

Never Give Up Praying

Luke 18:1-8a (NIV)

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?"

We are living in the end times. The signs are there. Wickedness has increased. The love of most has grown cold. Christians are persecuted and put to death. They are treated unjustly. The call to silence Christian voices and ideals seems to be getting louder and louder with more and more people seemingly agreeing. Although in this country physical persecution of Christians is the exception, the rule is mental and emotional persecution. "You with your Christian ideals, you're so closed-minded and out of touch with modern times. Your beliefs are antiquated, ideas from simple-minded people."

Injustice to God's people has been happening even after the Messiah, Jesus, had come. In Luke chapter 17, Jesus told his disciples that the end was coming when the Son of Man would return to end the world, but "first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." (Luke 17:25) Jesus would not only be persecuted, but he would be put to death. Following his death, those who rejected him would eat, drink, and be merry, have a grand ol' time. Wickedness and injustice would continue to run rampant without an end in sight.

Jesus knew that his disciples would live through such a time. He knew that they would turn to God to bring justice into a world seemingly run by injustice against Christians. But the longer they saw this wicked world prospering without any consequence, it would challenge their faith. They would be tempted to become discouraged, to give up on the God who seemingly never comes to their defense. They would be tempted to give up praying to God.

The struggle continues for us today. The same scene is played out with the only difference being the people playing their parts. Abortion continues to be legalized. Our courts are changing the legal definition of marriage in a way that goes contrary to the very institution of marriage. The Christian voice seems to be the minority while wickedness increases. We pray for justice, for God to influence our leaders to make decisions in keeping with his will, but it feels like a losing battle. Will God ever answer us? What's the point of praying for justice if he is never going to bring it? To answer that question, "Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (verse 1)

In Jesus' parable there is an unjust judge. He's not righteous. He doesn't care what people think; he has no regard for them. He also does not fear God. He doesn't care if God threatens to punish him if he perverts justice. The unjust judge cares only about what he thinks, nothing else. Not the guy you want with the decision making power of whether or not to give you justice.

Opposite the judge is a widow. We don't know what her case is, but because she is a widow we can surmise that she probably doesn't have any leverage or pull in this situation and people would take advantage of that. But the widow has one weapon: persistence. She kept coming to the unjust judge with the plea, "Grant me justice against my adversary." (verse 3) Day and night she would make this plea. She would not leave the judge alone.

For a while, the judge refused to grant the widow justice, but, as the widow continued to persist with her plea, he finally gave in and granted her justice. He didn't do it for any noble reason or because he was sympathetic of her situation and wanted to help her. No, he says, "Because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!" (verse 5) The word that's used for "attack" literally means "blacken the eye." The judge is only doing this, only granting her justice, so that the widow doesn't eventually come and sock him in the eye!

Jesus' parable makes an example of the lesser to the greater. The lesser example is this unjust judge. If he will grant justice not because it is the right and good thing to do and not because he cares for the person, he will at least do it because the widow is persistent and he doesn't want a black eye! The greater example is, of course, God as the just judge. "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.” (verses 7-8) He is a just God. He always does what is right. He cares about the downtrodden and the helpless. How much more will God as the just judge come at the request of his chosen ones, his believers, when they persistently cry out to him for justice?

But how long do I have to cry out to God for justice? How persistent are my prayers? How many times do I pray before I give up and stop praying? Am I a one and done pray-er? Two times? Three? Four? Every night...for a week? Do I then back off from persistently praying because I think I might be annoying God with my requests, because he has better things to do with his time than worry about my request? Do I back off from persistent prayer because I think God has already given me the answer and it was a big, fat “No!”?

When I give up on praying to God, when my prayers are not persistent, I show my lack of faith in God’s promises. God has not only invited me and commanded me to pray persistently, but he encourages me to that same end with the promise that he will answer. When I give up on prayer, I’m showing God that I don’t believe his promises about persistent prayer.

Honestly, it sort of baffles me why God commands, invites, and even encourages persistent prayer. It baffles me because my youngest son has been very persistent with his mother and me about a very specific request. He wants a dog, a pug to be exact. He has been asking for a pug for over a year now. That’s pretty persistent for a four-now-five-year-old. He’s cute, but when he asks three times in three sentences in a row, it’s exhausting. But at the same time my wife and I have been talking about it. She’s looked up rescue pugs and dog fostering programs. I can see how James’ persistence is starting to change my opinion about getting a dog.

But there’s more considerations to his request than just giving my son what he wants. Is it the best idea for our family to get a dog? I’m allergic. How will a dog affect my health? Who’s going to care for the dog day to day? This is a living creature. Will the novelty of having a dog wear off on him and then he would not take good care of the dog? Is wanting a dog a fad for him? Where will we get the extra money needed to care for the dog – food, toys, shots, vet appointments? What do we do with the dog when we go on vacations or leave town for a couple of days? More than just what we want has to be taken into consideration in granting any request.

Our God is a righteous judge who will answer the prayers of his people, but there’s more to consider than what I want and when I want it. God often does not answer our prayers on our timetable. It may seem like God is putting off our persistent prayers, but how does his answer to our prayers affect those around us? What else is going on that we don’t know about when we make the request? Whenever it seems as if God is not answering our prayers or that he is taking his sweet time in doing so, remember that our God is not slow as some understand slowness. He is patient with you. Sometimes he delays in answering our persistent prayers in order to remove any selfishness from our petitions. Sometimes he delays so that our longing may become greater. Sometimes he delays because he knows that quick and easy answers do not strengthen our faith. He knows his children and he knows that we, like ordinary children, treasure his gifts more when we have to wait for them.

In a culture of instant gratification, waiting is more of a burden on us than before. I may have to wait for the answer, but God says we should pray and never give up. He will answer our persistent prayers. God will not grow tired of your requests. He will not get annoyed. Instead, he promises to bring justice to his chosen ones, to deliver them in the most expedient fashion that he sees best.

Even though I can become discouraged with what looks like God putting off my prayers and I may give up on praying to him, but I know that Jesus did not give up praying. He made prayer a part of his life. He often went to solitary places to pray. Sometimes he prayed all night straight on until morning. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he poured out his heart to his Father asking that if there was another way to take away the sins of the world, another way outside of the cross, to please grant this to him. He prayed this right up until the moment that Judas with the others came to arrest Jesus and lead him off to his crucifixion. Jesus prayed and never gave up. Although Jesus had to go through the cross, the Father answered his prayer and granted the Son justice by raising him from the dead on the third day showing that Jesus truly brought justice for the whole world, the forgiveness of sins for everyone. His perfect prayer life covers my lack of faith in continuing in persistent prayers.

Our God is a righteous and just judge. He will not keep putting off the prayers for justice and deliverance for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night. He will act in the timing that is best, never delaying the answer to your prayers in a way to hurt you but only to strengthen you. Never give up praying to God. He will see that his chosen ones get justice, and quickly. Amen.