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Exegesis of Luke 11:5-13

I. Historical Background

The Gospel of Luke was written by Luke, a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. External testimony unanimously ascribes both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles to the same author--Luke (Morris 17). Recent scholarly work confirms the traditional view of Lukan authorship, in spite of some apparent discrepancies. Historical and theological differences seemingly appear between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Epistles (Ellis 185), but Guthrie lists the strong internal evidence for linking the two books: both are dedicated to the same man, Theophilus; both contain similar language and style; both exhibit common interests; Luke's gospel is naturally followed by Acts; Acts refers to the "first book" (Acts 1:1), which is most naturally understood as the gospel (*Introduction* 115). Luke is the only traveling companion of Paul mentioned in the epistles who could have written the four sections in Acts that use the pronoun "we" (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). "All others are excluded by the impossibility of harmonizing their geographical movements according to the epistles with the geographical movements in the 'we'-sections of Acts" (Gundry 205-06).

This writer agrees with the traditional and reasonably certain view that the author was Luke, whom Paul describes as "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14, NASB). Although Luke did not use "special technical medical language" uncommon for an educated writer, he does show "indications of a medical interest," according to Morris (20). A Greek-speaking Gentile by birth, Luke received a good education and was intellectually astute. Tenney further describes Luke as "the first great church historian and literary apologist for Christianity" (178-79). Since Luke was not an eyewitness of the events recorded in the Gospel, he relied upon the testimony of eyewitnesses and written sources in writing his Gospel (Luke 1:1-4). According to Morris, Luke was probably not a convert of Paul and probably reached Christian maturity before being influenced by Paul (23). Tenney says that Luke was probably converted less than fifteen years after Pentecost at the first mission in Antioch" (177-78). After meeting Paul at Troas around AD 51, Luke became "an intimate friend and fellow-worker of the Apostle Paul" (Geldenhuis 17). Luke accompanied Paul on three of his trips: his second missionary journey from Troas to Macedonia; his third missionary journey from Philippi back to Jerusalem; and his voyage to Rome as a prisoner. Between Paul's second and third missionary trip, Luke "remained at Philippi as pastor of the church" (Tenney 177).

The date of this Gospel has been the subject of some debate. Three ranges of dates have been suggested by various scholars: around AD 63; about AD 75-85; and early in the second century (Morris 24). Although some may see a small reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) in the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21:8-36) as a description after the event happened, many conservative scholars say that this is a legitimate prophecy by Jesus and had it been written after the fact, surely more details would have been included (Liefeld 808). The earliest of these dates is most probable since the Gospel was assuredly written before Acts. According to Morris, in Acts "no event after AD 62 is mentioned," such as Paul's martyrdom (probably AD 64-67) or the fall of Jerusalem (25). Considering the evidence, this writer agrees with the many conservatives who support the early date

of around AD 63.

Although the place of origin is not conclusive, Gundry says "the place of writing might be in Rome, where Luke was staying with Paul during Paul's imprisonment (though early tradition is divided between Greece and Rome for the place of writing)" (210). However, Luke was clearly writing for Theophilus (a high official) as the primary recipient, though it was written for all Gentile inquirers and converts (Geldenhuis 41) so that they too would know with certainty the things that they have heard. Marshall states that the address to Theophilus "is no more than a literary dedication to a friend of the author and the book was intended for a wider audience. The dedication suggests that it was meant for members of the church, and its contents reinforce this view . . ." (715). Gundry notes that it was written for "Gentiles, especially those who have open-minded interest in the historical origins of Christianity--most probably proselytes and especially God-fearers who have renounced idolatry and immorality and attend Jewish synagogues" (206). Luke worded difficult Jewish expressions and customs in a way that the Gentiles could understand (207). Barclay notes that because Luke begins his dating from the reigning Roman magistrates, does not emphasize the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy nor quote the Old Testament, and gives the Greek equivalent of Hebrew words, "there is nothing in the gospel that a gentile could not grasp and understand" (3). Liefeld says that "while Luke-Acts had an appeal to the non-Christian, Luke expected and desired it to be read by Christians, especially new converts" (802).

