"Persistent Praying"

(Pray without Ceasing)

Luke 11 5-13; 18:1-8; and 1 Thessalonians 5:17

1/27/2013

God desires to see persistency in our prayer life!

2 Bible Examples:

I. **The Persistent <u>Friend</u>** (Luke 11:5-13)

II. **The Persistent <u>Widow</u>** (Luke 18:1-8)

* **Be Persistent in Praying <u>in Every situation & circumstance!</u>** (1 Thess. 5:17)

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INTRODUCTION:

Of all the mysteries of the prayer world the need of persevering prayer is one of the greatest. Andrew Murray

Let it be your business every day, in the secrecy of the inner chamber, to meet the holy God. You will be repaid for the trouble it may cost you. The reward will be sure and rich. Andrew Murray

Prayer does help, praying always and not stopping will bring the answer. Only give God time. Andrew Murray

Persevering prayer teaches you to discover and confess, and to give up everything that hinders the coming of the blessing, everything there may not be in accordance with the father's will. Andrew Murray

Persevering prayer leads to closer fellowship with him who alone can teach us to pray, to a more entire surrender, to draw near under no covering but that of the blood and the Spirit. Andrew Murray

Persevering prayer calls for a closer and more simple abiding in Christ alone. Andrew Murray

There may be things in God's government, things that have to be put right through our prayer before the answer can fully come. Andrew Murray

God loves fellowship!

He created man in "His own image," giving him a spirit, so that man could do what no other animal or creature could do -- namely: intelligently commune or fellowship with the Creator.

God really desires that we rely upon Him daily!

He wants us to come to Him.

He enjoys us asking, seeking, and knocking.

Unlike people who get annoyed at beggars, nosy people, and people banging on our door. God wants it! He delights in it!

"The prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15:8)

Not only does God want to hear us, He wants to bless us, give to us!

The word "give" occurs 5 times in verses 7 - 11.

God desires to see persistency in our prayer life!

2 Bible Examples:

I. The Persistent Friend (Luke 11:5-13)

No one appreciates being awakened in the middle of the night.

A. God's Giving is <u>GUARANTEED</u> (v. 9)
(God answers prayer with <u>certainty</u>)

Note the emphasis on the <u>certainty</u> of the promise of answered prayer.

V. 9 - ***"<u>shall</u> be. . . <u>shall</u>. . . <u>shall</u>***"

Everyone who <u>sincerely</u> asks, seeks, and knocks will receive answers.

This promise, when compared to the rest of Scripture, is not a "blank check" that applies to anyone or any request.

The "anyone" refers to those who have God as their "<u>Father</u> which is in Heaven" (it applies to sons of God, born again believers)

This promise to answered prayer is also conditioned upon your:

1) <u>Closeness</u> to Christ and His <u>Word</u> (i.e. so that you ask according to His will - I Jn. 5:14-15)

2) <u>Obedience</u> to Christ (I Jn. 3:22 - *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight"*)

3) <u>Faith</u> (Mk. 11:24 - *"Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."*)
(cp. James 1:6, 7)

Very often, the reason we *"have not"* is because we *"<u>ask</u> not"* (James 4:2)

"If I told you that God has promised that if ye will prepare the soil properly and sow wheat in the ground, you would get wheat, you would say, "Of course, If you don't put the seed in the ground, you won't get wheat." In just the same way, if you pray you will have, and if you don't pray you will not have. It is as simply as that. God wants to help you, but this help is extended to those who ask Him for it. He will be found of the people who seek Him, and He will open the door for the people who knock." (Gutzke, Matthew, p. 62).

"Ask" implies a request for provision (for basic needs, for things that would glorify God)

"Seek" implies a request for answers (ex. wisdom cp. Ja. 1:5 - *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.")*

"Knock" implies a request for opportunity (an entrance into something, an "open door" of opportunity). Jesus promised the church of Philadelphia, *"Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it"* (Rev. 3:8) The church at Antioch saw how God *"had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles"* (Acts 14:27)

When you need something from the one who has plenty, ASK!

When you need something of real value, SEEK!

When you are shut out and need or want entrance, KNOCK!

Knocking on someone's door is something I don't often like to do. I feel, "I don't want to be a bother," or "Perhaps my visit is not welcomed."

