

Persistent Prayer

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SLIDE 1 Introduction

When we think of persistent and prevailing prayer we often think of the parable that Jesus told of the unjust judge.

Although other translations will use another term for “unjust judge,” the idea that Jesus was trying to get across was even though this judge didn’t particularly care about the woman’s situation, she kept on about it until it was easier to give her what she wanted than to deal with her constantly.

Jesus is not drawing a comparison from this, he is contrasting the determination of the woman to the judge in contrast to you before the Lord in prayer.

A comparison shows similarities, a contrast shows the differences. Persistence before God yields greater results than anything or anyone else can. Let’s look at the story:

SLIDE 2 Luke 18:1-8 (KJV) *“¹ And he spake a parable unto them to this end, **that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;** ² Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: ³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.”*

First notice Jesus explains why he is telling this and what we are to make of it. We ought to always pray and not faint. From Isaiah to Revelation we are told to not faint. Why? Because if you endure until the answer comes, you will receive a great reward.

Paul told the Galatian church this:

SLIDE 3 Galatians 6:9 (KJV) *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

That’s why we call it “seasons of prayer.” You don’t just pray over something once and forget it. That’s not real faith. Faith is enduring in prayer until you see the results you have asked for. If it’s not the daily topic of your prayer life, it probably is not that important to you anyway.

Then Jesus goes on and says this about the unjust judge:

SLIDE 4 *"⁴ And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; ⁵ Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."*

Jesus is not saying we weary God by our continual prayers. He is drawing a contrast that God will avenge his own in the proper season, even though it may seem he doesn't hear us or care about what we are going through at the moment.

Sometimes God has to move heaven and earth to do for us what we ask. Also, he does it in a way and in a time that completes his will for us and for those we pray for. That's why a powerful persistent prayer that gets results is, *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* This is part of Jesus' model prayer he taught his disciples, and it allows God to move for us as we continue to pray.

Then finally Jesus shares how God responds to the persistent prayers of his people:

SLIDE 5 *"⁶ And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said." ⁷ And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? ⁸ I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."*

Two things to note are: 1) bearing long with them, and 2) avenging them speedily. On the one hand it seems God is putting you off. Yet, on the other hand he is acting quickly to make it happen for you. How many times have we simply walked away expecting nothing or given up and given in right before the answer comes?

When do you quit asking, seeking, and knocking? When you have what you asked for. God does not bait and switch. He does not disguise his answers so you have to explain them to others. He gives you what you ask for if you ask according to his will and in faith believing, *"he is a rewarder of those who seek him."* (Hebrews 11:6)

However, the parable does not end there. Jesus adds one more comment to show why he taught this:

SLIDE 6 *"Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?"*

One of the reasons I am teaching this in this season is because times are going to get hard. As a result many will simply fade away from prayer and hope for the best. However, my prayer is that we will rise up and trust God more and more, and ask God for more and more. Will he still see faith operating in us through prayer lives? Or will we have turned to our own resources and hope for the best?

SLIDE 7 Where's Your Faith?

Yet, as the time draws closer and persecution arises in our land, many will turn away from the faith and embrace seducing doctrines that offer no real life. They will become fatalistic in their view of life. The "whatever" attitude will encompass many. That "what's-the-use" spirit we overrun many churches.

It's funny that Jesus ends this parable on persistent prayer with the comment, "*Shall he find faith on the earth?*" This clenches it. Our prayers in and of themselves demonstrate our faith in the Lord by continuing to ask for him to do for us. Saying "Oh, well! It is what it is" demonstrates our lack of faith in the love of God, the character of God, and the power of God.

SLIDE 8 Ephesians 3:20-21 (KJV) *"²⁰ Now unto him that is **able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think**, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."*

When we pray and GOD moves, he gets the glory for answered prayer. However, when we pray and WE move, we get the glory. That's why when someone tells you about their problem you ask, "What did you do?" instead of, "What did God do?"

Persistence is not just continuing to do something. It is continuing to do it even when it becomes difficult. Sometimes we want to give up on our prayers because we don't want to truly know how little our faith in God really is.

SLIDE 9 Prevailing Prayer

Prevailing means to overcome, but its Latin roots are even more revealing. Prevail is a compound of two Latin words: *prae*, meaning before, and *valere*, meaning to be strong or have power for victory. It demonstrates the fighting stance we take "before"

the "victory" is seen. That's what persistent, prevailing prayer is.

We also get the term "valor" from this Latin Word. We need to be valiant in prayer.

SLIDE 10 Prayer Vigil

This is what knights used to do before they went into battle. They held an all-night prayer vigil dressed in full armor before they went into battle the next day. We need to prepare ourselves for each day's battle by adorning the armor of God and become valiant in daily, preparatory prayer. Remember in the Gospels how Jesus often spent entire nights in prayer?

Jesus used the term "watch and pray" for an all night prayer vigil. Vigil actually means staying awake so you can watch, like a watchman on the wall. The enemy always tries to attack us in our darkest hours. So we must be alert and watchful unto prayer. When Paul talks about the armor of God, look at how he ends it:

SLIDE 11 Ephesians 6:17-18 (KJV) *"¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and **watching thereunto with all perseverance** and supplication for all saints;..."*

We are living in the days where we must watch and pray with perseverance. Perseverance is an extreme form of persistence, where it actually costs you something.

SLIDE 12 How to Prevail in Prayer

Next Sunday we will look at another well known parable Jesus taught in Luke about prayer. It's from the 5th Chapter of Luke and it's where we get the idea of ask, seek, and knock.

Our studies in prayer this year are to move us towards the results we desperately need in our lives and families. We must be fervent and effective. We must be persistent and prevailing. Remember: persistence is only rewarded if you prevail.

SLIDE 13 Altar Time

Let's make prayer our labor of love for God this year.