

# THE Best IS YET TO COME

## Persistence in Prayer

Pastor Lyle Tard

*Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'*

Luke 18:1-5 (NIV)

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The story of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-5 is a little bit crazy, isn't it? I mean an older lady bugging a king who doesn't care about anyone but himself to give her something that she's owed with the real threat of setting the king off is a bit wild! In 2021, the woman in this story might be painted as that annoying person that just won't go away. In one of my favorite all-time Pixar movies Up, it's the little boy trying to get his scout badge, Russell. Remember him? Russell was so persistent in his determination to help that he wouldn't take no for an answer. I think that sometimes, the elderly man, Carl, felt like he was in a fight. Pastor Mark, in his sermon titled Pray Hard: Persistence Quotient said it this way:

Praying hard is going twelve rounds with God. A heavyweight prayer bout with God Almighty can be excruciating and exhausting, but that is how the greatest prayer victories are won. Praying hard is more than words. It's blood, sweat, and tears.

Little Russell got his hardest scout badge in the hardest way - because of a really hard person in a really hard situation. I'd like to submit the idea of "pray hard" in two different aspects: What and Who. What you are praying hard for, and who you are praying for.

In Luke 18, the persistent widow was asking for something that seems pretty tough to get, and dealing with a person that didn't care about her or what she wanted. That's taking shots from both sides. But here's what you do not see in that story - long, drawn-out, eloquent words that tickle the ears and makes the heart flutter. No, the Best is Yet to Come isn't about a bed of roses. It's about digging your heels in when it doesn't seem like the obstacle in front of you is going to budge. Praying hard takes faith and courage. Sometimes having faith and courage is tough. That's why I brought in the story of Russell in Up. While life isn't a Pixar movie, perhaps having that image in your mind may aid you in putting persistence into perspective. Russell operated in childlike courage and determination that led him into a situation that changed his life forever. What are you praying for? Are you praying with faith and courage? Don't overthink it. Perhaps it's time to lean back into that childlike courage and pray until something happens.

Carl, the old man in Up, was a tough nut to crack. He may have been old and cute, but his attitude was much like the King in Luke 18. Carl didn't care about Russell or his scout badge. He just wanted Russell to go away. Sometimes, praying hard is about praying for a person that is hard to pray for. They have a hard shell to crack and it seems like the prayer you are praying won't avail. But other times, the hard shell is on your heart. This is the "tears" part of what I quoted from Pastor Mark earlier. It's that person who has hurt you in some way and they, in your mind, don't deserve your time or effort in prayer. Man, this prayer may be harder than trying to get that mountain to move! At least with the mountain, there is a passion and drive to see it move. But with a person who has a hard shell or a person that has hurt us, we could see praying for them as an impossible endeavor. Likely because we have no desire for them to move towards God or for God to move with compassion toward them.

Our savior, in one of his final moments, prayed a prayer for those who hurt him in the worst way (Luke 23:34). Their hearts were hard, but it took courage to push past and through his pain to pray a bold, brave prayer to see them blessed.

Praying hard could be in the time, the intensity, or the pressing. Either way, take a note from Russell. Even though it might feel like you are in a heavyweight fight, with God, with your circumstance, with someone else, or even with yourself, there's a badge at the end of your praying according to what God has promised you. Pray hard, because the Best is Yet to Come.

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*What are you praying for? Are you praying with faith and courage?*