

# Prayer and Promise

by C.I. Scofield

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*Jesus teaches that prayer is not just about asking for things, but about building a relationship with God as our Father.*

**Scripture:** Luke 11:2

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "God The Father"

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## Description

C.I. Scofield delves into Luke 11:1-13, highlighting the disciples' request to pray, emphasizing the importance of becoming praying Christians. Our Lord's response focuses on making prayer a vital part of our lives, teaching us to prioritize God's exaltation, the general good, and our real needs. He contrasts the simplicity of prayer with the misconceptions of earthly comparisons, stressing the significance of addressing God as our Father. The heart of the lesson lies in recognizing God's fatherhood over us, surpassing His roles as law-maker and decree-maker, and inviting us to pray based on our relationship with Him.

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## Transcript

(Luke xi:1-13.)

### I. The Analysis.

1. The Disciples' Request (verse 1).--Note that the disciples did not, as usually quoted, ask the Lord to teach them how to pray, but "to pray"--a far more vital thing. These Jews had already known how to say prayers, but they observed ("as He was praying in a certain place") that one great contrast between themselves and their Lord was that He was a man of prayer, while they were not men of prayer. That contrast exists in the church to-day. We greatly need to be taught to pray.

2. Our Lord's Answer (verses 2-13).--Our Lord's answer, be it remembered, is designed not so much to teach us how to pray as to make praying Christians of us. This He accomplishes by (1) laying a foundation for prayer: "When ye pray, say, Our Father" (See below). (2) He teaches us that all right prayer desires above all else the exaltation of God: "Hallowed be thy name." (3) Right prayer puts the general good above personal desire: "thy kingdom come." (4) Right prayer takes before God the real need, whatever it may be: "give us day by day our daily bread," etc. (5) Right prayer is definite: "Friend, lend me three loaves." (6) It must not be thought that our Father is like an earthly friend who must be importuned before he will rise and give. On the contrary, so willing is He to give that "I say unto you, ask and it shall be given

you," etc.

Nothing could more grossly misinterpret this parable than to say our Lord meant to compare our Father to the sleepy, reluctant friend. Contrast, not similitude, is before us here. (7) Prayer is an exceedingly simple thing. For these seven reasons--pray.

Note. --It can scarcely be necessary to remind the student that the model prayer given here, and, in substance in Matt. vi:9-13, is of use to the Christian not as a form of prayer, but only as a lesson on praying. Suited to the then state of the disciples as being still under law, and with redemption still unaccomplished, it is wholly unsuited to the Christian.

1. It is not a prayer in Christ's name (cf. John xvi:23, 24).

2. It conditions the forgiveness of sins upon something the disciple has done, whereas the Christian is forgiven because of what Christ has done (1 John ii:12; Acts xiii:38, 39; Eph. iv:32).

It should be added that the promise concerning the gift of the Spirit has been superseded by Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has been given, and every believer is indwelt by Him (1 Cor. vi:19; Rom. viii:9; Eph. i:13; iv:30).

## II. The Heart of the Lesson.

When ye pray, say, "Our Father," that is Jesus Christ's philosophy of prayer. The Christian is a child, and has a Father, and that Father is on the throne of the universe, therefore it is supremely rational to pray. Goldwin Smith has said that "the worst consequence of atheism is that it leaves us orphaned and guideless in a vast vortex of blind force." Unfortunately there are many who are by no means atheists whose dismal creed would only change one word in that sentence. For "blind" they would say, "ordered." The vortex remains, and the force, only the force is conceived of --and rightly enough if we take only the natural into view-- as governed by majestic laws.

That philosophy does not deny the existence, nor even the creatorship of God, but only that He has given nature certain laws which are irreversible and uncontrollable, even by the God who made them. He leaves volitional capacity to men and to angels, but has put volition out of His own reach. Having set the wheels to spinning, and the cogs to grinding, the mightiest force conceivable, the power of God, is bound hand and foot.

Prayer, say these men, is by no means useless, for the communion with God which it necessitates exerts an important reflex influence on him who prays. True, he does not get anything unless his prayer happens to coincide with some working of natural law, but as he prays he sees that it is really unimportant whether he gets anything or not.

Then there are those who conceive of God as a great decree-maker. Foreseeing everything. He has prearranged everything. If we seem to have an answer to prayer it is only because we happened to ask for something decreed. These, too, make much of the reflex benefit of prayer.

Now, over against these theories which inevitably discourage prayer, and logically would end all praying, Christ puts the great word Father. He is far from denying that God is a law-maker and a decree-maker, but He affirms a larger fact concerning God. He does indeed make laws for nature, and laws in the sphere of the moral being of man. He does indeed make and execute decrees. But, to Christ, what was a law of

nature? His Father's usual way of doing things. Christ neither manifested nor taught the pseudo-scientific superstitious veneration for a law of nature. The general manager of a great railroad imposes upon it of necessity a minute and, to any one save himself, an inexorable system of rules. Perhaps there is no better illustration of a law-regulated universe than that afforded by a great modern railway. But the rules imposed by the general manager do not make it impossible for him to send out an extra. On a notable occasion the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad ordered every train between Altoona and Pittsburgh sidetracked to leave the way open to him as he sped to the side of an injured son. His fatherhood was greater than his laws.

So much Christ affirms. Creatorship and law-making are so to speak swallowed up in the vastly greater fact of fatherhood.

The Old Testament saint grounded his prayer on the covenant; the New Testament saint grounds his prayer on relationship.

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