

THE FULLNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke 11:11-13

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus is still giving His lesson on prayer. He is still responding to a request, "Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples." After He gave the beloved prayer for His disciples to use, He gave emphasis to the need for persistence in prayer. He gave this emphasis through a memorable little parable, and a series of promises. But then He closed the lesson with encouragement to seek the highest and the best through prayer.

It is our Lord Himself who says "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" In this statement our Lord encourages us by what He affirms to be true of our God to ask Him for the highest and the best, even the Holy Spirit Himself.

These words of Jesus serve as a corrective for the prayer life of the believer. We should read them often as we seek to evaluate what we are doing in prayer, and how we are praying. They should cause us to ask, "Have I been seeking the best that God can give through prayer?"

I. Our praying for the best is based on our confidence in our Father.

Underlying this statement is a great assumption. Jesus is assuming that the earthly relationship between a father and his children is a reflection of the relationship between God and His people. He is the heavenly Father and we are the earthly family. While this was not the first time this truth had been set forth, none ever set it forth as boldly as did our Lord. Encouragement to seek from God the very best that He is able to give is based on this relationship and our confidence in the Heavenly Father.

A. We have confidence in the character of our Heavenly Father.

Jesus draws a deliberate contrast between the character of our heavenly Father and the character of our earthly father. He says, "If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children." Jesus recognizes that every earthly father is flawed in character. His character is tainted by the presence of a sinful nature in him. It shows up in his relationship with his children. Yet in spite of that selfish bent in him, earthly fathers still get some delight out of being generous in meeting the needs of the children, and in giving them the best wherever possible.

The "how much more" points us to the distinction in the character of God. He stands apart from the very best of earthly fathers. There is no flaw of character in Him, only perfection of character. In Him there is no selfish bent, only unselfish, unconditional love. So when we approach God to seek from Him His best, we do with a confidence that we are approaching One who is perfect, loving and good in character. Everything we know about the character of God should encourage us to have confidence as we approach Him.

B. We also have confidence in the willingness of our Heavenly Father.

In a sense this willingness is a part of His divine character, but since it is especially emphasized in the text, it should be emphasized as a basis for confidence. Jesus says, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" A father might find a stone that had the appearance of a loaf of bread, but no father would mock a son and his request by giving him a stone when he needed bread. "Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" Fish was a prominent part of the diet in that part of the world. The boy would want a fish to go with his bread for a lunch. He would be making such a request because he was hungry. No father in his right mind would give to his son a snake when he needed fish. "For if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a

scorpion?" Again the egg would be for food. No father would mock the need of his child by giving him that which could be harmful and hurtful, even a stinging scorpion. No, the great assumption we all make toward our fathers is that they will give us only that which they feel to be good for us, and that they are willing to give us whatever we really need if it is in their power.

Again, the "how much more" brings this note of willingness to us. We should anticipate a loving willingness and readiness to give us the very best if only we will ask.

Some of you may have a problem with this. You may have not had the privilege of having a caring, generous father. More and more children are growing up without the influence of a father upon their lives. Did you have a mother who was willing to meet your needs? This too is a reflection of the willingness of God. But if your parents were a poor reflection of God to you, there is a Heavenly Parent who is ready to give you the very best for your life. You can depend on it!

II. Our praying for the best is focused on the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

This is the surprise of this text. In a similar statement in the Gospel of Matthew, which was given earlier, Jesus had indicated that the Father is ready to give "good things" to them that ask. But here He speaks of the Holy Spirit as being the gift to be given to those who ask. This probably indicates growth on the part of the disciples. They are ready now to learn of the supreme good, the very best that God could ever give to man. There is no greater good that could ever come to a man than the fullness of the Holy Spirit of God in His life. I believe that this will be obvious as we consider who He is and what He does.

A. When God gives the Holy Spirit, He gives Himself.

The disciples understood this. They knew from the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit is the earthly manifestation of the presence of the eternal God. They knew that the Holy Spirit does things that only God does. They know that He is God, even though they did not have the kind of Trinitarian doctrinal statement that we might have today. They knew that when Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit being given to man, He was actually speaking of the eternal God Himself being given to man.

We have heard this so often that the wonder of it has escaped us. Do you realize what this means? This means that in response to our prayer to the Father we can have in us and with us the manifestation of the eternal Spirit of God, that God Himself will come to live in us and to be with us forever.

This is a privilege that uniquely belonged to Jesus. The disciples knew that when Jesus was baptized that the Holy Spirit had descended upon him like a dove.

They knew that He credited the mighty deeds of His life to the presence of the Holy Spirit in His life. So He was now indicating that this privilege that had been given to Him could be extended to them through prayer.

B. When God gives the Holy Spirit, He gives understanding of the things of God.

To give this gift is to give to man the opportunity to know the mind of God in a special way. Some years ago one of our very useful and retired missionaries said to me, "Young man get to know the second chapter of the first Corinthian letter. It is the most important chapter in the Bible for you." She said this to me while I was still a seminary student. The reason she commended that chapter to me so highly was that Paul indicates in that chapter that one comes to know the things of God only through the illumination of the Spirit of God. That Paul really believed this becomes obvious when you read his great prayer for the Ephesians. He prays, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give

unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."(Eph. 1:17) The King James Version translates this verse as though it were the human spirit that would be one of wisdom and revelation. Newer translations have rightly understood that this is actually a prayer that they may have the fullness of the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Could God give to man anything better? To know God personally and to know the things of God must be the highest knowledge that man can ever attain in this life!

B. When God gives the Holy Spirit, He gives power for service.

Later Jesus would say to them, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

Samson could face his enemies victoriously because He was full of the Spirit. David could write His psalms because He was full of the Spirit. The prophets could bring the word of God to the people because they were full of the Holy Spirit. There was a supernatural dimension to the lives of those who were full of the Holy Spirit. This had become even more obvious in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Now He was saying to the disciples, "For the asking you can have the best, even the fullness of the Holy Spirit in power in your life."

C. When God gives the Holy Spirit, He bestows a fullness of life.

Yet later Jesus would say to His disciples-in Jerusalem on a great feast day, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet give, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (Jn 7:37-39) Could you find a better description of a full and meaningful life, "rivers of living water." There will be an abundance to

satisfy the thirst of your life, and then an abundance to flow out and bless the lives of others.

Would you not agree that this must be God's best? If you could know in your life the fullness of the Holy Spirit, this would be the best of two worlds, the best of heaven and earth. God has nothing better to give than Himself!

CONCLUSION:

This text may raise a question in some minds. Do not all Christians have the Holy Spirit? The answer is a strong affirmative. When you asked Jesus Christ to come into your life as Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit was given to you by the Father at that moment. But this does not cancel out this statement of Jesus. Even though the Holy Spirit lives in your life, you do not experience His fullness day by day except as you ask for it. It is as though the Father has deposited in an account to your name all of the fullness you will ever need for a lifetime, but you must write a personal check each day to draw out what you need for that day. You cannot draw out enough fullness for even two days at a time. This is the reason that Jesus made the verb "ask" a continuous force verb in our text. You have only as you ask.

The Father waits for you to ask in order that you might have His best. Some gifts will come without you ever asking, but this one will come only in response to prayer. He is ready to give, are you ready to ask?