Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God's Generous Response to Boldness in Prayer
Scripture: Luke 11:11-13
Code: 42-158

We come now to our look at the Word of God to listen to what God has said on the pages of Holy Scripture. Luke chapter 11 is our text and we are looking at verses 5 through 13. This is a very, very rich and encouraging portion of Scripture.

One of the things I wish was different in the world was that church services were not sort of confined to the time limits that they are in our culture. One of the things I enjoy about going to Russia or other places in the world, you can preach as long as you want and nobody leaves or cares. It is a necessary constraint, however, in our culture in the way we approach our worship, to speak for 45, 50, 55, maybe sneak in an hour occasionally and then stop, because time constraints force us to go on to the next event.

And so consequently you can't always give the full representation of the text because God didn't write His Bible to be distributed in one hour or 45 minute segments. Not everything confines itself to that. And since the most important thing is not to make sure your timing is right, but to make sure your interpretation is right, the richness of Scripture spills over week after week, and I say that only to apologize to those of you who weren't here last Sunday.

We had a wonderful time last Sunday going through the first portion of this text. And I would simply commend to you to get the tape or the CD which is available out in the patio because it's one of the most fascinating and one of the most wonderful, encouraging passages of Scripture that we've studied as of yet in this remarkable book of Luke. Now we're going to go back and we actually are going to finish this text this morning and it's going to be equally blessed for all of us.

Let me read the text for you, starting in verse 5.

"And He -" meaning Jesus " - said to them, 'Suppose one of you shall have a friend and shall go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him;' and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

“And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or *if* he has asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Very remarkable passage. It starts out with a very simple kind of earthy routine look at a little village in an incident with a man who needed some bread to feed a friend who came at midnight, and it ends up with profound theology in the final verse. One could actually spend a long time on this. I was thinking about doing a 15-week series on verse 13 alone, it’s so rich. Now let me just give you the broad picture of this passage and then we’ll get back into it a little bit.

The one true and living God, the only God, the true God, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is very different from the deities and the gods fabricated by men and demons. And the difference is in His essential nature. He is loving, merciful, gracious, forgiving, approachable, available, and generous.

That is in direct contrast to all the gods of human religions throughout history, whose gods are not loving, or merciful, or gracious, or forgiving, or approachable, or available, or generous. They’re sort of designed along the line of typical kings and monarchs and rulers. And if you know anything about ancient history and the history of monarchs, you know that they are basically typically unavailable, unapproachable. In fact, in Esther 4:11, you have a characterization of a typical monarch. This happened to be in the Persian empire. But this is what is said.

“All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death.” If the king doesn’t summon you, and you go into his presence, he’ll kill you. “Unless - ” says Esther 4:11 “ - the king holds out to him a golden scepter so that he may live.” You walk into the presence of the king and you could lose your life. You can’t just do that.

Now that is a typical way that monarchs functioned. You approached only when you were invited. You approached somewhat delicately. You may have approached going in backwards, we read in some cases, or going in bowed over, for certain, in some cases crawling. And typically the king was elevated so that it was clear to you that he was way above you and you were somewhere under his feet. You approach with a certain hesitancy, with a certain delicacy, and you certainly didn’t approach with an attitude demanding anything.

But our God is just the opposite. He’s absolutely available, absolutely approachable, gracious, merciful, compassionate, kind, and you can go into His presence boldly and ask for whatever you

want. You can go into His presence any time and not interrupt Him. In fact, He desires you to do that.

Turn to Hebrews 4:16 for a moment, and here's a verse that we'll sort of use for a launch point for our discussion of this text. Hebrews 4:16 sort of pulls together the principle that we learn in this passage in Luke. It says this, verse 16, "Let us therefore draw near." We're drawing near to God. Drawing near to our great High Priest, the Son of God in heaven. "Let us therefore draw near with - " and some translations have the word "boldness," and some translations have the word "confidence." Let's use "boldness." I think it's a truer representation of the Greek.

"Let us draw near with boldness to the throne - " and this is the real interesting twist " - a throne of grace - " a throne that dispenses grace. It's not a throne of law, it's not a throne of justice, it's not a throne of judgment, it's a throne of grace? "So we draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Now I want you to see the word "boldness," *parrsia* in the Greek, *parrsia*. It means "freedom in speaking" basically. It means "to say whatever you want to say." It means "to be bold in your speech." It means "to be open and frank." And as we would say, "to be up front and say it like it is."

