

**THE IMPERFECT PRAYER LIFE AND THE DESIRE FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD - Part eleven- Sunday, December 8th 2024 - 5:30 p.m.
Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

WEARINESS IN PRAYER

Luke 18:1-8 - “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. [2] He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. [3] And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ [4] For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, [5] yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.” [6] And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. [7] And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? [8] I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

The parable opens and closes with some rather cautionary words from Jesus. ***First***, there is a ***encouragement***. ***Second***, there is a sad, searching ***question***. The ***warning*** is simply ***don't give up on prayer***. The ***implication*** of the last verse is ***many will***.

- 1) Between these two points Jesus tells a simple story to show ***why people give up***. What makes them stop praying in the first place. The reasons aren't all the same:
 - a) ***Apathy can creep into the heart because of the ongoing daily goodness of God in the first place***. Things don't have to be bleak to stop praying.

One of the great threats to fervent prayer is the **loss of perception of need**. I didn't say **loss of need**. I said loss of **perception** of need. These kind of needs deepen the resolve of prayer in people who otherwise become so easily independent and materially distracted.

They are **calls** to churches like ours. We all are prone to wander, as the hymn writer says.

Moses had to repeatedly call the children of Israel back to seeking God. He would repeatedly warn them their new found **prosperity and comfort** would be a spiritual threat to them. "**Lest you forget the Lord your God**" he would say, over and over again. And those simple words proved prophetic in their situation.

- b) **Sometimes crisis situations can overwhelm you with their sheer size and magnitude** - Were facing several giants now. We all come against situations that stretch our prayer lives. We've not just praying for people with the flu. God calls us to pray above our own fears and doubts.

Like the poor widow in Jesus' parable, we come up to situations where we are painfully aware of our lack of resources to handle life. Our cupboards are bare.

- c) **The weariness of fatigue can wear us down** - Jesus deliberately paints a picture where the strain of repeated requests is made obvious - “....**a widow who kept coming to him....**”(3). There was an over and over again aspect in Jesus’ story.

Why would this be? Why not answer this widow immediately? We just don’t know all the answers to that question. But one thing is certain - **her resolve grew in her repeated asking**. If the issue Jesus deals with in this parable is **praying and not losing heart (18:1)**, then there is a purpose to repeated asking.

- d) **We all have to deal with the condemnation that comes from your own prayerlessness** - How many times has this happened to you? You kneel to pray. Immediately there comes to your mind this thought: **"You haven't spent much time in prayer all week!"** There it is. That darkness inspired idea that somehow you don't qualify to come to Him **now** because you haven't been coming **enough**. You've blown it up to now **so there's no way back into God's good books!**

Only the devil can come up with logic like that - ***you haven't prayed all week, so not praying now will somehow make up for that situation?*** When did the devil suddenly get so interested in your spiritual progress anyway?

Listen to God's Word instead - ***"Come boldly before the throne of grace to find mercy and help in your time of need"*** (Hebrews 4:16). Know that one because it's a verse you're going to need over and over again!

- 2) **Next Jesus explains why we shouldn't give up - Luke 18:2-5 -**
"He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. [3] And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' [4] For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, [5] yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'"

The ***supplicant*** has everything going against her in that culture. She's a ***woman*** and she's a ***widow***. She will get no help from anyone. The odds are stacked against her. She can't afford a lawyer so she pleads for help from the judge himself.

Please don't rush over this. This is Jesus' way of revealing it isn't our **qualifications** that get answers to our prayers. There is no reason for this woman to be optimistic on her own.

The **judge** is a stinker. This woman can't pay much and he doesn't want the likes of her plugging up his calendar. "I'll help her out just to shut her up and get her off my back" **What a guy!**

Now the important point. The common interpretation of this passage is that **Jesus is teaching that you need to persist in prayer just like this widow did with the judge**. Some study Bibles have that lesson written into their notes. And while it's true there is some teaching merit there, I don't think it does justice to Jesus' main point.

Verse 6 - "And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says." This is Jesus' way of saying, **"Stop and look carefully at that judge! Do you see what he's really like?"**

Verses 7-8 - "And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? [8] I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Now look at what God's like! **"He will give justice to them speedily"**(8). Remember, we're still looking at the whole issue of losing heart in prayer. And Jesus encourages us to **begin** prayer with a proper understanding of the heart of God.

"Don't lose heart! You're not a bereft widow. You're the bride of Christ! God isn't an unjust heartless politician - some detached third party. He's your loving heavenly father!"

Here's the whole lesson. **This is the essence of not losing heart in prayer.** Never lose grip on how powerful and helpful the **right understanding of Father God's heart** is to a church's prayer life. This is the razor edged truth of **Hebrews 11:6** - **"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."**

Our Father is a **rewarded** of those who seek Him. Get that right in your mind and soul before you even come to the prayer meeting. This is the God Satan **doesn't** want us putting our trust in. This is the battle of faith.

Verse 8b - **"....Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"** You can't miss Jesus concern that **cynicism** will rule the day. People will become **skeptics** rather than **believers**.

Faith is unsustainable without a proper understanding of the heart of Father God. There are a thousand voices painting a different picture of Father God. Don't let them into your heart. This is the essence of the ***battle of faith.***