

# Luke 11

by John Nelson Darby

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*John Nelson Darby's sermon on Luke 11 explores the significance of prayer, our relationship with God, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.*

**Scripture:** Luke 11:1

**Topics:** "Relationship with God", "Prayer"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the importance of prayer and the relationship between believers and God as their Father in his sermon on Luke 11. He explains that the disciples lacked the confidence to approach God in prayer, prompting Jesus to teach them the Lord's Prayer, which reflects a desire for God's glory and kingdom. Darby highlights the need for earnestness in prayer, the significance of the Holy Spirit, and the dangers of a lifeless religion that prioritizes outward appearances over a pure heart. He warns against the hypocrisy of religious leaders who fail to embody the truth of God's word, urging believers to keep Christ at the center of their lives. Ultimately, Darby calls for a genuine relationship with God, characterized by dependence, desire, and a commitment to His will.

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## Transcript

Verse 1. At the beginning of this chapter we have another instance of our Lord praying, the expression of dependence. And there the disciples ask Him to teach them to pray. They had not learnt the simple confidence in the Father that would go up naturally to Him and tell Him all. There may not always be wisdom in asking, but there should be confidence of communion by the Holy Ghost. Even Paul had not always intelligence of God's mind, or he would not have asked to have the thorn in the flesh taken away; but he was not afraid to make his request. The disciples had not this simple-hearted confidence. They understood not their place as children of the Father. He condescends to teach them when in this condition and gives them this prayer. The Lord teaches them to pray for things about which His own heart was occupied. "Father, glorify thy name," was expressive of the grand desire of His heart. "Hallowed be thy name." He first tells them of Him with whom they are brought into relationship. Not that they had the present power of the Holy Ghost, giving them the consciousness of their relationship - this they did not get till the day of Pentecost; but He teaches them to say, "Father, hallowed be thy name." There we have perfection. It is the desire for Him to be glorified, though I cannot tell what it may involve me in. There will be the desire not to sin, etc. This was the expression of the perfect desire that was in Christ Himself - "Hallowed be thy name."

"Thy kingdom come." There will be the removing of those things that are made, that, "those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Are you quite sure that you would like Him to come in this kingdom that will involve the shaking out of everything that may not remain? Surely that will wrench the heart from a quantity of things that are attaching you to that which does not belong to the kingdom to come. There may be the desire for these things, while at the same time the consciousness that I have not the sense of the object, but a sense of distance from it which hinders my enjoyment, though I know Him to be "the chiefest among ten thousand," and the "altogether lovely." There are often complaining prayers, because there is not the present enjoyment of seeing Him in the sanctuary, though the remembrance of it. We may have the hope of the Lord's coming, being glad to get to the end of this desert, because it is a desert; or we may long to get out, because Canaan is at the end. If it is not the latter, we shall be in danger of being tired with running, which is always wrong. We should be in the spirit of waiting pilgrims, not weary ones. We ought not to be weary; I do not say we are not, but we ought to be ever desiring His coming, because He is precious. In Revelation 22:17, the bride says "come," in answer to what He is, when He says, "I am the bright and morning star." God does not reject the cry which comes to Him as "out of the depths"; but there is a difference between the cry of distress and the cry of desire.

115 When Christ was on earth, there was an answer in Him to all God's will, for He always did the things which pleased His Father. He did it as no angel ever could. Then He comes down to notice our daily need, and there is dependence, indeed, in this. "Give us day by day our daily bread."

"Forgive us our sins," etc. This chapter does not go into what we may call proper church privileges; the desires are perfect, but the place is not known. The Lord touches upon all the circumstances down here. Man is looking up from the earth, he is walking there, and needs his feet washed. There are trespasses to be forgiven, and the spirit of grace is wanted. There is no sin imputed to us now; it is all put away. But will that make me hard when others fail? No; my seeing that Christ has agonized on the cross for me, will give me a sense of my freedom, but not indifference about sin. Instead of hardness, it will give us tenderness and softness of spirit.