Go to God with openness, and frankness, and boldness, and confidence, and ask for whatever you want from the One who is dispensing grace and mercy to help. This is a promise I think often overlooked, that we are told to come to God with boldness for what is on our hearts.

Now I took you into that kind of concept last time. I showed you some prayers in the Scriptures where people actually said, "God, listen to me. Hear me. Give me Your attention. Don't hide from me. I have this on my heart and I'm bringing it for You to understand, and I want you to act, O God, and to hear and to answer my prayer." And while there is certainly a measure of humility there, there is also a very strong element of confidence and boldness.

A couple of people came to me after last week and said, "You know, we never heard that before, that approach. Are you sure that's really okay?" And so I didn't want you to think that I sort of invented that, so I thought I'd go back and muster a little historic support.

And one of my heroes is Martyn Lloyd-Jones, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones. And this is what Lloyd-Jones said. "This holy boldness, this argumentation, this reasoning, this putting the case before God, this pleading His own promises, this is the whole secret of prayer." That's pretty good, isn't it? He agrees with me. He doesn't know it. He's in heaven. Actually, I agree with him.

Of course, and to strengthen that and to let you know it's nothing new, I found a wonderful quote from Thomas Goodwin, the English Puritan. He even goes further. Thomas Goodwin says this, and I quote. "When you pray," he says, "you literally can go to God and say what's on your heart and claim

His promise. In fact, you can demand that He be faithful to His promise." And this is what Thomas Goodwin says, "Sue Him for it. Sue Him for it." Wow. "Don't leave Him alone. Pester Him with His own promise. Tell Him what He has said He's going to do. Quote the Scripture to Him," says Lloyd-Jones. And you know, God delights to hear us doing it, as a father likes to see this element in his own child who has obviously been listening to what his father has been saying. It pleases him.

Lloyd-Jones goes on and says, "The child may be slightly impertinent. It doesn't matter. The father likes it in spite of that and God is our Father, and He loves us, and He likes to hear us pleading His own promises, quoting His own words to Him, and saying in the light of this, 'Can You refrain?' It delights the heart of God. Sue Him." Pretty bold stuff, huh?

But I just wanted you to know other people have seen this in the Scripture. That is the attitude of bold prayer that goes to God and says, "You made the promise. You said to come. You said to ask what's on our heart. You said to be bold, so here we are." That kind of boldness is what Jesus is teaching here in this wonderfully rich passage in Luke chapter 11.

Now as I said last time, we know that God is holy, and that God is all powerful and all wise, all knowing. We know that God is unchangeable. We know that God is absolutely sovereign, that God is in complete control of every circumstance, every detail. And He's working out His own plan perfectly.

We know that and that raises the question: why do I pray? And if God's going to do what He's going to do, why should I pray? And how would my prayer have any effect on that? And certainly I'm just going to get in and get out as quickly as I can since God's going to do what He's going to do, anyway. I don't want to bother Him or interrupt Him with my little trivial prayers. How in the world am I to understand the role of my prayers?

And I told you last time that although God has ordained the ends, He has also ordained the means. And the end is fixed, and He uses the means to reach His end. And one of the means He uses to achieve His ends is our prayers. That's why, "The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." God determines who He will save from before the foundation of the world. He elects some to salvation, but He, though choosing to save them - that is the end - the means is their faith and their repentance.

And God has determined that we would be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, that's the end. But the means is our obedience. God is determined to build His church, but the means is our service and our preaching of the gospel. God has determined that He will unify His church, the body of Christ. The means is the exercise of our spiritual gifts. God reaches His ends through His means and one of the means that God has given us is prayer. And as we pray, we are the means by which God achieves His ends.

And even our simplest prayer is not insignificant to God, just as this illustration was so simple. All the man wanted was three little pieces of bread. That seems like a trivial thing, not a necessity, not an emergency, not a great need. And that's exactly why Jesus used that as an illustration. What may seem a small thing to you considering the greatness of God and the vastness of His kingdom and His eternal purposes is not at all a small thing.

