

***Foundation, Being Devoted to Prayer (Filling the Bowls)***

Are you breathing this morning? Are your lungs filling up with air and then releasing air...in and out? It is what keeps us alive. But this morning I want to ask, *are you really breathing?* There is a greater breath. The true breath of life is prayer. And prayer brings life. So, are you praying? I want us to see what the Apostles do before the Spirit comes, before the wind blows and the fire falls.

**Acts 1.4-5**

Jesus commands them to *wait*. He wants them to wait for what the Father had promised, which was the coming (filling) of the Holy Spirit. And He tells them in verse 8 that they will *receive power (might, strength, miraculous force) when the Holy Spirit has come upon* them. Then Jesus ascends into Heaven right before the eyes of the eleven disciples (Acts 1.9-11). Then an angel tells the eleven that Jesus *will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven (v. 11)*. Wow! This is not an ordinary day. Then the disciples go to the upper room where they were staying in Jerusalem. You can feel the anticipation and expectation in the air.

**Acts 1.14:** *These (the eleven) all with one mind (with one accord) were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus (last time she is mentioned in Scripture), and with His brothers.*

The eleven yield their will and obey Jesus by not leaving Jerusalem and they *wait (they await for the coming Holy Spirit with great expectation)*.

Scripture talks about this idea of waiting on God in other places:

Psalms 62.5 (David): *My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him.*

Psalms 130.5 (the Psalmist): *I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.*

Isaiah 26.8: *Yes, Lord, walking in the way of Your truth, we wait eagerly for You, for Your Name and Your renown are the desire of our souls.*

How do they *wait*? Are they idle, lazy and without purpose? Are they just twiddling their thumbs until Christ returns? Are they sitting on the bench?

No, they are all (*the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers, one hundred and twenty persons in total*) united together *continually devoting themselves to prayer*. (They spend their time the best way.)

This group is persistent and desperate in prayer as they wait expectantly upon the Lord. It is the priority. It is the breath of the Christian life. Without it we suffocate. We breathe out prayer and in grace.

Romans 12.12: Paul says, *be devoted to prayer*.

*Are you devoted to prayer? Are we devoted to prayer?*

Again, the followers of Jesus walk in obedience...the disciples were taught the importance of prayer by Jesus in Luke 11. In Luke 11.9-13 we find this with an address to most likely a Pharisaic crowd, but the disciples no doubt heard it. This section is called by some the poem of the Father's Gifts.

### **Luke 11.9-13:**

**1.A Command to Pray:** To ask, seek and knock. Continuous action: Keep on asking, seeking, and knocking. Jesus is extending an invitation to His disciples to pray (to pray without ceasing, do it continuously as Paul says – 1 Thessalonians 5.17).

This is an awesome invitation, the greatest that is extended to us. So He encourages them with repetition (vv. 9-10), in wanting them to really get this and do it, to pray.

With this command we find that God wants us to ask of Him.

Isaiah 45.11: *Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, and you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.*

Psalms 2.8: *Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as your possession.*

In other places like Jeremiah 33.3 God will say, *Call unto ME.*

Here is God emphasizing PRAYER! Ask Me! We emphasize other things more than we do the necessity of prayer. God wants you to pray!

**2.Promises:** Here in this section you have seven promises:

Verse 9:                    *Ask and it will be given to you.  
                                  Seek, and you will find.  
                                  Knock, and it will be opened to you.*

Verse 10:                 *For everyone who ask, receives.  
                                  He who seeks, finds.  
                                  To him who knocks, it will be opened.*

Verse 13:                 *Ask and the Father will give the Holy Spirit.*

God promises to answer our prayers. *Why are our prayers not answered?*

James 4.2-3: *You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures (lusts).*

-Our first problem is prayerlessness! We don't receive because we don't ask.

-Our second problem is our heart. Many times our prayers are wrong. We ask for things that don't line up with God's will (Many times earthly pleasures, that our temporary). Jesus said, *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6.33).* God does not bow to our will and simply give us things that are contrary to His will. He wants us to yield to Him and pray! Then He will answer.

Before we continue, *who is this promise for?*

Luke says, *for everyone* (v. 10). In this context that includes the disciples (followers of Christ, children of God), the outcasts, even the publicans or tax collectors, but the emphasis is clear, **EVERYONE!** The point is the gospel and being able to cry out to God is for everyone and that they will receive, even the sinner. So, *everyone* is given this command, along with its promises.

