

## Asking the Father for His Spirit

**Luke 11:13** “*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!*” <sup>1</sup>

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray (Luke 11:1ff). At the end of this particular teaching He taught them to ask the Father to give them His Spirit.

Today as we consider further the Spirit in the life of God’s servants (like His first disciples), let us open our hearts up to the One whom Jesus gave to us to teach us all truth -- His Spirit (John 14:26).

This Scripture is found in the context of Jesus’ teaching about PRAYER. Look at the context of Luke 11 -- Jesus was teaching His disciples about persistence in prayer -- asking, seeking & knocking (all in the present tense -- continuous action).

He then applies His teaching to His disciples’ asking the Father in heaven for “good gifts”. See Luke 11:11-13; Matt.7:9-11.

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How can we understand Jesus’ encouragement to us to pray for the Spirit if God has already given His Spirit to us? It is a little puzzling that Jesus asks us to pray for the Spirit when He has already given His Spirit to us?????

1) Some might say: Jesus gave this teaching to His early disciples BEFORE Pentecost. Before He sent His Spirit upon them. Therefore, it does not apply to us. Therefore, this verse doesn’t need to bother us -- it was only for that first group of disciples.

I cannot agree with this interpretation -- this is clearly a part of Jesus’ teaching on prayer, and there is no indication that it was meant for those early disciples only. In

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<sup>1</sup>*The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

fact, we have to ask: If it was intended for them only, then why would the Spirit have inspired Luke to put them in the Scriptures for the early Christians (post-Pentecost believers who received and read this Gospel account initially) as well as for ourselves? All that Luke wrote by the Spirit in Luke and Acts had special relevance to the needs of those early believers -- and also our own.

2) Some have applied this verse to a particular request -- asking God to give them the gift of tongues.

Let's ask a very simple question: Is there any reference here to the gift of tongues? No! Then thought we do not denigrate God's gift to some of speaking in tongues, it would be a misleading way of using Scripture to be dogmatic in making such a specific application where Jesus Himself appears to give a much more general teaching. Again it goes back to be faithful in our handling of the Scriptures -- not using the Scriptures to teach whatever we want to get others to believe.

3) Some might even teach perhaps: We need to pray this prayer because when we do bad things, the Spirit is grieved and leaves us. See Psalm 51:10-12.

We need to understand how the Spirit was operating in the OT times -- coming upon people for specific needs at special times, e.g. Samson in the time of the Judges. The great difference with the NT time that the prophets spoke about would be the giving of the Spirit for all believers -- and that the Spirit would remain with His people. See Ezekiel 37:11-14. (When we sing Keith Green's song, we need to keep this truth in mind -- this verse in Psalm 51 was written by David as an OT believer.)

Let us now look carefully at Jesus' words in Luke 11 asking God's Spirit to help us understand the truth we are to grasp and hold to for ourselves.

The fundamental question is: In what way did Jesus mean for His early followers and now ourselves to understand His teaching? Again let's not fall into the trap of being too complicated or technical.

Let's remember from the very outset that the Spirit has given God's Word to ALL God's precious people -- including the simplest believer -- for the purpose of helping

them to grow up in their faith and come to an intimate relationship with Himself. We cannot make the reading of God's Word restricted or limited to those who have Bible experts to help them know what it means.

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Without any doubt, we KNOW that God has given His Spirit to all true believers.

### Romans 8

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. 2

### 1 Cor.6

<sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. 3

Jesus promised His early disciples that He would give them His Spirit -- but then He also teaches them to continue asking the Father for the Spirit.

### Several thoughts:

1) Yes, God has already given His Spirit to us, but does this mean that we have received ALL of the Spirit? In this context of prayer -- asking, seeking and knocking -- we should inquire what aspects of His most precious gift we need to ask for?

God has give His Spirit to us as a "downpayment" for our full inheritance.

### Eph.1

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2*The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

3*The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

<sup>13</sup> *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.* 4

2) Jesus' teaching about asking and seeking and knocking is all in the present, continuous tense of these verbs. This means that He is teaching us to continually ask for His Spirit -- because obviously we will be in need of His Spirit at all times, for all things.

Thus the essence of Jesus' teaching is about our total DEPENDENCE upon God.

This means that we are to actively and continually live in full dependence upon God as we live for Him, waging war against the enemy and proclaiming His truths to others.

It is extremely easy to forget God as we go about our daily lives and ministries. Perhaps we don't do so deliberately, but we just get caught up in all the things that we do without consciously turning to God. We so easily forget that we are indeed still children dependent upon God's help at all times.

Thus Jesus' teaching us to ask for God's Spirit indicates the close link between prayer and faith/trust.

3) Jesus' teaching reminds us that we can never or should never treat any of God's wonderful gifts and the spiritual riches that we have received "in Christ" as if they are our RIGHT -- assuming that we can enjoy them automatically whether we want them or desire them, or not, whether we ask for them or not.

