

Persist in Prayer

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Date: 14 September 2014

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, if you would, and turn to the Gospel of Luke. Chapter 18, trucking along, trucking along.

If you're visiting with us, black Bible in the chair in front of you. Go towards the back of that black Bible. Because in the New Testament, they renumbered it.

So if you go towards the back and then find page 62. Page 62, you will find Luke 18. I'm going to do 8 verses.

I know, it's kind of weird. I'm used to doing like 20. So, 8 verses. We'll do our study, Luke 18, verses 1 through 8.

And as you know the drill, we'll read it. And then we'll exposit the text. Luke 18, verse 1.

[1:01] Now, Jesus was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. Saying, There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

And there was a widow in that city. And she kept coming to him saying, Give me legal protection from my opponent. And for a while he was unwilling. But afterward he said to himself, Even though I fear God nor respect man.

Yet, because his widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection. Lest by continually coming she wear me out. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge said.

Now, Shall not God bring about justice for his elect? Who cried to him day and night? And will he delay long over them? I tell you that he will bring about justice for them speedily.

However, when the Son of Man comes, Will he find faith on the earth? Quote, The militants divided us by gender and age.

[2:18] One for young and capable men. Another for girls and young women. And a third for older men and women. The jihadists stole cash and jewelry from this last group.

And left them alone at the oasis. Then they placed the girls and women in trucks. As they drove us away, We heard gunshots. Later, We learned that they were killing the young men.

Including my 19 year old brother. Who had married just six months ago. That's an excerpt from an article In the Washington Post.

It's a first person account of a 14 year old Yazidi girl who was kidnapped By militants And awarded To an ISIS commander.

Denny Burke, Who teaches at Boyce College, He posted this on his blog post On September 11th, Just a few days ago. On the blog post after he gives this quote, He says this, Quote, She ends up escaping from her captors And being reunited with her father.

[3:34] But I, Denny, Can't help thinking about the countless others Who've not escaped. They simply disappear into the desert Never to be seen or heard from again.

Some executed. Others raped and subjugated. Who will tell their stories? Who will mourn for them? Maranatha.

End quote. Come, Lord Jesus. That's what Maranatha means. When we see this evil that's taking place, What do we think of?

Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. When we see the tragedies in this world? Maranatha. When we see devastation and war?

Maranatha. When we see violent crime, Horrible abuse? Maranatha. Yet where is His coming? Why does God not answer?

[4:38] Does He not care? Just this past week, A couple days ago in Jerome, This is what one of men said to me When I was talking to him about the gospel.

He says, Why does God allow people to suffer like He does? That's why I don't believe in God, He told me. Where is God? And we're tempted when we see this, And when we face this, We're tempted to what?

Lose heart. Become discouraged. And yet in our text this morning, We must persist in prayer. Come and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Come and follow Him. You'll find forgiveness of your sins. And for us as believers, This is a great encouragement for us to persist in prayer. Don't grow weary. Be steadfast. Or don't stop believing.

[5 : 51] Although we probably mean it more than what Journey meant in 1981 by their song. Persist in prayer. Don't grow weary.

Don't lose heart. Here's a statement for you. We must remain steadfast in faith and prayer. For the return of Jesus.

Cry out to God for Jesus' return. Persistently pray for Jesus' return. And God's just judgment. That's what Jesus is saying.

That's what Jesus is encouraging us to do. Because Jesus' disciples choose to ally themselves with Him, They will undergo difficulty.

You will undergo difficulty. You will undergo persecution. As a matter of fact, If you are not a Christian today, And you decide to become one, Your life will probably get harder.

[6 : 53] And worse. His followers should identify with the widow. This widow by being persistent in prayer for God's decisive judgment upon the world.

And God hears His people. He does. This parable of the nagging widow. That was what one writer put it.

The parable of the nagging widow. It's linked to the previous eschatological section. When Jesus was talking about His second coming. And there's this tension that we live in.

As followers of Jesus. The kingdom is here. But it's not yet. Already, but not yet. It's here, but not yet. Hey. Oh. Oh.

