

# The Effectiveness of Audacious Prayer

Lk 11:5-13 (text)

21 November 2021, Reformed Church of Wainuiomata 10:30  
(Put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)<sup>1</sup>

## Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Currently, Session and I know of quite a few of our members who are suffering some or other hardship/trial!

Well, of all the things sufferers do, what is the one thing they are certainly bound to do? Is it not praying – ardently praying!?

But prayer must never be the action of only those who suffer hardship! No, every boy & girl, every young man/woman, every Christian should have an active prayer life fed by keen Scripture reading! Prayer! That's what our passage is about!

You see, the main message of our text is: If your cause is legitimate, then pray – pray audaciously!<sup>2</sup> God desires that (as Rm 12:12 says) His loved-ones will *be devoted to<sup>3</sup> prayer!*

Well, our text allows for us the following three points...

- Needs
- Asking
- Receiving

## Needs (v.5,6,7)

My brother & sister, the host in Christ's parable had *legitimate grounds* on which he went & woke up his friend at midnight!

It had all to do with showing hospitality to a friend who arrived unexpectedly late at night in a state of hunger & thirst.

First of all, you & I have to remember that the people of the Ancient Middle East did not have our ways of rapid communication.

They had no telephones to warn a host in advance about their coming. They could not ring. They could not text. They could not email. Their postal services were not what ours are.

So, it is understandable that many travellers would just *hit the road* without any prior warning whatsoever to any friends along their way!

Thus, if you had friends/family in other towns, you always had the chance of being caught off guard by an unexpected visitor!

Then, we must understand that, in those days, travellers did not have our comfortable means of travel – no sealed roads, and no fast-moving cars, buses, trains or planes.

Most long-distance travels were done on carts/wagons pulled by an ox or donkey; or even by just *riding* on a donkey – if not by simply walking the whole distance *on foot* along the dusty roads. And, because travelling was so arduous, people would prefer travelling during the cooler part of the day – i.e., in the evening!

Thus, when this traveller of Christ's parable arrived at his friend's house, it was dark, and he was way more tired, way hungrier & thirstier than what you and I would be if we had driven our cars from here to Auckland in eight hours!

So, his friend – the host – at whose house this traveller arrived so late at night, was in a real predicament! Yes, great was this poor host's *need!*

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<sup>1</sup> I am especially grateful for the sermon of RC Sproul by which I was greatly moved, and from which I gleaned wonderful words of wisdom (Cf. Sproul's audio sermon on Lk 11:5-13  
<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/asking-knocking/>)

<sup>2</sup> The word used in v.8 of our text is "persistence" (NASB), or "impudence" (ESV)!

<sup>3</sup> So, the NASB of Rm 12:12 (The NIV'84 says "faithful in prayer.")

I mean, he did not *know*, neither *expect*, that his friend would come! So, he is not prepared – hasn't got enough food in days when there were no fridges & freezers!

Thus – and here is the point – this poor host is *not to be blamed* for this predicament – for this need! Yet God's Word urges His people to show hospitality to sojourners, whether they're friends or even strangers in need!

Is this not what Heb. 13:1 says...? *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels<sup>4</sup> unawares.*

And did not our Lord Himself also say that, on judgement day, He will say to those on His right (His loved ones), "...*I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...*"? (Mt 25:35).<sup>5</sup>

My brother & sister, again, here is the point we want to make: this poor host had a sudden & unexpected need – yet a very *legitimate need*!

So, he did what you & I, no doubt, have also done at times, i.e., go to a neighbouring friend for help.

And, despite the fact...

- that it's already midnight;
- that his friend is already asleep;
- despite the fact that there would be a great commotion if his friend would have to walk past his children who are asleep in the front room (where the front door is) to remove the huge bolting bar from the door;
- despite the fact that the knocking and chatting at the door would be a great annoyance to everyone in his friend's house...

...this poor host's legitimate need nevertheless far outweighs his neighbour's peaceful sleep!