Luke makes his purpose clear saying that he wanted "to write an orderly account" (1:3) "about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven" (Acts 1:1-2, NIV) so that Theophilus (and other Gentiles) would have solid historical evidence of the truth in which he has been instructed (1:4). Luke not only wrote as a historian but also as a theologian, elaborating on such topics as salvation, the Holy Spirit, and prayer. Jesus is portrayed as a historical figure whose purpose is clearly stated in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (NASB). Luke emphasized the passion and resurrection narratives, which were the main subjects of early Christian preaching. Since Theophilus had some knowledge of these events, Luke "aimed to describe the happenings which led up to the passion" and describe the theological significance of this history (Guthrie, *Introduction* 107).

During New Testament times, approximately four million or more Jews lived in the Roman Empire, though only about 700,000 Jews "called Palestine their home." Three main languages prevailed in the Roman Empire: Latin was the legal language used primarily in the West; Greek was used primarily in the East; Aramaic and Hebrew was spoken by Palestinians. Therefore, "Jesus and the first disciples were probably trilingual" (Gundry 43).

The social world of the first century consisted of Jewish society and pagan society. Both of these societies had a wealthy aristocracy. Although many religious leaders and their families in Judaism were wealthy, "the majority of the Palestinian people were poor" (Tenney 49). Most of the Palestinian Jews were freemen, but there were many slaves in the pagan society. Due to the rise of slavery, especially resulting from military captives, the middle class was barely existent, with slaves accounting for more than "half of the inhabitants of the Roman world." The poor people, *plebs*, were numerous, and Tenney describes their condition as "pitiful." "Many lacked steady employment and were worse off than slaves, who at least had assurance of food and clothing" (50).

In New Testament times, Israel had many sects and parties in Judaism, including Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes, and Herodians. The Pharisees were mostly concerned with their religious faith and wanted to be "legally pure"; they believed that they were "clean" when they were obedient to the law (Gower 257). Professor Bright notes that the Pharisees' "moral earnestness won them widespread respect among the people. Indeed, they became true spiritual leaders of Judaism

and set its tone" (461). Theologically, the Sadducees rejected tradition and only accepted the written law of the Torah. They primarily consisted of a few wealthy and leading priestly families (Bruce 74-75). Representatives from both the Sadducees and the Pharisees formed a seventy member governing body of the Jews, known as the national council or Sanhedrin, that controlled the internal Jewish affairs. Additionally, a high priest was regularly selected from a wealthy Sadducean family to serve as the council's president (Bruce 78).

Although Roman rule provided excellent road systems for its provinces, Palestinian roads were not well developed. Many people walked miles by foot, others rode on donkeys. Those who could afford it rode by horses or mules, while dignitaries sometimes traveled in light carriages. Travelers could stop for shelter and meals at inns that were conveniently located at intervals, according to Tenney (61). Tenney says that the majority of these inns were not luxurious nor clean. Therefore, "middle and upper-class travelers usually counted on the hospitality of their friends, so that they were not at the mercy of avaricious landlords and their conscienceless servants" (61-62). Hospitality toward strangers was recognized as a sacred obligation in the Mediterranean world. Travel was usually done out of necessity rather than out of pleasure. "One never knew when he would be dependent upon the hospitality of others. Therefore a stranger had the right to expect hospitable treatment . . . and a man's worth and piety was readily seen by his hospitality " (Stein 105-06).

Although the typical Greco-Roman family was small, the Palestinian families were normally large. Gower describes the family as the father's "little kingdom" in which he would rule over his wife, children, grandchildren, servants and all who lived in his home (57). Children were considered a great blessing, especially boys. Gower explains, "men stayed with the family and so increased its size and wealth with wives and more children. Girls, on the other hand, were valuable only for the work they could do while they were young and for the bride-price that would be paid as a form of compensation when they moved to another family" (61). Since families did not have a last name (surnames), they were distinguished by mentioning either their father, their religious or political conviction, their occupation, or their place of residence (Gundry 49-50).

