The Power of Persistent Prayer
Message 4 of 6: Lord, Teach Us To Pray Sermon Series

Luke 18:1-8

This morning as we continue with our series, LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY, we are going to be looking at a parable Jesus taught about The Power of Persistent Prayer.

Please turn with me in your Bibles the Gospel of Luke, chapter eighteen. And let’s read VERSES 1-8.

LUKE 18:1-8

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes God teaches us valuable truths in the simplest ways.

For example: Several weeks ago I walked over to our multi-purpose building one morning. And when I was about halfway to the kitchen, I heard a little bird gently peck on the glass entry door on the side of the building.

Before I got to the kitchen, the little bird did it again. So I decided to stand and observe for a few minutes.

Time after time after time this little bird would fly up from the concrete porch and tap the glass with its beak.
As I walked away to return to my office I could hear that little bird still pecking away at the side glass. Now, that’s not the end of the story.

About a week or so later, I went back to the multi-purpose building to get something and there was, what I assumed to be the same little bird, still pecking away at that glass door. Over and over again the little bird repeated the same scene I had observed a week before.

As I observed the persistence of that little bird I realized that is the kind of persistence I need to have when it comes to my praying.

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The failure to PERSEVERE is one of the most common problems in our prayer life.

We pray about something a time or two, then when we don’t see any visible answer to our prayers, we just give up and stop praying about it altogether.

In these first eight verses of Luke chapter 18, Jesus tells us this Parable of The Persistent Widow “to show us that we should always pray and NOT GIVE UP!”

As we carefully study this parable let’s see what valuable truths you and I can learn about The Power of Persistent Prayer.

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First of all I would have you to notice……..

I. The Cry of The Widow

(A) Consider her DEMAND vs. 3

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

Jesus doesn’t tell us the specific nature of this woman’s burden, but it is very obvious she had a grievance against someone that was lying heavily upon her heart.

(B) Now consider her DISADVANTAGE

To understand how dire this woman’s situation was, we need to know a little bit about the Jewish society in the time of Christ.

-For one thing, she was a WOMAN, and women were not allowed to speak in a court of law.

-We also learn in verse 3 that she was a WIDOW, which meant she didn’t have a husband to speak on her behalf.

-Being a widow also meant this woman was in all likelihood very poor and couldn’t afford to pay someone to defend her cause in court.

(C) But then notice her DETERMINATION in vs. 5b

“so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!”

Just like that little bird I was telling you about earlier, this widow woman “pecked” on the judge’s door day after day after day.
-When he would show up for court, there she was.
-When he would go to the marketplace, there she was.
-She pleaded with him in front of his friends.
-When he went home, she would be there to knock on his door.

You see, this JUDGE was the ONLY ONE who had the power and authority to grant this woman her request. And so she persistently made her request known to the judge day after day after day.

APPLICATION

How many times have we found ourselves in a situation that was out of our control……..a situation that left us feeling so desperate and so helpless, we didn’t know where to turn?

If there is anything at all you and I can learn from this widow woman it would be this: BE PERSISTENT, DON’T GIVE UP, No matter how helpless, how hopeless or how impossible your situation may be, DON’T STOP PRAYING!

Well we have looked at THE CRY OF THE WIDOW…….
Now let’s look at……..

II. The Coldness of The Judge

1. In this parable, Jesus reveals three things about the character of this judge.

   (A) First of all, we learn the judge was CORRUPT vs. 2

   “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God or cared about men.”
Warren Wiersbe gives this commentary on this judge:

“This man did not care anything about God or man. All he cared about was himself. To put it simply, he was a wicked man.