Right? That's right. Oh. You get excited, but then it's not here. It makes living life tough. You almost feel like a bipolar person.

[7 : 53] You know. You're being pulled both ways. But this parable is a parable of contrast. If a dishonest judge responds to a persistent, unknown widow, won't God even more respond to His own children because He is gracious, merciful, and compassionate?

Won't He? Why would this wicked judge do something good? How much more so for God? If a nagging widow gets an unrighteous judge to act, kicking Him in the bum, how much more will our righteous God act on behalf of His elect?

He responds quickly to our requests. So, faith is needed in His delay. We must remain steadfast in faith. Be faithful. And ready for Jesus.

Be faithful. And ready for Jesus. Disciples of Jesus should persistently and humbly pray to a loving God for God's just kingdom in Jesus to come.

We must maintain hope in God's plan, trusting Him to respond to us, even though He is delaying. He calls us to remain faithful. In the Old Testament, God's people had to wait for the Lord God as He worked out justice with seeming slowness.

[9 : 19] David had to wait upon the Lord. Until his enemies were triumphed over. He was supposed to be the next king. He was crowned or supposed to be anointed as king.

And then He's running for His life. He had to wait. And wait is not just wait like this. Waiting means this and also trusting. That's what wait means in the Old Testament, by the way.

So, Jesus called the disciples to wait upon Him, praying continually. Well, that's our introduction.

Long one, but it is our introduction. Now, let's go through our text. First, verse 1 is straight from our title, Persistent Prayer.

Verse 1. Now, Jesus was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. Now, the setting to this parable and Jesus' teaching is vital.

Because you don't see it in English, which I've told you this before, but you kind of can pick it up with that little word ought. O-U-G-H-T ought.

[10 : 22] Which in the Greek is, guess what it is. Delta Epsilon Iota. Day. Day. Which means what? It is necessary. This must happen.

They must always pray and not grow weary. The purpose that He told them in this parable is that they must always pray.

Have that mentality. Have that thinking. You must do this. Must be in continual prayer. Requesting for God's justice and Jesus' return.

Disciples should not grow weary in life. Do not give up. Don't grow tired of prayer. Keep trusting. Don't stop believing.

In the midst of persecution and God's delay and Jesus' return. A true follower of Jesus should not cease praying for His justice when righteousness will dominate the whole world.

[11:22] Oh yes, there will not be any such thing as an ISIS when He comes. But it's hard. It's hard.

It's hard. It's hard. To keep praying when you don't see tangible results, isn't it? It's hard. I was tracking with you when you were praying, Daniel. I was tracking with you.

I was praying with you. You don't see results. That is the, for many times, the workforce of a pastor. He doesn't see results. You might not see results. People not coming to Christ. Family members not changing.

Christians regressing instead of progressing. Members backtracking. No numbers. It's hard to keep praying when you don't see tangible results.

[12:26] But when there's no sign of an answer from the Lord, we can easily become discouraged and give up praying because we are weary. So that's why Jesus is going to give this parable.

Persist in prayer.

First, what He does. He says, let's look at this contrast. He's going to paint this contrasting picture between this widow and this unrighteous judge. There was a certain judge in a certain city with a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

This judge, Jewish judge, maybe. Didn't fear God. Didn't care about people. Had no compassion. Had enough power to not worry about people's response to him.

Plus, he didn't really care what people thought about him. Don't know. Don't care. He did what he wanted. Nothing stirred his conscience.

Either God's laws, nor people who were truly in need. If he were in need, he didn't care. Got any money? Money talks. Appealing to his character was pointless.

[13:39] There's no ethic outside his own rules. No reason for him to give just decisions. This is who he is. This judge, verse 2. Now 3.

And there was a widow in that city. And she kept coming to him saying, Give me legal protection from my opponent. The helpless widow. The nameless widow.

And a widow. So, nobody knew her. I mean, she was all alone. All by herself. Not owned by anybody. Not helped by anybody.

She was in some financial difficulty. Maybe from a person who took advantage of her. But she kept coming to this judge again. And again.

