

Parable Of The Persistent Widow

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The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8) teaches the necessity of patient, persistent, and persevering prayer, much like the Parable of the Persistent Friend (Luke 11:5-13). A mention of prayer precedes both parables. Though delivered in different situations, they both show the absolute, immeasurable contrast between God and men, and provide evidence that God yields to the saints' pleading and urging. Both parables depict a person granting a request because of his selfish motives. The Persistent Friend's persevering prayer is for necessities, while the Persistent Widow's is for protection. Both parables conclude that God will not fail us as friends and acquaintances often do.

The Parable of the Persistent Widow is especially linked with the final crisis of the last days and the painful circumstances the faithful remnant will face. Prayer will be a major resource for them. Since vengeance is God's alone, they know He will judge their oppressors, but as they wait for deliverance, persevering prayer will be their refreshment and supply of patience. The parable is preceded by Jesus' exhortation on the Christian duty to pray, dedication in prayer, and resisting the temptation to discontinue prayer. It concludes by indicating that prayer is a matter of faith.

1. What does the word "always" express about the dedication we need in praying? Luke 18:1.

Comment: Concerning our habits of prayer, "always" does not mean we should pray every single minute of the day. If this were so, the faith involved in prayer would be a dead one, as we would never have time to do the works required with it (James 2:17-18, 20, 26). "Always" means that we should be faithful to our regular times of prayer. Concerning the time of prayer, "always" includes the fact that we should pray in both good and bad times. Sadly, some pray only in a crisis, and others forget to offer a prayer of thanksgiving when God has intervened to solve a problem or provide a blessing (I Thessalonians 5:17-18). Regarding the spirit of prayer, "always" means we should be continually ready to pray, praying whenever a crisis hits or a need arises. Because they reveal our priorities, good habits of prayer show dedication to God and strengthen our relationship with Him.

2. What causes people to discontinue praying? Same verse.

Comment: "Not lose heart" or "faint" (KJV) means to grow weary, to give in to evil, to turn coward. We must resist the human tendency of growing weary in prayer. We have a duty as the elect of God to pray. There are several major causes of losing heart: defilement, doubt, danger, distractions, and delay.

» The *defilement* of sin kills interest in spiritual exercises like prayer. Sin does not promote a good prayer life—in fact, it will stop it dead. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18).

» Praying with *doubt* is faithless, making the prayer useless. Doubting the inspiration of Scripture and the power of God hinders prayer (I Timothy 2: 8). As prayer and faith go hand in hand, so do unbelief and not praying.

» Prayer must sometimes be done at *dangerous* times. Danger weeds out the coward from the courageous. Daniel faced real danger in praying, but kept on praying, even though it led to the lion's den (Daniel 6). Today, our dangers are varied, but the danger of embarrassment often affects people more than danger of physical harm.

» Satan is a master of causing *distractions*, especially during prayer time. Probably every saint has experienced his mind wandering, causing him to think about everything except what he should be praying about.

» Few things cause us to lose heart in praying more than *delays* in answers to our requests. Jesus uses this parable to teach us that, though answers often appear to take a long time in coming, we should persevere and not grow weary in praying to God.

3. Why does Jesus compare the dealings of God with a corrupt judge? Luke 18:2-8.

Comment: Jesus compares God, not with a good man, but with a godless man to emphasize the vast difference between this unjust judge and the righteous God. The conduct of the unjust judge exposes the chaotic and corrupt judgments in which he had prostituted himself. No one can compel him to do anything because he feels no regard for anyone, including God. He acts purely out of self-interest. Yet, if this unjust judge could avenge a widow whom he disdained, how much more will the righteous God avenge his elect (Jeremiah 11:20)?

This parable reveals God's willingness to hear and answer the supplications of His elect (Luke 18:7), responding when they are offered according to His will. The word "avenge" (verses 5, 7-8) implies the working out of His vengeance in justice, not in retaliation. If God's elect are wrongly treated, they can be sure of vindication. So, if the unjust judge because of a selfish irritation avenges a troublesome widow, how much more will the selfless God come to our aid? We can expect substantially better treatment from a God of lovingkindness than from a heartless judge.

The widow, who speaks only five words, does not prevail because of her persuasive plea but because of her persistence. Sometimes too many words reveal a scarcity of desire or a lack of purpose. Jesus tells us long prayers and useless repetitions will not make God hear us any better (Matthew 6:7). He already knows our needs (verse 8).

God has assured us that He hears and answers prayer. We must have the faith of Christ that God can provide what we need, enjoys hearing us ask according to His will, and desires to give us abundantly what we should have.