Persistent Prayer

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[0:00] I'm very grateful that your church is part of this work as we work together in the blood of Christ.

I want to read from Luke chapter 8, verse 1 to 8. Luke, sorry, Luke 18, 1 to 8. I'm reading from NID. And it's a well-known Bible of the persistent widow. It says, Then Jesus told his disciples a Bible to show them that they should always pray and not give up.
He said, And the Lord said,
This is where it was. Because, again, just ask the Lord to open our hearts and our minds this morning. This is what we pray, Lord, that you open our hearts and our minds as we hear your word.
[2:20] I just pray for the blessing as we listen and as we share. Thank you, Lord, that you cover us all under your precious love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This is a well-known parable that Jesus is teaching us. And the parable, if we try to define it perfectly, it's a story from the real life, but it's had heavenly meaning.
Or we have a spiritual lesson we come to learn from. And in chapter 17 and chapter 18, the word kingdom of God is mentioned several times.
And the kingdom of God, you could say, it's the circle of God's work to be accomplished and to be implemented. And for the citizens in this kingdom, the Lord teaching us an important lesson.
How to learn and how to be disciplined to pray always, persistent, continuously. And he gave us a story about unjust judge, unrighteous judge in one of the cities.
[3:31] And the Romans gave the Jewish people to take care of their civilian or their civil problems. But this man, this judge, didn't fear God and also didn't respect people.

And there was a weak widow. And she came to him time after time, you know, granted me justice from my adversary. And for a while, the scripture said, he refused.
But then he felt to himself. And he knew himself. Unrighteous, don't fear God, don't respect people. But because this widow, we are we out.
She's bothering me. She caused me headaches. I will grant her justice. And listen, the Lord loved one wants to teach us.
If the unrighteous judge is willing to give and to grant justice to the wicked, how much more our heavenly Father will listen to his children who cry for him, believe him not.
[4:35] And the scripture said, he will answer us equally. But then he said in the end of this passage, when the Son of Man coming back, will he find faith on this earth?

Why is he saying that? Basically, one of the things we know that before the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, there will be escalation of unrighteousness. Escalation?
Unjustice. And there will be escalation in persecution. And the challenge to every one of us as the children of God, who are citizens in this kingdom, when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man coming back, will he find you and me still have faith to pray always and continuously and to be persistent in our prayer?
And this is the lesson he wants us to learn and to discipline ourselves. And he said to pray always and don't lose heart. Don't give up.
Because it's very easy, loved one. When you pray time after time and you didn't see an answer, then you give up. But the scripture said he wants us to learn to continue to pray and don't lose heart.
[5:52] Keep faith alive in your life. You know, let me just mention about some men and women of God, how prayer is so important in their life.

One of the questions, when the first prayer mentioned in the Bible, is it in Genesis 4 when Cain and Abel offer an offer to the Lord? Or is it in Genesis 3 when there was kind of conversation between

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God and Adam and Eve?
But we see that men and women of God in the Old Testament, the prayer was so important in their life. And I want to say, my life and your spiritual life will not rise above our prayer life.
We see Elijah praying, the servant of Abraham, we see Jacob praying, we see Moses, we see Hannah, we see David, we see Solomon, we see Ezekiel, we see Joseph, we see Israel, Daniel, Habakkuk.
And the common thing with the men and women of God, when they pray, they pray the prayer of faith. And this prayer is not only to change their life, but it changes their community and it changes their society.
[7:10] But one of the things, when I was Googling about the prayer of Jesus in the Bible, there's 25 prayers that's mentioned in the Gospel that Jesus prayed.

Let me just share with you briefly, just to see how prayer even was so important in the Bible, when He baptized in Luke 3, He was praying.
Before healing the other thing, He was praying. After healing people in Luke 5, He was praying. He was praying all night, before He chose that will of disciples in Luke 6.
While speaking to the Jewish leader, He was praying. Before feeding the 5,000 and the 4,000, He prayed. Before walking on the water in Matthew 14, He prayed. Praying for the deaf and the youth. Praying for the children in Matthew 19.
[8:26] Asking the Father to glorify His name in John 12. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus prayed in Matthew 26. Praying for Peter. Faith that He continued to be strong.

