

## Pray So You Won't Give Up Luke 18:1-8

Have you ever felt like giving up?

If you feel even a little bit spiritually discouraged. If you're trusting God and asking Him to do something, but He hasn't. You're thinking, "Why hasn't He done this?" Maybe you've been praying and believing, and you know He can; but He hasn't. If you feel like quitting. Maybe you feel like throwing in the towel. It could be your marriage. You've tried, and you've tried, and you've tried, and you don't feel like there's any way to get it back to the place where it should be. You might feel like quitting on a dream. You thought one day you could, and you would, and now you think there's just no way. It could be your finances and you can't make ends meet. It could be the job that never seems to happen. There's something on your heart. You're seeking God and asking Him to heal or provide or show up in a situation. You believe He can, and He hasn't. So you keep praying, and you keep on waiting. Jesus said don't give up.

*"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."* Luke 18:1

Prayer is the great resource of believers in the last days. 60% of American people pray at least one time every day. 78% of American people pray at least one time a week. Only 1% of Americans say that they never pray.

The Bible is a promise book and a prayer book, and while reading is reactive, prayer is proactive. Reading is the way you get through the Bible. Prayer is the way you get the Bible through to you.

You've been praying for something, asking God for a miracle, believing that God is going to work, and He hasn't answered your prayer. You've been praying and waiting.. Maybe you have been praying for a miracle because someone you know needs healing. Are you tired of things being unfair, and it feeling like justice will never come? Are you exhausted from wanting things to be better for your family, friends, or neighborhood? Ready to give up in frustration?

The term "give up" means "to lose courage, to cave in." We live in a world where people are caving in to financial pressure. We are caving in under relational pressure. There are pressures at work, and you are just caving in. The temptation for Christians is to cave in to the evil around us. There is a temptation for Christians to cave in morally. There is a temptation for Christians to cave in spiritually.

Jesus has a word of encouragement for us in this parable about a widow who refused to give up. A parable is a simple story that uses everyday imagery to reveal deep spiritual truths. Jesus didn't invent parables, but He was a master parable teller, using them to teach timeless lessons about God's kingdom. Parables invited listeners to lean in, reflect, and wrestle with what Jesus was really saying. For those with open hearts, these simple stories revealed deep spiritual truths, but for those who resisted, the meaning remained hidden.

The reason that many of us give up too soon is because we feel like we have failed if God doesn't answer our prayer. That isn't failure. The only way you can fail is if you stop praying. One thing is certain: our most powerful prayers are linked to the promises of God. When you know you are praying the promises of God, you can pray with holy confidence. It's the difference between praying on thin ice and praying on solid ground. It's the difference between praying tentatively and praying tenaciously. You don't have to second-guess yourself because you know that God wants you to double-click on His promises. There is an old adage: "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it."

It was settled on the cross when Jesus said, "It is finished." It wasn't just the final installment on our sin debt. It was the down payment on all of His promises.

*"No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ."* 2 Corinthians 1:20

We are like the widow in need.

God is not like the unjust judge.

*Jesus 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!' And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 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?"*

Luke 18:2-8

If a crooked judge will give this poor widow what she needs because of her persistence, how much more will our heavenly Father answer us when we pray?

## 1. Life Is Not Always Fair, But God Is Good.

### THE CONDITION OF THE WOMAN

- Her Disadvantages

*"there was a widow in that town."* Luke 18:3

A widow in Bible times was even more helpless than a widow today. The word "widow" in the Greek language actually means "helpless" or "without strength." Any writer who wants to portray a scheme to deprive someone of his livelihood usually depicts his victim as a widow.

The Bible specifically forbids taking advantage of a widow.

*"Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan."* Exodus 22:22

There was no more overlooked or helpless person than a widow. She had several things working against her when it came to seeking justice before a court of law. First, she was a woman, and women were not allowed to speak in court. Because she was a widow, she had no husband to speak for her in court. Widows were a segment of society that was oppressed and often taken advantage of. She was a widow, and being a widow was synonymous with being poor. She had no money with which to grease the wheels of justice. She could not have paid a bribe even if she wanted to.

- Her Demand

*"Avenge me."* Luke 18:3

We do not know the nature of this woman's burden, but she had a grievance against someone that was very heavy on her heart.