Palestinian homes of biblical times were normally "squarish, with a flat roof and external staircase" (Gower 22). The roof was very low--approximately six feet above the floor (Dickie and Payne 772). The poorer homes had one room with dimensions of ten feet by ten feet (Gower 31). The houses were built with "bricks made of mud and straw baked in the sun" and sometimes had a guest chamber on its flat roof (Gundry 46). The primary source of light came through "the single open door, which was shut with a wooden bar at night" (Gower 32). "Windows were small, both for protection and for keeping the house cool" (Dickie and Payne 771). Gundry states:

The typical low-class Palestinian had an apartment in a building containing many apartments, all on ground level. An apartment might have only one room. If so, part of the room was on a slightly higher level than the rest. Beds, chests for clothes, and cooking utensils were located on the higher level. Livestock and other domestic animals inhabited the lower level. . . . The floors consisted of the hard earth or, in better houses, of stone. The beds were merely a mat or a coverlet laid on the floor. Only well-to-do homes had bedsteads. People slept in their day garments. (46-47)

While the Romans would eat four meals each day, the Jews would eat only twice, once at noon and the second time at night. Gundry describes the Jewish diet as "bread, fruits, and vegetables" while "meat, roasted or boiled, was usually reserved for festival days. Raisins, figs, honey, and dates supplied sweetening, since sugar was unknown. Fish often substituted for meat" (47). Gower emphasizes that "bread was the basic food" (46).

Gundry notes that the ancient oriental custom was for families to retire early in the evening, but if a traveling guest happens to arrive late at night, the oriental "law of hospitality" caused the traveler's host to wake a neighbor if provisions of food were needed. One meal consisted of three small loaves of bread. "Palestinian families slept close together on mats in the same room"; therefore if one member got up to unbolt the door, the whole family would wake up (229).

II. Contextual Analysis

The passage in Luke 11:5-13 is structured as a parable that is told by Jesus. Using an extended simile, Jesus expressively makes a comparison using a common event of first-century life to emphasize an important spiritual truth concerning prayer. In its larger context, the parable is aptly preceded by a teaching illustrating the importance of waiting quietly on the Lord (10:38-42) and a sharing by the Lord on how to pray (11:1-4). The parable is then succeeded by Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees (11:14-54). All of this takes place within Jesus' ministry as He travels from Galilee to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27).

Luke has explicitly stated that his purpose for writing his Gospel was to produce an orderly account of all that Jesus did and taught (1:3; Acts 1:1-2). Throughout his Gospel, Luke stresses the importance of prayer by recording Jesus' prayers and by relating Jesus' parables and exhortations to pray (Morris 50). This theme is portrayed in Luke 11:5-13. The first half is an actual parable that Jesus used to "drive home the point that prayer must be persistent and that God is always ready to give." The second half is an amplification and teaching by Jesus that God will give to those who seek (Morris 212-13). These passages contribute to Luke fulfilling his purpose of presenting an orderly account of Jesus' teachings, in this case, on prayer.

Luke 11:5-13 has several key words and phrases that relay important ideas that help contribute to an overall understanding of this passage on prayer. Verse 5 specifically states that the setting of the parable takes place at *midnight*, the time after which an unexpected traveler arrives at his friend's home. The vast majority of commentaries state that the traveler journeyed after dark to escape the heat of the daytime (Barclay 145; Gilbrant 349; Morris 213). Even though it was so late, the friend wanted to fulfill his sacred duty of hospitality by feeding the traveler, but since he had no bread to offer, he had to awake his neighbor (who is also a friend of his) for the provision of three loaves. Since it was midnight, the neighbor's door had been bolted shut and his family was sleeping together on the same mat in their rather poor one-room house (Morris 213). Although the neighbor had the provisions to give, yet because of the lateness of the hour, it was very inconvenient for him to get up and thereby disturb his whole family's sleep in order to give his friend what he had asked.

The key word that contributes most toward understanding this parable is the Greek word *anaideian* (ἀναίδειαν), translated in verse 8 as "persistence" (NIV, NASB) or "importunity" (RSV, KJV). Thayer defines this noun as "shamelessness, impudence," and describes the importunate man in verse 8 as "persisting in his entreaties" (38). The noun *anaideian* literally means "without a sense of shame" and is used only once in the New Testament. "One cannot deny the man was persistent, so evidently Jesus was speaking of the shameless manner in which the man came to his neighbor and continued to ask--his shameless persistence. He had no shame in making an unreasonable request in the middle of the night. It was impudent of him to expect help at such a time" (Vinyard 11: 221). Defining the word *anaideian* as "shamelessness" or "importunity," Vine interprets the Lord's illustration as showing "the need [for] earnestness and perseverance in prayer, Luke 11:8. If shameless persistence can obtain a boon from a neighbor, then certainly earnest prayer will receive our Father's answer" (321). In spite of this clear explanation, several alternative views

have been stated concerning the word for "persistence."

