

The Power of Persistence

1. He's never annoyed
2. He's quick to answer

Bible Text- Luke 18: 1-8a

I have a quick question for you parents. What was or is your absolute favorite thing to do with your kids when they were young? Perhaps it was tucking them into bed at night and reading them a bed-time story. Maybe it was going for a walk in the park and seeing their happy faces go down the slide. Maybe it was when they vacuumed the carpet solely out of the goodness of their hearts. But I would have to say that in the top three fun things you do with your kids it would have to be going to the grocery store with them, right? No? Maybe sometimes it's not a hassle, but if your children were anything like me, you couldn't go down one aisle without them begging, pleading for this one item they had to have. I mean, I couldn't go down the condiment aisle without begging for some ketchup. From the moment those doors slide open to the moment you leave your shopping cart in the parking lot all the kid wants is for you to give them what they want. This morning I'm going to give you all permission to act like little children when they're in a grocery store. Shocking, isn't it? Actually what's shocking is that I'm not the giving you the permission, God is. In the context of prayer God wants you to act like little children in a grocery store. God in his amazing love gives us this blessing of prayer and Jesus, through the parable of the persistent widow, teaches us about the power of persistence. Persistence in prayer is powerful not because of our strength but because of God's. Persistence in prayer is powerful because no matter how many times we come before him He is never annoyed and He's quick to answer.

Both of those qualities of God are found in Jesus' parable. Jesus here is talking to his disciples. And Luke, who records this parable, tells us right off the bat what the meaning of the parable is. That hardly ever happens. Usually the gospel writers just introduce a parable by saying, "Jesus told this parable" or they record Jesus telling his disciples the meaning of the parable. Luke just plainly says, "**Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.**" Boom. There it is. That is what we're suppose get out of this parable. Don't read anymore into this parable than this. Always pray. Don't stop. So then Jesus goes into the parable. There was this judge who lived in some city. Not important who he was or where he lived. What is important is that he 1) didn't fear God and 2) didn't respect other people. So basically he didn't follow the 10 commandments at all. He was just a low-life, corrupt, unjust judge. Then there was a widow who came to him to settle a legal dispute with someone. She wanted justice for something. We don't know what that was. That's not important. What we do know is that she never stopped trying to get justice from this judge. Day after day she went to court seeking the same exact settlement. You can probably picture this judge, sighing heavily every time she stepped foot near him. During Jesus' time widows weren't exactly in the highest of classes in society. They weren't even in the middle class. They were usually very poor and lonely, an afterthought in society, having lost almost everything when their husbands passed away. The judge who already had no respect for anyone surely wouldn't show respect for this widow. Yet, she kept coming. She was like that kid at the grocery store. Even though she knew

should probably get what she was looking for, she kept on asking. She wouldn't stop. The judge refused at first, but it was getting real old real fast and finally he just said, "forget it. I know I'm not a nice guy but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm just going to give her what she wants. I will see to it that she gets the justice she's looking for or else she might even attack me.

And then Jesus says something very interesting. He's done with the parable says to his disciples, "Listen to what the unjust judge says" Listen to what the judge says? That judge who hated God and hated his fellow human beings? Why wouldn't Jesus just tell us to be like the widow who patiently and persistently kept coming to that judge? Shouldn't we be like her and pay attention to what she's doing? No. Look at what the unjust judge did. You see. Even in his corruption and his injustice, he still gave to her what she wanted. Then Jesus goes on "**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.**

Huh? Did Jesus lose us here? What's the main point?? Let's recap. Luke tells us this is about how to always pray and never give up. Jesus tells the parable and it makes sense. The widow is persistent and eventually gets what she wants. Ok! Be like the widow. But then Jesus says "Listen to what the unjust judge says" and then proceeds to tell us that God brings justice to those whom he has chosen. So is the point of the parable to teach us to always pray? Is the point of the parable to show that God is like that unjust judge? Or is the point of the parable to teach us that God is NOT like the unjust judge? The answer is yes!