Praying for unity in John 17. In Gethsemane, as He was struggling before He went to the cross in Matthew 26. On the cross, Jesus prayed, Father, forgive them. And also when He cried out just before He died.
On the cross, when He said, My God, My God. And then when He said, Father, in Your hands I commit My spirit. Where He also blessed the bread in Matthew 24.
And where He blessed the disciples just before His ascension. And the thought, loved one, if Jesus, the Son of God, God incarnate, as a man, He felt, He needs to spend time with the Father in daily basis.
How much you and I, if you will, the sons of Adam, We need to learn and to be disciplined to pray continuously in our relation with the Lord.
[9:36] We see the prayer in the life of the first church. We see it in the life of different apostles of Paul. But this morning I want to share with you four things. First, there is a difference between repetition in your prayer and to be persistent in your prayer.

And second, why the Lord compelled us to pray continuously. Third, if God knew what I need, why sometimes He didn't give it to me quickly.
Why I have to keep waiting. And the fourth thing is simple practical things to help us to pray always. The difference between repetition in the prayer and persistent. We read in Matthew 6.
The Lord said, when you pray, go to your room, close your door, and pray to your Heavenly Father who will heal. He will reward you. And then He said, don't be bubbling in your prayer like the Vikings do.
[10:44] Why? Because they believe in so many different gods. That these gods, small g, have so many names. And they want to mention all these names. Hopefully, one of these gods will answer and will respond.

But Jesus said, no, no, you're not that. But you pray to your Heavenly Father, to the true God, who will hear. He will respond. He will listen. He will answer according to His will.
And then He gave this parable in Luke 11. How important, loved one, to pray always. And He talks about a friend who received a friend coming from far away.
And it was in the middle of the night. But He didn't have anything to offer His friend. What He did, He went to the other friend. Asking, please, could I borrow three loaves of a bread.
I have a friend coming from far. And the friend will respond. It's the middle of the night. The Lord is in close. My children in bed. But He said, even if He didn't respond as His friend.
[11:53] The Scripture said, but because He is persistent. He had shameless audacity. In other translations, He said, God of rudeness, that He continued to ask.

But He said, because of His persistence, He will respond. And then the Lord teaches us this promise. Because His desire, He said, you don't have because you don't ask.

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But then you ask, and I ask, and we didn't get it. Because sometimes we ask for selfish reasons. Our attitude, our motivation is not pleasing to the Lord.
And the promise said, ask and you will receive. And you know in the Greek, it's a present continuousness. What the Lord is saying, ask and continue asking.
Seek and continue seeking. Seek, not and continue looking. Because who ask will receive. And who seek will find. And who look, the Lord will be open to them. Don't lose heart.
[12:56] Don't tear up. Be persistent as you seek the Lord. And then He gave us this lesson. He said, look, you as a human being. Even with our wickedness.

When our children asking us. It's great. Wouldn't I go and give them stones? When they ask fish, we're not going to give them this day.
When He asked an egg, Allah will be supreme. And if we are, as a human being, with this evil in us. Willing to give good gifts to our children.
How much more our Heavenly Father, who created us in His image. Who will the person of life. The Holy God. Will give good gifts to the children.
Who seeking Him. Who asking that He will give the Holy Spirit. There is a difference between the petition. And to be persistent in your prayer.
[13:53] Second, why the Lord commands us to pray continuously. Why He takes us to do that. You know, time is one of the most precious things you can give to another human being.

Time is the only thing you cannot take back. If you spend a day, or an hour, or two with somebody. That's it. You give your time. So when you make up your mind that the Lord, I want to commit my time, my life, and take me to the Lord.
As I say, the Lord is first. The Lord is first. My faith is first in my life. Because when I pray continuously, I implement the greatest command to love the Lord God from all my heart.
From all my strength. From all my meaning. And the second command to love your neighbor as yourself. When you decide to pray continuously, every time when you humble yourself before the Lord, you declare faith and trust in the living God.
Another thing important when you pray continuously. We not only, loved ones, learn about our Heavenly Father and who He is. But we learn about ourselves. When you humble yourself, you bow your head before the, in the presence of the Lord.
[15:15] You start to learn more about who you are. About your strength. About your weakness. About your attitude. About your motivation. About your desire. And the Lord will start to change.