So, this poor host decides to go make himself shameful (as v.8 says);<sup>6</sup> yes, an annoyance!

My brother & sister, often you & I have great needs. Sometimes our needs come about because of our own fault – because of sinful decisions we ourselves have made, like e.g., greed or overspending; like gossiping, which backfires on us; like laziness or inaction; like immorality. However, at times, our needs are like the great need of the host of our text – *unexpected, sudden, and legitimate*!

Now, if our need/predicament has arisen because of our own sinful action/inaction, then, of course, before we can even begin to cry out to God, we will have to *acknowledge* our sin which was the cause of our predicament/need. Then we need to *confess* it before the Lord and those people whom our sin has affected. We need to ask for forgiveness!

Only *then* could we dare come before the Lord to ask for His help in our time of need/predicament!

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the divine visitors who came to Abraham (Gn 18:1-3), *And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.* <sup>2</sup> *He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth* <sup>3</sup> *and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.* <sup>4</sup> *Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree,* <sup>5</sup> *while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant."* *So they said, "Do as you have said."* <sup>6</sup> *And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes."* <sup>7</sup> *And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly.* <sup>8</sup> *Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.* Also cf. Gn 19:1-3 for how Lot showed hospitality to strangers/angels, *"The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth"* <sup>2</sup> *and said, 'My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way.'* *They said, 'No; we will spend the night in the town square.'* <sup>3</sup> *But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate."*

<sup>5</sup> Also cf. 1 Pt 4:9 *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

<sup>6</sup> The NASB translates this word as "persistence;" the ESV as "impudence;" the NIV'84 as "boldness." The Greek word, *anaideia* (ἀναιδεια), literally means, 'insolence, audacity, impudence, shamelessness' (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 627). New York: United Bible Societies).

After all God's Word is clear on this (Ps 32:3-5), *For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.*<sup>7</sup>

Of course, if our need/predicament has *not* arisen because of our own sin/fault, then we can come *without hindrance* to ask God for His help – which brings us to point 2...

### Asking (Asking, seeking & knocking v.9)

In v.9 our Lord Jesus says, *"And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."*

Thus, our Lord gives a threefold exhortation: ask, seek, and knock. And these three come in a rising scale of intensity.<sup>8</sup>

You see, asking means that you are conscious of your need and that you have the humility to come ask; seeking means asking plus acting; and knocking means asking plus acting plus persevering.<sup>9</sup>

We infer that the "poor" host in Christ's parable did all three: in humility he went & asked; with action, he went and sought; in perseverance, he went & knocked.

Well, let's contemplate these three more closely: asking, seeking and knocking...

Asking:

The Bible says (Js 4:2c), *"You do not have, because you do not ask!"*

The Apostle John says (1 Jn 5:14), *"And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us."*<sup>10</sup>

Now, in v.9 of our text, our Lord Himself encourages us by saying, *"Ask!"*

Well, someone might say, "But, pastor, twice in Mt 6 (v.8 & v.32), Christ also says, *'Your Father knows what you need before you ask him!'*" "So, pastor, if God already *knows* what His children need, *and He is inclined to give them these things*, why should we then bother asking Him!"

My brother & sister, the purpose of asking is not for God's benefit! It's for ours! Thus, with the words of v.9, Jesus is effectively saying, *"Come here in your prayers! Open your heart! Tell the Father your concerns! He knows them, of course! But He wants to hear from you! And He knows that it's good for you that you have the opportunity to come to Him and pour out your heart to Him!"*<sup>11</sup>

You see, whereas it takes pride & superiority (like that of the Pharisee) to *tell* God, it takes humility (like that of the tax collector) to *ask* God!

What's more, *asking presupposes belief/faith* – yes, faith in a personal God with whom human beings can have fellowship. After all, someone who believes in God and has a warm, heartfelt, personal relationship with God, will never pray, *"O God, if there be a God at all, save my soul if I have a soul!"*

Asking presupposes humble belief!

