

Luke 18:1-8

Don't Give Up

Image Church // Inverted Kingdom Vol. 2 / Radical Week 1

Introduction

Well, Happy New Year! If you're a guest with us this morning we're so glad that you're here with us! I would love to meet you after at **SP!**

Hey, how many of you are New Year's resolution people? I'm interested... *show of hands...*

Well, here's the deal, you have until **Feb. 1** to see if you're gonna make it... Because **Feb 1** is the day most people call it quits on our New Year's resolutions...

- Studies show that It takes just **32 days** for the average person to finally break their resolution, and the crazy part is **68% of people report giving up their resolutions even sooner than that.**¹

I have a buddy of mine and he's the resolution guy... Every year it's something new...

- One year it was intermittent fasting- is that still a thing??
 - I don't know why you would ever want to do that- breakfast is the best meal of the day... one-word BACON...
- So he's all gung-ho on this idea
- I call him like 2 weeks in, he's like I'm going to tweak it...
 - *Of course you are...*

Maybe that's you... Good luck and Godspeed...

¹ NY Post article,
<https://nypost.com/2020/01/28/the-average-american-abandons-their-new-years-resolution-by-this-date/>

Well, this morning we're kicking off a new series in ***The Gospel of Luke, Inverted Kingdom Volume 2!***

- In 2021 we spent 28 weeks in the first 17 chapters...
 - If you missed it you can check that series out online...
- Well in **Volume 2** we're going to finish out Luke...

And we couldn't be starting at a better place to kick off the new year!

Where we're going to be jumping back in is centered around this idea of **endurance**... I don't know about you but endurance is hard... It's hard with anything really...

- Working out...
- Parenting...
- Job...

It's really hard spiritually... It's so easy to become discouraged, it's so easy to just give up hope... Especially when things get busy and we get distracted... Especially when things get hard... When following Jesus isn't convenient... It's hard to remain faithful in the midst of seemingly faithless situations...

But I think one of the biggest reasons for that is that we put the weight of enduring in our faith, remaining faithful all on ourselves... that we have to be the ones to fix, or to do, or to muster up enough to see it through...

On August 14, 2003, just 23 months after 9/11, the city that never sleeps went black. New York City lost its power and a dark cloud of fear was cast over the city. As News reporters commented on the pitch-black scene they noticed the city had a hope-filled night light. **Throughout the blackout**, it was the Statue of Liberty that had remained lit.

The same had been true in the blackout of 1965... And what was discovered was that the Statue of Liberty was tied into the power grid over in **New Jersey**...

See, Lady Liberty could remain illuminated in the darkness because she was connected to a different power source...

This morning we're going to be looking at how we plug into the right power source so that we can experience **endurance** in our faith holding onto an incredible hope in the midst of the chaos and the brokenness...

If you have your bible grab it and turn to Luke 18...

What we're going to see this morning is that the power source that God's given us to plug into for endurance and hope is **prayer**...

Luke 18:1-8

1 Now he [Jesus] told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not give up.

Ok, we have to stop right here because right out the gate we get the purpose and point of the parable that Jesus is about to tell...

And I don't want you to miss this... There's an encouragement in here before the challenge that's about to come...

*Here it is, you ready... **There are going to be times when you're going to want to give up on the Christian life...***

- I don't know about you but that's good to hear...
- There are going to be times that are hard, there are going to be times when you're walking in the midst of brokenness and you want to give up...

I think sometimes that we think that being a Christian should make our circumstances easier, that it should make life easier...

- There are a lot of people that preach it that way, that Christianity is all about you and your best life now...

But here's where we see this idea of **Jesus' inverted Kingdom** where He flips worldly philosophies upside down...

Jesus doesn't tell us that our lives will get easier, He tells us endurance is possible...

Here's the reality:

- We live in a broken world...
- Broken because of sin...
- **Jesus came to deal with the root cause of our brokenness...**
- He comes to bring salvation not to work on our circumstances...
- He says that He's going to come back and deal with that...

In fact, that's what Jesus just got done talking about at the end of **chapter 17**... That He will return and when He does it will be obvious and **final!** There will be *judgment and deliverance* where He will bring justice and make all things right...

