

Upside Down Kingdom (10): Always Pray and Not Give Up

(Luke 18:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. Young man had a big date; he went to the candy store for 3 boxes of candy
1. He explained, “I’m eating with new girlfriend’s family, then we’ll go out”
 - a. “If she only holds my hand, then I’ll give the small box of candy.”
 - b. “If she kisses me on my cheek, then I’ll give her the medium box”
 - c. “And if she really smooches big time, then she gets the big box.”
 2. As they sat down to dinner with family, he asked if he could say the prayer
 - a. He really a very earnest, heart-filled, sincere... and very long prayer
 - b. After, the new girlfriend said, “You didn’t tell me you were so spiritual”
 - c. He said, “And you never told me that your father owns a candy shop!”
- B. Yes, prayer can get you out of sticky situations, but that’s not all prayer is!
1. Prayer is important to a lot of people... or at least, they say that it is.
 - a. A 2000 Gallup poll found that 90% of Americans pray regularly.
 - b. 83% favor prayer at graduations. 70% percent favor prayer in schools
 - c. The same poll found 86% believe in God! *More prayer than believers!*
 2. Prayer was something that was very important to our Savior
 - a. Luke seems to place a special emphasis on the prayer life of Jesus.
 - b. He includes an emphasis on prayer not found in the other gospels.
 - 1) Jesus prayed after His baptism (**3:21**) and after healing others (**5:16**)
 - 2) Jesus prayed all night before choosing the 12 apostles (**6:12**)
 - 3) Jesus was praying as he asks, “*Who do you say I am?*” (**9:18**)
 - 4) Jesus was praying as he was changed at the transfiguration (**Lk 9:29**)
 - c. Luke includes 2 parables on prayer not told in any of other gospels
 - 1) The parable of friend at midnight stressed persistence (**Lk 11:5-8**)
 - 2) The parable today is *Persistent Widow* or *Unjust Judge* (**Lk 18:1-9**)
 - d. This parable also stresses the need of persistence in prayer
 - 1) I originally was to skip it— who needs another lesson on prayer?
 - 2) It also has several very hard statements... *don’t want to seem chicken*

II. Always Pray and Not Give Up: The Parable (Reading- [Luke 18:1-5](#))

- A. Luke reveals the point or “*moral of the story*” in his introduction in [verse 1](#).
1. The point is, “*to show them that they should always pray and not give up*”
 - a. Pious Jews prayed three times a day, and these were rather formalized
 - b. Rabbis taught not to pray too much “*lest they weary God*” (Morris, 287)
 - c. That contrasts with “*Pray continually*” or “*without ceasing*” ([1 Th 5:17](#))
 2. Problem with prayer is that there is a distinct lack of instant gratification.
 - a. We’d like prayer to be Aladdin’s lamp that grants wishes immediately
 - 1) Old story of the farming community in drought that prays for rain
 - 2) And there one little old lady shows up at church carrying umbrella
 - b. Our struggle in prayer is its lack of immediacy—prayer takes time.
 3. It is that continuing struggle in prayer over time that shows our faith
- B. So Jesus tells this story of a widow demanding justice from an unjust judge
1. The widow in the first century represents the most powerless of people
 - a. There was no safety net for widows—no gov’t programs or jobs
 - b. She comes to judge for justice— wasn’t always the business of judges
 - 1) Sometimes business was their business—settled cases by bribes
 - 2) The judge doesn’t fear God nor respect man, and he admits it! ([v. 4](#))
 - c. He later admits her case is just ([v.5](#)), but there’s nothing in it for him!
 2. But the widow keeps asking over and over, day by day, for her justice
 - a. Judge is afraid she will “*wear me out*” or “*beat me down*” (ESV) ([v. 5](#))
 - 1) Paul uses the same word in [1 Cor 9:27](#) in since of spiritual discipline
 - 2) The word ὑπωπιάζω is from two words meaning “*under the eye*”
 - 3) It was used for giving black eye, i.e. the widow was beating him up!
 - b. Judge gives her what she wants, not for justice, but to get rid of her
 - c. The widow in the parable become a model for our persistence in prayer
 3. In [1 Timothy 5](#), Paul gives Timothy instructions for support of widows
 - a. Widows were powerless, the church was to care for them—true widows
 - b. He says a true widow (“*widow indeed*”) has no family to take care of her
 - c. A true widow also depends on God thru persistent prayer ([1 Tim 5:5](#))