And to transform more and more of your life. The continuous prayer of Lord, loved one. It teaches us how much really we need God in our life.
How desperate we need the Lord in our life. What about the widow? How much really she needs justice. That she can't go time after time to the unjust judge.
You know, I love the verse in Matthew 5 verse 3. Where he said, blessed are the poor and the spirit. You know, the drink or the poor is not just the poor, but the poorest of the poor.
In other words, there is somebody, a person, a father, who worked long hours and clearly he is able to provide the basic needs for his children.
[16:23] Drink, order, and children. But another person who is the poorest of the poor is not able to provide the basic needs for his family.

And this is the word which is used here when he says, blessed are the poor and the spirit. What the Lord is saying, how much this person needs these basic needs in his life?
Very much so. On the other side, the Lord said on the spiritual level, if this is how much you feel you need me in your life.
If you are so desperate, how badly you need me in your life, then you'll be blessed. How much we need the Lord in our life.
You know, the prayer, it changed not only the person, but it changed the whole society. You remember Hannah, when she prayed in the Old Testament?
[17:22] Her prayer is not only the person, but Samuel, the Lord used him to change the whole community, the whole society, the whole nation.

Our prayer is so important as we discipline ourselves before the whole life. Somebody said, if your prayer is not changing you, do not pray to our prayer.
And the desire, the desire, God desired for every one of us to be more like Him. His image to be reflected in every area of our life.

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Second, or third, why God didn't answer us equally?
Why God didn't answer us equally? If He knew my needs, basically as all of us know, if there is something wrong in my relationship with the Lord, He will not respond.
[18:33] As I seek Him. He will show me. But if there is sin, I have to confess it, I have to change it, I have to leave it, I have to refrain. But also I noticed, sometimes the Lord, like we see in the Deuteronomy, chapter 8, verse 2 and 3.

And if I may read it, I don't know if you have it on the screen. He mentioned to the people of Israel, in Deuteronomy 8, 2 to 3.
He said, remember how the Lord, your God, led you all the way in the wilderness these 40 years. To humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart. Whether or not you would keep His commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna. Which neither you nor your ancestors had known. To teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.
[19:48] What are we saying here? Sometimes He is not responding quickly as we expect or as we desire. Because He brings you or brings me to a humble situation.

To realize how much I need. How desperate I need God in my life. And He says, for 40 years, because of disobedience, because of disobedience, the Lord brought them to this kind of situation. You know, Gaza is on the border of the nations. Not far from the Sinai Desert. If you drive from Jerusalem to the Sinai Desert, maybe just several hours. And somebody says, maybe take them three days.
But took them 40 years. Desert is a place of pain. A place of suffering as well.
And sometimes, loved ones, you and I, as if we forced out the Lord to bring us to this situation. To realize how much we need it. They thought maybe they can be independent from the Lord.
[20:56] They can do it with their own strength. As if they forced the Lord to bring them to this humble. And in other translations say, He humiliated them.

To realize how much they need the Lord in their life. Why? Because you and I, to the Lord, more important than anything else. More important than our ministry.
More important than our preaching. More important than our service. Because this is how much He loves every one of us. The time of wilderness. And it's very easy from one person to another this morning.
But for me, I remember when I was in Gaza. And me and my wife once mostly separated for nine to ten months. Because basically, I was in Gaza home.
She was in Jordan. And she was not able to come back. Because they didn't refuse Israel to give her a visa to come back home. Five months not in heaven. How many people prayed around the world?
[21:55] And then we went to the Supreme Court in Jerusalem to bring her back. And after almost ten months for the first time, she was back with one single injury. Back home.

And this almost happened again in our wilderness. But then the Lord, in a way, we never dreamed of. It's difficult to mention the details here.
But me as Christian Palestinian, that the Lord provided a person in high position in the Israeli side. And all this man like an angel.
We never met him. But we heard about our story. The kindest person we ever heard. And I told it this day, we never met him. But for a year and a half, he walked with us step by step with me, my wife, and my children.
And God used that. But there is time the Lord will allow us to go through the wilderness. But I also want to say, wilderness, or challenges, or difficulties, or trials, or tribulations, is not necessarily always because of disobedience or rebellion.
[23:00] But sometimes the Lord set the stage for you as you will launch something new level in your life and in your ministry. So don't be afraid in the time of testing.