To understand this judge we need to understand something of what the judicial system was like in those days. “The courtroom was not a fine building but a tent that was moved from place to place as the judge covered his circuit. The judge, NOT the law, set the court agenda, and he sat regally in the tent surrounded by his assistants. Anybody could watch the proceedings from outside, but only those who were approved and accepted could have their cases tried. This usually meant bribing one of the court assistants so that he could call the judge’s attention to the case.” (Warren Wiersbe, BE COURAGEOUS, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, Copyright 1989, page 62)

(B) Secondly, we learn the judge was CALLOUSED vs. 4a

vs. 4a “For some time he refused.”

Refused to do what? Refused to listen to widow.

Even though this judge knew he was the only one who could help this woman, he chose to turn a “deaf ear” to her persistent pleas.

(C) Thirdly, Jesus tells us the judge was CONDESCENDING

vs. 4b-5 “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.”

In spite of his spiritual condition and his utter disregard for the needs of this woman, the judge helped her? The question is, “Why?”

We find our answer in VERSE 5 “so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!”
That term “wear me out” in the original Greek literally meant, “to beat down or blacken the eye.”

This widow had been so persistent in coming to the judge everybody in the whole community knew about it. She was literally “giving him a blackeye” in the community.

Well we have looked at THE CRY OF THE WIDOW and THE COLDNESS OF THE JUDGE. Now let’s consider…….

III. The Contrast With Our Heavenly Father

1. When we get down to VERSE 7 Jesus shows us the stark contrast between this cold-hearted, calloused judge and GOD, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

2. Jesus reveals three things about our Heavenly Father that should give us confidence every time we pray.

(A) For one thing, we can have confidence that Our Heavenly Father, HEARS OUR PRAYERS

vs. 7a And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night?

Remember while ago I told you the wicked judge turned “a deaf ear” to the cries and pleas of the widow? We don’t ever need to fear that God turns a “deaf ear” to us when we pray.
ISAIAH 65:24  Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

JEREMIAH 33:3a “Call to Me and I will answer you.”

I JOHN 5:14,15 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.

(B) Secondly, we can have confidence Our Heavenly Father HONORS OUR PERSISTENCE

vs. 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?

Remember the cold-hearted judge grew “weary” of the widow’s persistent pleas. Our Heavenly Father never grows weary of our persistent prayers and pleas.

Sometimes God answers our prayers immediately. But most of the time God delays His answer for a period of time, not because He’s trying to torture us or because He delights in making us wait, but because He desires to see our FAITH grow. And the more persistent we are in prayer, the more our faith DOES grow.

When something is truly weighing us down……. when something is truly important to us and truly matters to us it should cause us to go back to OUR HEAVENLY FATHER again and again and again until we receive an answer to our prayers.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HONORS OUR PERSISTENCE!
And thirdly, we can have confidence Our Heavenly Father handles our petitions

vs. 8a  “I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly.”

Remember in the case of the widow, the only way she could possibly get the judge to handle her case was to slip some bribe money to one of the court assistants.

As God’s children, you and I don’t have to bribe God to handle our petitions.

Do you know God begins working on an answer to our prayers the very minute we pray them? As I said while ago, we may not see an immediate answer, but we can have confidence that God is already at work in our situation in ways we may not see.

As our faith continues to grow, we come to realize that each time a prayer goes unanswered simply means we are one day closer to getting our answer. So in the meantime we just keep on praying and praying and praying until God answers.
CONCLUSION

Earlier in this series of sermons I mentioned the late, GEORGE MUELLER, as one of the mighty men of prayer in history.

George Mueller once wrote: “The great point is never to give up until the answer comes. I have been praying for 63 years and 8 months for one man’s conversion. He is not saved yet, but he will be. How can it be otherwise? I am praying.”

Well George Mueller died and that man was still not saved. But on the day of the funeral as Mueller’s casket was being lowered into the grave, the man he had been praying for over 63 years, repented of his sins and made that great confession of faith and was baptized into Jesus Christ.

There is great power in persistent prayer! And so as we leave here today, may we resolve to become more persistent in our prayers......always trusting.....always believing......that each time we pray we are moving closer and closer to an answer from God.

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY AND NOT GIVE UP!