- Her Desperation

*"Grant me justice against my adversary."* Luke 18:3

She has an adversary. She has things that are against her. She was fighting those battles all on her own. She had no family or friends in high places. The only thing she could do was go to a judge and plead her case. Because of her social and financial standing, she had no other hope but to get help from this judge. Therefore, she made a nuisance of herself before him, every day, until she received the very thing she was after.

While we don't know what injustice took place. Maybe her son was falsely imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit. Maybe the man who took advantage of her daughter was still on the streets.

This widow represents us. There are times when we too are burdened with cares, worries, fears, and troubles. During those times, it may seem that every circumstance of life is stacked against us. There may be the temptation to say, “*What’s the use?*”—especially after we have prayed and prayed and prayed about some matter. Yet, if we can learn anything from this poor woman, let us learn the lesson that persistence in prayer pays off in God’s time! So, keep praying, despite all the obstacles you face and despite all the signs that say you should just give up!

We may not always get the answer we want immediately, but we must keep asking and keep believing. God will answer in His time! Desperate times call for desperate measures, and there is no more desperate act than praying hard. There comes a moment when you need to throw caution to the wind and draw a circle in the sand. There comes a moment when you need to defy protocol, drop to your knees, and pray for the impossible. There comes a moment when you need to muster every ounce of faith you have and call down rain from heaven. For the persistent widow, this was that moment.

- Her Determination

“...*by her continual coming she is going to weary me.*” Luke 18:4

This phrase “*continual coming*” has the idea that she was begging this judge for help every day. When he would show up for court, there she was. When he went into the marketplace, there she was. She pleaded with him in front of his friends. She stalked him at home. Everywhere he went, there she was, constantly asking him to give her satisfaction.

In the Greek, the verb “wear out” means “to blacken the eye” or “to beat unmercifully.”

We learn some things about the judge in this story as well.

## THE COLDNESS OF THE JUDGE

- He Was Corrupt.

“*Even though I don’t fear God.*” Luke 18:4

This man did not care anything about God or man. All he cared about was himself and his own life. To put it simply, he was a wicked man! To understand this judge, we need to understand something of what the judicial system was like in those days. Warren Wiersbe describes it this way, “The courtroom was not a fine building, but a tent that was moved from place to place as the judge covered his circuit. The judge, not the law, set the agenda; and he sat regally in the tent, surrounded by his assistants. Anybody could watch the proceeding from outside, but only those who were approved and accepted could have their cases tried. This usually meant bribing one of the assistants so that he could call the judge’s attention to the case. This is still true in much of the third world countries today.”

- He Was Calloused.

“*or care what people think.*” Luke 18:4

Even though he had heard this widow’s petition and saw she had a case, he would not do as she asked. He simply turned a deaf ear to her pleas for help. He was hard-hearted and closed-minded to the needs of others.

- He Was Condescending.

“*Yet because this widow keeps coming to me.*” Luke 18:5

In spite of his spiritual condition, and in spite of the fact that he did not care for this widow in the least, in the end, he helped her! Why? He is concerned she will “*coming to me.*” This “*to beat down, to blacken the eye*”. It is a word

used to describe the effects of being beaten severely about the head. Evidently this means that her continually coming before him and her constant crying was hurting this man's reputation. She was giving him a "*black eye*" in the community!

The widow's persistent crying had metaphorically beaten him down as a boxer would an opponent, and he is tired of taking so many blows to the head. Whatever it was, the judge knew she would never give up. The judge knew there was no quit in the persistent widow.

How desperate are you for the miracle? Desperate enough to pray through the night? How many times are you willing to circle the promise? How long and loud will you knock on the door of opportunity? Until you knock the door down?

If you aren't desperate, you won't take desperate measures. And if you don't pray like it depends on God, the biggest miracles and best promises will remain out of your prayer reach. But if you learn how to pray hard, like the persistent widow, God will honor your bold prayers because your bold prayers honor God.

The persistent widow's method was unorthodox. She could have, and technically should have, waited for her court date. Going to the personal residence of the judge crossed a professional line. I'm surprised the judge didn't get a restraining order against her. But this reveals something about the nature of God. God could care less about protocol. If He did, Jesus would have chosen the Pharisees as His disciples. But that isn't who Jesus honored.

John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher, encountered many times of refusal, and denial, during his early years in the ministry. He logged a few of these instances in his diary:

Sunday A.M., May 5: Preached in St. Anne's. Asked not to come back.

Sunday P.M., May 5: Preached in St. John's. Deacons said, "Get out, and stay out!"