"Lead us not into temptation." Why should God ever lead us into temptation? it may be asked. Sometimes the Lord has need to put us through a certain process to make us learn our weakness. Look at Peter. The Lord saw he needed to be sifted, or He could have prayed for him to be saved from that fall. A soul would always desire that he may not have this sifting. Christ Himself, though it was a different thing for Him, desired to be delivered from it when bearing sin. Paul prayed for the thorn to be removed. But Paul did not get a fourth heaven - that would have made him worse, but a "thorn in the flesh"; something to make him despicable in preaching (otherwise people might have come to him and said, Paul, you must be better than anyone else, for you have been to the third heaven), to prevent his being puffed up, and to keep him even. It was a gracious provision for him, though it is a right thing for the soul to desire not to be led into temptation, but to be delivered from the evil.

116 Verse 5. "Which of you shall have a friend," etc. This is another character of prayer - earnest waiting upon God. There is majesty in God's goodness, and yet He takes knowledge of all our wants, and we must await His will and pleasure. Suppose one asks his father for anything, and he says, "you must wait five minutes," is the child to say, "No, I cannot; I must have it directly?" Meantime, while waiting, faith is exercised, and the spirit broken down in the sense of need. Look at Daniel, and see another thing. God gave him a deep sense of his identification with Himself in what he was doing; so He must make him pray three weeks before he has his request granted. This is a great privilege, for it is to have fellowship with God. In the case of this friend, there is a depth of interest excited in desire for the thing, and because of

his importunity he gains it. There is a certainty of God's answering in blessing, though He delay.

Verse 9-13. This is prayer for the Holy Spirit, whom they, though believers, had not then received. In one sense a man may pray for this now, when he has not the Spirit of adoption, like the disciples then. But now the Holy Ghost has been given, consequent upon the Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33). There could be no union with the man Christ on earth. It is as a heavenly people that there is union with Him. Christ was looked upon alone until His work was done. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." The Holy Ghost was the seal of Christ's work, not of John's preaching righteousness. The second time He received the Holy Ghost was for the church. He received for Himself (Matt. 3) at His baptism, but for us when He ascended, having finished the work of our salvation. The fruits of the Spirit in us are the consequences of the grace and righteousness in Him, He being the only righteous man. The firstfruits of the Spirit in us are love, joy, peace - then come the practical fruits toward men. The first-named fruits are toward God, then patience, temperance, etc., towards men. The Holy Ghost cannot be the subject for the church, as such, to ask for now, seeing He has thus been given. Christ received Him for us. We pray by or in the Holy Ghost, not for Him now. We should pray for more of the working of the Spirit in us, and desire to be filled with the Spirit - poor little hearts indeed, but they may be filled. It does not at all follow that we are filled with the Spirit because sealed with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit would keep out evil thoughts. It will not take away the evil nature, which ever remains, but thereby that will be kept down.

117 Verse 14, etc. See the dreadful opposition of man's heart against Him, which brings out a very important test. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." When Christ is manifested, it is for or against Him that people take their stand. We have spiritual enemies to contend with, and Joshua leading the people in conflict was figurative of the Spirit leading the soul against our spiritual enemies. It is not Christians but Christ who is become God's centre. We may gather Christians together, but if it is not Christ in one's own spirit, it is scattering. God knows no centre of union but the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Himself the object, and nothing but Christ can be the centre. Whatever is not gathering round that centre, for Him and from Him, is scattering. There may be gathering, but, if not "with Me," it is scattering. We are by nature so essentially sectarian, that we have need to watch against this. I cannot make Christ the centre of my efforts, if He is not the centre of my thoughts. It is a great thing for a man to say, I have no other object but Christ - no other activity in my heart but for Christ; not only that He is the chief object at bottom - every Christian has that - but there may be a quantity of middle things in our hearts between the inside and the outside. These must be judged in the soul. Besides love to Christ, there may be love of company, etc.; and we must judge all that is between Christ, the root, and the offspring.

118 Verse 27, etc. "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," etc. They speak of the honour of being His mother. No, we would say, that has nothing to do with it. The closest connection with the Son of man is not equal to keeping the word of God. Religionists make a great deal of natural affection, but, though blessed in its way, it is nothing to the life of God in my soul. Of course it was a blessed thing to be the mother of the Lord; yet it was but a natural relationship, though a miracle; nor could it have been a light thing to her heart. Still, it was not equal to the blessing of the word of God bringing a soul to Himself. O! beloved friends, if you will only let the pure word of God abide in your hearts, you will find that it will sweep away all the cobwebs of the flesh.

