

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups May 6th 2007

Deeper into prayer – Persistent prayer

The Widow and the Judge Luke 18:1-8



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon.

We then go onto read vs 3&4, where Jesus tells his story and we are introduced to the characters of the judge and the widow. Judge – Neither feared God nor cared about men. When Jehosaphat king of Jerusalem commissioned the judges he gave them the following brief and warning! (2Chr19 5-7). By saying that he had no fear of God, we may surmise that this judge was unjust, showed partiality and took bribes. He has no sense of shame for what he does, all he cares about is himself. The widow, keeps going to the judge with a plea for justice against her adversary. In many parts of the OT, God's people are charged to care for and protect the widow. Isaiah 1 vs. 17. Jesus often uses the widow as a symbol of piety and vulnerability. Since this widow brings her own case to court she cannot have anyone to care or support her.

This parable draws on opposites rather than similarities. On one hand we have the judge – powerful, rich, corrupt, without shame. On the other hand the widow – vulnerable, poor, alone, seeking justice. They are poles apart, and yet despite this distance the widow gains justice through her persistence.

In vs 6-8a, When we pray, we are not appealing to an unjust judge, but praying to a loving heavenly father completely righteous, just and faithful to his promises. However hopeless their/our situation may seem to be, This is a story to give the disciples/us hope to persist in prayer and ends with a warning. Vs 8b. Where does the motivation for this persistence come from?

1. persistence in prayer will be born out of need. The widow was persistent in prayer because of her need for help. She could not help herself. We too, will only persevere in prayer if we need God and are dependent on him. If we are self-reliant, after a while we will find there is no reason to pray.

2. persistence comes as we pursue God's justice. The widow knew the Law commanded that widows be cared for. She persisted because she knew her cause was just before God. We are called to pray for these situations, example of William Wilberforce, Trade Justice, Stop the traffic etc.

3. persistence is made possible in the light of God's promises and faithfulness. 8a, Jesus promises that God's chosen ones will get justice and quickly.

At times, we may feel that God does not seem to hear our prayers; how then are we to persevere? It is at these times that we fall back on the promises and faithfulness of God. From the bible and from our own lives we can find stories of how God has fulfilled his promises and been faithful in the past; as we remember these our perseverance is strengthened.



Witness: questions to discuss

1. Where in our lives and our world do we encounter situations which oppose God's justice? How can we take action in prayer?
2. What have you persisted in prayer over in the past, what is your story? What are the main hindrances to prayer?

3. Make a list as a group of the promises which we hold onto from the bible to help us persevere in prayer

4. Identify individually, times where God has been faithful and you have seen his promises fulfilled - Occasions which build your faith as you recall them.

5. You Could compile these in a prayer bookmark, or card to help us persist in prayer?

6. Why did Jesus have to teach this parable, where does faith fit in ?