

The Power of Persistent Prayer I

March 22, 2020

Scripture reading: Luke 18:1-8

Text: *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14-15 NIV).*

In this sermon we will read about one of the most important tasks and responsibilities in our Christian life, and it is **prayer**. I am convinced that everything rises and falls on prayer. If we pray persistently according to the will and leading of God then sooner or later we will get an answer. However, if we are not persistent in prayer then we will see the consequence of it, too. There are many people who pray for something for a while and when the answer doesn't come, when they think it should, they just throw up their hands in defeat and say, *“What's the use? It's not worth it to pray.”*

In our story the Lord Jesus teaches His followers and disciples of the importance of remaining persistent in prayer. I think it is important to talk about prayer and I strongly believe that this sermon will be a great blessing for every one of us in this Lenten season, and especially in this time of trial we are in nowadays.

This parable teaches us how powerful the persistent prayer is. Jesus encourages us through this story to always pray and not give up (1.v.). Christ exhorts us to continual prayer, again and again, rather than continuous, non-stop prayer. Additionally, Jesus teaches us to continue to pray until we receive the answer. That continued prayer is not a sign of little faith, but of persistent faith. However, the danger is that we get discouraged after we don't get any sign or response from the Lord and then quit praying.

In order to avoid this, Jesus tells a story to make His listeners understand why it is so important to remain persistent in praying. So the story starts this: *“In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men” (2.v.)*. The judge had no regard for God's justice and he didn't respect the special needs of the poor and oppressed. He was independent or thought he was. He wasn't overly concerned about public opinion. He was concerned only with himself, his own opinion and comfort.

However, *“there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary’” (3.v.)*. The judge was arrogant, self-absorbed, and unjust, but this powerful man was facing one of the weakest members of society, a widow. Widows had many difficulties in Israel, but we may state that around the whole world, in fact. Normally in Israel the wife of a deceased husband had no legal right to inherit her husband's estate. So when he died she couldn't take it for granted living in her deceased husband's house. If she did not have any children, the estate reverted to her husband's male relatives: his brother, his father's brother, or the nearest family kinsman. If she had grown children, things were easier for a widow. They took care of their mother. But a widow with small children might just as well have to contend for property rights with her in-laws, and if they didn't happen to like her, things could be difficult.

We don't know how the widow was being cheated, but the judge was not on her side. However, one thing we know about her, she was persistent. She didn't take "no" for an answer. Instead, every time court was in session, here would be the widow, asking for justice to which she was entitled.

For some time the judge refused her. *"But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"* (4-5.v.) This widow was starting to make the powerful judge feel some heat. Her constant appeals were hurting the judge's reputation. Finally he decided to grant her what she wanted to just get rid of her.

Jesus wanted to point to something very important with this story, and He concluded the story with these words: *"Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly"* (6-8a.v.).

Hearing all this someone may ask, *Did Jesus substitute the unjust judge for God, and the widow for His people.* No, that's not the point here, at all. Moreover Jesus' words were from the lesser to the greater which means that if an unjust, selfish judge sees that justice is done in response to persistent requests, how much more the just God will bring justice to His own beloved children who pray constantly for relief.

Jesus told *The Parable of the Persistent Widow* so He would encourage and exhorts us. The widow was persistent and had faith, and finally the unjust judge gave her what was hers by right. How much more you can expect God to intervene on your behalf! How much more God will bring justice to you, since you are His beloved child! How much more God will answer our prayers in due time! Yes, we are waiting for it, even now when we had to cancel our worship services, ministries, and events due to this dangerous virus that keeps many people in fear. We are waiting when we pray for ourselves, our family members, and friends so this horrible sickness would not reach us and we would remain healthy. It may happen that we become discouraged, and we have fear and worry about things. But we must not quit, not give up praying, dearly beloved!

The heavenly Father, in His Word, encourages us and says to us that *"this is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him"* (1John 5:14-15).

Keep on praying, people of God! Your prayers are not in vain! The answer is on the way!
Amen.

Yours in Christ,
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Pastor