

Let Us Pray Like This

Luke 18:1-8

Last Sunday, I preached that this year will be a 'Prayer' year. So I plan on preaching about prayer for the next couple of weeks. I pray that you will become mature Christians by listening to God's Word and become resolute in acting through the Word of God.

Prayer to Christians is like breath to man, it gives us life. It is the power that connects a weak human with the almighty God. Prayer is like a key that can solve every problem through the power of God and is a source of all strength. John Knox, a Scottish religious reformer, said, "The one who prays is stronger than the entire nation that doesn't pray." E. M. Bounce, an author of many books about the absolute necessity of prayer said, "God leads this world by prayer. That means that this world is formed by praying. The more we pray the more this world become well. The more we pray the more we have power to beat Satan. God's grace and blessings depend on the prayers that we pray."

If so, then what kind of attitude should we pray with? First, we should pray continuously and not be discouraged. Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not be discouraged. In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town that kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' But the judge refused her petition. The scripture says that he was an unjust judge, so he probably may have expected a bribe from her. Because the widow was poor, she couldn't give a bribe to him. Nevertheless the widow kept coming to him continuously. Verse 3 says, "kept coming to him." That means she visited his house repeatedly. The important factor for praying is persistence. So that's why the apostle Paul said, "Pray continually."

Until when should we pray? We should pray until our prayers become true. Why are many people discouraged when they pray? That is because God promised to listen to our prayers, but He didn't mention when or how He would answer the prayers. This widow kept bothering the judge. He said, "Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice." She purposely kept coming to him until her petition was accepted and the judge finally recognized her intention.

Verse 1 says, "they should always pray." "Always" means 'continually, to the finish, of long duration.' Jesus said God brings about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night. These words 'continually, always, day and night' show us what kind of attitude we should have when we pray. I want to encourage all of you that we should pray until our prayers become true.

Secondly, we should pray earnestly. Earnestly means to 'exhaust all my passion and energy.' This is similar to dedicating everything that we have, even our life, into prayer. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said of the secret of answered prayer, "Pray just like it depends upon death or life."

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Actually, those who have been shown as a prayerful person in the Bible prayed earnestly. The Gospel of Luke 22:44 tells us how Jesus prayed to God at the Mount of Olives. "He prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." The Book of James 5:17-18 says, "Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops." When Peter was kept in prison, the early church was earnestly praying to God for him. (Acts 12:5) God heard their prayers so the chains fell off Peter's wrists and the Iron Gate opened for him by itself and he went through it. 1 Samuel 1:10 says, "When in bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD, the LORD remembered her and Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son." God remembers our earnest prayers and answers them. Can you imagine how earnestly Jesus prayed so that his sweat was like drops of blood? According to medical doctors, when people exert themselves, a capillary vessel spout and blood comes out from their sweat glands. I want to encourage all of you that we should pray earnestly if we really want an answer from God.

Lastly, we should pray with faith. Verse 8 says, "I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" This means that it is very hard to find faith on earth when the Son of Man comes. It also means that as arrival of the Son of Man nears, this world becomes more distrustful among the people. There is no relationship between how long you have attended church and how much faith you have. There is no relationship between how many are in our congregation and how much faith we have. Also, what God wants to see when we stand in front of Him someday is not how pretty we are or how good our figures look. What God wants to see from us is our faith. Jesus, of course wants to see our faith and we should show Him faith. We have to receive recognition of our faith from Jesus.

Jesus mentions that the most important attitude for prayer is faith. Just as we need to have a positive attitude, we need to have a positive faith. This is a faith in which God will remember and answer our prayers. The faith that today's scripture tells us is a practical faith that does not discourage, endures us to the end, and prays continuously. The reason why we don't receive any answer from God when we ask is because we don't ask in faith, rather we ask with the wrong motives. Another reason why we don't receive any answer from God when we ask is because we ask with doubt. He said when we ask, we must believe and not doubt. Jesus also said that we who doubt are like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind and should not expect anything from the Lord. Jesus taught us how to pray and instructed us to pray often. The Gospel of Matthew 7:7-11 says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? Then if you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?" This shows how God responds to the ones who pray. If you believe and trust in the Bible, we must pray to God. I hope all of your prayers with faith become answered by God.

John Wanamaker is the founder of the first department store which now has 160 branch stores in the U.S. If he is not busy, he prays one hour a day. If he is busy, he prays two hours a day. If he

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is too busy, he prays three hours a day. 'Being busy at something' means you have a lot of things to do. That means we need more of God's help. How about us? If we are busy, we do not bother to pray. If we are busy, we miss worship services. If we are busy, it will become easier for the distance between us and God to grow. That is not right. God surely remembers our prayers and answers them. Even though we may have a dislike for praying, and it is hard to do, and we do not know how to pray, we should pray to God. One of the reasons that we are here is to pray. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." What does 'good' mean here? The greatest good, the greatest virtue, is believing in Jesus. When we pray to God, we are at our best as Christians, we are the most virtuous. If we do not become discouraged and don't give up, we will reap a harvest at a proper time.

I want to encourage all of you to not be discouraged, to not give up, and do your best to pray. What do you have in this world? Praying is a blessing and the key to live in this world. I pray that you experience God's great love through prayer.