Thus, although God knows what His loved-ones need before they ask Him, He nevertheless exhorts us to ask, because He desires of you & me to come to Him in humility, faith and personal affection!

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<sup>7</sup> Also cf. Ps 51 for David's pleading with the Lord to forgive him his sins with Bathsheba; and for David's ensuing request of God to bless Zion In Ps 51:18): *"Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem..."*

<sup>8</sup> Hendriksen, W. 2004. Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke (In: Hendriksen, W. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books. p.612).

<sup>9</sup> Hendriksen (ibid)

<sup>10</sup> Also cf. 1 Jn 3:22 *and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.*

Also cf. Prov. 10:24, *What the wicked dreads will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted.*

<sup>11</sup> Well-said words of RC Sproul in his audio sermon on Lk 11:5-13

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/asking-knocking/>

Next, our Lord also says (v.9), “***Seek, and you shall find!***”

Well, it is important to note that Christ is not addressing unbelievers when He says, “***Seek, and you shall find!***”

Remember: in and of themselves, unbelievers don’t seek God! Does not the Bible make this absolutely clear?

After all, the Apostle Paul (quoting the OT)<sup>12</sup> says (in Rm 3:10-11), “***None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.***” Then Paul repeats, (in Rm 3:12), “***Not even one!***”

My brother & sister, take for example the Apostle Paul before his conversion – there where he was on the road to Damascus. What was he seeking? He was not seeking *Christ*! He was seeking Christians that he might kill them! But *Christ* was “seeking out” Paul!

Unbelievers don’t seek God!

Perhaps someone will say, “But, pastor, my friend is not a believer!” “Yet, he/she is searching!” “Pastor, how does this rhyme with God’s Word which says unbelievers are not seeking God!”

Well, I love the way RC Sproul<sup>13</sup> answered this question. Says he, “You see your friends – you see your neighbours searching for happiness; they’re searching for meaning in their lives; they’re searching for healing from their afflictions; they’re searching for relief from the paralysis of their guilt!” “What you see is people searching for those things that *you* know only *God* can give them.”

“And so, then you rush to the conclusion that, since they’re seeking for the *gifts* of God, they must be searching for *God*!” “But no, the problem with fallen humanity is that, in our fallen nature, we want the *gifts* of God without *God*!”

My brother & sister, we delude ourselves when we think that unbelievers seek after God!

And if a perceived unbeliever is really seeking God, then it is a matter of God who has already begun working that search in his/her heart.

So, let us be aware that when Christ says (v.9) “Seek, and you shall find,” He is talking to *believers*!

In fact, verse 5 makes this clear by saying, “***And He said to them...***” – i.e., to the disciples whom He had just before taught the Lord’s Prayer, and for whom He is now giving *more fully some of the important elements and dynamics of prayer*.<sup>14</sup>

So, when Jesus says “seek, and you shall find,” He is urging *believers* to seek after God! Indeed, this is in sync with what Christ says elsewhere (Mt 6), “***Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and everything else will be added unto you!***”

Again, RC Sproul says it well, “The seeking after God is the main and central business of the *Christian* life!”<sup>15</sup> The day we met Christ, was the day we started a life-long pursuit to know Him more deeply and more fully!”

My brother & sister, may you & I understand this well: seeking is something which is the business of the believer! And Jesus assures those who are *believers* (and who are *seeking*) that, if you seek you will find! And note: Jesus is giving this exhortation in the context of *prayer*! Search Him *in prayer* with all of your heart! And you will find Him more deeply every day.

Well, Christ also says (v.9), “***Knock,<sup>16</sup> and it shall be opened to you!***”

So, as said before, *asking* presupposes humility & belief; and *seeking* is asking plus acting.

But now comes *knocking* which is persevering!

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<sup>12</sup> Cited from Ps. 14:1–3 ***The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.***

***The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.***

Also, cf. Ps 53:1–3 for almost the same words as those of Ps 14:1–3.