And again. And again. For justice. What was her weapon of choice? Ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha.

Persistence. Determination. She would freely ask for aid.

[14:37] Seeking relief from her opponents. Again. This widow. Was helpless. And powerless. And she appealed to this judge. Who had the authority.

And he had the power. To vindicate her. And all she could do was appeal. She didn't bribe him. She didn't have money.

She's a widow. Who doesn't have the stash of cash. Well, maybe under their mattress or something. But he didn't have that big old wad of cash with them. She didn't have a great lawyer. She's destitute.

Verse 4. For a while he was unwilling. What was the judge's first response? Eh. Whatever. Eh. Don't know.

Don't care. He didn't want to deal with her. So he ignored her. He lived up to his reputation. And did nothing for her.

[15:34] He was insensitive. Maybe he was waiting for a bribe from somebody else for her. But as her appeals continued.

Afterward he said to himself. Even though I do not fear God. I respect man. Yet because this widow bothers me. I will give her legal protection. Lest by continually coming.

She wear me out. It became annoying to the point where he began to do some internal reflection.

Okay. He knew his own reputation. I don't fear God. I don't care about people. And he was proud of it.

I don't care what people think. But. This lady. Is getting on my nerves. Her persistence. Was wearing him down.

Her continual appeals were bothering and troubling him. Beating him down. The word there. Wearing me out. Or beating him down. It literally means. Giving me a blackjacket. That guy. And she was literally going.

[16 : 39] Popping him in the face. But the idea is. She's just wearing him out. She keeps swinging. Swinging. Swinging. Appealing. She's wearing him down emotionally. She's a nuisance.

This is pathetic. I'm going to go crazy. I will take up her cause. Because she's eventually going to wear me out. And if I refuse to give her legal protection.

She'll just keep bugging me. Man. Lady. Leave me alone. This dame is driving me crazy. I want to be rid of her totally.

Verse 6. And the Lord said. Hear what the unrighteous judge said. Now. Jesus will start to apply the parable. Hear what this judge said.

Hear what happened with this judge. In other words. Reflect on the judge's response to this widow. Unrighteous judge. Unrighteous judge. Doesn't care about anybody. Has authority.

[17 : 38] But doesn't matter what God says or what anybody else says. We know. Nobody knows her. Nobody owns her. Helpless. Has nothing. Here's the scenario.

Now Jesus is going to use. A lesser to greater argument. To prove his point. What's his point? Persist in prayer. Why should you persist in prayer?

Three reasons. Persist in prayer. Because God is loving. Verse 7. God is loving. Now.

Shall not God bring about justice for his elect who cries him day and night? That part right there.

There's going to be two rhetorical questions. Here's the first one.

God will bring justice in the midst of trouble. He will judge those who persecute his elect. Vindicating them. He will defend his chosen ones. They're facing turmoil or persecution.

[18 : 40] They long for God to deal with their enemies. Making these wrongs right. And bringing vindication that they're in the right. So what does he say? God loves his people.

Notice the difference. His righteous. Awesome. Magnificent. Just God. Versus the unrighteous. Evil. I don't care about God.

I don't care about other people. It's a contrast. The widow. Helpless. Nameless. Nobody knows her. Nobody helps her. Versus who? The elect. Loved.

Cared for. Blessed. You are cared for. Loved. He shows compassion for you. See the contrast? God waits.

God waits for the proper time to act on behalf of his elect people. Elect.

[19 : 39] What does elect mean? Election means that God, before the foundation of the world, chose those whom he was saved. It was done based upon his sovereign free choice, not based upon foreseen faith.

Else, it would be our decision first and then his. No, friends. It's his decision first, then it's ours. Christians and Southern Baptists say they believe in election, but many base election upon God foreseen a person's faith.

So that election is conditioned upon that faith. That is not biblical. That's error. Election is unconditional based upon grace.

Election comes first. Faith follows. That's why Jesus said to the Pharisees, The reason why you don't believe in me is because you're not my sheep. He doesn't say the reason why you're not my sheep is because you don't believe.

