

Faith & Prayer

by Wayne Goff

In Luke 18, Jesus taught a parable for the purpose of encouraging men always to pray and to not lose heart (v. 1). The parable is about an unjust judge who does not fear God nor regard man, but who avenges a widow because of her constant coming to him asking for help (vv. 2-5).

The application is that God is a just Judge who will also avenge His own elect who cry out to Him day and night, though He may bear long with them (vv. 6-8a). Therefore men ought always to pray and not lose heart!

However, at the end of this parable and its obvious application, Jesus asks the seemingly strange question: *“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”* (v. 8). J.W. McGarvey suggests that this means that Jesus questions whether or not any of the just will have faith enough to pray until the coming of the Lord. Thus we have the important connection of **prayer** with **faith**. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), but without faith it is also impossible to pray as we ought! Who would pray if he believed it did no good whatsoever? On the other hand, one whose faith is strong and mighty will find himself to be a warrior of prayer!

So the application to you and me then is this: If our prayers seem to avail little or nothing, then we need to increase our faith. Faith comes by hearing God’s Word (Rom. 10:17), so in order to pray as we should, we need to study and learn God’s will. Dear reader, are you willing to do what it takes to improve prayer in your life?

An example of this connection between faith and prayer is found in James 1. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him **ask** of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him **ask in faith**, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”* (vv. 5–8). You see that God wants the man of faith to pray for wisdom, and we could say by way of application that God wants us to pray for anything we hope to receive from Him.

We see again the connection between prayer and faith when the apostle John wrote: *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him.”* 1 John 5:14–15. In order to have confidence in your prayers, you must ask according to His will. But how do you know what is His will? Read your Bibles! That’s the only way you know for sure what is God’s will.

Jesus’ prayers in the Bible are a gold mine of information and encouragement. Read the prayers which are recorded in the four gospels (Lk. 3:21-22; 4:42; 5:15-16; 11:1-4; John 11:41ff; 12:27-28; 14:16; ch. 17; Luke 22:39-46; and 23:34-36). They show each of the following traits:

1. **Humility.** One cannot pray to God without recognizing one’s own station in life. God is in heaven and you and I are here on earth. Remember that as you pray.
2. **Dependence.** God wants us to realize that we can do nothing without Him, and to give Him credit for the things He has done for us. It is no shame to admit that we are dependent creatures, because that is exactly what we are.
3. **Trust.** One who prays to God trusts in God. He feels relieved once he has finished praying because He knows that matters are now in the Lord’s hands. *“Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”* (1 Pet. 5:7). Whatever the Lord’s answer may be, you can believe that He sees, knows and cares.

Dear reader, do not grow weary in praying to God. He is there. He cares for you. He hears, understands and answers prayer. If He takes longer to answer than you think He should, then realize that time means nothing to God. Just do your part: trust and obey.

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