You don't need to feel embarrassed when you go to God. You don't need to feel like your trivialities don't matter to Him. You don't need to consider that because God is sovereign He doesn't need your input, your information. You don't need to consider that because His divine choice and wisdom and power are already in place and He's going to do what He's going to do that your prayers don't play a part. They do and you need to go and you need to go boldly, whatever the issue might be. Because like everything else in our spiritual experience, God's ends are achieved through means that involve our will, our obedience, our desire, our faithfulness.

Now the key word in Luke 11 is the word "persistence." This is what he's pointing at in verse 8 where he says, "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs." Persistence, I told you, is a very interesting word, *anaideian*, very unusual word, it means "importunity."

"Importunity" is different than "opportunity." "Opportunity" is simply a circumstance that's favorable to you. "Importunity" is something completely different. "Importunity" is another word for being "brash" or "over bold." It's a word for being "shameless." It's a word for being "overly aggressive." It's a word for, as we said last time, having a lot of nerve or a lot of gall. It's a word to describe, you know, rushing in where angels fear to tread, that kind of attitude.

And Jesus is saying here this man got what he wanted because he was shameless. He got up in the middle of the night, he went right over there and he bothered his neighbor, and he didn't seem to concern him that the man was asleep, he was in bed with his family. It was in the middle of the night and he was going to disrupt the whole family. Everybody's going to get up. The man is going to have to get the bread because he had a social duty to do so, and so forth, and so forth. This is a bold thing to do. This is a brash thing to do. This is a thing that takes some nerve to do, to wake up this entire family in the middle of the night for something as simple as three biscuits.

The Lord is teaching us here something about how we approach Him. He's calling in this passage for bold, shameless interruptions, prayer that is aggressive, that goes to God when it may seem inopportune; not rushing in and rushing out, but unburdening your whole heart.

Now we saw last time the parable, verses 5-8, and I won't read it again. The Lord introduced this issue with a story that everybody would understand. And the point of the story is when you're not

embarrassed to ask, you get what you ask. Remember what James said. “You have not because you ask not.” Don’t be hesitant to ask God. At any midnight, in any circumstance, however small, if you don’t have it, it’s because you didn’t ask for it.

Without embarrassment we’re invited to come invading, and intruding, and claiming we have the invitation, and saying, “God, You promised. You said to pray without ceasing. You said to ask. You said to come. So sue me if I’m out of line. Here I am.” And so we looked at the parable and it was a fascinating one to look at.

And the second thing we saw, not only the parable, but in the application of the parable came this incredible promise. The second point is promise, verses 9 and 10, and I will take you to that again. Jesus again is speaking still, “And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.”

This is just beyond imagination. It’s staggering. I’m telling you, come, come in the middle of the night, come for what might seem small to you, come and hold me to my duty, just as one friend held another to his social obligation to show hospitality to give to someone who had a need, hold me to my promises, hold me to my responsibilities. You come, you ask, and I’ll give. You seek and you’ll find. You knock and the door will be opened to you.

This is almost too amazing to be true, so amazing that after saying it once in verse 9, just to deal with our sort of incredulity, he says it again in verse 10. This again is God inviting us to come into His presence and there’s a progression. You start out asking, and then you get more aggressive and you start seeking, and finally you start knocking, banging. Your appeal gets more aggressive. Does that somehow turn God away? Does that somehow irritate God? Quite the contrary. You ask, you receive; you seek which means you plead, and you find; you knock which means you get more intense, and the door to God's blessings will be opened to you.

Now that’s just review. Come to a third point, and let’s call this the principle. The parable made sense because of a promise. The promise makes sense because of a principle. And the principle is a pretty simple principle. It is this principle: Fathers do good to their children.

Look at verse 11. “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or *if* he’s asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?” Now this is a basic principle. Fathers give good gifts to their children. Generally speaking, humanly speaking, fathers care for their children.

And He’s upping this a little bit from friendship. The friend’s response, “Don’t bother me. The door’s been shut, my children and I are in bed, I can’t give up and give you anything. I’m your friend, but

don't this friendship too far. I like to be your friend in the daylight. I'm not interested in being your friend in the middle of the night."

Friendship is one thing and friendship goes so far. Fatherhood is something else, isn't it? This again is a typical common Jewish pattern of reasoning from the lesser to the greater. If a friend will respond to your boldness, what will a father do?

