



PERSISTENT FAITH - PERSISTENT PRAYER

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FEB. 25, 2024

I'm beginning a series today from Luke 18 that I call *The Dynamics of Faith* and we're just going to talk about **how faith works and why faith matters and what faith is and how we live out our faith in Jesus Christ**. Today I want to talk to you about *The Dynamics Of Persistent Faith* and specifically *how persistent faith results in persistent prayer*.

Luke 18:1-8

In this passage there is really only one point to take from it, and we are told what it is in the first verse. That we **ought always to pray and not lose heart**. (*not give up*.) Luke, does something that really doesn't happen in any other place. In **v.1** Luke tells what this parable is about *before* Jesus starts to tell the parable. I don't know of any other place in Scripture where the this happens Usually Jesus just starts telling the parable, and at the end sometimes he does, and sometimes he doesn't tell us what it's all about. But not here.

And I believe everyone in this room needs to hear this, because we've all had prayers that we prayed and we really felt like, "*Hey, I'm. I think I'm asking what God would want me to ask. And I'm praying for a real need here. Why is the answer delayed? Why does it seem like nothing's happening? Why does it seem like I'm praying and it seems like sometimes I'm just talking to myself?*"

Well, God wants us to learn what it means to persist in prayer, and in this text. **we see four reasons that we can/should persist in prayer**. Even when we seem to be hitting a wall with our prayers

The first reason is this.

I. YOU CAN PERSIST IN PRAYER BECAUSE OF GOD'S COMMAND.

Simply put, God's word in **v.1** commands us that we **ought always pray and not to give up**.

Notice it's not just "ought" like a good suggestion or good idea. No, it's **ought always pray and not to give up**

This is an important, needed command for us, He knows how much we need this. And Jesus didn't just tell us here, once. Earlier on in this same Gospel, Jesus was describing prayer and he compared prayer to *asking and seeking and knocking* in **Luke 11:9**, Jesus said. **And I tell you ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find, knock and it will be open to you**. Every one of those commands in the original language is continual. In other words, Jesus was saying, *Ask and keep on asking. Seek and keep on seeking. Knock and keep on knocking*. He's telling us **to persist, because**

- if we want to receive, we have to keep on asking.

- If we want to find, we can't just stop after we've been seeking for a while, we've got to keep on seeking.
- If we want someone to come to that door, we've got to keep on knocking.

You ought always to pray and not lose heart. That's the command. You persist in prayer because God has commanded. And **if you're not persisting in prayer, you're disobeying**.

Jesus has commanded us to persist because He knows the devil will come and whisper in your ear and say, "*why don't you stop? People are tired of you bringing up this prayer request. God is tired of hearing you bring up this prayer. Why don't you just quit talking about it?*"

When the devil tells you to quit, you can know this. 2000 years ago Jesus already told you to **keep on praying and don't lose heart**. Don't give up. Stay in that spirit of prayer.

There's a *second reason* that you can persist in prayer.

II. THE BIBLE SAYS YOU CAN PERSIST IN PRAYER BECAUSE GOD CARES FOR YOU.

Here's what I mean. You can persist in asking God about the needs of your heart - when you're being hurt by someone, when you or someone you care about is hurting, when you see people far from God and covered in spiritual darkness. You can persist in prayer because the God you are coming to *cares so deeply for you*.

Jesus illustrated that with the parable that he told. Now, if you notice, there are two characters in this parable. The first character is a **judge**. Notice what Jesus says about him in **verse 2**, he says **in a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man**. Now I happen to believe that most judges (real judges, not Judge Judy) are men and women who care about the law and care about people and they want to uphold the laws in order to help people and to help the community.

That's NOT this judge! This judge did not fear God. He didn't care anything about God. He didn't care about people. So when you came before him, you were gonna be mistreated.

And the Bible says he had this **widow** (second character), who kept coming to him. **v.3, ...and saying give me justice because of my adversary**,

Now we don't know what her problem was. Jesus is in charge of the story, and he doesn't tell us, but he does tell us this. She kept coming to this judge who didn't fear God and who didn't respect people and she kept asking him, saying **give me justice against my adversary**. She wouldn't quit. *She continually came to him and he didn't care*. He didn't, because he didn't care about anybody. He just did not care.