<sup>13</sup> Sproul was freely quoting words from Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> Century, Italian Christian scholar/theologian). For more on Aquinas (also known as Doctor Angelicus and the Doctor Communis), cf. e.g.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Aquinas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas)

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Sproul (ibid)

<sup>15</sup> Sproul (ibid) quoting Jonathan Edwards (Sproul, ibid)

<sup>16</sup> For a good exposition of Rv 3:20 which explains that Christ is knocking on the hearts of lukewarm believers, cf. RC Sproul’s audio sermon on Lk 11:5–13 <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/asking-knocking/>

Imagine just how persistently (or shamelessly, and audaciously – yes, with boldness)<sup>17</sup> the host of Christ's parable was knocking at midnight to wake his neighbouring friend!

But when the need is great – *despite the inconvenient hour* – one knocks and knocks again until the door is opened!

Thus, one perseveres!

My brother & sister, that means that you & I will continue to knock audaciously & boldly *at the door of the kingdom-palace until the King, who is at the same time our Heavenly Father, opens the door and supplies whatever is needed.*<sup>18</sup>

And so, the believer, in his/her prayers, “knocks” on the door of God's kingdom – not for *entrance* into God's kingdom, for believers are already in – but for “*good things*” from Him who is already their King – which brings us to the last point...

### Receiving (v.8, 10,11,12,13)

My brother & sister, all indications are that the friend who was woken up from his sleep at midnight, did get up and did give to his friend whatever he needed.

And, gauging by Christ's words, if this man's getting up and answering the door was not because of his *love* for his friend, then, at least, he would have gotten up because he was *annoyed* by the persistence/boldness/audacity of his friend, for *getting up* was the only way to put an end to this annoyance!

Well, if this host's audacity, because of his legitimate need, paid off with a *human* friend, then *so much more* will the believers' legitimate requests pay off with their *loving Father* who never sleeps! And no less than six times in verses 9 and 10 does Christ promise that the believer's prayers will be answered. Christ even says (in v.10) that *everyone* who asks, seeks, and knocks will receive, find and it will be opened for him/her!

So, effectively, Christ says that of those who obey His command to ask, seek and knock, *not a single one* will be disappointed!

And to even stress the certainty that those who ask *will* receive, our Lord now tells a second parable of an earthly father who, despite his sinfulness/weakness, nevertheless knows how to give good things to his son!

Imagine a little boy says, “Daddy, can I please have a piece of bread?” Says his father, “Sure!” “Here, here's a rock!” “Bite into it!”

What kind of a father would do something like that?

Or, Jesus says, “If he asks for a fish... his father says, ‘Do you want a fish?’ ‘Here!’ Here's a cobra!’ ‘Eat it!’”

What kind of a father would do that?

Or if he asks for an egg, he says, ‘While you're waiting, here's a poisonous scorpion to play with!’”

You & I may frown or laugh at Christ's parable, but Christ is deliberately going to the *absurd* to show how *if even evil (sin-infected) parents know how to give good things to their children*, how much more will the Holy and Almighty God know what is good to give to His children?

And *what* does our Heavenly Father give His children?

Well, Luke says (in v.13 of our text) the heavenly Father will give the *Holy Spirit* to those who ask God (for Him)! Matthew does not say God gives the *Holy Spirit*, but that God gives *good things to those who ask him!* (Mt 7:11).

Now, Luke and Matthew are not in conflict with each other, for is the Holy Spirit not the source of all good things? And, is it not so that the Holy Spirit is counted as a good “thing”?

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<sup>17</sup> Remember again the Greek word used in v. 8! The NASB translates this word as “persistence;” the ESV as “impudence;” the NIV '84 as “boldness.” The Greek word, *anaideia* (*ἀναιδεία*), literally means, ‘insolence, audacity, impudence, shamelessness’ (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [\*Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains\*](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 627). New York: United Bible Societies).

<sup>18</sup> My adaptation of the well-said words of Hendriksen, W. 2004. Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke (In: Hendriksen, W. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books. p.613).



So, good things that you & I may ask for, come in two categories: good *spiritual* gifts and good and urgently needed *physical* gifts.

