

## “Faith: So Annoying”

### **Scripture: Luke 18:1-8**

Graphic: persistence, courtroom,

Key Verses: 18:1 Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

Theme: No matter what your state in life – needy, able to serve but not serving, serving with all your heart, God calls us to faithfully engage in consistent and persistent prayer. He will meet those needs, change your heart, and bring glory to His name through your gifts and ministry.

### **1) Introduction**

- a) DRAMA – Tabby and Don
- b) In the book of Luke alone, Jesus either goes to pray or commands his disciples to pray more than 10 times. Above that, there are many instances when Jesus talks ABOUT prayers, teaches his disciples HOW to pray, or models prayer FOR them.
- c) (slowly) Prayer is important to Jesus! And if prayer is important to Jesus, it’s important to those who are following Jesus...it’s important to this church and the body of Christ around the world.
- d) And any group in the church, or any church, that does not hold a high regard for the power and purpose of prayer is sadly missing the divine mark that God set before us, and is not being faithful to the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.
- e) Prayer is our lifeline into the heart of God and the expression of our faith in His sovereignty and grace.
- f) Prayer is not optional! It is not something that we simply use as a tool to get God to do what we want or to bless our food. Prayer is what God jealously craves from us so He can grow us, use us, and show us the needs of those in this world around us.
- g) As we continue to track through the book of Luke and talk about faith, today, we talk about consistent and persistent prayer and its outcome on our faithful walk with Jesus in this life. And Jesus tells a parable, that was so skillfully depicted by Tabby and Don, about a widow that appears to be annoying, but whose heart was crying out to God in faith...
- h) Turn with me to Luke, chapter 18...

i) Let's pray...

## 2) Scripture

### a) Read verses 18:1

- i) OK, if there were any doubts about the meaning of this parable, Luke serves to dispel any thoughts of wild interpretations or allegorical fancies.
- ii) Luke says, "Read my lips. This parable is about prayer!" And not just your average hail Mary prayer...but it's about consistent and persistent prayer. It's about a life of prayer.
- iii) And, according to Luke, it's not optional, because Jesus asserts that this is a NEED for prayer.
- iv) So Doctor Luke sort of sits us down and says, "Good morning class! I'm Dr. Luke and I will be telling you today about consistent and persistent prayer..."
- v) And so, it's our job as students to listen – to hear – what Jesus is trying to tell us about prayer.
- vi) Now, there are other things that this parable could be about...there are lessons to be learned about things like widows and judges and God's mercy and grace...and we'll touch on those. But this parable is about praying (underline that in your Bibles in verse 1).
- vii) Praying always – that's CONSISTENT prayer. Prayer in the morning...prayer in the evening...prayer in the afternoon and at night...prayer in the car, in the shower, at the table, with friends and family...when you are alone...CONSISTENT PRAYER. ALWAYS!
- viii) Secondly, the NEED to not lose heart, especially in our prayer life. This is PERSISTENT prayer. It's praying for another 10 minutes in the morning, or half hour. It's praying for the second YEAR for someone who is just not getting any better from cancer. PERSISTENT PRAYER.
- ix) Consistent and persistent prayer looks like this...

### b) Read verse 18:2-3

- i) So here's the background...there's a judge and a widow.

- ii) Now, here's where I have to stop and remind myself (and you) and this is a PARABLE. This is not an event or situation that actually happened. It's a larger-than-life story that highlights a specific truth about something in real life. It's not necessarily allegorical, meaning that each person in the parable does not necessarily represent some larger concept or divine nature. It's just a parable...
- iii) With that being said, we have these two characters, rights? The judge and the widow.
- iv) Now, this judge is a ridiculous character. This guy couldn't be more unfit to be a judge in this culture.
- v) In your mind, walk with me back to the time of Moses. You remember the story of an overworked Moses coming up with a plan to appoint judges to help with the caseload he was experiencing in the desert after the Exodus? Remember that?
- vi) Let me read that to you from Deuteronomy 1:16-17: *I charged your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it."*
- vii) This is the establishment of the judges in the nation of Israel...fair, right, non-partial, and hearing all grievances. These men were agents of God and of the people...
- viii) This is exactly the kind of judge that Jesus is exemplifying in this parable right? Wrong!
- ix) If this judge was around today he would be an epic fail!
- x) He doesn't fear God! And what's more, he has no respect for people! Some judge! Sounds like poster child for term limits, right? This guy was completely unfit for his appointed position.
- xi) In a certain city, there was this judge...the foolish bad guy.
- xii) **And** there was this widow.