My children certainly didn't hesitate to ask me for what they wanted. Do yours? They certainly have never hesitated to ask their mother what they wanted. And the expectation is that if it's something they need and we know they need it, they're going to receive it, because they understand the relationship that we have is one of love, and care, and responsibility, and affection. And that's the point here.

So Jesus is then saying this promise. You can ask, and seek, and knock, and you will receive, and you will find, and the door will be opened, is based on the fact that you're coming to a father. This is the analogy. This is the principle here. And it's very interesting how he lays it out. He says one of you fathers, one of you of the disciples that are listening to this – it says back in verse 1 that He was speaking to His disciples. "One of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish. Your son's hungry. He wants a fish. He wants fish." That was kind of the staple meat.

And so what are you going to give him? You're going to give him a snake instead of a fish? I mean, if he wants to eat and he's hungry, you're not going to mock his hunger and you're certainly not going to give him a snake. Some suggest that this is also the word for eel, I think it's best to see it as a snake. You wouldn't give him an animal that could poison him. When he wants food and he wants to be fed, you're not going to give him something that could kill him.

And then He gives another simple analogy. "If he asks for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?" Why that comparison? Because scorpions were kind of a yellowy color. There are different breeds that are different kinds of scorpions. But historians tell us the kinds in those days were of a sort of a yellow color, not unlike the color of an egg, and they would curl up, and when they curled up in a little ball, they looked like a small egg. So there was some kind of a similarity there to make the analogy work. He says, "If your son wants an egg because he's hungry, you're not going to give him a deadly scorpion."

Now when Jesus taught this elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:9, He added a third analogy. He said, "If your son asks for bread, you're not going to give him - " what? " - a stone." You're not going to mock your son's hunger. You're not going to mock your son's need. And you're not going to give him something that he can't eat. You're not going to give him something that will kill him. That's the principle. The principle is that fathers take care of their children. And when children come and they have needs, the father meets the needs.

And so we see the parable which illustrates that we are to come at any time, no matter how simple the need, and to be overly bold in our asking. The promise that underlies our coming is that whatever it is that we seek, if it's within the framework of His will, we'll receive it. That is based upon the principle that God is a father.

Now that takes us to the fourth and most important point. Let's call it the premise. And by premise, I mean the bottom line, the foundation on which this whole discussion is built. And here it is, verse 13, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Now we are launched into theology. This verse is rich.

We've gone through a parable, and a promise, and a principle, an analogy, and we now come to a divine premise. We now come to biblical doctrine. "If you then, being evil - " we could stop there and teach on the depravity of man, right? You're evil, and He's talking to His disciples, His followers, those who had embraced Him, those who were "saved." Those were His children, but they were still evil. He doesn't say "those who do evil, those who are evil," "being evil." It is not just what we do, it is what we are that is evil. "But if you then, being evil - " and by the way, the word "evil" is *ponros*, *ponros*, "bad, wicked, worthless," used in Matthew 5:37 and 6:13 and translated by many translations as a reference to Satan, "the wicked one." You share essential nature that the devil possesses. "You then, being evil - " even those who follow Jesus Christ still have an evil sin principle operative in them.

You, being evil. However, have the residual imago dei, you have left in you the residue of the image of God that was defiled in the fall, but it's still there, because even though you are at heart evil, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," Jeremiah 17:9; "there is none good, no not one," Romans chapter 3. We are evil. "Yet know how to give good gifts to your children." That's the residual of the image of God.

Whenever you see what we call "the milk of human kindness," whenever you see people who don't know God parent well, love their children, show kindness, give their children what they need, be philanthropic; you're seeing the residual of the image of God, so warped and scarred in the fall, but still there. And so He says, "You, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children - " and here comes the key " - how much more - "

This is an old rabbinical way to argue, an old Jewish way to argue, the "how much more" argument, the "how much more" approach. "How much more than you who are evil shall *your* heavenly Father - " implied, who is not evil, who is perfectly holy " - give?" I mean, if you who are at heart evil give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father who is holy give to His children? If you who can only love imperfectly give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father who loves perfectly give to His children? If you who are limited in your wisdom give to your

children what you think is best, how much more will your Father who is perfectly wise give the best to His children?