Some commentators have deduced from verse 8 that Jesus is not presenting a comparison but a contrast to the way that believers should pray to God, since God will surely answer prayers (even without persistence) much more graciously than any friend (Liefeld 949; Barclay 146). Another view states that *anaideian* refers to the "over-boldness" and "shamelessness" of the man coming to his friend at "such an inconvenient time," not to the persistence of his request. This shows that the requester highly regarded the strength of the relationship to such an extent that it warranted a reply to an outrageous request because of his confidence in the friendship (Geldenhuys 326). Another interpretation proposed is that *anaideian* is used in reference to the man in bed and therefore means that he wanted the "avoidance of shame" that would be incurred for refusing the need of a visitor to his community. In the same way, "God will always do what is honorable and consistent with his character" (Liefeld 949). However, while these explanations seem plausible, the verses following verse 8 further indicate that the parable uses the word *anaideian* in reference to the requester to make a comparison of how believers should persist in prayer.

Jesus commands believers to *ask*, *seek*, and *knock* (verses 9-10, NASB), and the appropriate response will be given. According to Morris, all three verbs are continuous in the Greek, and therefore imply that "Jesus is not speaking of single activities, but of those that persist. He is speaking of an attitude similar to that taught by the parable" (214). The word translated *ask* is *aiteō* (αἰτέω) and "frequently suggests the attitude of a suppliant, the petition of one who is lesser in position than he to whom the petition is made," such as the case where men ask for something from God (Vine 40). Asking refers to a humble petition. The word translated *seek* is *zēteō* (ζητέω), which means "to seek in order to find" (Thayer 272). Vinyard characterizes *zēteō*, "to diligently, earnestly, and tenaciously search after something, sparing no effort or expense, for the sought object is valued to the highest degree" (13: 28). Geldenhuys comments that "this includes faithful prayer and all other exertion directed towards the purpose of obtaining the things for which the prayer is offered. While confidently awaiting God's answer, the one who prays must also from his side do everything that is necessary" (326). The word translated *knock* is *krouō* (κρούω) and means "to strike, knock" and is used figuratively in Matt. 7:7, 8 and Luke 11:9, 10 (Vine 346). Angel says that the context of this word is metaphorical, probably coming from a proverb found in Judaism "with reference to studying the Mishnah" (881). While *krouō* is always used in the New Testament to mean "to strike or hit something," the object that is struck (e.g., a door) can be figurative, such as in verses 9-10 and its real parallel Matthew 7:7. In both verses, "*krouō* is in the present tense and a 'continuous knocking' is in view. Persistent petition will bring a result (cf. Luke 11:5-8)" (Vinyard 13: 412). The following quote aptly summarizes the use of the three verbs:

There is a progression in the appropriate kind of persistence. Asking means a simple request. Seeking implies a stronger desire and a more definite kind of request. It is something that takes time. It implies a greater sense of urgency. Knocking shows determination to get an answer. (Gilbrant 351)

Gilbrant says that Jesus "emphasized that faith is not the only criterion for success in prayer; it is sometimes necessary to persist" (351). God is willing and able to give to those who ask persistently in prayer, but Jesus does not say that they will always get exactly what they ask for. Instead, Morris gives a proper balance by saying that a 'No' from God is just as definite an answer as a 'Yes,' but God will surely hear and respond to their prayers in "the way that God sees best" (214).

Believers can surely trust in God's goodness as seen contrasted to man's evil nature in verses 11-13. The *serpent* or snake is described as "a strange and threatening animal, dangerous to life and full of cunning, deceit and evil" (Bietenhard 509). A *scorpion* was known to both Greeks and Jews

as being about two to six inches long and having a "poisonous sting in its tail" that was painful and could "be fatal to young children" (Budd 510). The word for evil is *ponēros* and signifies "human cruelty in general" (Vinyard 15: 259). Jesus acknowledges that mankind is sinful, and yet recognizes that even an evil natured father will give good gifts to his children. While it is hard to imagine any father giving a needless stone to a son who asks for bread or giving a harmful serpent or scorpion instead of the requested fish or egg, certainly God's nature would prevent such a thing from happening to those who ask of Him. Liefeld gives two supporting arguments to show that "God will respond to our petitions only in kindness:" "(1) God is our heavenly Father (v. 13) and will do no less for his children than would an earthly father; (2) God is perfect and will do 'much more' than sinful man would" (949). Believers can have confidence when praying, knowing that their loving Heavenly Father desires to give them good gifts, the foremost being that of the Holy Spirit, who would provide for their spiritual needs. Geldenhuys extols the Holy Ghost as "the most important and indispensable Gift, in which all other good gifts are included!" (325).