In those days, judges usually operated out of tents and moved thru their jurisdiction and set up tent. And I imagine every morning when that judge set up his tent and got ready to hear cases, the first person that came into that tent was her.

Now this is a parable. That means there's symbolism here, right? And so it's easy to see the symbolism of the request the woman who is continually asking. She is a symbol of US in our helplessness and in our need to have our prayer answered.

But please be careful to understand - this judge is not a picture of what our God is like. In fact, it's just the opposite. Jesus used this judge to contrast what our God is like. This Judge didn't care at all. He didn't care about God. He didn't care about people. **But God cares deeply about you.**

And if this woman was willing to come over and over again because it's the only thing she could do. If he took bribes, she didn't have bribe money to offer. She didn't have a friend to help her get influence with the judge. *All she could do was persist. All she could do is just keep coming back. And that's what she did.*

And here's what Jesus was saying **If that woman would come that often to a judge who didn't care about anybody and didn't care about her, how much more can you come to the God who loves you with a perfect agape unconditional love (Darryn tonight).** How much more can you come with the needs and the concerns and the cares and the problems in your life. You can persist in prayer because God cares about you so deeply.

The Bible talks about that over in **1 Peter 5:6-7** (ESV)
⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Peter links Prayer with humility. *humble yourself*. Prayer requires saying, *God, I can't take care of this on my own. I can't do this myself. But I'm going to cast my cares on you.*

But so many times we try to live the Christian life on a *do-it-yourself* basis. And we say *OK, I can. I can take care of this myself*. And all the while, God says that you're to call on Him. *And cast ALL your cares on him* to be humble enough to say, *Lord, I can't do this myself. I'm going to cast my cares on you because I know you care for me.*

So remember, if that woman could come to an unjust, uncaring, unjust Judge and keep coming over and over again - you can come to your God and persist in your prayers.

A *third reason* the Bible says you can persist in prayer...

III. YOU CAN PERSIST IN PRAYER BECAUSE OF GOD'S CHARACTER

(expansion) Now continue with me in verses 4-6 of this text. and Jesus says

For a while, maybe a long while he refused. He stiff-armed her every time he saw her. Finally he says to himself. *Though I neither fear God nor respect man. Yet because this widow keeps bothering me...* Now, I want to stop right there.

He didn't say. *You know, I really am beginning to see her side of the story.* That's not what he said.

He didn't say. *You know, I'm really starting to feel sorry for her.* That's not what he said.

He said. *I don't care about God. I don't care about man. This woman is driving me crazy. And because she keeps bothering me. I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.*

He says. I'm tired of her *beating me down*

Now again, God is not like this Judge. God is **absolutely unlike** this judge. But here's what Jesus is saying. **If this judge with that type of low character would show justice to a persistent widow, OUR God, who is perfectly just, who is absolutely merciful, who is unendingly gracious, who is eternally loving - our God, based on his character, will answer your prayers.**

This is beautifully illustrated in the first book of the Bible, in Genesis 18. It's a well-known story. The Lord had a relationship with Abraham and he tells him what he's about to do, especially since it is going to affect some of Abraham's own relatives who were living in Sodom and Gomorrah.

And God came to him. And said *"I'm going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because they're evil, and their wickedness has come before me."* It's a reminder when a society embraces evil, God pays attention and God judges, and that's what God was saying to Abraham, he says, *"I'm going to destroy these cities because of their wickedness."*

And Abraham knew that his nephew Lot along with his family was living there in Sodom. And so Abraham began to pray. He began to intercede for Sodom. If you look in **verse 25** of the text. He said *Lord, far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked so that the righteous fair as the wicked. Far be that from you.* He's speaking to the Lord, he said, Lord, this is so far from what I know you would do, what I know your character is. And then he asked this question. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just.* He said *"God, I know your character. I know that you will do what is just. You're the judge of all the earth. I know that you'll do what is just."*

