genesis 18: 23-25).

When we come to God with a problem that we ourselves did not create and ask for help, we can believe that God will help us, especially if our actions are to help others. It is not to say that God will not help us through problems of our own making, but on occasion we should be taught a lesson so that we do not repeat those mistakes: here we have two different situations.

Along with approaching God with boldness and confidence, we should be constant in prayer. Being in a situation where we must pray to find a way out, we are encouraged to continue in that state until an answer is given. If we act in haste, we can only get into further peril. Waiting and seeking advice from God shows our trust and dependence on Him in our lives. It is through prayer that we can hear what it is God wishes us to do, what we must do to get out of these problems.

People sometimes will try to help us out of our problems just to stop us from asking, but God delights in the fact that we have come to Him. This allows us to see the Majesty and power of God when He solves our problems. What we wish is to be in God's will for when you're asking it is an important ingredient for believers to enhance our relationship with God. Jesus wanted to impress on His disciples the idea of persistent prayer.

It is undoubtedly difficult for us sometimes to understand or accept this, but God expects us not to become *faint*, but to continue persevering in prayer until our will meet up with His will. Remember the saying of Abraham "***Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?***" (Genesis 18:25).

Jesus' teaching contrasted the character of God, with the attitude of the host's friend. God does not behave like the friend who did not really want to help his knocking neighbour. The man did grant the request for the bread in order to avoid shame, for if the people in the village heard that he had refused to help, he would certainly be ostracized. Jesus pointed out that God is loving and unselfish. He will

The Prayer of Jesus

respond eagerly when His children ask Him for help. He is their Father and has the heart of a father. God's personality is the opposite to that of this reluctant neighbour.

Verse 9. This verse points believers to be consistent and persevering in their approach to God. The stress is that God is an heavenly Father who loves us and there will never be any regrets in putting one's faith in Him for He is a Father that is not like our friend that can't be bothered to help us when we are in need. He does not sleep, does not need to be covered up by blankets in bed. He is always awake and watching and seeing.

The verbs are in the present tense and tell us there is to be continual asking, seeking, and knocking. In all that we do toward God in communicating our wants and needs to Him, we must at all times *ask*, *seek*, and *knock*. All three verbs are continuous tense, that is, it is something that is to persist throughout all activities in our lives. These descriptions speak of an earnestness and intensity that is required to our prayers.

Christ is encouraging us to pray, to communicate our wants and needs to the Father in the name of Christ and in faith, so that whether it be for food, for body or soul, blessings, temporal or spiritual, it shall be given. Jesus guarantees that we will be given what is best for us, not according to what will fill our desires, but according to the riches of the grace of God.

The verse records a promise from Jesus made to believers. Jesus' personal guarantee runs from verse 9 and so we know that this promise from Jesus is most reliable. Jesus promised that everyone of His children, not just those who are persistent in asking, who asks God for the fulfillment of their desires will receive an answer.

Once we *knock*, we will find the door open. Once we speak to God, we will get His full attention. God will open the doors of Heaven and give us what is best for us and what fits best into His plan for our lives and for His Kingdom.

Verse 10. It is true that Jesus' words suggest that God will rubber-stamp every request what our experience teaches us that that is not what Jesus is saying for even Jesus prayed a prayer for deliverance but was not delivered.

So on the surface its right to ask the question that if God is a loving parent who desires to give what is good and life-giving why do so many prayers seem to go unanswered? One commentator says to us:

“There is no simple answer to this question, though simple answers are often given. One answer given is that it only *seems* that God has not answered our prayers; God always answers, but sometimes says no.

There are times, perhaps, when that is the case. We do not always ask wisely, and God, to be a truly loving God, must refuse our request. Yet this explanation cannot account for the many cases in which our requests must surely be in tune with God's will. Scripture bears witness to God's will that everyone have enough to eat and that violence and war cease. Jesus tells us to pray for daily bread and for God's kingdom to come. Yet millions continue to go hungry and wars rage on.

Another explanation often given to the problem of unanswered prayer is that “everything happens for a reason”. God has some purpose in everything that happens. No matter how bad it may seem, it is all part of God's plan to bring about some higher good”.

We will sometimes hear those who say that if the Father knows what things we have need of before we ask Him why should we pray? We are also told in Scripture:

“Known to God are all his works from the beginning of the age”. Daniel 4:35 also tells us:
“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say on became, What doest thou?”

One scholar answers this question as follows and this answer is likely to be very unpleasant for some of us:

“The facts are, my dear Christian friends, that prayer does not ultimately change things. The truth of the matter is that God has in his decree determined what has come to pass. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will, but we do not know what these things are, and while he has determined the end, he has also determined the means to that end.

And prayer is often the means to that end. Sometimes it is witnessing or sharing our faith that is the means to that end, and we are encouraged in the Word of God to pray constantly, because it is an opportunity for us to have a share in what God is surely going to accomplish.

In fact, I have never understood why a person, in the light of that doctrine, should feel that he shouldn't have to pray. This can be the greatest incentive for prayer that there could possibly be. I know that I can have a part in something that God is going to do. And furthermore, that says nothing about the fellowship that we enjoy in prayer with God. He has given us exhortation and invitations to pray, to enter into fellowship with him, and to have a part in what he is doing. But he is going to accomplish his will. We cannot frustrate God. Known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the age. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will. He does according to his will in the army of heaven and also among the inhabitants of the earth. Your father knows what things you have need of before you ask him, but he invites you to ask that you may enjoy fellowship with him”.