He says the reason why you don't have faith is because you don't belong to me. You must belong to me, then you have faith. Does my sheep hear my voice?

[20 : 51] John chapter 10. How do you know if you're the elect, then? If you repent and trust in Christ. If you repent and trust in Christ alone.

Well, but how does it show itself? Peter says, Render certain his calling and choosing you. Render certain how? By the way that you live.

See, it's not, well, I'm chosen. I'm going to go do whatever I want. And that's not how it works. It's, I'm chosen. Let me show you about my life. The high love Christ. It's a little diversion there, but we understand what elect means.

We're loved, we're cared for. God cares and loves his elect people. So, so is God's response like the response of the unrighteous judge?

Not even close. It's not. Because the judge's response, this is God, elect. This is that judge, the widow.

[22:00] The judge's response to the widow? Man, it ran for her. You want to deal with church? You just, Just keep persisting. I just want to get rid of her. Do you think that's what God does when you pray to him?

If you think that, you don't have God right. Persistent prayer because God is loving towards his people. If this insensitive jerk responded to repeated pleas from a helpless widow, he doesn't even know, he doesn't even care about her, will not our righteous, just God even more respond with love and grace toward you?

Love by God. Chosen one. Look, God is not anything like this unrighteous judge because our God is good, kind, gracious, and merciful.

Plus, we're not like this nameless unknown widow because we're his loved, elect people. No. Loved as his elect children.

This judge, another way to put it, this judge was unloving, evil, hard-hearted, selfish, and self-seeking. God is loving, kind, good, gentle, merciful, totally just, and righteous in all his ways.

[23:30] And he loves those who love his son. You love his son? He loves you. You hate his son? He hates you. Pretty simple. He loves his son, he has life.

You do not have the son, he does not have life. Confess Jesus, you have the Father. If you don't confess Jesus, you don't have the Father. He loves, he adores, he cares, he reaches out to those who love his son.

He's nothing like this judge. Here's the judge here. Here's God here. It's contrast. It's so different. It's like this. much more can we expect a righteous, just, sovereign, kind, merciful, gracious God to come to your aid, Christian.

Notice, says, the elect who cry out to him, who cry to him day and night. They're constantly entreating him to intervene. We're under pressure.

We're under, just under pressure and trial and persecutions. So we must pray to a gracious, loving, merciful God who listens. But it's hard, isn't it?

[24:47] It's hard to believe God is listening when he doesn't seem to answer. You ever feel like that? You pray and your prayers just hit the ceiling.

You feel like that? I do. I get that made about once a month. In my prayer time, I say, are you even listening to me? I feel like my prayers are just hitting the ceiling and bouncing right back to me.

You feel like that? I know you do. See Samuel Storms in his book, Reaching God's Ear.

He brings out some questions we must ask ourselves. I'll put them on the screen. They're going to be small. And if you need to write these down, I wanted to put them up there for you.

But you can get my notes afterwards. You can't get these four questions. These are really, they really bring out your heart type questions. Number one, do we repeat a request because we think that the quality of a prayer is dependent on the quantity of words?

[26:05] Second, do we repeat a request because we think that God is ignorant and needs to be informed? Or if not ignorant, at least, He is unconcerned and therefore needs to be aroused.

God, wake up. Are you sleeping? Do we repeat our prayers because we believe that God is unwilling to answer?

And we must prevail upon Him somehow transforming a hard-hearted God into a compassionate and loving one. fourth, do we repeat a petition because we think that God will be swayed in His decision by our putting on a show of zeal and piety as if God cannot see through the thin veil of hypocrisy?

Are those just telling? I mean, do you read those and you go, oh my goodness, that's me. I've done that.

These are false understandings. Not just of prayer, but of God. Well, why does God want us to pray?

[27:41] Because one, He uses means to bring about His decreed plan. And two, it shows that we're totally dependent upon Him.

God uses means. The nail needs to go into the piece of wood. So if you say to the nail, please go into the piece of wood, it probably won't listen to you.

What is the means by which you can take that nail and drive it into the wood? The hammer. It's meant to go into the piece of wood. It's meant to do that.