And in response the Lord said, *"If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."* And Abraham said, *what if they're 45? What if they're 40? What if they're 30? What if they're 20? What if they're 10?*

And God, in his character of love and mercy and grace and justice and righteousness, said, *even if there are only 10, I won't destroy it for the sake of the 10.*

And you know the story, that there weren't even 10. So the city was destroyed, but God was even more gracious and faithful to his character, than what Abraham asked Him in prayer. Because BEYOND Abraham's prayer, BETTER THAN ABRAHAM'S PRAYER, He still saved Lot and his household when the rest of the city was destroyed.

You can persist in prayer because God is just. God is merciful. God is righteous, God is gracious, God is loving, God is patient. God is kind. And when you pray, you are throwing yourself upon his character and saying *"Lord, I am going to persist in my prayer because I know who you are."*

Some of you may have given up on the prayer because you've really given up on God. You've decided somewhere in your heart that God doesn't love you. Or that God's not going to be merciful to you or be gracious to you. *You haven't just given up on that prayer you've given up on God.* And God would call you back to himself because He is who he has always been and he still is just and merciful, and he still is gracious, and he still is forgiving. And he still desires to save. And so, because of his character, you can persist in prayer

#4 - I want you to see this. The fourth reason you can persist in prayer is...

IV. YOU CAN PERSIST BECAUSE OF GOD'S CHOICE BECAUSE OF GOD'S CHOICE.

Don't miss this. Look in v.6 of the text, the Bible says *hear what the unrighteous judge says*, Jesus tells us *hear what he says, here, what he did, how he changed his disposition based on the persistence of this woman.* **Verse 7 and will not God give justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night.**

He asked the question *will God not give justice to his elect?* And the answer is "Yes he will." *Will he delay long?* And the answer is "No, he won't." *I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.* Jesus promises.

Look in **verse 7** again *to his elect who cry out to him day and night.* Yes, we cry out to him day and night. Yes, we persist in our prayers. But notice the Bible describes us, God's people, as *his Elect.* That word *elect* means *chosen* (oft translation). It's a reminder - *God chooses his people.* He loves us so much that he looks at us in our sin and yet He chooses us to come into His family and to know His salvation.

I'm pretty sure you have heard about or have seen the very popular and engaging film series on Jesus, called, THE CHOSEN. You realize that the title is a reference, not to Jesus, but to his followers – those that he has CHOSEN. His Elect.

We are His elect. And we belong to him. We can persist in our prayers because we have a special relationship with him.

Think about what you have that that widow didn't have. (I have a list here, and if I could preach with the cadence of a black gospel preacher – we'd all be hooping and hollering before I would be done...) Think about what you have that that widow didn't have...

- She had **no relationship** with that judge, But you are a child of God when you come before him.
- She had **no paperwork**, no contract. She didn't have a deed or any such thing to prove her case. *Friends, you've got paperwork.* You can come before God and stand upon every promise of God as you call on him.
- She **had no one** to represent her. You have an *Advocate before God the father. Jesus Christ the righteous.* And

he brings you into the presence of the Father and his blood makes the way for you to come. She didn't have that. You do.

- She didn't have **any friends at her side.** The Bible says you have the Holy Spirit living *inside* of you. And when you *don't know how to pray as you should pray, he prays for you in groanings too deep for words* (Rom. 8:26). She didn't have that. You do.
- She was coming to a court of law. You are coming to the throne of Grace.
- She was coming to a judge. You are coming to your Father.
- And because **you belong to him** and because he belongs to you. You don't need to give up!

CONCLUSION

Some of you have given up on some prayer because you've forgotten...

- He's Commanded you to pray.
- He Cares about you.
- His Character is unailing.
- Your relationship - You're His Chosen. He knows you and you know him.

Yes he promises to hear as you pray.