The whole thing sets a huge gulf in our understanding. You can go to God because He's a loving Father. But He's a loving Father far beyond the most loving father in this world who is by nature evil and who does his best to give good gifts out of a corrupt and fallen heart. How much more will your heavenly Father love you with a perfect love? How much more with perfect wisdom, and perfect compassion, and perfect mercy and grace, and perfect understanding of your situation, and perfect goodness give to you?

So when you go to God, and you go with boldness, and you go with persistence, and you rush in and you unload what's on your heart, and first you ask, and then you start pleading, and then you start banging, know this, that God is delighted with that - delighted with that - because He, with His perfect love, and perfect wisdom, and perfect power, and perfect provision is able to give the best to His children. In fact, Psalm 84:11 says, "He withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly," His children. He holds nothing back. So how much more shall your heavenly Father give than any earthly father?

You know, John 13:1, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *eis telos*" it says of Jesus, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *eis telos,*" to the max, to the end, to the finish, completely, totally, limitlessly, infinitely. It's out of that love, it's out of that wisdom, it's out of those resources that God gives. Very different than a concept of an earthly monarch or a false god.

But there's this interesting point here. It says, "How much more should our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" That doesn't seem to make sense when you first read that. In fact, in the parallel passage, Matthew 7:11, only parallel in teaching, although on a different occasion, listen to Matthew 7:11. See if this doesn't make better sense. "If you then, being evil, - " here Jesus taught the same thing in the sermon on the mount. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him?" Now that's a good parallel, isn't it? You being evil know how to give good gifts, how much more shall your heavenly Father give what is good to those who ask Him?

But it doesn't say that here. It says, "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit?" How did the Holy Spirit get in here? And I read some commentators not too long ago who said there is a narrowing here, there is a narrowing here. In Matthew it's "that which is good." It's broad, wide, limitless. Here it's "the Holy Spirit." So He narrows it down to this specific thing.

When I read things like that and they don't sort of sound right, it doesn't sound right that the Lord would narrow this promise. He would make it as broad as possible in one place, anything that is

good. And then narrow it down to the Holy Spirit in another place. I sort of sit back in my chair and go into my meditation mode, try to figure out what may really be being said here.

The whole point of this is not that God's going to narrowly give us some prescribed things if we happen to hit the target. The whole idea is come and ask for whatever's on your heart and rush into God's presence whenever you want, of course with a measure of humility and reverence, but still unbare your heart, speak boldly, be persistent, go over the top, if you will, and you can expect that God who is generous will give you whatever's good. But how does the Holy Spirit fit in?

Let me just make it real simple, okay? It doesn't say you ask for the Holy Spirit necessarily. It says "Give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." When you go to ask God for whatever you ask God for, whatever it is, God gives you the Holy Spirit. Let me show you what I mean. You ask for comfort, He gave you the Comforter, right? You ask for help, He gave you the Helper. You ask for truth, He gave you the Truth teacher. You ask for power, He gave you the Spirit of power. You ask for wisdom, He gave you the Spirit of wisdom. You ask for guidance, He gave you the Guide. You ask for love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control and He gave you the Spirit whose fruit were released in your life.

You see, this is the generosity of God. You ask for the gift, He gives the giver. You ask for the effect, He gives the cause. You ask for the product, He gives the source. Is that generosity? He gives you according to His riches, not out of His riches. You ask God, as it were, going to the bank, you ask for some money, He gives you the bank. That's the point. I'll just give you the Holy Spirit, then you've got it all because out of the Holy Spirit comes power.

Out of the Holy Spirit comes the anointing which teaches you all things. Out of the Holy Spirit comes the giftedness, out of the Holy Spirit comes the fruit, out of the Holy Spirit comes the direction and the guidance. From the work of the Holy Spirit comes everything. Out of the Holy Spirit comes intercession on your behalf so that all things work together for good. I'll just give you the Spirit.

Talk about generosity. You might go to God and you might say, "Lord, I need comfort. Lord, I need some power to get through the circumstance. I'm struggling here. I need some wisdom." It would be pretty brash to assume, let's say if you were a disciple, or even for us if we can sort of put ourselves in that position to go to God and say, "God, I just - I don't want - I don't want grace for the moment. I don't want comfort for the moment. I don't want guidance for the moment. Would you just come down and live in me? Would you do that?" That would be pretty bold, wouldn't it?