Verse 29. They are seeking a sign, another natural thing; but He says, "There shall no sign be given." Jonah is a sign; he preached, and they repented. Now My word has come to you, and that is the test to

you. "The queen of the south," etc. The word of God is so perfectly suited to man's heart, even the natural feelings are touched by it. The word is sown in the heart, though it may bring forth no fruit.

Verses 33-36. Light is there, and the question is about the man's eye. If a man has bad eyes, the light is painful. So the word to one who has not clear eyesight or the eye single. This is a solemn word; but if a person was converted only yesterday, it might be true of him; he might be full of light. It applies as much to the babe in Christ as to the grown man. Where God is in the soul, His light is seen. "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not." "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light, having no part dark," etc. When the candle is there, we see all around. It shews itself and thus shews all around. The eye receives the light, single or evil. It is not single or double, but single or evil. If Christ is not the object, there is some evil object. If the eye be single, it is all simple, though there will be difficulties in the path, as with Paul. The light is set on a candlestick, that all who come in "may see the light." The man is forced to the question, Do you see it or not? Christ has set up the light in the world. God has displayed Himself in Him, and the effect of that is to shew your condition. Do you say, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father?" Ah, you have something first. If my body is not full of light, there is something not single in my eye - something has not given way before the power of Christ - something not given up. People say, I cannot see. No, of course you cannot; you have some other light. Further, what you do-see now will presently be given up if you do not walk in the power of what you have.

119 "Take heed that the light that is in thee be not darkness." Our manner of judging may be wrong, because the standard is not Christ, and then the light becomes darkness: we are guided wrong and mistaken in our path. If the eye be full of Christ, and we judge everything by that light, when I see anything that would not glorify Christ, I say, That will not do for me. I may be a little vessel, but I must be wholly for Christ. May we be walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the divine teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, content to follow Him, and desire no other path, having the eye upon Him, and only upon Him, so that when other objects are put before us, we may be able to say, "This one thing I do!" While walking through the world, may we be occupied with Christ, not making it our business to judge evil, but simple concerning it.

From verse 37 we have the sure judgment of the Lord on the various forms which the lifeless religion of those who led the people took up, expressed in different ways, but His constant and unmingled judgment upon it all. The first ground of condemnation is the substitution of outward cleansings and services, which the flesh can render, for purity of heart and the spirit of love: where these last are, external things are clean. Thus money occupies the heart, where there is only a religious form, for it represents the world; and pre-eminence is another expression of the same thing. Next (v. 45, etc.), the doctors of the law are sentenced, and with them the imposing of burdens on others, while they spared themselves from the trouble. It might not at first appear why building the sepulchre of the prophets shewed approval of those who killed them; but the truth was that the lawyers sought in this their own honour, instead of receiving the testimony of the prophets, which would have humbled them, for the moral and utter ruin of the nation. But they were adorning, as if all were right, the tombs of the righteous and good. It was the spirit of the world, arrogating credit to itself for piety to the dead, not holy fear at the prophet's rebukes. But a clearer proof should be in the wisdom of God that they sympathised not with the word of the prophets, but with the works of their fathers. Prophets and apostles would be sent, and once more be slain and persecuted. The Pharisees were hypocrites, and so judged; the expositors of the law perverted their nearness to scripture in their hatred of any real testimony to their own conscience. These could, least of all bear, what detected their evil. Hence, in pride and fear, they took to themselves all the springs of knowledge, neither entering

themselves (for they must do that as learners, and needy, and lost), nor allowing those to enter who would (lest they should condemn themselves, and besides, their honour and characters go for nothing). The closing verses shew us the invariable conduct of false religionists. Having no answer of moral truth to the evidence of deceit and evil exhibited in their ways, their effort was to perplex and to entrap. Convicted of sin, and incapable of truth, they sought to make void God's goodness in accusing even Christ of error. It was mercy toward others to be plain as to these false guides, and therefore the Lord denounced them unsparingly.

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