And this is what he did with his people. He testing them in the wilderness. He took their security for a while. The food and the drink. And then he gifted them enough so they can learn and realize that the only person can live by the bread of Allah.
But every word comes out of the mouth of the Lord. The time of testing. This is why James, he said, consider it all joy, loved one, when you go through different kinds of tribulations.

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Because the testing of your faith, and the word testing at that time, the time of James, it's used to examine the coin at that time, if it's genuine or fake.
What I'm trying to say, my faith, loved one, and your faith, will not be tested when everything is going fine. But our faith will be tested in the most difficult time of our life.
[24:05] And he said, if you pass this test, this test will produce perseverance, produce burden. And when you have this virtue in your life, you will learn nothing.

I want to say, loved one, before every real blessing in your life and in my life, there will be time of testing. And if we didn't pass the test, we have to repeat it until we then learn the lesson.
And that will affect us, if we're not learning quickly, affect our maturity, affect our character, affect our relationship with the Lord. Sometimes we, as a leader, focus too much on the skills of a leader, rather than the character of the leader.
John Maxwell said, our influence as servant leaders is more through our character than our skills. When we talk about character, we talk about integrity, faithfulness, our attitude, how we live to other people.
And he said, 87% or 89% of our influence will be more through our character. And I just pray, may God help us all, loved one, as we learn how to discipline ourselves in this persistent prayer.
[25:23] How to build ourselves from inside out and to be men and women of character. Yet people, if you want to tell what in your life, you will wonder you.

But if you start to compromise in your age, the price of God will be too much. Pay today, like they say, and pay tomorrow.
But if you start to compromise now, the payment, I'm afraid it will be too much. And regret it. I'm afraid the rest of you will like this. The Lord will forgive you.
But the regret and the wounds sometimes could be too deep. The Lord wants us to be men and women of character.
The time of this thing. And the Lord said, He's doing that because He wants to know what in their hearts. Didn't He use a Rebbe? He was in their heart, of course. But what He's saying, He wants His people to know what in their heart.
[26:29] The Lord allowed this testing so in order that every one of us realized and knew what inside in His heart. Let me just quickly mention about some tips which is helping us as we discipline our mind to be connected.

Of course, loved ones, when we say to pray continuously, this is 1324-7, that you're kneeling down, you're bound down. Of course, there is time you need and I need to kneel and to bow.
But to pray continuously, it means to be aware of the presence of God in your life. Even though you're driving, but you have this connection and you discipline your mind.
You have this connection between you and the Lord. You talk to people, you do your work, but in the same time you're aware of the presence of God and you have this special connection between you and the Lord.
And I think this is one of the most painful things for us as the children of God. I love Psalm 84-11. God will not withhold, please listen, God will not withhold any good thing from His children who bow deadless before Him.
[27:57] This is the heart of God. He wants to give every good thing to His children. But you know what, sometimes the Lord, He knew, I'm not mature enough to receive that blessing.

Because if I receive it, I will abuse it, I will misuse it. We as parents, the children ask us for second thing and we say no. This is a tough love.
Because we know they could harm themselves if they get this thing or that thing. It's not the right time. Aren't you happy that the Lord didn't answer every prayer you requested?
If the Lord answered every prayer we prayed through our ears, I don't know where we would be ending. But out of His mercy, loved one, out of His grace, He said no.
But sometimes you ask the Lord and He said, Robo, there's something that's not right in the relationship. But sometimes when the time is right and the character is right, He said yes, my child.
[29:07] I know you're not going to abuse the blessing. You're not going to use it. Look quickly with me at Joseph. The Lord had wonderful work He proceeded and He prepared for Joseph to walk into.

But Joseph was 17 and he's still not able to handle the great blessing that the Lord had for him. Joseph had to come to the bottom of the pit when his siblings saw him.

