**Always Pray!**

Luke 18:1-8

Key Verse 1

 “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”

**Introduction**

 Ecclesiastes 3:11 reads, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” Man is not a merely physical being. We are endowed with a very important spiritual component. So prayer often comes inevitably. Yet obstacles come in the way of effective and constant prayer. Because of this, Jesus knew we needed to be taught and encouraged always to pray. One of the themes of Luke's gospel is the prayer life of Jesus. In Luke 11 Jesus taught His disciples about what to pray. Today he taught them about how to pray. May the Lord help us to know how to pray persistently through this passage.

1. Read verse 1. Why did Jesus tell His disciples a parable? Why do people give up instead of always praying?

1-1, Read verse 1.

 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

1-2, Why did Jesus tell His disciples a parable?

 ***Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.***

* Jesus says to always pray. But being told to do so wasn’t enough for the disciples.
* Jesus knew they would suffer difficulties and persecutions. At those times, the disciples would feel like giving up and despairing.
* The same is true in our day. We are weak. But Prayer is basic to the Christian life. Prayer is like spiritual breathing. If we don't breathe, we die.
* Prayer is the expression of faith. Prayer is conversation with God that strengthens a right relationship with him.
* Jesus first set a good example in terms of prayer. When we review Jesus’ life, he fulfilled God’s mission through prayer.
* Prayer was his source of strength to carry on the work of God. Jesus prayed at critical moments such as at the time of his baptism. Then he received the Holy Spirit and heard the word of God.

Luke 3:21-22 reads,

 “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

* Also he prayed to seek God’s will at the time of popularity. Prayer was the way for him to discern God’s direction for him and to follow God’s leading.

Luke 5:15-16 reads,

 “Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. **16** But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

* Jesus sometimes spent the night praying to God. Before choosing His 12 disciples and designating them as apostles, Jesus prayed overnight.

Luke 6:12-13 reads,

 “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. **13** When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles”

* Jesus also urged His disciples to watch always and pray when signs of the end times became obvious.

Luke 21:36-38 reads,

 “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” **37** Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, **38** and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.”

* Jesus prayed to obey the will of God the night before His crucifixion. Jesus prayed as usual. Jesus knew how to cope with His cross. It was through His earnest prayer.

Luke 22:39-45 reads,

 “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. **40** On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” **41** He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, **42** “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” **43** An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. **44** And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. **45** When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. **46** “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

* Jesus even prayed while on the cross. His prayer enabled him to draw near to God. He prayed from beginning to end during His earthly life. His mission was accomplished in and through His prayer life. He never gave up to do God’s will.

Luke 23:34 and 46 read,

 “Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2023&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25970c)] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”

 “Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.”

* Verse 1 is a summary of the entire passage. Here Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray always.
* “Always” meant that we should be faithful to our regular time of prayer. Whether we feel like it or not, we should always pray.
* Good habits of prayer show dedication to God and strengthen our relationship with Him.

1-3, Why do people give up instead of always praying?

 ***Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.***

* We often times give up praying when we grow weary or lose heart.
* There are several causes of losing heart. Delay, bitterness, sinful desires, doubt, and busy minds prevent us from praying.
* At that time, we should persevere and not grow weary in praying to God. We are to pray always instead of giving up.
* Paul also knew that prayer was similar to hard work, requiring labor.

Colossians 4:12 reads,

“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”

* The Devil hates prayer. If prayer were powerless, it would be easy to attack us.
* It is easy to **lose heart** in prayer because we are not always convinced of the power of prayer. Prayer becomes a last resort instead of a first step.

Hebrews 7:25 reads,

 “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

* We must therefore not **lose heart** in prayer.

2. Read verses 2-5. How does Jesus describe the judge? (2) What did a widow plead with him for? (3) What can we learn from her persistently asking? Why couldn’t the judge refuse her plea? (4-5)

2-1, Read verses 2-5.

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!’”