- C. In the parable, Jesus uses an unjust judge to make point (**Reading: [Lk 18:6-8](#)**)
1. This parable is in the format one of those “*how much more*” statements
 - a. If evil parents give, “*how much more*” will God give Spirit (**[Lk 11:13](#)**)
 - b. God feeds the birds, yet “*how much more valuable you are*” (**[Lk 11:24](#)**)
 - c. If God clothes the grass, “*how much more will he clothe you*” (**[Lk 12:28](#)**)
 2. In the parable, this unjust judge responds to persistence of widow’s request
 - a. So then, “*Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones*” (**[v. 7](#)**)
 - b. If we cry day and nite, God who loves and never is annoyed will listen
 3. The AP carried a story of postal customers who went postal... in nice way
 - a. Were 26 in line, and service was slow; they chanted “*We want service*”
 - b. Two minutes later, a clerk ambled out; they kept it up and another clerk!
 - c. Clerks said nothing except “*Next.*” *All 26 were thru line in 4 minutes!*
 4. So the point of the parable is that we should pray and never give up
 - a. It’s God job to manage the universe and answer prayer as He sees fit.
 - 1) There’ll be times we won’t understand or appreciate his answer
 - 2) They’ll be times that we will wonder if God is even listening to us
 - b. Our job is to keep praying and keep believing in the God who answers.
- D. So far I’ve succeeded in ducking the thorny question here with the rose
1. Jesus is telling us to be persistent (therefore patient), but He also says--
Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly
 - a. I was with Him to that point, but this suggests that the process is quick
 - b. This is like the postal customers getting in and out in under 4-minutes
 2. This doesn’t match our experience, and commentators suggest options
 - a. Some interpret the “*speedily*” (τάχος) as “*suddenly*” (note in the NET)
 - b. Others point out that prayer is always measured in God’s time, not ours
 - 1) While not a strict formula, God’s day is like 1000 years (**[2 Pet 3:8](#)**)
 - 2) God answers immediately; takes awhile to get it (*back to post office*)
 - c. Robert F. Capon takes a stance that few commentators will take
He said “soon” because for some reason unknown to us, He felt like saying “soon”
 - 1) Later Capon says, “*What Jesus actually did soon was to die and rise*”
 - 2) No matter how we understand soon, God answers all prayer at cross!

III. Conclusion

- A. If Ron Lantz looks like a truck driver, it's because he is a truck driver
1. Six years ago, he pulled his rig off the road to attend a prayer meeting
 - a. DC area was being terrorized by the Beltway Sniper; 10 killed, 3 injured
 - b. Truckers met to pray for God end terror and comfort families of victime
 2. Later, Lantz pulled off at the Myersville rest area near Frederick, MD
 - a. His was listening to radio, which broadcast a description of suspect's car
 - b. He saw that car in the rest area he was pulling into with two men asleep
 - 1) He call 911 and used his rig to block the exit in case they woke up
 - 2) Police arrived and arrested the two suspects; both were convicted
- B. Do all prayers work so quickly? Do all prayers get interviews on CNN?
1. We like stories like this when the answer to prayer seems so obvious
 - a. But that's not how prayer always works, is it? *Not how it usually works!*
 - 1) Many faithful believers spend years praying the same prayer
 - 2) There never seems to be an answer, or it always seems to be "No"
 - b. When your questions remains unanswered, we tend to stop asking
 - c. The POINT and POWER of payer is FAITH, and faith does not give up.
 2. So Jesus wants us to never give up and never give in—just pray
 - a. Don't worry because you aren't getting answer—pray (**Phil 4:6**, NLT)
 - b. That will take great patience, but then that's the point (**1 Pet 5:6-7**, NLT)
- C. Jesus ends, "*When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" (**18:8**)
1. Jesus isn't asking if the church will be around? *Gates of hell can't prevail.*
 - a. He is asking if His people will still be praying when He comes
 - b. No mater how long delayed is His coming, will we still be praying?
 2. His question is rhetorical, because the two really do go together--
 - a. If we are faithful, then we will continue to pray.
 - b. And if we pray, the we will continue to be faithful. (*Prayer*)