The parable of Luke 11:5-13 describes a man who obtains his inconvenient request from his friend because of his persistence in asking, seeking, and knocking. Thus, the parable compares this incident to the way that believers should be in approaching God with their real needs. On the other hand, the elaboration of the parable contrasts the nature of man as being sometimes reluctant to give to a person in need, while the nature of God is such that He is always able and willing to give good things to his children, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit. Geldenhuys summarizes the meaning of the passage by saying "No regenerate child of God should ever doubt that when he prays to God out of real need his prayer will be answered" (325).

III. Theological Reflection

This writer, along with the majority of evangelical scholars, believes in the idea of progressive revelation--"the concept that God's revelation gradually increased in definiteness, clarity, and fullness as it was revealed over time," and yet the revelation remained perfect each step of the way (Virkler 133). Virkler states well that "the law continues to perform the same functions in the New Testament that it did in the Old Testament. The misunderstanding that law was actually a second means of salvation is based on the fact that the [later] Israelites themselves misunderstood the law similarly, and turned the law from its proper purpose into legalism, the attempt to earn salvation by keeping it. . . . Faith in God's provision of a sacrifice remains the basis for salvation throughout the Old and New Testaments" (144-45). The law was not given as a means of justification, but to guide consciences, restrain evil, show the need for Christ, and serve as a guideline for living after commitment to the Lord (140, 143).

At the heart of the parable in Luke 11:5-13 is a comparison and a contrast. The parable compares the persistence of the man requesting food for his visitor to the way that believers should approach God in prayer with their real needs, e.g. the Holy Spirit. At the end of the parable, Jesus contrasts the nature of evil men to the good nature of God. This passage provides enlightenment on several important theological concepts: **human sin**, **God**, **prayer**, and the **Holy Spirit**.

Human sin is affirmed as a fact by Jesus in Luke 11:13 and its parallel Matt. 7:11, by using the Greek word for evil, *ponēros*, in conjunction with fathers and parents specifically, and "human cruelty in general" (Vinyard 15: 259). While some commentators regard *ponēros* as relative, comparing parents with "the pure motives of God," Guthrie affirms Jesus' clear indication of man's inherent sinfulness (*Theology* 936-37). Guthrie aptly states that Jesus "was certainly affirming an evil bias which marked all people in contrast to the perfectly good intention of God the heavenly

Father" (*Theology* 190). While Jesus takes for granted the innate sinfulness of humankind, and differentiates Himself and the Father from them (Guthrie 229), His main emphasis is on the "superior generosity of a heavenly Father over an earthly father" (190).

Although **God** is known as a God of love in the Old Testament and Jewish literature, this truth has a more dominant role and a sharper focus in the New Testament according to Guthrie (*Theology* 104). God's character is gracious in "wanting to give" to and to respond to the needs of His spiritual children, just as a human father loves to give to his natural children. All a disciple has to do is ask, seek, and knock, and then God's unmerited gifts (including grace) can be received (Guthrie, *Theology* 606). Luke 11:13 references God as "heavenly Father" (NASB), while in the parallel verse of Matt. 11:7 God is designated as "Father who is in heaven" (NASB). Guthrie notes that for Jesus this "combination of heaven with the fatherhood of God" was "synonymous with his Father's presence" (*Theology* 875). As an adopted child of the heavenly Father, a believer in Christ is "the recipient of God's fatherly care" and an heir of "unlimited resources of the Father" (Erickson 964). The Father will care for his human children even more than he takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields (Matt. 6:25-34). The heavenly Father will always act for the child's welfare, knowing his needs and the potential dangers. There is a foundation of warmth and trust in God that enables a believer to submit to God's wise and kind provisions after asking for his needs. The heavenly Father can be trusted to give good gifts to His children (Erickson 975).

