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PERSEVERE IN PRAYER

Luke 18:1-8

INTRODUCTION :

At the end of a Sunday service the pastor invited people to come forward if they wanted someone to pray for them. About midway through the line of people stood an imposing, intimidating looking man. When the minister asked about his prayer request, the burly guy said, "Pastor, I need you to pray for my hearing." The pastor quickly placed his hands over the man's ears and prayed fervently for restored hearing. When the minister finished praying, he looked the man squarely in the eyes and shouted above the choir's strong singing, "How's your hearing now?" The man loudly replied, "I don't know yet, Pastor. I will know after my hearing on Wednesday when I will go to the courthouse and stand in front of the judge."

Today, we will talk about the persevering prayer of a widow in front of a wicked and cruel judge.

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 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? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Last week, we shared to you the importance of persistent prayer in Luke 11. Today, we will talk about Persevering prayer

Difference between persistent and perseverance :

- **Persistence is a constant action.** It's almost like stubborn.

In our lesson last Sunday, God is saying to us to be persistent in our prayer. That's why our Lord Jesus said,

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

- **Perseverance is an enduring action.**

That's why Jesus said in what we just read.

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

DON'T GIVE UP... LOOK UP : "I give up!" The man shouted. "I can't take it any more! There is nothing left for me."

Everyone around him kept on about their business. Some made it a point to get away from him.

"He's crazy," one man said quietly as he nervously rushed toward the door.

The man sat down quickly. Still taunted by whatever caused the outburst, he looked down placing his head in his hands.

"I give up!" He said again.

A young boy standing nearby seemed unaffected by the ranting. While others kept their distance, he stood his ground.

"Sir! Sir!" The young man repeated.

So wrapped up in his anguish, the man never heard the young boy.

Determined to speak with the man, he walked closer.

"Sir! I know what's wrong!" He said. "Please, sir!"

The man still slumped forward in his seat, rocked slowly back and forth. But still he did not respond.

The young boy walked up and placed his small hand on the stranger's shoulder.

This startled him and he picked up his head to see who was there.

The boy was taken at first by his appearance. His red eyes, his unshaven face and hair that looked like it hadn't been washed for days, would cause most people to cautiously avoid him.

But this young man wasn't just anyone.

"Sir, I know what's wrong," the young boy whispered.

"What? How would you know what's wrong with me? You're just a child. You can't even begin to know what's wrong," the man said.

"Sir. You said "I give up!"

"Yes, so."

"My Mom said that I should never give up. Whenever I feel like I want to give up, I just need to look up. God's hand will be there to lift me up."

The man's head fell back into his hands as he began to cry again.

The young boy never left his side.

Slowly the man lifted his head to find the young boy standing there with his hands stretched out toward him.

The man's hands shook nervously as he reached out toward him.

At the very moment their hands touched the man said, "Thank you dear God! You do love me."

He raised his head and with an ever so slight smile, he said, "In my frustration I have been angry with God. I thought He never heard my prayers. All morning I prayed to Him with no results.

Finally, I asked God for a sign. I told him that I couldn't handle the weight of all my burdens. I begged Him to give me a hand."

Looking at the young man he said, "I never expected they'd be so small...He sent me yours."

"Don't give up...look up!" The boy said.

Why would the Lord command this for us not to give up on praying?

It's because He knows we tend to give up on praying specially if we don't hear any answer to our prayers.

Look at this :

And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For some time he refused.

God is not saying that when you pray, you will immediately get an answer. Sometimes, you think you might be hearing a "no." But God is saying, like the widow, we should keep on praying.

Why? It's because God is strengthening your faith.

That's why at the end of the passage, our Lord said.

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

Quote : "I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me." - C.S. Lewis

There is a direct correlation between praying and faith.

Quick background : The reason why our Lord told this parable is because He was telling His disciples then, that the last days will be marked by godlessness.

Luke 17: 26 "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. 29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

Look at this. People had no problems. They were prosperous. They were eating, drinking, doing business, investing and building but the one that they forgot is God. The flood during Noah's time came because of godlessness.