Among good spiritual gifts, you & I may pray for:

- a closer walk with God;
- better public prayer abilities;
- Christian teaching skills to open up the Scriptures for others;
- godliness and all the spiritual fruit mentioned in Gal 5:22, i.e. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

All of these spiritual needs we can ask the Father for.

And, my brother & sister, I have never seen that the Father has answered such prayers (i.e. prayers for spiritual needs/for a closer walk with Him) with a “no”!

Perhaps I have once told you how the Lord answered my sincere, audacious/bold prayer for a *spiritual* blessing!

Here is the short version:

It was ten months after our migration to New Zealand. I was downhearted as I was unable to find good work in my field of experience. So, I prayed! However, I was not praying for *work*! My prayer was to have a spiritual need met! I was simply praying for reassurance from God that He was still near to me! And, more specific, I was praying that God would give me the words of Martin Luther’s hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God!” Well, it was a weekday, and where I was at that stage, was near the CBD of Auckland. I had no hymnbook neither Bible with me. And, at that stage, I did not even know that Martin Luther’s hymn was based on Ps 46! But *so great* was my spiritual need, that I was not just *asking*, but also *seeking* and ready to *knock* (as v.9 says)! So, in God’s gracious doing, I remembered that, about a half a city block away from where I was, there was an Anglican church. I decided to walk there while all the time praying that God would give me the words of “A Mighty Fortress is our God!” Well, when I arrived at that church door, it was unlocked. So, I opened it and walked in. There was no one inside! Again, I prayed as I walked to the pew about three rows from the front! I entered the pew; saw something that looked like a psalter/hymnal; took it in my hand; prayed once more. Then, I opened it! Guess where it fell open straightaway? At the Martin Luther hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God!” Tears of joy mixed with tears of awe came as I read and read again the powerful & uplifting words of that hymn!

What an effective answer to a spiritual need prayed audaciously while literally *asking*, *seeking*, and *knocking*!?

Well, so far re prayers for *spiritual* needs.

What about receiving answers to our prayers for *physical* needs?

Well, here we must understand that the *Father’s vantage point* is different to ours! What may seem a need for *us* may not be a need *in His eyes*!

So, we must always remember that God *has the right to distinguish what we actually need*.<sup>19</sup>

You see, would a mother whose four-year old throws a tantrum wanting an ice-cream cone ten minutes before lunch, give that ice-cream and so spoil the child’s appetite?

Sadly, some parents will! But the wise parent won’t, for he/she knows better!

My brother & sister, I’ll say what I said once before: no prayer prayed by God’s loved ones is ever unanswered!

If you do not straightaway receive from God a “yes” answer, that does not mean your prayer was not answered.

In that case, either you have received a permanent “no,” or a “not-yet ‘yes’” from your heavenly Father who knows better *what* you need (and *when* you need it) for your eternal wellbeing!

A straightaway and permanent “no” from your heavenly Father may come for the same reason as God’s refusal to remove Paul’s thorn in the flesh – i.e., so that Paul’s ministry would take place from Paul’s humble heart so that *God* (and not Paul) be glorified and the coming of *God’s* kingdom advanced!

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<sup>19</sup> Well-said by Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [\*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke\*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 351–354). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Quite strikingly, that's also why Christ's Gethsemane prayer (that His Father would remove the bitter "cup" of the cross from Him) was, within hours, answered with "no"!

So, He, the very One who, in our text, assures you & me that *our* prayers will always be heard, is the One whose ardent prayer received the "no" answer!

Well, did He not receive that "no" answer, so that your & my prayers would indeed always be heard!?

My brother & sister, answer for yourself. Are you faithful to our Lord's command to ask, to seek, and to knock in prayer, and to do so persistently and audaciously!? *Ask* for spiritual blessings! *Ask* for your physical needs. Ask knowing that your loving heavenly Father has the right – and the wisdom – to answer on His terms and for His glory, for your eternal wellbeing!

AMEN (3425 words excluding footnotes)