- xiii) Now, widows are a whole other class of citizen in the Jewish culture. If you were a widow, not only did you lose your husband, making you pitied, but you lost all of your possessions, which at the time of death of the husband would go either to the eldest son, or to the man's brothers.
- xiv) Being a widow was not fun place to be, even aside from the emotional loneliness that comes with being widowed.
- xv) I've attempted to walk with my Mom through the process of being a widow, and it breaks my heart to see her pain and deep loneliness. I can't imagine if all she had was taken away from her in addition. (Not to mention it would be given to my brother! And we all know how brothers are!)
- xvi) This widow **KEPT COMING**...this verb is about consistency and persistence...(drawn out and monotoned) day and night, all the time, she kept on coming...how annoying is this woman and her coming and coming...
- xvii) And her request – her need – was for the judge to grant her justice against her opponent.
- xviii) Now, we don't know who her opponent was...she had just about every opponent against her...men, creditors, thieves, you name it.
- xix) And we don't even know what kind of justice she was looking for...
- xx) The point is...this helpless widow portrayed by Jesus has a **REAL** and **AUTHENTIC** crisis that caused her to consistently and persistently **KEEP COMING** to the judge, who could care less about her or her problem.
- xxi) Sometimes in life, the things that we think are crises are really no more than inconveniences for us to work out...often times with God's help.
- xxii) Other times, we have real and authentic, heartfelt needs that God knows cause us to cry out to Him for a change in our situation...in our hearts, or in our environment.
- xxiii) This widow had nowhere else to turn...she had tried everything else and this judge, **WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HER ADVOCATE**, was more interested in his own welfare than in justice for this widow.

**c) Read verses 18:4-5**

- i) **Can't** you just **hear** the pain in this guys **attitude**...
- ii) I just want her to go away so I can get back to watching this football game. She's killing me with her badgering and annoying persistence. How can I get rid of her? Go away, woman, please!
- iii) It's like our skit this morning...what will it take to shut you up?
- iv) And so, finally, the judge who doesn't fear God and doesn't care about people, simply gives her what she wants in order to make her go away...
- v) "So she may not wear me out, with her continually coming." The Greek here is actually about getting beat up by this woman who won't stop...being slapped in the face by her presence.
- vi) The point, however, is not about the judge and his decision, but from the widow's perspective, is that she got what she wanted, (wink).
- vii) She won! She got her justice and got what she rightfully deserved according to the law under which they were operating.
- viii) She was consistent and persistent...always coming and never giving up, and EVEN THIS JUDGE, who didn't care about any motivation to help her but his selfish desire for personal comfort, granted her what she wanted...
- ix) So what? What's the point?

**d) Read verse 18:6-8**

- i) Jesus said, "Listen to what the judge says." Understand that he gave her what she wanted...justice...what was rightfully hers.
- ii) And then it's rhetorical question time...Will not God grant justice to his chosen one who cry to him day and night?
- iii) Literally, won't God, who DOES care about people and DOES do things for the good of His kingdom, grant those who are faithful the provision for their needs? Won't God be faithful, as he promised he would be?
- iv) And won't he do it faster than the foolish judge who only cared about himself?

- v) Some people have tried to make the unjust judge a metaphor for God...but it's just the opposite. The unjust judge is the exact contrast to the God who loves his people and wants to build his Kingdom.
- vi) And so the answer is YES! God will do that...he has done that...and he wants to do that. And he wants to do it quickly!
- vii) If you've ever stood in line at Home Depot, which I've done a lot lately, you know that waiting in line to check out can be a painful process...especially if the cashier is having some computer problem or whatever. And because I rarely miss an opportunity for God to teach me patience, I try to receive that blessing from God as I wait. (yeah, right?)
- viii) But see, God wants to grant us those things which we need...the flip side to that is we need to be ready to receive those things from God.
- ix) The widow was ready to receive the justice from the judge because she had worked out all the other desire of her heart and needed this one thing.
- x) Interestingly, Jesus never tells us if she actually received the justice...just that the judge agreed to give it to her...I wonder what would have happened to the judge if he has reneged on his decision?
- xi) Either way, Jesus finishes this parable with yet another question...a question about faith. "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

### **3) Application**

- a) When Jesus comes like a thief in the night...when Christ returns to usher in the final stages of the Kingdom of God...when he comes in judgment and glory...WILL HE FIND (THIS KIND OF FAITH) ON EARTH?
- b) Will he find faith in us the size of a mustard seed? Will he find in us the faith of this widow? Or will he find something else?
- c) Will he find us seeking after His heart or seeking after our own pursuit of happiness?
- d) Will he find us in prayer - in communication with Him about His will - or will he find us being successful on our own and taking the credit?

- e) If you'll remember the nature of faith that we talked about a couple weeks ago, you'll recall that faith is what allows God to work through us for His glory.
- f) And it's clear from this parable that Luke and Jesus draw a direct link between the expression of one's faith and the consistency and persistence of one's prayers.
- g) And our prayers originate from wherever we are in life...from the most needy of times to the most fruitful of times...

#### **4) Conclusion**

- a) For those who are in need, right now, consistent and persistent prayer cries out to God for mercy and provision...
- b) For those who are able to help those in need but are not fully, consistent and persistent prayer aligns your heart with the heart of God – beating for those who are the ones crying out for mercy.
- c) For those who are able to help those in need and are doing it, as you are gifted, consistent and persistent prayer allows God, through increased faith, to be glorified and fill that person with gratitude. This leads to deeper levels of service, worship, and discipleship.
- d) Will god find you faithful, moving from needy to willing to doing because of his mercy and grace at each step of your journey?
- e) Have you turned a blind eye to a need that you feel God is calling you to meet?
- f) Have you turned a deaf ear to a cry for help?
- g) If you are the one crying for mercy, have you been tempted to give up hope? To reject the notion that God will hear your prayers?
- h) What our faith requires of us...what God expects from us...is consistent and persistent prayer. Prayer that prepares and opens us up to the Holy Spirit, making us ready to receive God's grace and mercy...God's calling and provision...and God's mission for His glory and the for the sake of His kingdom.
- i) Let's pray...