

PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” —LUKE 11:13

After Jesus had taught His disciples to pray and told them the parable of a friend at midnight, He asks them, “How much more will our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Why does Jesus suddenly talk about the Holy Spirit as the answer to our prayers? Because God always sends the Holy Spirit to fulfill His agenda in our prayers. Prayer opens up the way for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. It’s not about making life easier, though sometimes it does, but about giving the Holy Spirit freedom to implement God’s will in that particular situation.

It is true, of course, that God does not always give us what we would like Him to. In Bill Hybels’ book, “Too Busy Not to Pray”, he says if the request is wrong, God says, “no”. If the timing is wrong, God says, “slow”. If you are wrong, God says, “grow”. But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, “go”. Sometimes the request is wrong and the answer is “no”. We can’t have the notion that answered prayer is only when God does what we ask Him to.

Paul pleaded with the Lord three times to take away the thorn in his flesh, and God’s answer was no. He said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” And Paul’s response was, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Corinthians 12:9). We don’t

know what the thorn in Paul's flesh was, but God used it as a means of keeping Paul dependent upon Him, and He may do the same with us. If "no" is the answer, it is for good reason.

Paul's praying is always about something only the Holy Spirit can do to enable and equip us for life. Our agendas are usually about having a nice, smooth time through life, and we try to engineer our circumstances in that direction. There's nothing wrong with wanting life to go smoothly, but God will sometimes allow situations we don't like, in order for the really important things to take place. His agendas are far greater than ours, and the bottom line in our praying is that God's purpose be fulfilled. And we find in the Holy Spirit the resources for whatever God's will and purpose is for us.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I ask that your Holy Spirit work in me so that my prayers are always in line with your will, and that your purpose be accomplished in them.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I inclined to think my prayers are unanswered because they have not been met the way I expected?