You have to remember, that Sodom and Gomorrah wasn't destroyed because of homosexuality. Homosexuality is a by-product of godlessness.

Quote : The good things in life can make us just as insensitive to the reality of God as the gross things in life can. – John Piper

As I've always said, "The test of prosperity is harder than the test of poverty." It's because we tend to forget, ignore or de-prioritize God and the things of God when everything is doing well in our lives.

The danger of prosperity is godlessness and the danger of godlessness is lawlessness.

Matthew 24 : 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Illustration : Time and time again, I've seen this several times. A person will lose a job and you will see them attend Bible studies and attend church every Sunday. But once they get the job, church becomes second priority and they will have many excuses not to attend church.

What is the antidote that our love will not grow cold? PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!

WHY WE CAN PERSEVERE IN PRAYING

I. IT'S GOD'S COMMAND.

*Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should **always pray and not give up***

Etymology : "not give up" ekkakeo, "ek" out "kakeo" bad nature. Spiritless – it means do not give up on a good thing (which is praying) even if it seems nothing is happening in your life or even if there's a lot of bad things happening in your life. PRAYING IS THE GOOD THING TO DO.

The command of the Lord is to "always pray." And when God commands us to do something, there is a blessing to it.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMAND = BLESSING

Look at the blessings :

COMMAND : ALWAYS PRAY

Ephesians 6: 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,

BLESSING :

Protection from Satanic attack and the gospel will be made known.

Philippians 4: 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

BLESSING :

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

COMMAND : NOT GIVE UP.

*that they should **always pray and not give up***

BLESSING : *We will see the answer to our prayers. 7 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?*

Illustration : I noticed some of you planted vegetables. I remember we did that too with the seniors one time. I was thinking how can these small vegetables grow big? But Mica and I went back and checked after a few months and we saw that the plants were now big and it was obvious that people were already harvesting the tomatoes, eggplants and etc.

That's why let's continue to pray because He is a rewarding God.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

II. GOD CARES.

2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

Again, just like last week, I shared with you that our Lord Jesus Christ is the master teacher. In order to emphasize something, he uses the opposite scenario or situation to tell us about who God is.

This time our Lord uses a judge *who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.*

Our Lord is saying the reason we should not give up praying is because God is the exact opposite of this judge.

1. HE IS GOD.

And unlike this judge, our Lord is saying God is not like that judge. **He cares for people.**

That's why the Bible says :

1 Peter 5:7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

You know why He cares for you?

It's because God is your Father.

Matthew 6: 25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Illustration :

The story is told of a king who was in his throne room, holding a council with his advisers, noblemen, and high ministers of state. Suddenly there was a bang and a clatter at the door of the throne room. All eyes turned as the door burst open and a young boy ran into the room.

One of the king's royal guardsmen tried to stop the boy. "Hold there, lad!" he shouted. "Don't you know you're disturbing the council of the king?"

"He's your king," laughed the boy, "but he's my Daddy!" And the boy bounced into the open arms of his father, the king.

QUOTE : If you don't see God's response, always remember your relationship with God. He is your Father.

III. GOD HEARS OUR CRY.

3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"
6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 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?"

Who was asking the judge?

The widow.

Note : The second character is this needy widow. In that society, widows were especially vulnerable, in that there were not many vocational opportunities for women. Life insurance was non-existent. She was dependent on whatever her husband had left her. But now some scoundrel had cheated her out of what little she had to live on. So she comes to the judge and asks for justice. REMEMBER SHE IS ASKING AN EVIL JUDGE. He takes one look at her and figures, she's not going to give me much of a bribe, and I've got many others who can reward me handsomely if I take their cases. So he refuses to give her any help. He tells his bailiff to escort her out of the courtroom and he thinks, "That's the last I'll see of her."