**3. Who do you pray to:** The *Heavenly Father* (God – sometimes *Heavenly Father, sometimes Jesus, sometimes Holy Spirit – Trinity*). In verses 11-13 it makes it evident to pray to God, the Father with the comparison to earthly fathers (Romans 8.15: *you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out "Abba! Father!"*). This is important because these three actions, to ask, seek and knock are actions that we do in relation to Him. Let's think about these commands and actions in relation to the Father, thinking about a human father (you have us in the role of children and Him in the role of a loving Father).

### **Examples of Dad's and their kids:**

*Ask:* First for a child to ask, the Father must be present and available. He must listen when the child has a question or if He would like something. And based on whether or not the child needs it or it is the best for him the Father will respond with giving it to them or not. Or maybe by giving them something other than what they asked for (sleep instead of play or TV).

-The Heavenly Father is always available, present and near. He is always there to listen (full of love) and ready to give you what you need and what is best for you. This sometimes is shown when the Father does not give you what you ask for.

*Seek:* Maybe you're in the other room and your son or daughter doesn't know where you are, but he or she goes and seeks to find you to speak with you concerning something. He or she looks for you and finds you. Not only will he or she find you physically, but they seek from you what they need.

-The Heavenly Father is always there when you seek for Him. You can always find Him and His ear is always ready to listen. He is full of wisdom ready to impart wisdom unto you. In fact, as you seek and seek you will always find.

*Knock:* Say your in the other room and the door is shut (maybe locked). Your son or daughter needs to speak with you or they need something. So, they knock on the door. *And what do you do?* You open it and let them come in. And again you listen.

-The Heavenly Father is the same way. You come to Him, you knock and He will open the great door of Heaven right up. He is never too busy. He welcomes all and lets you in.

**4. He gives good gifts:** Jesus compares the Father to earthly fathers. Jesus says that even earthly fathers give good things. He calls the earthly fathers in *evil*. Jesus says, *you then, being evil (wicked or sinful)*.

Truth rings loud and clear that all of mankind is finite, there is nothing good in us, nothing that is right, we are depraved and opponents of Jesus and His gospel until we come to Him by grace through faith. But He uses this description to make a huge point. Earthly fathers give good things to their children...If your child wants a *fish*, you give him a *fish* and not a *snake*. If he asks for an *egg*, you will not give him a *scorpion*. But if earthly fathers, who are evil, will give *good gifts*, how much more will the Father in Heaven give good gifts to His children?

Isaiah 30:18: *Therefore the LORD longs (waits) to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long (wait) for Him.*

-God waits, He longs to be good, loving, merciful and to bestow favor upon you! This is the Father. How much more does He give good gifts!

One of the greatest scholars on the Parables in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Joachim Jeremias asks, and I quote: *Are your eyes opened to the fatherly goodness of God? Consider how you behave to your children. If, although you are evil you know how to give good gifts to your children, why are you unwilling to believe that God will give the gifts of the New Age to those who ask him? (Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes p. 141)*

-Matthew writes very similar words to Luke's in Matthew 7:7-11 and closes the similar section on prayer in his writing like this: *how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:11)*

-Luke though, is slightly different in his choice of words: *how much more will your heavenly*

*Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? (Luke 11.13)*

-Do you see the difference? The *Holy Spirit*.

-But let's look at this. Jesus says, *evil* earthly fathers, *know how to give good gifts to their children*.

-Who is the *Holy Spirit*? In Acts 2.38, Peter says to the ones who are *pierced to the heart* by the message that he delivers about Jesus, *Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Do you see it?* The *Holy Spirit* is a *gift* that one receives.

It is what Jesus promised in John 14.16-17 to the disciples. It is a good gift that the Father gives!

-So, think back to Acts 1 and 2. Jesus reminds the disciples of the promise of the Holy Spirit and then they wait, they pray (they yield) and the Holy Spirit fills them and does the supernatural in and through them and in their midst. Power comes upon them, in them and around. They receive this good gift, the Holy Spirit!

Let me ask you: *Do you want this good gift?*

*Do you want this power?*

*Do you want to shape this world...to see it transformed?*

*Do you want to experience what the apostles experienced?*

*Do you want the supernatural?*

*Do you want lives to be changed?*

It is time for saints to pray, so that the Holy Spirit, God's good gift, can fill us, and do the supernatural, bringing forth changed lives by the beautiful gospel!

It is the highest calling of the church – Prayer!