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He has to be tempted in Pharaoh's house. He has to be in the prison for a while. 17 and he was 13 before he sat at the greatest second man on the throne of Egypt.
But only then he matured enough to be used of what God had in store for him. Look with me at David.
When Samuel and Monica David, he was 17. But when he sat on the throne, he was 13. When he governed for 40 years, the people of Israel.
[30:22] David had to go in the wilderness. Saul had to go after him. But think with me for a moment. How high the ethics was in the life of David.

He wasn't willing to come close to Saul to hurt him as an anointed one. This is how ethically the level, the standard was so high.
But isn't this the same David when he was walking on the roof of his house and as all of us know, the sin he committed or the sins he committed.
How is this possible? It's very easy but not only for believers but also for people, leaders, pastors, servants of all.
All of us really become servants as we commit our life to the Lord. But the lesson here, as long as you and I, we keep our eyes on the Lord, we will be fine.
[31:26] But when, as David did, start to wave his eyes and turn to the Lord and look at other things, he started to go down. It just shows you, loved one, how we, even as a Christian, as a believer, capable to do wicked things.

If we start to wave our eyes, Lord, help us all, even under a pressure, under all circumstances, to give our eyes and move.
Not to compromise, but to live our life completely and quickly. Somebody say, the definition of Christianity is not only words I repeat, it's not only doctrine I believe, even though these are important things.
But it's more and simply that Christ in me and I in him. Spurgeon said, the Lord looked at me and I looked at him and we became one.
And this is what Jesus prayed in John 17, when he said, as, say to the Father, as you are in me and I in you, may he also be one in us.
[32:36] The Lord is closer to you than even you close to yourself. The most conversation we have is not among our, with each other.

Most of the conversation we have, 80% of our conversation is self-talk. Can you imagine that? 80% of the conversation we have is self-talk.
And the key here, not one, which could be really blessing for you and for me. Because the self-talk, most of the time, things we worry about, things we concern about, things sometimes will drive us crazy.
What about if this self-talk, the 80% conversation that you have with yourself, Lord, help me to turn this conversation as a prayer before you.
And you will see the great things that the Lord can do through this kind of prayer. One of the most beautiful things, loved one, is to enjoy the presence of God in your life.
[33:41] I think the most beautiful thing, and this is what really sustains us when we went through persecution in Gaza and in difficult times, it's just to be aware of the presence of God.

I think the most beautiful thing when you humble yourself, when you close your eyes, when you bow for the Lord, and you just hear His loving arm embrace you and carry you in the most difficult times of your life.
This is why David the king, when he sinned against the Lord, and he felt the connection and the fellowship, it's been broken. He cried out to the Lord and said, Don't cast me out of your presence. Your Holy Spirit don't take away from me. What he was saying, Lord, if I lost your presence in my life, what is this done for me? This is why he came in Psalm 27.
He said, One thing I decided, David, aren't you the king? Aren't you having the will and the authority and the power and the... He said, You don't understand. If I lost the presence of God in my life, there is nothing lived in this life for me.
[34:48] The will, the authority, the army, nothing. The only thing that can bring your meaning, purpose, and tenement to my life and your life, loved one, is to enjoy and to respect and don't take the presence of God for granted.

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What it's worth if I start one day to bow before the Lord, but I didn't feel His presence around me. Isaiah 57.
He said, The Lord is living in two places. Of course, the Lord in different ways. But He's in the highest place, but also where is the broken hearted. Loved one, you want to experience the presence of God in a special way, just humble yourself in the presence of the Lord.
To be persistent in the prayer, the Lord will say, Don't lose heart. The Lord will answer. He will hear and He will answer. And He will bring justice to you.
Sometimes there's some justice. Maybe we will not see it in this life, but it's coming. And this is the cry in Revelation 6. Those who are martyrs for their faith, their souls went under the altar, and they cried out to the Lord, until when are you going to bring justice?
[36:10] And He said, For now, rest. Get your growth, until the number of those brothers and sisters who will be murdered for their faith, until the number will be completed.

Then the Lord will bring full justice. Don't lose heart. And the challenge for you and for me, when the Son of Man is coming back, will He will find faith in my life and in your life, that we continue to learn, to pray, continuously, and not losing heart.
Amen. God bless you.

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