Jesus' main point is kind of weird here. In one way he's saying God is like the unjust judge and in another way he's saying God is the exact opposite of the unjust judge. He's like the unjust judge in that he gives justice to those who continually come to him. He answers our prayers. He's the exact opposite of the judge in that his character is the exact opposite of the judge. Our God is perfectly just. He loves us perfectly. He cares for our every need perfectly. He hears us when we cry out to him. He has the world in the palm of his hand. Most importantly, He gave us his Son to suffer and die for every single one of our sins. If that terrible cruel judge gave justice to that widow and answered her requests, what do you think our perfect and loving Father will do? Will he not answer every single one of your prayers? That judge was probably like the parent at the grocery store who eventually gave in because he was annoyed out of his mind. Not so with God. Will he keep putting us off? Never in a million years. Will he eventually get around to us? Jesus says, "No." He will give us justice; he will answer our prayers quickly. That is the reason we pray continually. That is reason we never give up. That is the power of persistence. The power of persistence relies in God's promise that it's impossible to annoy him and in his promise that he will hear us.

But when we analyze our prayer life, doesn't it seem like we could always be praying more. Sometimes for me it will be around midday and I'll realize that I haven't prayed yet that day. What am I doing? I have an amazing God who has given me everything necessary for my physical and spiritual life. I have a God who promises to hear my prayers and invites me to communicate with him every day and I couldn't find one minute in my morning to do that? So why is it a challenge for us to go to him every hour of every day? I think it comes down to the three things that prevent us from having a relationship with God in every area of our lives. The devil. The world. Our sinful flesh; the ultimate trifecta in creating chaos in our lives which

prevent us from focusing on the one thing needful, our devotion to God. They work as a team. The devil tempts us and our sinful nature to put the things of this world right in front of us blocking any view of God. Think about it. There are so many things happening in our lives; our job, our kids, our education, our relationships, which is great. But the devil can use those things as a trap to draw us away from our Savior. You go about your day preoccupied with those things and before you know it, it's the end of the day and you're lying in bed, thinking about what you have to do tomorrow.

Another reason we might fail ignore the power of persistence is that we don't think God is answering our prayers. **Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry to him day and night?** It's hard to see that sometimes. It's hard to accept the fact he is actually answering our prayers and quickly doing it. Lord, I asked you for good health but now I have this illness. Lord, I asked you for this job promotion, but someone else got it. Lord, I asked you to restore this relationship, but it's only getting worse. What gives?

There was this girl I knew in high school who was a Christian, but when she went to college she seemed to be falling away from the faith. During college I saw her at some event. We started talking about faith and one of the saddest things I've ever heard came out her mouth. She said, "Prayer is just an empty wish." I don't think she realized the magnitude of that statement. Because in that statement, she's saying God isn't good. God doesn't keep his promises. He doesn't love us. He doesn't care for us. That time when Jacob wrestled with God and went face to face with his Creator relentlessly asking for his blessing, it didn't matter. Those times when David over and over again in psalms says he prayed and the Lord answered, it wasn't true. All those times that you prayed for forgiveness of your sins, God wasn't listening.

At times in your life it may seem like God isn't listening, but listen to Jesus words one more time, "**And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?**" Those are the words of your Savior. Those are the words of the one who offered up his life so that you may live with him forever. Those are the words of the one who is in heaven ruling the world for your good. God has brought justice for you through his Son. He has answered your prayer for mercy and forgiveness. And now he will answer all your prayers you have and he will do it quickly.

Just be patient and persistent like that widow. Be like that kid in the grocery store. When you get up in the morning, pray. When you come near a problem at work, pray. When you're lying in bed with your spouse, pray. When you're tucking your kids in, pray. Paul says plainly, "pray continually." You know you have a God who hears you. You know you have a God who never gets annoyed with you and who's quick to answer.