The important thing, my Christian friend, is to recognize that God is sovereign, and he does according to his will, and in his marvelous grace he invites us to participate in what he is doing through prayer. But our prayers are to be private, they are to be directed to him, they are to be without vain repetitions, they are to be brief and to the point, and he will honour those prayers and bring answers to them. Prayer is the attaching of ourselves to God”.

Jesus strengthens this promise that God will respond to the prayers of His children. Despite the strength of this assurance some believers doubt whether or not God is listening to them. However here we are told that as soon as we ask for what it is we think we want, God will provide us with an answer. If we are in God's will, then whatever we ask there will be an answer given to us.

Take the case of Paul. He asked and persevered in asking for the thorn in his side to be removed. Yet God told him He would not remove the thorn. God in His wisdom provided **him** with sufficient grace such that it would not hamper the work that he was doing for God.

What happens if we ask for something that is not exactly in the will of God? Will God answer our prayers then? Will our prayers even reach God? There are other instances where requests or prayers were made to God, even though God had other plans in mind. We note for example King Hezekiah, who when he was told he would soon die, asked for grace lamenting that in view of the fact that he had done so much for God that he should not die quickly or at that time. God gave him a few more years and he had a son who turned out to be a most evil ruler who was responsible for hastening the destruction and exile of the kingdom of Judah. So note the warning. Accept God's decisions graciously.

The Prayer of Jesus

If we persist in asking for that which we know or suspect is not God's will for us, sometimes God allows us to get what we ask for and we soon realize our error. However, remember that even if God allows our ill-advised requests to be granted to us, God is always nearby to help us out of this situation.

The case in point is that we must go to God with boldness and confidence previously stated, and when we pray continually, God will see the desire in our heart and will act according to His will. If He does not act and grant us the request through prayer He will most surely eventually give us a reason as to why it is not best to grant that request.

We should come away from this Study with the fact that constant communication or prayer with God demonstrates our knowledge of God's character and our confidence in our Heavenly Father. The entire process greatly glorifies God because it shows we are resting in His wisdom and love. The lack of an immediate answer should not deter us, or cause His promises to lead to fear, doubt or frustration. This goes back to our understanding of who God the Father really is. This is part of the learning process that we go through by praying. We can truthfully say that we will never completely understand what God is doing, but we know that He is faithful, just and righteous. All His actions are for our good.

A mature and growing faith sees and believes the promises of God, embracing them with persistence even though the answer is not immediately forthcoming. Maturity in our faith will lead us to understand that God will answer in His time and in the best way to succour us. Persistent prayer as we persevere will become a time of discovery regarding God's will.

The last aspect of this verse is that God wants us to pray specific requests by which we bring God's will directly to bear on the details of our lives and that of others. This kind of praying fits with the basic concepts we have seen about prayer. It is not just a religious exercise. It is the means of fellowship and growth by which we are to seek and discover more about the Lord and His will.

The Holy Spirit is at the same time guiding us and helping us during this time of prayer to understand God's will. Through persistent and persevering prayer we are forced to investigate the needs and requests as to their nature and motive and ask God's purpose in this situation. This demands time, thought, soul-searching and fellowship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

With a steady and continuing prayer life and searching in prayer, we will see our own needs and inadequacies or those of others more pointedly. This will allow us to move from the strict pattern of ritualistic prayer forms we use, and move to a form of prayer more personal and intimate. This will allow for our individual and personal walk with God to be more successful in terms of our growth in faith and obedience to Him.

Verses 11-12. Jesus now looked at the experience of an earthly father and his beloved son in order to show that the heavenly Father would certainly fulfill His promises.

When a son is in need he may feel apt to go to his father and ask for assistance. That is because he knows that his father has his best interest at heart and loves him and looks for good for his children. A normal earthly father will provide the best for his children.

If this is the behaviour that exists between earthly fathers and sons, then how much more will a perfect and infinitely loving, Heavenly Father act on behalf of His children given the trusting relationship that exists between God the Father and us!

We only have to look at the relationship between God the Father and God the Son to get a glimpse of how our relationship with the Father should be, or how it can be.

It is being stressed here that the natural tendency is for a father to look out for the well-being of his children. If we assume that society has not fallen into a complete state of ungodliness leading to child abuse, then the father would not act so unnaturally as to give a harmful gift to his own children. If there is any fault, the parents might not give the best and most wise of gifts, but will do the best that they can to ensure the well-being of their children.

Verse 13. Jesus separated Himself from the earthly fathers and makes us realize that God the Father is perfect and infinite in all the goodness of His character and being. Gifts from earthly fathers are limited and only material, but God gives more. The gifts of God are spiritual and as well He gives us material benefits. The best gift of all is that God desires to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit to us.

In the Old Testament times this was a gift that God promised to His people. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour we will be given this gift of the Holy Spirit. If you are a true believer you will already have this gift. Once acquired, the Holy Spirit will be there to help us move closer and closer to the Father, and allow His will to be carried out on Earth. He will encourage us to be persevering in prayer. That is where your help lay.

CONCLUSION

Your relationship with God means that you should be persevering in prayer. God the Father is unique and believers have a unique relationship with Him. So do not let the culture marginalize your faith with God. Keep on asking and it would be given to you. Do not treat casually an opportunity for intimacy with the Lord God.

Remember. ***How much more*** is available to you. God will as David said increase the strength of soul. You may wonder about many things but remember the Father will give good gifts to you and He awaits your knocking. The presence of God will be always there with you and He will take you through to the New Heaven and the New Earth.