

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 5/4/16

Growing In The Christian Life

Learning To Pray

Scripture: Luke 18:1-43

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

¹Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ²He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴"For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

⁹To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

The Little Children and Jesus

¹⁵People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

¹⁸A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁹"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ²⁰You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and

mother.”²¹ “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy.²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” ²⁸ Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” ²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

³¹ Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³² He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; ³³ they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” ³⁴ The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

A Blind Beggar Receives His Sight

³⁵ As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening.³⁷ They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” ³⁸ He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ³⁹ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁰ Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, I want to see,” he replied. ⁴² Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” ⁴³ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

There is no greater work than the work of praying, for prayer is work of the highest order. Prayer means contact and fellowship with God; it is not simply asking God for things, though it does include that. Our Lord related the parable in Luke 18: 1-8 in order to stress the great importance of prayer. Notice that in verse 1 He said that we “should always pray.....” It is the privilege of all to pray, and in this chapter we are given five examples:

- (1) In verse 3, we read of a praying Widow.
- (2) In verse 11, we read of a praying Pharisee.
- (3) In verse 13, we read of a praying Publican.
- (4) In verse 18, we read of a praying Ruler.
- (5) In verse 38, we read of a praying Beggar.

1. WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

There are many ways in which this question can be answered, but let us confine our answer to the suggestion that arises out of the word "should". It simply means, "We owe it to pray....." Prayer is an obligation. In what sense is praying an obligation?

- **(1) We owe it to ourselves to pray.** In the infinite mercy of God, we have been given a new life; we have been made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1: 4), and this life can only be maintained by prayer. Only as we pray can our lives be what God wants them to be; only as we pray can we know the secret of victory over sin and over the power of the Enemy; only as we pray can our Christian service be what it ought to be.
- **(2) We owe it to others to pray.** Think what an amazing ministry we can exercise on behalf of others if we know how to pray, and if this is true, how solemn a thing it is not to pray for them! - look up 1 Samuel 12: 23. As we think of the need, of the sin, sorrow and suffering and the broken hearts all around us, is it not an obligation resting upon us to pray for God's gracious relief and help and salvation to be given to these needy ones?
- **(3) We owe it to our Lord to pray.** In His Word, God has given us many "very great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1: 4), and each of these promises invites us to trust Him and to secure from Him all that we need for life and service. He has, as it were, given to us a blank check book; each check is signed with the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (John 14: 13), and the resources of the Bank of Heaven are exhaustless (Philippians 4: 19). We owe it to our Lord to cash these checks, to go to Him regularly in prayer and to draw upon the boundless supplies of divine grace and power which are available to us.

2. WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

The answer is "*always*", which means at all times and in all circumstances - see Ephesians 6: 18 and 1 Thessalonians 5: 17. Here are some practical suggestions as to when we ought to pray:-

- **(1) At regular times.** We do many things every day by habit. We should likewise form the habit of prayer - look up Psalm 55: 17, and compare Daniel 6: 10.
- **(2) When the Holy Spirit urges us.** As surely as we go into the place of prayer so surely is the Holy Spirit present to guide us in our praying - look up Romans 8: 26-27. It is wonderful to be thus guided by Him to pray for someone for whom previously we had no thought of praying, and then afterwards to discover that our prayer had been the channel through which God met a special need. Have you not had this experience?
- **(3) When cares and troubles press upon us.** The Lord gives a special promise for times of trouble - look it up in Psalm 50: 15, and notice that His promise is not for deliverance from the trouble but for something better than this - deliverance in the trouble. Paul and Silas enjoyed such a deliverance - look up Acts 16: 25.
- **(4) At all times of special need.** Such times arise in your life and mine - look up Acts 12: 5, and compare James 5: 13-15 and 17-18.

- **(5) When we can, we should pray with others.** There is a place for private prayer (Matthew 6: 6), but there is a special invitation to, and a value in, united prayer - look up Matthew 18: 19-20 and Acts 1: 13-14.

3. HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

Consider three of the illustrations in this chapter which show us how we ought to pray.

- **(1) We are to pray like the Publican, and not like the Pharisee (verses 5; 10-13).** We are to pray with no confidence in ourselves. All our confidence must be in the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for us so that we (though sinners) can approach a holy God in prayer (verse 13). If we come to God like the Pharisee He will not hear us, but if we come to Him as the publican did, He will hear us.
- **(2) We are to pray persistently, without giving up (verses 1-8).** We so easily get discouraged when we pray if God does not seem to send the answer at once! Read the parable of the persistent widow. The lesson is this: *If a bad man, (and the unjust judge was), will yield to the pleading of a poor widow, how much more will God yield to the earnest prayers of His people! Compare verses 38-39.*
- **(3) We are to pray with child-like simplicity and trust (verses 16-17).** We must always come before God as children coming to their heavenly Father. "Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try."

Are you proving what a practical thing prayer is, that nothing is too great or too small to pray about, and that prayer is the greatest work on this earth?