That's what it's meant to do. It was made to do that, correct? The nail is made to go into the wood. You have means. God's decreed plan.

His means is prayer. That's one of them. prayer to put the nail into the wood. He uses means to bring about His end. And second, as I said, God wants to pray because prayer shows we're totally dependent upon Him.

[28 : 56] But we need to have a right understanding of God when we pray. I'll wait a few moments because I know some of you might be writing these down. So wait a few moments so you can get these down.

Again, if I shoot past this, if you want my notes, I can give that to you. Or again, write down, see Samuel Storm's reaching God's ear.

Reaching God's ear. And those four questions are in that book. Okay. Persistent prayer.

Persistent prayer because God is loving. Second, persistent prayer because God is patiently caring for you.

That's the next phrase. And will he delay long over them? There's different ways to translate this. New American Standard has, excuse me, will he delay it long over them?

[30 : 10] Or another way to translate it is, or will he not have patience for them? Or will he not be forbearing for them? What does this mean, though?

It's hard to tell. What does Jesus mean when he says this? in my study, I found out there's 12 different views on this verse. So I'm going to put all 12 up on the board.

No, I'm just kidding. The last two seem the most plausible. either God's patience is reflected in a current care that culminates in ultimate deliverance, or his patience is reflected in keeping persecution from being too severe.

That's what it means. But either way, this shows he's patiently caring for us, patiently caring for his own.

And I take that first view that God's patience is reflected in a current care that culminates in ultimate deliverance. God continues to care for his own in the midst of their trials, in the midst of our persecutions, in the midst of our pains.

[31 : 22] But what's the main point? What's Jesus trying to hone in on? God will vindicate his people because he's loving and he's patient. he patiently cared for his own.

Third reason, because God is faithful. God is faithful. Verse 8, I tell you that he will bring about justice for them speedily.

I tell you, he will bring about justice for them speedily. He will do it. Jesus answered the second rhetorical question about God's delay. And verse 7, by saying that God will speedily bring vindication for his elect.

Okay, what does speedily mean? Two views on this. It could mean suddenly when Christ returns, it will happen quickly.

Or second, it means soon. Vindication is near. God has not forgotten his elect. I favor the second view. God will soon act to deal with enemies and to judge, which implies there will be a delay.

[32 : 40] Since vindication is delayed, it can bring the excuse of losing trust, which is why Jesus said the next phrase, which we'll look at in a second.

God is faithful, but there's a delay. I mean, and it's not just a couple days.

It's been a couple thousand years. I mean, hello? What is God thinking? Like I told you, the gentleman in Rome, how could God, why does God allow all this evil to happen?

Why does he let this all happen? delay seems long, yes, but compared to eternity, is it really that long of a delay?

Is it really that long? And to the Lord, a day is like, not is, but just is like a thousand years, a thousand years like a day.

[33 : 51] and when it's all said and done, after vindication takes place, when he returns and justice is served, and that's what I told this gentleman, I said, you're speaking about all these people that are doing these horrendous, horrific things to other people, they have theirs coming, they will be judged, they will be judged, but after vindication, it will seem so short, it will just seem so short, look, friends, God is always faithful, God is always faithful, he will always be faithful to his word, he will bring vindication, persistent prayer, because God is loving, he's patiently caring, he's faithful, he ends the way he began, so persistent prayer, the next part of verse 8, however, when the

Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? No, Jesus isn't asking this because he doubts the faith of his own, I mean, he just spoke about his elect, that would be kind of weird, what is he saying that for?

No, he's actually exhorting us, will we be praying and looking for his return? This is an exhortation to continue to pray and hope in God and vindication he's promised his elect children, he's exhorting us, persist, don't lose heart, but faith, the Son of Man will be looking for, is the faith, those who are faithfully looking for him?

Will we keep the faith? Will we continue to remain steadfast, praying and looking for his vindication? He exhorts us to keep watch, he exhorts us to persevere, stay strong in your allegiance to Jesus when trials come, when trials come, no longer fear, for in the pain our God draws near, but in our text, he draws near to bring us just vindication, he will draw near, he will come soon.