Sometimes people --ridden with guilt or because it has been so long since they came to God's door in prayer-- are reluctant to knock.

However, unless you knock, the door won't be opened!

The word "ask" alludes to our mouth
The word "seek" alludes to our eyes
The word "knock" alludes to our hands

The words *"seek and knock"* show us that there is more to prayer than just asking. If the request can be accomplished by human effort, we cannot sluggishly or complacently remain passive until the answer drops out of the sky.

Get to it and seek God's will until you find it; go out and knock on every door until the right door opens!

B. God's Giving is <u>GENEROUS</u> (v. 10)
(God answers prayer with <u>impartiality</u>)

Whereas verse 9 emphasizes the <u>certainty</u> of God in answering prayer, verse 10 emphasizes the <u>impartiality</u> of God in answering prayer.

NOTE: The emphasis: "*for <u>everyone</u> . . . <u>he</u> that seeketh* (no matter who he is) . . . *to <u>him</u> that knocketh* (no matter who he is, as long as he is knocking)

The reason why many Christians are discouraged from praying is because they believe the devil's lie as he whispers in their ear: "God isn't interested in you" "God won't answer your prayer."

God is <u>not reluctant</u> to give.

He will <u>not mock</u> our requests (Ja. 1:5 - *"He upbraideth not")*

He does not give trash or less than the best, but rather "*He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*" (Eph. 3:20)

God does not give based upon the color of your skin; the importance you have in the eyes of the world;' the position you hold in this local church.

Some of the greatest prayer warriors have been "ordinary" people! God shows no bias, favoritism. He wants to answer your prayer. The <u>sincere</u> prayers of <u>everyone</u> who belongs to Him.

Note: The present tense of the verbs: "*ask, seek, knock*" (v. 7), and *"asketh, seeketh, knocketh"* (v. 8) suggests that we need persistence in our praying.

To test the sincerity and earnestness of our requests God will often allow us to come to Him several times before He will grant our request.

It does not mean that He was too busy to hear us the first time, but for our benefit He may delay an answer to test how serious we are!

The common phrase: "Seek the Lord" implies spiritual effort!
(Dt. 4:29, I Chron. 16:11, Is. 55:6, Jer. 29:13, Ps. 105:4; Prov. 8:17)

Jer. 29:13 - *"And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."*

C. God's Giving is GOOD (v. 11-13)
(God answers prayer with goodness)

"Being evil" - Jesus asserts the depravity of man. He who knew all men's hearts boldly declares the inherent sinfulness of man.

***"Being evil"* -** Contrary to the thinking of the New Age philosophy, we do not have divinity with in us (for God is not evil); we don't even have a "spark" of divinity.

Though man is evil, he still has a capacity to give what he considers good gifts to his children.

Even unsaved people seek the well-being of their children.

Even some lost parents are concerned that their children are well fed, well clothed, kept protected; receive a good education; have their physical, emotional, and intellectual needs met. Even sinners make plans for their children's future.

"The most naturally selfless relationship among human beings is that of parents their children. We are more likely to sacrifice for our children, even to the point of giving up our lives, than for any other person in the world. Yet the greatest human parental love cannot compare with God's (Mac. p. 446)

v.13 - The Holy Spirit is given to all believers at salvation, however, His Power, & Blessings are given to those who ask!

Matthew 7:11 - "Good things" - Everything <u>good</u> that we have is because of the kindness of God, because of His righteous nature God cannot give anything but good to His children.

James 1:17 - *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."*

Contrary to the devil's lies, God does not withhold or forbid that which is for our good. If He forbids it, it is because it is bad for us.

One of the good things that God gives to all of His children is the Holy Spirit. Ever since the day of Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit has been given to all believers (Acts 10:45; Rom. 8:9) However, before Pentecost, people had to ask for the spirit and His empowerment. For this reason Luke records: *"If ye then, being evil, know h ow to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"*

Jesus' point: If depraved, sinful, selfish, fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, is it possible that our holy, perfect all wise, all knowing, all caring loving Heavenly Father would fail to give good gifts to His children who ask? NO!

II. **The Persistent <u>Widow</u>** (Luke 18:1-8)

Widows were not taken care of, often neglected or ignored. Viewed with insignificance in Ancient times.