I mean, that's asking a lot for a holy God to take up residence in this clay vessel, for a holy God to live in a fouled human. That is pushing the envelope, wouldn't you say that? "Okay, here I am, God. I don't want three flat loaves of bread. I don't want three crackers here for my friend. I'm telling You, would You please come down and live in Me permanently?" Whoa. That is presumption beyond

description.

But that's exactly what happens. That is exactly what happens. How generous is God? What else can He do? This isn't the narrowing. This is definition. He not only gives you the good gifts, but He plants in you permanently the source of every one of them. You are, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "the temple of the Holy Spirit." You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. So it's only a matter of being strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, right?

And then in Ephesians 3:20 it says, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all he can ask or think, according to the power that works - " where? " - in us." God says, in effect, "They have so many needs, they need so much power, so much wisdom, so much guidance, so much help, I'll just put My Spirit in them and then they have the Giver, and the Source, and the Cause."

I mean, the generosity of this is absolutely staggering. Giving us the Holy Spirit specifically is not something less than good gifts, it is something more than good gifts. The Lord is taking it a step further. He said, "I'll give you that which is good." And now He says, "I'll just give you the good One, the third member of the Trinity, God of very Gods, God the Spirit to come and live in your life."

Now those disciples knew about the Holy Spirit. The Jews knew about the Holy Spirit, they could actually say that phrase and the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." They read Genesis, and it was the Spirit of God who moved on the waters, right? And brought creation into form. Isaiah chapter 40 ascribed creation to the Holy Spirit. Job 33:4, Elihu gives testimony, "The Spirit of God has made me." The Spirit of God is the Creator. So they knew the Spirit of God's work in creation.

They also knew the Spirit of God came upon the judges in the Old Testament and aided them in their leadership in Israel. They knew that the Spirit of God came upon craftsmen who built the tabernacle and built the temple, that the Spirit of God came upon leaders like King David, and upon the prophets like Ezekiel and Micah, Zechariah. They knew the Spirit of God came for power and for prophecy and for certain works.

But they also knew - and this is really important - they also knew that when the Messiah came, there would be a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 61 introduces the Messiah by saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." You remember in Luke 4 Jesus came and said, "I have fulfilled that." So they knew that when the Messiah came, He would be empowered by the Spirit, and the Messiah was.

He was born of a virgin who was impregnated by the Spirit. He was anointed by the Spirit at His baptism. He was filled by the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit in His temptation and His ministry. The Spirit of God energized Him. You see it right through the gospel of Luke as you move through all those elements of the life of Jesus. So they knew that that was the way it should be, that's what the

Old Testament said, the Messiah would be anointed by the Holy Spirit.

But they also knew that when the Messiah came, He would bring a kingdom which would be dominated by the Holy Spirit. How did they know that? Because in Joel 2:28-29 it says, “The Spirit of God would come on all mankind.” There would be a release of the Holy Spirit, the likes of which had never been before.

And you remember on the day of Pentecost Peter says, “What you’ve seen in the day of Pentecost is a preview of what Joel said. The Holy Spirit is going to come on all mankind and there will be prophecies, and visions, and dreams.” That’s going to happen in the future kingdom and there was a preview of it on the day of Pentecost.

So they associated the Holy Spirit with the coming of Messiah, Messiah’s personal life and ministry, with the Messiah’s kingdom, as well. But there’s a third element. They knew that the Holy Spirit was going to come in fullness to believers who were a part of that kingdom. How did they know that? Because of that key passage that all knowledgeable Jews were aware of, Ezekiel chapter 36, that wonderful new covenant passage which Nicodemus knew so well as a teacher in Israel.

This is what the new covenant promises. I will sprinkle clean water on you, you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, all your idols. I will give you a new heart, put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, give you a heart of flesh. In other words, I’m going to totally regenerate your soul, your inside.

Then this, “And I will put My Spirit within you and He will cause you to walk in My statutes, and be careful to observe My ordinances.” So they knew that the Holy Spirit was going to come, and come in them, and enable them to walk obediently to the Word of God. They knew this was in the promise of the new covenant. They knew what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3 that “the letter kills, and the Spirit gives - ” what? “ - gives life.”