2-2, How does Jesus describe the judge? (2)

 ***He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.***

* This judge would not have been a Jewish judge, for those days judges were usually one of the paid magistrates that were appointed either by Herod or the Romans.
* All disputes in the Jewish world were first brought to the elders. But often times they were brought to notorious judges.
* The judge had power to rule. By his one command a person could be set free or imprisoned.
* But this judge neither feared God nor cared about men. It seems he could exercise his authority without restraint.

2-3, What did a widow plead with him for? (3)

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

* This widow must have had no power in a male-dominant society. She had no status and no one to depend on.
* She did not have a personal lawyer. So she must have represented herself.
* All she could do was to keep coming to the judge with the plea, “Grant me justice against my adversary.”
* The widow was probably facing some financial difficulty and so appealed to the judge again and again with other choices.

2-4, What can we learn from her persistently asking?

* The judge must have ignored her. Moving this proud judge’s heart was like breaking a rock with an egg.
* This woman should have hired a powerful lawyer to win her case. But she did not have money. So she kept coming to the judge.
* She just showed up and repeated the same plea, “Grant me justice against my adversary.”
* The judge could have denied her request for a while. Perhaps she visited him first at his office.
* He told her he would be with her in a few minutes but let her wait all day long. Then he left without saying a word.
* He expected her to give up. But the next morning, she was there waiting for him, saying, “Good morning your honor. Grant me justice, grant me justice!”
* Still the judge refused. He tried to avoid her and used his security guards to try to control her.
* But she always found a way to come to him. In the morning she was at his door. When he went to the restroom, she was waiting for him.
* When he went to have dinner with his fellow judges, she was at the door. She showed up wherever he went.
* It was so irritating and annoying to the judge that he began to see her in his dreams, with pleading hands, “Grant me justice....”
* Her relentless pleading became a health hazard. Whenever he saw her, his blood pressure went up.
* The widow’s bothering the judge so persistently was so powerful that he finally decided to grant her justice.

2-5, Why couldn’t the judge refuse her plea? (4-5)

 ***“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!’”***

* Again it was simply because she kept bothering him.

3. Read verses 6-8. How is God different from the judge? (6-7) Why can we be confident of God’s answers to our persistent prayers? How should we cry out to God day and night as His chosen ones? Why do you think we need faith to pray to the end? (8)

 3-1, Read verses 6-8.

 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?”

3-2, How is God different from the judge? (6-7)

 ***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?***

* Jesus compares God with a godless man to emphasize the big difference between this unjust judge and God who is righteous.
* God is so different than the unjust judge. First of all, God loves justice.

Isaiah 61:8a reads,

 “For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity.”

* Not only does God love justice, but he also loves His people. They are called his chosen ones. They have accepted the blood of Jesus as their ransom price.
* They have confessed Jesus as their Lord and Christ. When they cry out to God, God hears them. God is like a Father who hears his children’s cry.
* They cry in the middle of the night, in the morning, in the afternoon like babies. Each time they cry, He hears them.
* Since God loves justice and he loves his chosen people, he is not reluctant to bring about justice for them.
* Thus we can expect far better treatment from a God of love than from a heartless judge. God has assured us that He hears and answers prayer.
* Some might say that God knows what we need. Why be persistent? When we remain persistent, our faith grows.

Romans 5:1-5 reads,

 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings,because we know that suffering produces perseverance; **4** perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

* Persistence leads us to patience and builds our character. We live in a fast-food society in which patience has become a lost virtue.
* Good parents do not rush out to buy something when a child asks for it once. Instead, it is the repetition of the request that makes them buy it.
* When we repeat the same prayer, God knows that we really want it and grants our request.
* That’s why God waited 25 years until Abram was given a child.
* So Jesus says that men should pray and should not lose heart because God is reluctant, but because He is willing to answer our prayer.
* Sometimes it seems to us that God is reluctant to answer our prayers. Yet the delays in prayer are not needed to change God, but to change us.
* Persistence in prayer brings a transforming element into our lives, building into us the character of God Himself.
* Jesus Himself even prayed repeatedly for the same thing not because he doubted His Father in Heaven, but because He trusted God to the end.
* Our God is different! The judge was unfair, but God is fair.
* The judge had no personal interest in the widow, but God loves and cares for those who petition Him.
* The judge answered the widow’s cry out of pure self-interest, but God loves to bless His people for their good also.