The entire focus of Luke 11:5-13 and the preceding passage is **prayer**. The parable teaches the principle that "true faith will persist in prayer until the answer comes" (Gilbrant 347). Theologian Erickson asserts that prayer does not change the providence of God or what he has purposed to do, but prayer "is the means by which he accomplishes his end. It is vital, then, that a prayer be uttered, for without it the desired result will not come to pass" (405-06). Erickson continues:

Prayer is not so much getting God to do our will as it is demonstrating that we are as concerned as is God that his will be done. Moreover, Jesus taught us persistence in prayer (Luke 11:8-10--note that the imperatives of verse 9 and the participles in verse 10 are present tense: keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking). It takes little faith, commitment, and effort to pray once about something and then cease. Persistent prayer makes it apparent that our petition is important to us, as it is to God. (406)

Morris says that the message in the parable is clear:

We must not play at prayer, we must show persistence if we do not receive the answer immediately. It is not that God is unwilling and must be pressed into answering. The whole context makes it clear that he is eager to give. But if we do not want what we are asking for enough to be persistent, we do not want it very much. It is not such tepid prayer that is answered. (213-14)

Geldenhuys asserts that the passage teaches that only those who are in a "relation of friendship towards God" and who pray "from real need and not from false motives" can have a "firm faith that their prayer will be answered" (324-25). Because God can do anything that is consistent with His character, "the believer can pray confidently, knowing that there is no limitation upon what God is able to do" (Erickson 964). The answer to prayer may not be what is expected, but God will always respond in a caring and kind way, seeking the believers best interest according to His will. Erickson gives several examples to show that believers do not always get what they ask for: "Jesus asked three times for the removal of the cup (death by crucifixion); Paul prayed thrice for the removal of his thorn in the flesh" (406). The heavenly Father granted what was most needful. "The believer can pray confidently, knowing that our wise and good God will give us, not necessarily what we ask for, but what is best" (406).

The **Holy Spirit** is described as a "good gift" in verse 13. In Old Testament times, before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit "came upon believers in order to equip them for a certain work they were to do for God, and left them when that service was over" (Wuest 110). Wuest uses John 14:17 to exemplify that "the presence of the Spirit was *with* the believer in Old Testament times under the law," whereas "the presence of the Spirit [is] *in* the believer under grace" (108). While acknowledging the previous change, this writer also sees the ministry of the Holy Spirit as primarily continuous as Virkler does, "The biblical evidence suggests that the Holy Spirit ministered in similar ways throughout the Old and New Testaments, convicting people of sin, leading them to faith, guiding and empowering them, inspiring them to make verbal or written prophecies, giving them spiritual gifts, and regenerating and sanctifying them" (151). Virkler aptly notes that even though "the disciples had already received the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) . . . they were still to wait for a special manifestation of His presence that would transform them from fainthearted disciples into courageous apostles . . ." and empower them to become witnesses of Christ's resurrection after He had been glorified (150).

The Gospel of Luke has more references (seventeen) to the Holy Spirit than the other synoptic Gospels, showing that Luke had a historical and theological interest in the Holy Spirit (Stronstad 35). Ladd summarizes the references to the Holy Spirit in Luke and the other two Synoptics by saying that "Jesus was endowed by the Spirit to fulfill his messianic mission, that his mission would include a general endowment of the Spirit, and that his disciples would be enabled by the Spirit to meet whatever difficulties they might encounter" (324). "Luke quotes a promise that the Father will give the Spirit to Jesus' disciples (Lk. 11:13)" (324).

According to Stronstad, although Luke 11:13 does not "significantly contribute to Luke's theology," it does "highlight the importance of the Holy Spirit in Lukan thought" (46). Because some passages of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke contain almost identical material, scholars believe that both writers used a common source designated as *Q*. In two specific texts, the wording is similar but Luke adds a phrase to one and modifies a phrase in another to include a reference to the "Holy Spirit." In Luke 11:13, the "Holy Spirit" is substituted for Matthew's wording, "good things," in 7:11. Stronstad believes that even though Luke altered his source he was not unreliable because he was simply contemporizing the text to fit to the fulfillment of the times and thus conforming to the "common principle of midrash peshar" (46). Stronstad continues, "Because of his emphasis on the Holy Spirit, Luke contemporizes the original promise of 'good things' to the post-Pentecost reality of the gift of the Spirit. While the meaning is consistent with the *Q*-source, the wording is Luke's" (46). Guthrie well states that this assurance of the availability of the Holy Spirit "throws some light on the post-Pentecost experience of the Spirit, when all believers, although possessors of the Spirit, might request a greater fullness of the Spirit" (*Theology* 524). In conclusion, Scripture simply states that "Jesus affirms that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Lk. 11:13)" (523-24).

