

SERMON: Luke 18:1-8
PRAY AND NOT LOSE HEART

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying:

There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, "Get justice for me from my adversary." And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, "Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

Then the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

Have you ever needed to call a particular person at a business a distance away? Maybe there's been a problem with a part you ordered, or a question on how to install it, or the billing wasn't right. You make the call, but no answer. You try later, the line is busy. Still later you get an answering machine putting you on hold for 45 minutes with crackly music, but nothing. You call again and finally get to a real person, who takes your name, number, a brief description of your problem, and promises your "man" will call you back. He does not. What do you do? You know you're just nickel and dime business to the outfit; they have bigger fish to fry. Give up and switch companies? Hmph! There's nothing quite like being considered a "zero."

In our text for today Jesus talks to us, about going to the "top man in the office," the Lord God, with any issue on your heart and in your life. Jesus says, *Men always ought to pray and not lose heart*, "Men" isn't just "men," but "everyone, "mankind." Literally it's "they," "*they*" always ought to pray and never lose heart. Jesus teaches that going to God with problems is always the "right" thing to do, the thing you ought to do, the thing you need to do. Who else is in a position to help you?—really help? The devil tries to tell you he can, but he never does. He is a liar. What help he offers leads to bigger and bigger hurt and harm. Can you show me one time when the devil really helped anyone in the Bible, or anyone today, or you? He is a dead end.

Rather, always pray to your God and Father in heaven. He made you. He knows how to fix you. He gave you life, and He gave the world life. He knows how to straighten out life for everyone's good. What is "good"? Big money? Report card with all A's? Being liked by everyone? Weather that always suits your plans. Days of easy life and fun? Being right all the time? Etc. What is really good for you? To know that you are a transgressor and sinner before God, facing His wrath. "Pastor, don't you have something to say better than that again?" No; and it kind of bursts your bubble on a comfortable Sunday morning, doesn't it? But it's the truth. You are a sinner and you're dying because of it! --- Then there's the real sweet spot. You a sinner, are a redeemed and rescued sinner, spared from the sentence you deserve! Your penalties were borne (carried) by Jesus in His death and paid for you in love. His glorious return to life on the third day assures you He succeeded! Go to God in prayer for every need.

Never lose heart. Prayer is a heart to heart talk with God—a communication from your heart to God's. It's not a back-and-forth conversation. God does not reply in your prayer. But, you humbly and freely approach Him with your heartfelt issues and concerns. Take to Him every need, in Jesus' name. Jesus said, "*Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it you*" (John 16:23). Whatever you ask that serves to the benefit of your own salvation in Christ, or someone else's, is truly brought in Jesus' name. It will be granted. Something which would lead to the spiritual harm of one of God's children is really not a prayer offered in Jesus' name. We can't always see the difference and the big picture. Never lose heart. Keep praying. Don't interpret a "No" answer from God as if God is doing you a "bad turn." Do not be discouraged. God hears. God knows. He will not shut you out. Patiently, humbly, repeatedly pray to Him. He knows the best way and the best time.

In this text, Jesus used a parable to highlight that you can always be sure of God's help. A widow lady, a nobody, with nothing in her "corner" to convince an unjust judge to help her, went to him. An adversary was taking advantage of her. She could do nothing about it, so, she went to the the judge. He was unjust. He had no respect God, nor cared for anyone under his charge. He did not even care for right and wrong. He cared only for HIMSELF! "Serving SELF" is a big temptation for every government official. There is power and access to money. It's been that way for years. In the Bible King Saul wanted what was good for King Saul! not what was right for serving the Lord or the Lord's people. He tried to kill David, the future king. Are you ever tempted to operate that way? "What's in it for me? I don't go out of my way to help anybody, unless I can profit." Not what God wants.

The unjust judge told the widow woman, No. He was not interested. The widow humbly kept going back to the judge with her plea. She was “importunate.” Not “unfortunate,” but “importunate.” The word “importune” means to be pleading with someone persistently while in great need, without any basis to expect help. Imagine a shabby stranger who keeps coming to your door asking for help because he ran out of gas a quarter mile away (in town), or a mile or two away (in the country). What if you told him, No, for this or that reason, yet every thirty minutes he kept coming back? You would hardly call the sheriff. Eventually you would help him, wouldn’t you? The unjust judge eventually did help the widow, not because he was concerned for her, or because he honored right and wrong before God, but because he could see she would wear him out. He took action against her adversary. This parable is often called the Parable of the Importunate Widow.

Jesus makes a direct application to us and our praying to God for help. *Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.* Jesus is saying, If an unjust judge would help a nobody widow lady, just to have her stop bothering him, will not God step-in to help those who are His?—His own “elect,” His own “chosen” ones, who pray to Him, crying out to Him, day and night for help? Of course He will! Jesus calls you the God’s elect. The Bible says you are His chosen ones. *You are a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a “peculiar” people—His own people, purchased at the price of His dear Son—that you should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9).* God has chosen you to be His, not because of something in you, but because of His own love and mercy to you. Your “saved” status before Him has NOTHING to do with you, only with Him! He chose you in Christ before the world began! ----Please let me add: The Bible does not say, God has chosen others to go to hell. He has chosen hell for the rejecters of His Son, but He has not chosen anyone to be a rejecter and be damned. Logical or not, just leave it at that. Trust Him. ---- Go to Him in prayer against your adversaries. Go with confidence!

Who are your adversaries? Dangerous weather, looming bills, uncertain future, sudden terrorists, political unrest, degenerating morals of society, your own sinful flesh with its corrupt weaknesses and desires, anyone who wants to harm you physically or spiritually so that your ties to Jesus the Savior and your faith in Him for forgiveness and salvation are harmed. “Father, deliver us from such adversaries!” Sometimes God will allow what seems like harm, as He did when Stephen was stoned to death for Christ. But when God so allows “harm,” it is used by Him to serve salvation in Christ. 1) The believer goes to heaven. 2) The Good News of salvation in Jesus reaches others.

It goes without saying that the ultimate adversary is Satan. The name Satan means “the accuser.” His goal is to get you to do wrong and then to accuse you before God and say, “See! See! You can’t take him/her—shameful creature!” Satan is a mean double-crosser. Peter writes, *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith (I Peter 5:8-9).* God will answer your prayers for help even against the devil.

Take heart. Jesus says God will help *though He bears long with them.* The point of that phrase is not that He puts up with a lot from us and really shouldn’t help us (which is also true). The point of the phrase is, God has “greatness of feeling” for you. “Greatness of feeling” certainly is evidence by “patience” or “to bear long,” but it’s much more. When praying to God, you are not just approaching a coldhearted, unjust judge who simply wants to get you off his back. You are approaching your God and Father who has adopted you through the blood of Jesus His Son. He has specifically “chosen” someone as undeserving as you to be His part of his family! God has “greatness of feeling” for you! He will not send you away empty—though at times it may seem that way. You are forgiven. You are His own. He will help.

I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. When you bring your prayers to God, God does not dilly-dally with the answer, putting you on hold or not call you back, He does not ignore you. He is not interested only in Himself. He answers SPEEDILY ! God is right there with His answer, a good answer, the best answer! If His answers do not match your expectations and timetable, put your expectations aside, as a trusting child. *Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you (I Peter 5:7).*

With the adversaries and troubles that come each day, pray to your Father and to your God of salvation in Jesus for help. You are not just nickel and dime business to Him. You are one of His own special people. Do not give up nor turn to a different god—a “no-god.”

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---