

# Powerful prayers

Luke 18:1-8

1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart....

2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.

3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'

4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man,

5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said.

7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?

8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

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Jesus gave His disciples a mission. Go make disciples. One of the greatest spiritual threats to disciples of Jesus fulfilling their mission is losing heart.

To lose heart is from the Greek word....

egkakeo (eng-kak-eh'-o)

Depending upon the circumstance it can mean...

- To be afraid
- To become discouraged
- To become weary or tired in well doing
- To despair
- To faint

When you lose heart, you want to quit.

Jesus knew that as His disciples carried out their mission, they His were going to face some very difficult circumstances that could cause them to lose heart and want to quit.

Persecution was at the top of His list of concerns for His disciples.

Why?

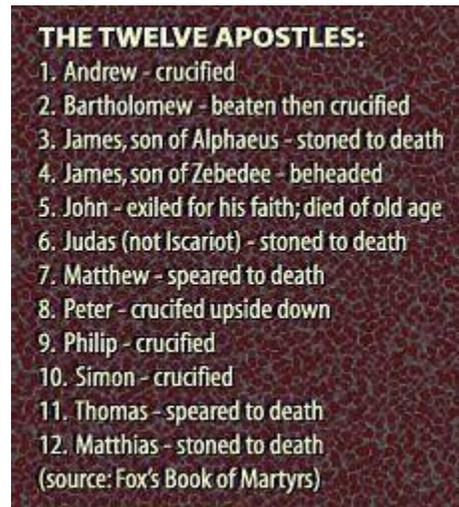
The prophets of Israel said that the messiah would come and establish His Kingdom in Israel. His capital would be Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, He would rule the world.

His disciples wanted to know when He was going to establish His kingdom on the earth.

Jesus told them what would happen on the earth before He came and established His Kingdom on the earth.

Jesus told them that He was going to suffer injustice from men.

Jesus told them that after He suffered injustice, they and those that believed because of their testimony were going to suffer incredible injustices for following Him.



We read in the Book of Acts how Saul of Tarsus was the leading activist for persecution of Christians in Israel. We can reach in ancient history how the Roman emperor Nero had Christians covered with wax, put on polls, and then set on fire to serve as lamps at his garden parties. Christians were also used for sport as prey for lions and wild dogs in the Roman coliseum. Jesus knew they were going to be treated unjustly. Jesus knew that persecution could cause His disciples to lose heart and want to quit.

He tells them a story of a widow that was treated unjustly. He uses this story to show them how to avoid losing heart.

Widows and the elderly in general are particularly vulnerable to scammers.

The widow in this story was unsuccessful in her first attempt to receive justice from her city judge. But she does not give up and continues to bring her appeal to the judge. She obviously believed that her appeals would make a difference.

The city judge has no regard for justice. He does not fear God or man. But because he grows weary of the widow's persistent requests, he relents and avenges her. To avenge means to make right that which was wrong.

The point Jesus made to His disciples was even an unrighteous judge will relent and avenge a widow if she believes her persistent appeals will make a difference.

Jesus had already promised His disciples that He would return and avenge them. They had something more reliable to stand on than the widow's belief in her persistence. They had His Word.

While they were waiting and suffering, they should be like the widow. They should always pray and not lose heart.

It appears that we have some very difficult days in front of us.

- The mayor of OKC has issued a shelter in place order through April 16.
- Nearly every day we receive reports of people losing their jobs or their hours being reduced.
- We are constantly hearing news reports about the potential damage of this virus, the potential damage this shut down could cause in our economy, and the potential damage this shut down could cause in our society. Those dangers are very real. Our President has attempted to reduce the damage by approving a stimulus package and suspending certain debt payments.
- But no one knows when this shut down is going to end.
- Nearly every day I receive reports about tensions rising in families.

Church, we have a mission to perform. We are called to make disciples. That is our purpose. Because of modern technology, we can shelter in place and still connect with people. Because our main strategy to make disciples is through small groups, our small group leaders can still connect with their members and the members of our small groups can still connect with one another. All of us can stay connected through our small groups and be the church. Because of modern technology, all of us can be a witness to the lost and invite them to join our small group meetings. Church we can stay connected to the church and to our purpose. Being connected to our church and to our purpose is critical to our personal spiritual health and growth.

But there is one other connection that we must make and maintain during these difficult days that is critical and vital to our spiritual health and growth. If we are going to avoid losing heart, we must develop our personal connection to God through prayer.

What Jesus said to His disciples in this story, is what Jesus is saying to us to today. He wants us to always pray and not lose heart.

I want to take some time this morning and share with you some practical lessons about developing your personal connection with God through prayer.

When I became a Christian, I was taught that even Jesus devoted Himself to prayer to His heavenly Father.

[Luke 5:15-16](#)

[15 However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.](#)

[16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.](#)

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I was then introduced to a guide called how to have a quiet time with God. A quiet time is time that you personally devote to be alone with God every day in prayer. I made a commitment when I was 17 to follow Jesus and have a daily quiet time to help me develop my personal connection with my heavenly Father.

I was told that in order to be consistent in having a quiet time, I needed to follow Jesus and determine these things.

- Jesus had a time.
- Jesus had a place.
- Jesus had a plan.

Mark 1:35

35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. NKJV

Matt 14:23

23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. NKJV

Luke 11:1-4

1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

2 So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."

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- Jesus had a time.
- Jesus had a place.
- Jesus had a plan.

This counsel I received was a life changer for me. The time, place, and plan have changed over the last 48 years, but I still have a time, a place, and a plan. As a result, I have remained continuously personally connected to God through prayer.

Without question, following this counsel has been the single most important practice in my Christian life and has kept me from losing heart and quitting.

What causes you to lose heart and want to quit?

- Loss of relationships
- Loss of results
- Loss of reputation
- Loss of opportunity
- Loss of finances
- Loss of job
- Loss of health
- Loss of a loved one

As I have gone through these experiences, having a daily quiet time has been the single most important practice in my Christian life and has kept me from losing heart and quitting.

It was difficult to establish this routine in my life. My flesh and the devil resisted it. I have repented to God many times for allowing my flesh and the devil to win on certain days or during certain seasons of my life.

But early on I learned some very important lessons about being alone with God that has caused me to become very consistent in my quiet time.

- Spending time alone with our heavenly Father is an incredible privilege.

Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

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- Our heavenly Father delights in being alone with us.

Zephaniah 3:17

17 The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

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- Worshipping and praising our heavenly Father for who He is and who we are to Him fills our soul with His Spirit.

Eph 5:18-21

18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

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(He will reign-Dennis Jernigan)

The Lord is shaking....

- The economic foundations of the world
- The ecclesiastical foundation of the church

But the Lord is also using this circumstance to shake the spiritual foundation of our personal relationship with Lord. That shaking is exposing just how weak our personal connection is to Him. He wants so much more. Will you give Him more?

Revelation 3:20 says....

Revelation 3:20

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me.

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