And part of that deliverance is the delivering those that are in Christ from the brokenness of this world...

But in the meantime, before he returns we wait in the midst of the brokenness...

And that's hard, because we experience that brokenness physically, spiritually, emotionally, and circumstantially...

Example: We have 3 kids: 6 almost 4 and almost 2... Things get chaotic around the house, to say the least...

- But can I tell you the times when it gets real crazy- when Mom's gone...
- She has a system for everything- me, not so much- I'm more figure it out as you go...
- I put the wrong clothes on them... AG's Hair...
- Loud music is the key...
- The struggle is real...
- And I long for Ashley to return, but in the meantime, I wait in the craziness...

That's a picture of where we are right now... **We are waiting in the midst of the craziness...**

- And it's hard...
 - Death of a loved one...
 - Loss of a job...
 - Sickness...
 - Hard diagnosis...
 - Financial struggles...
 - People abandoning us...
 - People hurting us...

This is the world that we live in, full of brokenness... Jesus knows that, he understands it better than anyone... He would enter into it...

- **He's on His way to Jerusalem** where he would soon suffer and die at the hands of a broken people...

He knows Brokenness!

- But He also knows what awaits us, and as we navigate **now** Jesus says that we have an incredible power source to lean into... **Prayer**
- Which BTW He purchased for us... What He would do would give us the ability to have direct access to God in prayer...

And what He's saying is that prayer is the **means** for continuing on...

That **Prayer keeps you from giving up on the Christian life**...

He says we have the need to pray **always** and not to give up...

- We have to see that **this is more than a mealtime prayer**...
- We're going to see this more in a little bit...

For some of you, you're tired.... You're at a place where you want to give up... **My question is how much do you lean in through prayer?**

- *Lost your fervor, look at your devotion to prayer...*

Now, here's the parable on the need to pray and not give up...

2 "There was a judge in a certain town who didn't fear God or respect people. **3** And a widow in that town kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For a while he was unwilling, but later he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or respect people, **5** yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice, so that she doesn't wear me out by her persistent coming.' "

6 Then the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** Will not God grant justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay helping them? **8** I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice.

Here's what Jesus does, He's making a point through **contrast**, not **comparison**...

God is the opposite of the unjust evil Judge...

If this evil Judge can be moved by the petitions of a stranger, **how much more** will God help his children when they cry out to Him **persistently**?!

And then Jesus says this at the end of **verse 8**: **Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"**

What's Jesus getting at here?

Jesus is saying that dependence is the key to endurance, and prayer is the tool that God's given us to declare our dependence.

Prayer is you saying I can't, and coming to God because you believe that He can... Prayer fans the flame of our faith in our lives...

One Pastor says it like this: Prayer and faith stand and fall together. Faith is the furnace of our lives. Its fuel is the grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer.²

² John Piper: Sermon. Always pray and do not lose heart. Jan 9, 1983

Prayer at its core is an act of dependence... It's a tool that God's given us to keep us dependent on Him!

What if you started to see prayer for what it is, that its purpose is not for you to fill God in but for God to fill you up...

What this passage points us to is a life of persistent prayer as a means for endurance...

Where we bring our broken realities to God, calling out to Him and begging Him to move...

- When we do this, we're anchoring ourselves to God in the midst of what we're going through...
- WE ARE CONTINUING IN FAITH and we DECLARE it through PRAYER...

Here's the first part of this: **1. Prayer is the means for continuing in the faith.**

There's another part of this:

2. Not only is prayer a means of endurance, but it's also the means to God's activity.

Let me show you this played out in the Church here in Acts:

- At the very beginning of **Acts 1:14** when Jesus had ascended into heaven they were in continual prayer together...
- **Acts 1:24** they had a big decision, who would take the place of Judas as the 12th apostle, what did they do? Prayed...
- **Acts 2:42** they were devoted to prayer together...
- **Acts 4:23-31** prayed for boldness and endurance to continue the message and ministry of Jesus after they had faced opposition.
- At the end of **Acts 7** Stephen's last words are a prayer before he is stoned to death... (literally almost like one final radio in to God as bombs were dropping around him)

- **Acts 9:40** A girl named Dorcas had died, Peter prays for God to raise her from the dead and God does...
- **Acts 10:9** Peter goes up to the roof to pray as the church is continuing to expand...
- **Acts 12**... Peter is imprisoned because of the mission, and the church prays... All night...

