

Confidence in Persistent Prayer (Luke 18:1–8)

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When I chose today’s sermon theme, “*Confidence in Persistent Prayer*,” based on the parable of the widow and the unjust judge, my thoughts immediately went to my mother. She was known in our family and community for her *unwavering persistence in prayer*. No matter what season of life she was in—joyful or sorrowful—you would find her kneeling before God. Her lips whispered words of prayer long after everyone else had gone to bed.

To me, as a child, it seemed puzzling. I often asked her, “Mother, why do you keep praying when you don’t see any blessings or happiness coming your way?” She would smile gently and say nothing in reply. But her faith spoke louder than words. She remained confident, even amid pain. She remained joyful, even in suffering.

In time, I came to realize that her faith was rooted in the words of the prophet Habakkuk, who declared:

“Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails,
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold,
and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will exult in the God of my salvation.” (*Habakkuk 3:17–18*)

For my mother, prayer was never merely about *asking* for things. It was about *trusting* God, *communing* with Him, and *resting* in His presence. She understood prayer not as a transaction, but as a relationship, a continual conversation of love and dependence.

1. The Meaning of Persistent Prayer

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples a parable “to show them that they should always pray and not lose heart.” The story is simple but profound: a poor

widow seeks justice from an unjust judge who neither fears God nor respects people. Yet, through her persistence, the judge eventually grants her request—not out of compassion, but due to her relentless determination.

At first glance, it might seem like Jesus is comparing God to the unjust judge. But in reality, He is contrasting them. If even a corrupt and indifferent judge can be moved by persistence, *how much more* will our loving and righteous God respond to His children who cry out to Him day and night!

However, the parable’s focus is not simply on getting results from prayer—it is about the *character* that prayer forms in us. Persistent prayer shapes us into disciples whose faith endures trials and who refuse to lose heart. Prayer, in this sense, is not only communication with God—it is *formation* in God.

Jesus shows that prayer reveals who we are. It molds our character, our commitments, our actions, and our hopes. Persistent prayer trains our hearts to trust in God’s justice and prepares us to participate in the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth.

Thus, the traits of those who persist in prayer include:

1. **Being disciples of Christ**—seeking to make God’s kingdom real in this world.
2. **Fighting persistently for justice**—believing that God’s righteousness must prevail.
3. **Patiently waiting for Christ’s return**—maintaining hope amid delay and suffering.

2. Understanding the Parable in Luke’s Context

Among the four Gospels, *Luke alone* includes this parable. Luke is deeply concerned with prayer, justice, and the faithfulness of God’s people. To grasp the parable’s hidden meaning, we must notice its final question:

“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

This question connects directly to the earlier inquiry in Luke 17:20, where the Pharisees ask Jesus when the Kingdom of God will come. Jesus responds that the

Kingdom is not a distant event but already breaking into the world through faith and obedience.

The parable of the persistent widow, therefore, is not only about prayer—it is a call to faithfulness. It teaches us how to remain steadfast, prayerful, and hopeful while awaiting the fullness of God’s Kingdom.

Persistent prayer is the heartbeat of discipleship. It is how we stay connected to Christ when the world seems unjust and silent. It is how we maintain courage when God’s promises appear delayed. Prayer, then, becomes the lifeline of faith—the means by which the disciple endures until the Son of Man returns.

3. Why a Widow? The Symbol of Discipleship

Why does Jesus choose a widow to illustrate this truth? Widows in biblical times were among the most vulnerable in society. They lacked male protection, legal standing, and economic stability. Yet, this widow refuses to be silent. She demands justice from a man who has no moral compass. She keeps returning, pleading, insisting—until the unjust judge relents.

Her persistence becomes a mirror for discipleship. In her, we see *courage, resilience, and faith*. She is poor, powerless, and ignored by society—but spiritually rich and bold in her trust that justice must prevail.

In many ways, her repeated plea—“*Grant me justice*”—becomes a prayer for all believers who live in a world marred by injustice, pain, and delay. Her voice echoes the longing of every Christian heart that yearns for God’s righteousness to be revealed.

Luke, often called “*the Gospel for women*,” intentionally uplifts her as an example of faith. Throughout Luke’s Gospel, women—Mary, Anna, the sinful woman who anointed Jesus’ feet, the widow who gave her last two coins—demonstrate extraordinary faith, courage, and persistence. Luke reminds us that in God’s kingdom, greatness is not measured by power or position, but by perseverance and faithfulness.

4. The Fourfold Pattern of “Grant Justice”

The repetition of the phrase “grant justice” gives structure to this parable and deepens its theological meaning:

- a) **The widow's plea:** "Grant me justice against my adversary" (v. 3).
- b) **The judge's decision:** "I will grant her justice" (v. 5).
- c) **Jesus' question:** "Will not God grant justice to his chosen ones?" (v. 7).
- d) **The promise:** "He will quickly grant justice" (v. 8).

This progression moves from human persistence to divine assurance. It teaches us that our prayers are not in vain. God *hears* the cries of His people, and though His timing may differ from ours, His justice is sure.

Still, Jesus ends the parable not with a promise but with a question—"*When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?*" This question turns the spotlight on us. It challenges every believer to examine their perseverance. Will we, like the widow, continue to pray and believe even when the world grows darker and colder? Will we remain faithful when God's justice seems delayed?

5. Application: Faith That Does Not Lose Heart

Dear friends, there are moments in our lives when prayer seems to yield no immediate result. We pray for healing that doesn't come, for justice that feels delayed, for peace that remains elusive. It is in these very moments that the message of today's parable speaks most powerfully: *Do not lose heart.*

When you pray and nothing seems to happen, remember the widow. When your faith wavers, remember her persistence. When the world's injustice overwhelms you, remember that your cry is heard in heaven, and that the God of justice will not delay forever.

Persistent prayer builds confidence—not in ourselves, but in God. It keeps our hearts anchored in faith and our eyes fixed on the coming of Christ, who will bring justice wholly and swiftly.

6. Conclusion

The story of the persistent widow is ultimately a story about *faith that endures*. My mother's life, like that of the widow, was a testimony to this enduring faith. She prayed not because life was easy, but because she knew that her life belonged to God. Her confidence came from knowing that, in God's time, every prayer finds its answer—sometimes in ways beyond our understanding.

So, let us continue to pray without ceasing. Let us persist in hope, in justice, and in faith. And when the Son of Man comes, may He find in us a faith that has not lost heart, a faith that has endured through prayer, and a faith that confidently rests in the God of our salvation.

Lord, strengthen our hearts to pray without ceasing, to trust without wavering, and to persevere in faith until Your justice and glory are fully revealed.