Could it not be that God has so willed or designed our relationship with Himself so that we keep coming back to Him for even those gifts that He has promised to us -- in order that He might enjoy the pleasure of intimate fellowship with His people -- and the sheer delight of giving them again and again what He has promised them they may have?

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<sup>4</sup>*The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

One thing about ALL gifts of God -- asking for them keeps us from ever coming to the point when we take them for granted.

But what a wonderful encouragement to pray and ask of God for anything when we KNOW He has promised us the very thing we are asking of Him!

Compare:

- Forgiveness: Eph.1:7; Col.2:13c with Matt 6:12; 1 John 1:7
- Wisdom: 1 Cor.1:30 with James 1:5
- Renewal: Titus 3:4,5 with Rom.12:2

<sup>4</sup> *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior* 5

- Eph.1:13 with Eph.1:17 & 3:16ff.

We note these two parts in each of these two-sided truths:

- God's promise, and
- the believer's acceptance of the promise & through this his enjoyment of the promise.

So God promises, and then we appropriate His promises by seeking after and accepting His good gifts -- they then become our IN POSSESSION.

4) When Jesus teaches us to ask for His Spirit -- e.g. in relation to our ministries, He is teaching us to ask for all the wonderful blessings that God mediates to us THROUGH THE SPIRIT. See also Luke 10:21; 12:12.

THROUGH HIS SPIRIT, JESUS PROVIDES ALL OUR NEEDS -- WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS UPON OUR SPIRITUAL NEEDS. (Cf. "Holy Spirit" & "spiritual needs".)

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<sup>5</sup>*The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

It is God's will for us to continually ask the Father that He may give us His Spirit so that we will be able TO LIVE LIVES WORTHY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S NAME AND SERVE HIM IN THE FULLNESS OF HIS POWER.

In other words, Jesus is teaching us that to ask for the Spirit is to ask for the Spirit and His work in and through us -- to invite Him to do and accomplish all He desires through us.

This teaching is very relevant to us -- and related to specific needs that we will have in the days ahead.

So does God want to give to us THROUGH HIS SPIRIT? What will our needs be?

Consider various needs that we will have in the coming months & years:

- \* Understanding of and perseverance in the truth
- \* Bearing the fruit of the Spirit abundantly -- daily
- \* Walking in the unity of the Spirit together with our brothers & sisters
- \* Conviction of sin & our putting off the works of darkness -- through the Spirit's help
- \* A genuine, deep love for people
- \* Living and praying with God-sized faith (N.B. JO Fraser)
- \* Godly wisdom
- \* Comfort in hard times
- \* Endurance in trials
- \* Encouragement -- for ourselves and for others
- \* Speaking forth the truth on God's behalf -- teaching, preaching, witnessing
- \* Power for service -- an anointing for ministry so that the word of divine truth impacts and changes lives for eternity
- \* Leading and guidance for what to do when and where
- \* Discernment concerning the needs of people including understanding spiritually our own needs

We have if we ask of God. We do not have if we do not ask. See James 4:2.

God does NOT give His most special gifts to whomever regardless of whether they are interested in having these gifts or not, whether they sense any need for them or not. HE RESERVES THEM FOR THOSE WHO COME ASKING, SEEKING &

KNOCKING -- for those who show by their asking, that they wholeheartedly desire and trust in God for His divine help.

Therefore, we need to ask the Father for the Spirit in order that we might do the works of Jesus -- that we might have for the glory of God:

- the power of Jesus,
- the love of Jesus,
- the discernment of Jesus,
- the divine encouragement of Jesus,
- the wisdom of Jesus etc.

What then are two essential requirements we must follow if we are to enjoy these “good gifts” that God has promised His people through the divine operation of His Spirit?

- 1) A deep realisation of our need
- 2) A simple, sincere asking & seeking (i.e. an earnest longing) for any need & help at any time

God’s promise to us is that He will then give us what we ask from Him -- abundantly, in measures above and beyond what we could imagine.

See Eph.3: 20 *“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*

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Conclusion:

Jesus teaches us to ask His Father for the BEST gift of all -- good, better best! -- the gift of His Spirit -- NOT to indwell us because He has already come to live within us, but in order that we might THROUGH HIM do all things with His divine power and help to the praise and glory of His name.

The rest is really up to us -- to keep asking and seeking and knocking -- and receiving according to our childlike faith.

Ask of such a generous and kind God -- and let Him show you the wonder and glory of His kindness and greatness.

Do not hesitate to ask God for His Spirit and for His Spirit's help at all times. Be bold! Through God's great gift, you will be able to accomplish all that God is sending you to do.

Keep coming back. Keep coming to the Father -- giving Him the great joy of showering His gift and the gifts of His Spirit upon you over and over again.

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