IV. Contemporary Application

Believers of all ages have wondered whether or not God really answers prayers, especially when their requests have not been granted. While God is sovereign, He has made it clear that He is willing and able to oblige the requests of His creation on account of their right relationship with Christ. In so doing, God uses the prayers of believers to accomplish His will for their lives and for the world. Prayer changes things and people. The way that God answers prayers can be compared with and contrasted to the way that a friend answers the urgent needs of his companion, and a father

answers the requests of his children.

Though this world has been corrupted by sin, especially in family relationships, the vast majority of fathers want to give good gifts to their children. A father takes pride in his own children and wants to see that they are taken care of well and grow properly. Fathers not only want to see that their children's needs are met, but they delight in seeing that the little ones are happy in receiving the good things of life. Not all fathers have the capability to give as good a gift as they would like, but out of love, they each have a longing and a desire to give that which would benefit their children; yet, some fathers are occasionally reluctant to give until it is more convenient or until it becomes a necessity. When a child asks for something out of necessity, the father will do everything in his power to give his child the thing that was asked for or at least an equivalent. On the other hand, if the child asks for something that is detrimental, the father who has more experience and wisdom will lovingly decline the request that is made. In such a case, the father does answer the request but not necessarily to the child's liking.

Similarly, God is the heavenly Father of all those who have received Jesus as Lord and Savior. All believers are therefore spiritual children of God and have the privilege and responsibility of asking God for the needs of life. Many comparisons can be made between the nature of a natural father-son relationship and the nature of God's relationship to believers. Just as a natural father loves to give to his children, the heavenly Father also loves to give to his children. On the contrary, God is a perfect father and is therefore always able and willing to do even more than a natural father would and give good gifts to his children. Even an imperfect earthly father in this day and age will not give useless things (e.g., a stone for bread) or dangerous things (e.g., a serpent for a fish or a scorpion for an egg) to his son when he asks for necessities, how much more will the perfect heavenly Father give to His children the things that they request in prayer and really need, especially the Holy Spirit. God desires that believers have assurance that He will surely meet their real needs when they pray. He is always capable and willing to give a good gift when it is clearly beneficial to His child and in accordance with His will. God knows people's needs better than they do and He is gracious and generous with His provisions. God may not always give what is requested or expected, but He will always respond in a kind, loving, good, and wise way.

If a believer does not receive from God what he has requested in prayer immediately, it could be because the request is not in accordance with God's good will for that person (or the recipient of the prayer) and God has something even better for him, but it could also be because Jesus desires for us to persist in prayer. Luke records a parable told by Jesus that compares the persistence of a man who obtains his inconvenient request from his reluctant friend to the persistence that is often necessary of a believer when approaching his loving, caring, and generous God. Jesus desires for believers to be earnest and persevere in prayer when they are certain that their request is necessary. This persistence shows faith, commitment, and sincerity to God.

Jesus reiterates the necessity of persevering by commanding believers to continue *asking*, continue *seeking*, and continue *knocking*. Jesus desires for believers to begin by humbly *asking* for their needs and to continue until a response is given by their Father in heaven. They must *seek* by tenaciously praying and doing all that is in their own power to prepare themselves to receive the answer. Believers must *knock* figuratively by urgently striking heaven's door with their sincere prayers until God opens the door and they have obtained an answer to their request. Jesus wants believers to have determination in getting their answer, for this shows true faith in a God who can and will respond. Because God is a loving heavenly Father, believers can be assured that their persistent prayers will be answered out of God's goodness and wisdom, especially when they pray for the Holy Spirit.

Luke describes the Holy Spirit as a "good gift" that the heavenly Father would be glad to bestow upon those who ask. While the Holy Spirit is automatically received when a person repents of his sins and trusts in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, there is a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence that is available those believers who ask God for this wonderful gift. Since this is a gift that God is more than willing and able to give, and since God's nature is good and kind and trustworthy, the believer can be assured that when he asks for a greater fullness of the Holy Spirit with the accompanying power to be a witness he will not be given an imitation of the real gift but will be given the authentic Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will enhance a believer's relationship with God and enable him to serve Jesus in greater ways.

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