3-3, Why can we be confident of God’s answers to our persistent prayers?

 ***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?***

* They need to be assured that God is not like the unjust judge, so we should keep praying to the Lord who will resolve all things righteously.
* God always brings about justice for His chosen ones.
* God always hears our prayer without delay like the judge.
* God always knows our need.
* Our God is a righteous, wonderful Judge:
* We come to a judge of perfect, good character.
* We come to a judge who loves to care for His children.
* We come to a judge who is kind and gracious.
* We come to a judge who knows us.
* We come to this judge with an advocate, a friend who will plead our case before the judge.
* We come to the judge with promises to encourage us.
* We come to the judge with the right of constant access, to a judge who has a personal interest in our case.

3-4, How should we cry out to God day and night as His chosen ones?

***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?***

* Since we are crying out to God, not an unjust judge, we are in a much better position as chosen ones than this widow.
* She was making an appeal to a stranger, but we pray to our Father God, who knows us intimately already. He loves us as his precious children.
* She was pleading with an unjust man, but we beseech the attention of the Righteous Creator of heaven and earth.

Mark 11:22-24 reads,

 “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. **23** “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. **24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

* She made her plea alone, but we join in prayer with God’s children around the world.
* We are in a far better situation in that we have an advocate in heaven. Jesus is the best attorney who ever existed on earth.
* Jesus Christ, who is interceding for us like a public defendant. And his intercession is free of charge!

Romans 8:34 reads,

 “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

Hebrews 7:25 reads,

 “Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners,exalted above the heavens.”

* The woman was limited in her opportunity to plead her cause, but God is listening to us day and night.
* The woman’s judge cared nothing for her justice or well-being, but our Father God so loves us. While we were weak and powerless, he gave his Son to save us from our sins.
* He has loved us with an everlasting love.

3-5, Why do you think we need faith to pray to the end? (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?”***

* The question we must ask, is not if God will grant us justice, but if we have the faith to pray.
* When Jesus comes again, he will find some people who have lost faith and stopped praying.
* Some people grow weary and stop praying all together. Prayer and faith are closely related.
* Prayer is the extension of our faith in God. When we believe in God we can pray.
* We must believe in God Almighty who created the heavens and the earth with the word of his mouth.
* With this faith, we can overcome injustice in this world and pray to God without giving up.

James 5:16 reads,

 “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

James 4:2b also reads,

 “You do not have, because you do not ask God.”

* The power of prayer is sufficient to save the soul, heal the sick, and cause the rain to fall.
* Would you like to experience this power of prayer? Then come to the Lord and kneel down before the presence of our loving Father and offer up your prayers persistently, not just one or two times.
* But pray until he answers your prayers.

Matthew 7:7 reads,

 “Ask and it will be given to you: seek and you will find: knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Revelation 3:14 reads,

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.

* What prevents us from praying? Nothing will prevent us from seeking God when we have courage that come from faith.
* Have faith in God and pray with faith and even mountains will be moved before us. Do we suffer from spiritual depression or meaninglessness?
* We should not give up on our prayer life. Instead, we should come to God and pray. Most of all, we should pray to hasten the day of Jesus’ coming.

**Conclusion**

In accordance with what Jesus had taught His disciples today, after Jesus’ ascension they became warriors of prayer in the second volume of the author Luke, which is Acts. At every moment, they had to overcome the desire to give up and go back to their ordinary lives. Acts 1:14 reads, “They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” They in turn received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave them the power and wisdom to proclaim the gospel to all people in Jerusalem. Despite threat from the religious leaders, they were enabled to live before God. In this way the gospel spread throughout the world. It sometimes seems that our praying is a very small or insignificant thing. But when we pray, God works mightily in and through us. In short we must always pray and not give up just as Jesus taught us through today’s passage. May the Lord help us to serve God’s kingdom purpose by persistent prayer. Amen.

**One word: Always Pray!**