

Pray Until Something Happens- Matthew 7:7,8 Luke 18:1-18

According to a recent public poll, prayer is very important to Americans. In 2010, the Gallup poll organization found that 90 % of American's pray. They found that 86% believed in God- isn't interesting that more people pray than believe in God. 70% believe in prayers in school. We're looking at a series of sermons on prayer. As we have already discovered, Jesus had a lot to say about prayer.

In his teachings on prayer he tells a story about prayer. In a certain town, there was a judge who feared no one including God and didn't care about anyone. There was a widow in that town who kept coming to him repeatedly with the same plea, "Grant me justice against my adversary." Again, and again he would refuse to help her. But finally, he said to himself, "Even though I do not fear God or care about people, yet because this widow keeps bothering me with her request, I will see that she gets justice, so she won't wear me out with her coming." She was constantly in his face and her begging and nagging paid off because he ruled in her favor. So, what does this story tell us about prayer and our relationship with God? There are three important prayer principles Jesus taught in this story.

The first prayer principle -Don't worry-pray. The widow in the story did not sit at home feeling sorry for herself and her problem. Instead of worrying she approached the person who could help her-the judge. Jesus tells us in the story-pray and do not lose heart. When we face a challenging circumstance, we have two choices. We can lose heart and let worrisome thoughts control our mind; or we can pray about it. Peter wrote, "Cast your cares upon him, for he cares for you."

The second prayer principle is don't quit-pray persistently. We learn persistence from our children. When David, our youngest, was little he would come and ask me for something, and I would give the standard parent' answer, "We'll see." Until I would give him my decision he would follow me around looking very hopeful. Repeatedly I would hear him say, "Dad, have you made up your mind yet?" I would answer with, "No, not yet." He would keep following and keep asking. That's persistence!

In the parable, the poor widow kept begging the judge to grant her justice. She didn't ask once and say, "Let me know what you decided." She peppered his ears with persistent petitions. Have you ever asked God for something, and when he didn't answer our prayer immediately, we would quit praying? That's a mistake. The most effective prayers in the Bible are those that were prayed persistently. In Psalm 55:16-17 David talks about praying evening, morning, and at noon. God hears his voice, why? Because David was persistent in his prayers.

In the Old Testament, there was a woman named Hannah who desperately wanted a child. For many years, she prayed to have this child. After years of unanswered prayer, she didn't say, "Well it must not be God's will for me to have a child." She kept on praying for years and eventually God gave her a son- Samuel who became a mighty prophet.

Even Jesus prayed persistently. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he poured out his heart to God. His persistent prayer was so intense that drops of blood like sweat on his forehead. He prayed again and again, "Father, take this cup from me-but not my will but your will be done." He cried out and God gave him the strength and resolve to face the cross.

Persistence is an important factor in prayer. But persistence is a valuable commodity for every area of your Christian life, not just prayer. God blesses those who persist. So, whatever you may be facing now, don't give up. If you're ever tempted to give up, just remember the composer Brahms. It took him seven long years to write his famous Lullaby.

In Matthew 7 when Jesus is giving out his Sermon on the Mount, he reminds his listeners to do three simple things in persistent prayer. Keep on asking God and it will be given you. Keep seeking after God and we will find him and have relationship with him. Keep knocking on God's door and he will open it for you. God will answer our prayers, but he will answer them in his own way. And the way will be perfect love and perfect wisdom.

The third prayer principle is don't doubt-pray positively. The widow didn't worry and she was persistent in her requests. But is God like that crooked judge?

Does he have to be pestered and coerced before He will answer our prayers? Not at all. Parables not only contain comparisons but contrasts as well. Jesus used the mean judge to show that God is opposite in personality and actions than the judge. Jesus goes on to say that God will bring justice to his chosen. He will not put his people off. He will answer their prayers.

So, as we pray without worry, persistently, and positively how does God answer our prayers? First, God may answer our prayers quickly. In verse 8 of the story Jesus used the word quickly to describe how God answers prayer. The word Jesus uses means suddenly. Prayers might go unanswered for a while and then suddenly God answers them. A lady came to the mall in the pouring rain and prayed for a good parking space near the door. Just as she said that prayer, a spot opened in the best parking space in the entire lot. "Never mind, Lord I've found one myself." What a joke. God answered her prayer so quickly that she didn't have time to understand that it was God at work.

Second, God may answer our prayers later. When we pray and God doesn't answer right away it might mean that the timing is not right for that prayer to be answered now, but the timing is better later. God's delays are not God's denials. Sometime our sense of timing is not God's timing. Pray persistently and wait for his answer.

Third, God may answer our prayers better. Sometimes we don't get what we ask for because God has something better in store for us. Last of all, God might answer our prayers with a no. Sometimes what we want is not ever right for us because God has our best interests at heart. I have often prayed and got no, but it was the best answer I could get. As Garth Brooks sang, "Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers. Some of God's gifts are unanswered prayer."

So, to be effective men and women who pray we are to be people who experience the power of persistent, positive, worry free prayer. Pray until something happens.