

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God

Lessons on Prayer

Luke 18: 1-17

In this chapter Luke revisits the subject of prayer by reporting on several situations which Jesus used to bring out key principles. In some ways similar to the 17th chapter with a variety of lessons, but dissimilar here in that there appears to be an underlying correlation. So what do a persistent woman and an unjust judge, a tax collector and a Pharisee, and a bunch of babies and little children have in common with each other and with prayer?

I. God is Both Interested and Attentive (verses 1-8)

The point of this first story is to encourage prayer at all times because God is interested in every detail of our life.

- A. An ungodly judge and a persistent widow
- B. A favorable response is finally forthcoming because she is wearing the judge out with her persistence
- C. God is not an unjust God Who does not want to be bothered — He will bring justice quickly to those who call out to Him
- D. Even so, will Jesus find faith here when He comes?

II. God Responds to the Humble and Honest (verses 9-14)

In this second story, Jesus contrasts those who think they are sufficiently righteous to pray with those who are broken and feel they have no right to ask

- A. The reasoning and attitude of the Pharisee
- B. The attitude of the tax collector
- C. Many people do not pray because they think they are unworthy or some sin disqualifies them
- D. God welcomes and listens to the humbled and honest person who prays out of desperation

III. God Grants the Kingdom to Those Who Are Childlike in Their Faith

- A. Let the little children (and babies) come to me
- B. Mistaken values of the disciples: it is not the wise and prudent, but the simple who are welcome
 - 1. Worldly wisdom and achievements do not give special status with God
 - 2. Being *simple* is not the same as being stupid
 - 3. Being *simple* is not the same as being ignorant — we need to be growing in the knowledge of God and His Word
- C. What is a child like? (in relation to Kingdom qualities)
 - 1. Dependent and helpless (even if not intellectually recognized, it is automatically demonstrated)
 - 2. Trusting and confident (in the parents' ability)
 - 3. Wonder and amazement, always amused and delighted with life's simple things
- D. In all of these ways we are to be like children with our Heavenly Father

Conclusion: These three lessons on prayer should give everyone of us great confidence in approaching God: 1) He cares about every detail 2) He hears and rewards the humble and broken in spirit 3) He seeks child-like faith — not theological precision. Therefore, with great confidence, we ought always to pray and not to lose heart.

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are you most childlike? And least childlike?
2. When your heart condemns you and the enemy tells you that you cannot pray, what ought you to do?
3. How can Bible reading and memorization help you to pray more effectively?
4. What was the main problem with the Pharisee?
5. We have considered this before, but what does it mean to pray without ceasing?
6. To what extent is God attentive to the details of our life?
7. List some times or situations when prayer would not be appropriate

NOTES

a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner! I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.' And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

Luke 18: 1-17 NASB

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 NLT