So Jesus understands that they’re waiting for the Holy Spirit. They’re waiting for the Holy Spirit. And they know that all fullness is going to come in the Spirit, that when the Spirit comes and takes up residence in them, they’re going to obey the Law of God, they’re going to walk in His commandments. So Jesus knows this is in their heart, and so He says to them, “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more is *your* heavenly Father - ” who is perfect and perfectly good going to give you what you want most, and what you want most is the Holy Spirit, because in having Him you have not just the supply, but you have the source, right?

And you remember Jesus said in John 14 to the disciples, “He has been with you - ” speaking of the Spirit “ - but He shall be in you, a new fullness.” And Jesus said in John 7 that when the Spirit of God comes in you, “out of your soul will flow rivers of living water.” You will become a gushing fountain of

divine blessing. The Spirit will lead you in all truth, He'll bring you into remembrance of things I've said. He'll guide you. He'll direct you. He'll convict you.

Do you understand that everything that has happened to you as a believer is a product of the work of the Holy Spirit? And at this point we could go into what's called pneumatology, the study of the Spirit. As a sinner, you were convicted by the Holy Spirit, John 16, that's how you came to understand your sin. When you confessed Jesus as Lord, you did it because of the Holy Spirit. "No man confesses Jesus as Lord but by the Holy Spirit," 1 Corinthians 12:3. You received the knowledge of God's truth from the Holy Spirit because it's only the Spirit that knows the things of God, 1 Corinthians chapter 2. "The natural man doesn't understand them."

You were given liberty from the law of sin, the law of death by the Holy Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is - " 2 Corinthians 3:17 says " - *there* is liberty." You were sealed to eternal life by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1. You walk in righteousness by the Spirit, Romans 8. You were baptized into the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12, literally "immersed into His life and power." You are indwelt by the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. You are filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18. You are gifted by the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12.

You're given godly virtues by the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5. You're empowered by the Spirit for evangelism, Acts 1:8. You are constantly prayed for by the Spirit, Romans 8, who makes groanings which cannot be uttered interceding for you. You are sanctified by the Spirit, 2 Thessalonians 2. You are made like Christ by the Spirit from one level of glory to the next, more and more like Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18. You have hope in the Spirit, Romans 8:23. The Spirit is the *arrabn*, the guarantee, the down payment, the engagement ring of your future eternal glory.

In summary, when the Lord gave you the Holy Spirit, He gave you everything, absolutely everything. By His presence, by His power, by His grace we are permanently the possessors of everything we need and so much more that "He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all we can - " what? " - ask or think." You have more resource in the Holy Spirit than you can even imagine.

It's all over the top, the whole passage. God gives you more in giving you the Holy Spirit, then you could ever possibly understand. That's why the prayer also of Paul was that God would give us the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge that we would understand what we have. And it's to those who ask. You ask and He doesn't give you what is the Spirit's, He gives you the Spirit.

God is not like that neighbor, is He? Who was bothered and said, "Go away," but finally relented. God is so generous. He gives us more than we could even imagine because since we can't comprehend God, or His power, or His wisdom, or His resources, we can't comprehend the Spirit, even though He lives in us. That's why He's able to do exceeding, "abundantly above all we can ask or think." Don't dishonor God by doubting His generosity. Go to Him in the middle of your night and know you

couldn’t interrupt Him. He delights that you’re there. And hold Him to His promises and be persistent and demand that He listen and give you what is best. Does this help you to see prayer in a different way? Good.

This is all so overwhelming to us, Father. We are so undeserving and so utterly unworthy. And yet You have just given us way beyond what we could ever comprehend. We ask for a gift and You gave us the Giver. We can only say, “Thank You,” and we will come, and we will plead, and we will pray, we will ask, we will seek, we will knock, because You’ve told us that that’s how we will receive and find, and the floodgates will be opened to us.

We love You and we thank You for being the generous One that You are, so magnanimous. We could never be so bold as to ask You to live in us, and yet that’s what You’ve done. We thank You for that. And we thank You that the Spirit is there to strengthen us, to teach us, to guide us, to comfort us, to help us, to intercede for us, and to keep us, seal us until eternal glory. For this we thank You in Christ’s name.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).