So, be vigilant, alert, observant, attentive, the day will come when he will defend us by exercising righteous judgment over this lost, evil world, setting up his kingdom for his son to reign.

[36:45] And as I said earlier, I'll say again to you, you're here, you don't know Christ, you're not a Christian, you're a follower of Jesus, know for certain that he will judge this world, he will judge you.

You will have to give an account to him. Are you ready to face him? You will have to give an account to God. Everyone will. Will you be able to say, I trust in Jesus alone.

It's his righteousness, it's his goodness, not mine. It's not your merits, it means nothing to God. This is the gentleman I told you about. He came to the point where he says, I live a really good life.

As a matter of fact, in my conversation with him, it seems like he thinks that he is better than God.

Your good deeds versus your bad deeds means nothing to God.

You're a lawbreaker. All of us are. I told him the standard is perfection and what did he say? But nobody's. I said, exactly. Exactly. Which is why God sent Jesus to live a perfect life and he died and he rose.

[38:04] So anyone who repents and puts their trust in him alone, they will be saved. He heard the gospel. That's the gospel. So for you, you're a follower of Jesus, that's the gospel.

That's the only way by which you can face God. As you will say, I trust in Jesus and he will say, come. So then what's our purpose then as a church?

As we think about this, what's our purpose? What do we have to do? What does Jesus call us to do? Our purpose then as a church, what's our mission? To preach Christ Jesus and him crucified to lost sinners and for us to remain faithful to this gospel truth.

And not grow weary. Persist in our prayers continue in prayer, not losing heart, waiting for the second coming of Jesus. That's what we must do. As disciples of Jesus were to walk by faith under the pressures and persecutions of life, bringing major stress and turmoil to you, we must not give up.

Don't throw in the towel. Don't abdicate. Long for Jesus' return. How? By persistent, patient prayer to our gracious, listening Father.

[39:25] He responds to our requests. He showers us with blessings. He gives us grace, remain steadfast, and perhaps, just perhaps, he lessens the trials.

But really, he promises total vindication soon, in his time. followers of Jesus must continue in strong faith and enduring hope, keep praying for Jesus to come and to make all these wrongs right.

Our Father listens and responds to the cries of his elect children. He does. God is silent.

What if God is silent in your prayers? Just taking prayer in general, just specifically, talking about prayer. It can be discouraging, but in the silence, our loving Father is answering us, whether we see it or not.

R. Kent Hughes brings this up in his commentary. He says sometimes silence means God's answer is a loving no. Sometimes God's silence is, he has a bigger answer expected to come.

[40:49] A bigger answer is expected. Sometimes God's silence means we just must keep depending upon him. Sometimes his silence means he's delaying to allow your prayers to mature.

Maybe your prayers are more upon the focus of you, from me. We want your prayers to mature.

That's why he's silent. Different reasons.

But we must continue in our prayers. Even when there seems to be no answer. Because God is just, gracious, good, righteous, and merciful all the time.

Persist in prayer because we know he truly cares. notice what this does, this brings you face to face with what you really believe about God.

If you really believe God is loving, patient, and faithful, you'll persist in prayer. If you don't, you will do those things that we mentioned before, those four questions, repeating that God is ignorant, doesn't know, doesn't care, doesn't this or that.

[42:02] that's how we feel, isn't it? We have those feelings. We must not allow the feelings, this, to drive this.

This drives this. This is what we know to be true. This defines our feelings. Don't let your feelings drive your thinking.

Let your thinking drive your feelings. I know that God loves me. I know that God is faithful. I know that God is gracious. I know that God loves me because I am in Christ.

He hears. Right? Persist in prayer because God is loving, patiently caring for you and He's faithful.

Take a few moments and let's have some time of silence for you to think, to ponder, to dwell upon what we've seen, the truth of God's word here in chapter 18 of Luke.

And then we'll do our time of giving and then we'll sing our last two songs, closing prayer. And then we'll enjoy a meal together.

[43:15] Sit, think, ponder on the truth that you've seen here, O Christian. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.