Wrong! He no sooner leaves the courtroom to go home for lunch, than this woman dogs his steps all the way to his house. When he comes out to go back to work, there she is. When he goes home at night, she's there again. Every morning she is parked at the door of the courthouse, waiting for him to show up. Every day he tells her to get lost, but she keeps coming back. He can't get rid of her! She's beginning to dominate his life. He begins to hate going to work, because he's going to be confronted by this nagging woman!

But what was the widow asking for?

'Grant me justice

The widow was not asking for some trivial thing like, "Lord, let me win the lotto or something like that." She was asking for fairness or justice.

She is asking God for what she needs.

Isn't that the promise of God?

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Now this is a study of opposites again.

Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!"

Let's look at the judge here.

The Lord said : *6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says."*

This give us the clues on why we know God answers our prayers.

Again let's look at the judge here.

1. He doesn't fear God or care what people think. In short, the judge is wicked.
2. He will only answer because the widow kept bothering him.
3. He will also answer because he was threatened by the widow. The original language shows that she will give him a black eye. (SHE WON'T EVENTUALLY COME AND ATTACK ME)

Now the reason why God answers our prayers is HE IS the exact opposite of who the judge here is and how he thinks.

WHEN GOD ANSWER OUR PRAYERS

- 1. Unlike the judge, GOD IS A GOOD GOD.**

Quote : God doesn't answer our prayers not because we are good but because He is good.

That's what we think sometimes God is. If I am good enough. If I give enough. If I am loving enough or caring enough then maybe God will answer our prayers. No. GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS BECAUSE HE IS A GOOD GOD.

- 2. The widow "kept bothering" the judge so that he will answer.**

This is the exact opposite of God. When we pray to Him, we are not a bother to Him.
The other translation in the Bible shows that the judge is **UNWILLING TO ANSWER** (NASB)
GOD IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE. HE LONGS TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS AND RESPOND TO IT.

Remember the definition of prayer

Etymology : pray "proseuchomai" this means go near to God.

Prayer is not a set of words. It's an attitude of the heart saying, "I will go near to God." And when we go near to God, He longs to hear our prayers.

Biblical Illustration : Remember the story of the prodigal son in the Bible.

The son rebelled against his dad and made an action in that culture as if wishing his dad was dead. But then the son realized, the foolishness of his ways, this is what he said.

Luke 15: 17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 20 So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Remember, you are no bother to God AND GOD WILL TO ANSWER.

Quote : Prayer delights God's ears; it melts His heart; and opens His hand. God cannot deny a praying soul." Thomas Watson

Now, God is not saying, "I long to answer your prayers immediately. Or I will answer your prayers according to your timing."

Matthew 6: 8... your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

CONCLUSION :

We should never give up on what we are praying for!

- Is it a loved one who doesn't know Jesus Christ yet?
- Is it a relationship that you want healed?
- Is it something you know God has called you to do and you're not in there yet.

DO NOT GIVE UP ON PRAYING BECAUSE THE ANSWER IS JUST RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER. IT MIGHT BE A LONG CORNER. BUT STILL, THE ANSWER TO YOUR PRAYER IS COMING.

Illustration : It was a fog-shrouded morning, July 4, 1952, when a young woman named Florence Chadwick waded into the water off Catalina Island. She intended to swim the channel from the island to the California coast. Long-distance swimming was not new to her; she had been the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions.

The water was numbing cold that day. The fog was so thick she could hardly see the boats in her party. Several times sharks had to be driven away with rifle fire. She swam more than 15 hours before she asked to be taken out of the water. Her trainer tried to encourage her to swim on since they were so close to land, but when Florence looked, all she saw was fog. So she quit. . . only one-mile from her goal.

Later she said, "I'm not excusing myself, but if I could have seen the land I might have made it." It wasn't the cold or fear or exhaustion that caused Florence Chadwick to fail. It was the fog.

Many times we too fail, not because we're afraid or because of the peer pressure or because of anything other than the fact that we lose sight of the goal. Maybe that's why Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Two months after her failure, Florence Chadwick walked off the same beach into the same channel and swam the distance, setting a new speed record, because she could see the land.

- John Cochran

DO NOT GIVE UP...LOOK UP.

S.G.D.