

Don't Lose Heart!

Luke 18:1-8

April 19, 2020

Scripture Reading: James 4:1-10

Opening Illustration: “Well, I tried!” How often do we say something like this in order to cover ourselves or to salve our conscience? How often do we give ourselves a pass even though we exert only the minimal amount of energy? On the other hand, how persistent can you be when you really want something? Example: If children really want to go for ice cream or to a movie, don't they plead, “Please! Please!”? Don't they keep bugging you about it until you finally give in? What does that show? It shows persistence and passion. We simply don't do that for things that we are only half-heartedly interested in.

I. Introduction

A. To the short series

1. In the next few weeks, I will be asking that the Lord would protect us from losing 3 things:
 - a. Losing heart—beginning to lose our persistence in prayer.
 - b. Losing perspective—beginning to think pridefully about ourselves and our walk with Christ.
 - c. Losing focus—beginning to lose clarity about what the gospel is and what it calls us to.

B. To this sermon

1. There is only so long that we can keep asking for something before we give up. I get this.
2. The time we DO keep asking shows us how much we really want what we are asking for.
 - a. Example: A wife who prays for the conversion of her husband only once and then says, “Well, I tried,” probably does not really care all that much whether her husband is converted.

II. The Character of the Judge.

A. He did not fear God.

1. What does this mean?
 - a. This seems to mean that this unjust judge was completely unconcerned with whether or not what he did was right.
 - b. This seems to mean that this unjust judge was completely unconcerned with punishment from God.
2. What can we say about this attitude?
 - a. It is stubborn.
 - i. This judge will do what he thinks he should do, and not even the absolutely terrifying wrath of God will do anything to change him.
 - b. It is stupid.
 - i. It is foolish to disregard God. **Psalm 14:1** “The fool has said in his heart ‘there is no god’...”

B. He did not care about people.

1. What does this mean?
 - a. This seems to mean that this unjust judge was completely unconcerned with whether or not what he did helped or hurt others.
 - b. This seems to mean that this unjust judge was completely selfish in his heart.
2. What can we say about this attitude?
 - a. It is callous.
 - i. There was no love in the heart of this judge.
 - ii. He just didn't care about the people he was supposedly serving.
 - b. It is corrupt.
 - i. There is something distasteful...disgusting about a judge that doesn't care about justice.
 - ii. To preserve justice is not only his job, it is his calling in the community.

III. The Constancy of the Widow.

A. Notice what she was asking for.

1. She was asking for justice.
 - a. The Greek word used here is *ekdikew*, which means:
 - i. **ἐκδικέω** fut. ἐκδικήσω; 1 aor. ἐξεδίκησα; (1) as helping someone secure justice *avenge, get justice for* (LU 18.3); (2) as bringing someone to judgment for something *punish* (2C 10.6) *take revenge* (RV 6.10)
 - ii. The point is that she was asking that the judge would do his job. She was asking him to bring an evil-doer to justice.
 - iii. Wouldn't we assume that a judge would be concerned with justice? Wasn't she right to think that the judge would be concerned with her situation?

B. Remember why she had to handle the situation this way:

1. She was a widow:
 - a. She didn't have a husband to stand up for her.
 - b. We can assume that she didn't have any adult children, who could argue for her.
2. She was desperate:
 - a. She had nothing, and whatever she did have must have been illegally taken from her.
 - b. She couldn't wait until tomorrow. She had to keep pushing.

C. Notice why the judge finally relented.

1. It was not because the judge was afraid of God...he wasn't.
2. It was not because the judge was concerned for the woman...he wasn't.
3. It was because he simply didn't want to be bothered anymore.

Point: This man was not a good man. He was not a good judge. The only way he could be coerced into listening to this poor woman was because she was getting on his nerves.

Is God like this?

IV. The Contrast between God and the Judge.

A. Is God like this?

1. Is He irritated by our requests?
 - a. He tells us to pray without ceasing. **1 Thessalonians 5:17**
 - b. He tells us to let our requests before God.
 - i. **Philippians 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
 - c. He tells us to pray at all times
 - i. **Ephesians 6:18** With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,
 - d. He tells us to be devoted to prayer
 - i. **Colossians 4:2** Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*;
2. Is He unconcerned about our struggles?
 - a. Surely this God Who loves us is concerned about our struggles.
 - i. After all, this parable was written so that we would pray. That's the point.
3. Is He moved only by an irritation with us?
 - a. Is he ever irritated with us at all?
 - i. We grieve the Spirit, but do we irritate Him?
4. Do we have to manipulate God to hear us?
 - a. **1 Kings 18:26-29**—Notice in this passage that the prophets of Baal cut themselves and cried out with a loud voice to get their god's attention. Do we have to do things like this?

B. Why, then, don't we automatically get whatever we ask for?

1. Ultimately, I don't know...the "why" questions are the hardest.
2. Sometimes we would dishonor God with what we ask from Him.

- a. **James 4:2-3** You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.
- 3. Sometimes what we ask for is directly contrary to His sovereign will.
 - a. **1 John 5:14** This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- 4. Perhaps it is sometimes because God loves us too much to give us what we want.
- 5. Perhaps it is sometimes because God refuses to be treated like a Divine vending machine.
- 6. It seems, from this text, that (at least sometimes) God wants us to be more diligent, more persistent.
 - a. See the end of James 4:2 above—You don't have because you don't ask!

V. The Conclusion to which this drives us.

A. The Principle: *When Jesus returns, will He find faith?*

- 1. What does this question mean?
 - a. Really, the issue is not whether or not God loves us enough to answer our prayers. The issue is, "Do we really believe that God will answer our prayer?". Do we have the faith it takes to be diligent?
 - i. **Hebrews 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- 2. To what does this question drive us?

B. The Practice: *What are you going to do about this?*

- 1. Are you going to withdraw?
- 2. Are you going to float?
- 3. Are you going to persist?

"If you believe in prayer at all, expect God to hear you. If you do not expect, you will not have. God will not hear you unless you believe He will hear you; but if you believe He will, He will be as good as your faith."

Charles Spurgeon