Sunday A.M., May 12: Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there either.

Sunday P.M., May 19: Preached in St. Somebody Else's. Deacons called a special meeting, and said I couldn't return.

Sunday A.M., May 26: Preached on street. Kicked off street.

Sunday A.M., June 2: Preached at the edge of town. Kicked off highway.

Sunday P.M., June 2: Preached in a pasture. Ten thousand came.

If you and I are to get an answer, it may take some action—Consistent, and persistent action!

George Mueller, the great prayer warrior said it well, "*The great fault of the children of God is, they do not continue in prayer; they do not go on praying; they do not persevere!*"

Jesus always honored desperate people:

Jesus honored the desperate woman with the issue of blood and touched the hem of his garment.

Jesus honored the prostitute who crashed a party at a Pharisee's home to anoint His feet.

Jesus honored the tax collector who climbed a tree in his three-piece suit just to get a glimpse of Jesus.

Jesus honored the four friends who cut in line and cut a hole in someone's ceiling to help their friend.

And in this parable, Jesus honored the woman who drove a judge crazy because she wouldn't stop knocking.

## **2. When You Want To Give Up, Look Up.**

*"And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?"* Luke 18:7

We can look up because God is always there. He is always faithful. He is always consistent. He is never too busy to answer our prayers.

We are a microwave generation, but we serve a crockpot God. In the parables, Jesus tells us what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. They knew what the Romans were like. They knew what Caesar was like, but Jesus had come to tell them what His Father was like. They had lived with some incorrect views of God.

Luke 18 is one of the end-time parables. He is explaining some of the things that will occur near His coming. In the last days, the world will be filled with uncaring, cold people and desperate problems. Times will be so desperate they will make you want to give up. They will likely be oppressed by people who live and act as if there is no judgment coming and no Kingdom of God.

*“He told them a parable to show them that they should always pray and not lose heart.”* Luke 18:1

There will be things that come into your life that make you want give up: to give up on life, to give up on yourself, and to give up on God.

*“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”* 1 John 5:14-15

He is talking about something we can know in prayer. Sometimes God's answers are direct. Sometimes God's answers are different. Sometimes God's answers are denials. Sometimes God's answers are delayed.

### **3. When Life Feels Hopeless, There Is A Greater Power Available To Us.**

*“I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.”* Luke 18:8

She couldn't solve her own problem. God wants to answer prayers. *Persistent prayer honors God because it expresses our complete dependence on Him.*

*“Ask and it shall be given you.”* Matthew 7:7

Ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking. The one who asks and keeps on asking shall receive. The one who seeks and keeps on seeking will find. The one who knocks and keeps on knocking will have it opened. When I pray, it reminds me Who the Source is. When prayer is not answered immediately, it helps me to focus on my Source. Many times, it brings me to the point of desperation where, if God does not answer, then I have no hope. I am totally dependent upon Him.

*“Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face forever more.”* 1 Chronicles 16:11

*“In prayer you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”* Jeremiah 29:13

*“Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”* Ephesians 3:20

*“However,” says Jesus, “when [not if] the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”* Luke 18:8

The mark of maturity is how long you can wait. Does God have to answer everything immediately? Because a lot of times it seems all that we are doing is sowing the seed.

This widow woman provoked the judge. We don't provoke the Lord when we pray. This woman disturbed the judge. We don't disturb God, we delight God when we pray. We aren't widows. The Bible says we are the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. This widow didn't have any friend to represent her in court. We have a friend, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our advocate in heaven. No matter what or who is against us, God is always for us. He will do what is right. In a world that will do you wrong, God will always do you right. Sometimes you have trouble that you can only take to God. He was for them, He was not against them.

*“The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. We don't always know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.” Romans 8:26*

*“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16*

When the praying gets tough, the tough keep on praying.

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin.” Hebrews 4:15*

The devil wants you to quit going to God in prayer. This widow has an adversary who was stealing from her. He's a picture of the devil who comes to steal and kill and destroy. The devil will steal your love, your joy, your peace, and will destroy your marriage and family. You and I are not strong enough to stand up against the devil in our own strength.

Paul said, *“In my weakness I am made strong.”* 2 Corinthians 12:9

*“For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”* 2 Corinthians 1:20

Every promise in the Bible is like a check, and Jesus signs that check.

*“Call to Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know.”* Jeremiah 33:3

*“Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart.”* Psalm 37:4