Hebrews 4:16 (ESV) ¹⁶ *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Then Jesus concludes with this statement:

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

(This harkens back to the previous passage we looked at last week – Coming Kingdom & Second Coming). We're living in that *in between time.* We're part of God's Kingdom, and yet, we're waiting for God's Kingdom to come. We belong to Jesus, and yet we're waiting for Jesus to come. And here's the question. Jesus asks, *when he returns will he find faith on Earth?*

Sometimes we lose heart. And we lose faith because from our vantage point it seems God delays in answering our prayer. Notice what Jesus said here, *will he delay long over them? No, I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.*

Those are hard words to swallow unless you remember, this has spoken by someone for whom *one day is 1000 years and 1000 years is a day* (2 Pet. 3:8). He works on a different timetable than you and I work on. **He does not delay ever from his perspective/timetable.** But from our perspective, it really can seem like a long time.

But here's something I hope you'll never forget. God's delays are never delays of inattention. They are always delays of PREPARATION. When it seems like God is delaying in answering a prayer. His delay is never due on

due to inattention. It's always a part of preparation.

Imagine going into a restaurant. You come up to the the host-stand and nobody's there. And you stand there for quite a little while. Eventually somebody walks past and says you say, "Oh, hey, we didn't see you." And they take you to your seat. And you sit down and they don't give you a menu. They don't give you any silverware. You're just sitting there. And you see servers walking back and forth, but for some reason nobody ever stops at your table. Nobody brings you water to drink. Nobody brings you anything. You're just sitting there. And after you sit there you think "*If we got up and walked away I don't think anyone would even notice.*"

Let me give you some advice. Get up and walk away right then, because it's not gonna get any better. If they're not paying any attention to you at the beginning, the meal is not going to be what you might think it is going to be. It's going to be bad from there on.

But imagine you come into another restaurant and you get there and they greet you and the host asks you what kind of seating you prefer and then seats you. And after they seat you, they give you the silverware and your menus and everything's ready. And the waiter comes by and he brings you water to drink and some bread for the table, and and then he takes your order.

And he says, "*Listen, what you've ordered is going to be wonderful. But that dish will take some time, it takes our chef about 25 to 30 minutes to prepare it, but it's really good.*" And then you're sitting there waiting. And as you wait, you can look back in the kitchen and you can see them working back there. And you hear that grill sizzling and you can start smelling the the food, cooking. And you can smell the ingredients and your mouth begins to water - **and you will sit there as long as it takes because you know your delay is not due to inattention. The delay is due to preparation**, and they're going to bring you something wonderful.

When you're praying and you're waiting, the delay is never due to God's inattention. It's always due to God's preparation. God is doing something to prepare while you wait.

- He may be preparing you, getting your heart ready for his answer.
- He may be preparing circumstances and lining things up in the right way for his answer.
- He may be preparing other people and working in their hearts for his answer.

Sometimes you can see him at work even while you're waiting and praying. And even if you can't see him, *you can almost hear the sizzle*, and you can almost *smell the ingredients coming together*, because *any delay on God's part is always a **delay of preparation***.

So don't give up praying. Don't stop. He's working.

- Don't stop praying for that family member who needs to be saved.
- Don't stop praying for revival to come.

- Don't stop praying for God to do a work in our nation and in our city.
- Don't stop praying for God to come through for some need in your life or in our Church. He hasn't forgotten.

Remember what I said – this message/parable has only one point, one application. Jesus told them this parable so that we would know He wants us *always to pray and not to give up* because *when he returns*, he wants to *find faith*, persistent faith *among his people on the earth*.

Will you do it? Let's pray....

GOSPEL

A real relationship with God begins with a prayer. A prayer to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

John 1:12–13 (ESV) ¹² *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* ¹³ *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Knowing about God, believing in God isn't really enough. It's RECEIVING by faith your Savior Jesus Christ, that connects you to God when your sins are taken out of the way.

You come in faith believing. You tell Him -That's prayer.

Here's a prayer that expressed that: *Dear Jesus. I know I am a Sinner. I know you are the Savior. Right now I turn from my sin and I receive You as my Savior. Forgive me and make me Yours. Be my Savior and my Lord forever. Amen.*