We see the things He does in Scripture- He can still do those things today- ***what seems to be the gap??***

Dependence and desperation...

They were persistently dependent and desperate for God to move...

What if we prayed like this?!? What would God do?!?

I think for some of us the problem is that we doubt God's ability, really at the heart of it is this:

- We don't pray because we're afraid that we're going to get let down...
- What this parable tells us is to keep being persistent... And that in the process God is working...

I think others of us want to see the activity of God, but rather than leaning into His power we lean into our own power...

- We feel like we need Him for the basics, and then we're good to go... The problem is we find ourselves discouraged, doubting, wanting to give up...

Let me get practical on this...

Elyse Fitzpatrick³ Give them Grace: She says what Christian books on parenting are trying to do... give you a formula, and tell you that if you follow it, it will guarantee success in parenting...

- But she points out that God was a perfect father and 1/3 of angels and the two humans he created rebelled...

³ Credit for this example goes to JD Greear, *How to deal with unanswered prayer.*

- She's like, "So, you think you'll be able to out-technique God?"
- She says the really dangerous problem with thinking there is a foolproof way of parenting is it keeps us from the one thing we most need; that is, to cast ourselves down at the feet of Jesus, looking to him for his mercy in our kids' lives. To do what we can't do...

The same is true in all other areas of our life...

- *Your marriage, your job, our church, the mission of the gospel...*

BTW: I'm not saying that books, resources, strategies and techniques are bad...

I'm just saying that we can't seek to master the principles more than we seek dependency in the one who gives them power...

- And the way that we do that is through **PRAYER!**

If you try to master principles in your own strength you will either: fail, lose heart, get tired, have a bad heart and store up bitterness...

Prayer is the power source that allows us to experience the power of God!

We need to live by the words of the **theologian MC Hammer**: *We got to pray to make it today...*

Here's the 3rd part that I want you to see: **3. God will answer your cry for restoration in the midst of brokenness**

Here's the thing: when we pray, what are we doing, we're crying out for restoration, we're asking God to do something that we can't to make things as they ought to be...

In faith we're coming to God, and we're to do it persistently...

I want you to listen again to how Jesus finishes this parable, V. 6...

6 Then the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 Will not God grant justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay helping them? 8 I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

God says that He will help that He will grant Justice (He will make things right)... Then He talks about when He returns will he find faith...

Jesus is saying hang on in faith until I return... Because when I do I will make all things new...

At the end of the day when it comes to the restoration that you long for God will either answer it now or later...

Here's where we get to the heart of hope... Even though we may not get the answer to our brokenness when we want it we know that God will answer it one day!

And as we pray with persistence over the restoration that we so long for God to bring, we're continuing in faith, hoping and believing that Jesus is going to come back and finish what he started...

Charles Martin in *They turned the world upside down*: I don't pray because everyone is healed, I pray out of obedience, if I stop praying the problem is me not Him. So regardless of the outcome I pray, I believe in...

- There is a difference between believing **in**, and believing **that**...

Keeps you anchored in faith...

The point Jesus is making is clear: The Key to faithful endurance and hope is persistent prayer...

Conclusion [VAMP]

Samuel Chadwick (in *The Path of Prayer*) says:

The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from prayer. Our enemy fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray. Prayer turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. There is no power like that of prevailing prayer.

- 1. Prayer is the means for continuing in the faith.**
- 2. Not only is prayer a means of endurance, but it's also the means to God's activity.**
- 3. God will answer your cry for restoration in the midst of brokenness**

Don't give up!!! Lean into the tool that God's given you for endurance prayer! Where you tap into His power and His ability to do what you can't!

When Jesus returns will He find faith.. Would he find it here...

Appeal for **ABIDE**

Appeal to non-christian... Hope has been extended to you through Christ, would you believe this morning!

Prayer