God however said that taking care of widows and orphans was true religion.

* **Be Persistent in Praying <u>in Every situation & circumstance!</u>** (1 Thess. 5:17)

What is God's will for you?

What is it that God desires from us as His children? What can we give to God that would please His heart?

READ I Thess. 5:16-18

V. 18

For "<u>this</u>" is the will of God.

The word "this" refers to the three imperatives stated previously.

In the commands found in verses 16-18, that which God is <u>emphasizing</u> is <u>not</u> the words

"rejoice," "pray," or "give thanks," but rather the words "evermore," "without ceasing," and "in everything."

(NOTE: these modifiers come before the verbs in the Greek)

It's relatively easy to rejoice, but to <u>always</u> rejoice is not so easy.

To pray is not such a great demand; what is remarkable is the command to "without ceasing" pray.

To give thanks is not too much to ask, but to "in everything" give thanks is another story.

What God desires of us is <u>consistency</u>.

There is too much "fair weather" Christianity today.

Too much "on/off" "up/down" "in the valley or on the mountaintop" Christianity.

"Consistency" = faithfulness; to do something without fail; to be steady, day in and day out; to be like clockwork.

In Verses 16-18, God outlines for us a "<u>trio</u>" of internal experiences that we are to be involved in consistently.

We must always remember that <u>consistency is God's desire</u>.

A. GOD DESIRES CONSISTENCY IN OUR <u>REJOICING</u> (v. 16)

"Evermore" = always
It's easy to rejoice when things are going smooth; when circumstances are favorable; when our agenda is falling into line as planned.

But what happens to our joy when trials fall, when opposition arises, when suffering knocks at our door? (cp. Ja. 1:2ff)

The command "rejoice always" is remarkable when you consider what the Thess. believers had already gone through (1:6; 2:14; 3:2-4).

Peter rejoiced that he had the privilege to suffer shame for Christ (Acts 5:41).

What keeps us from rejoicing? ANSWER: A bad reaction to bad circumstances.

If you study the life of Paul, you find a man who was consistent. He had joy when he was abased and when he abounded (Phil. 4:12). He could rejoice when he was out preaching the Gospel freely, and when he was whipped, chained, and imprisoned for reaching the Gospel (Acts 16:25).

For Paul, suffering and rejoicing were not mutually exclusive.

He knew that the Christians could have both at the same time. Though these two human experiences are seemingly contradictory or paradoxical, Paul could rejoice while suffering *SEE II Cor. 6:4-10 **v. 10).

Was Paul a "blind optimist"?

Did he merely believe in the "power of positive thinking?" NO.

Unlike the man-centered theologians of today, he had a Biblical basis for his positive attitude.

How did Paul and how can we rejoice no matter what? SEE II Cor. 4:16-18.

1. Paul had a daily spiritual renewal (v. 16)

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (II Cor. 12:10).

2. Paul knew the final score (v. 17)

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

HYMN - "It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus."

3. Paul keeps his eyes on the eternal (v. 18).

He lived for Christ and His Church.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24).

--They can take away our money, but not our riches in Christ.

--Our earthly house may burn down, but our heavenly home will not.

--Our present health may deteriorate, but our future body is incorruptible.

--They may kill the body, but not the soul.

We need to rejoice in times of need and in times of abundance.

We need to rejoice when life is easy and when it's difficult.

We need to rejoice when people respond readily to the Gospel, and when they don't respond to our witness.

As long as we are doing right (obeying God), we can know that God is working, whether external circumstances reveal it or not.

This requires FAITH. The Christian who remains in depression and sadness is in sin, because in one way or another he is disbelieving (mistrusting) God.

B. GOD DESIRES CONSISTENCY IN OUR <u>PRAYER LIFE</u> (v. 17)

"The prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15:8)

God is pleased (receives joy) when we pray.

Those who please God even more are those who consistently pray.

To pray "without ceasing" does not mean to pray non-stop or to be on our knees

24 hours a day.

Such an interpretation would be inconsistent with Paul's own claim that he prayed "unceasingly" (Rom. 1:9; I Th. 1:2-3) while he was still a busy missionary (church planter) (Hiebert, p. 241).

We need a spirit of unceasing prayer; we need to be in constant communion with God (throughout the day; with our eyes open; while we do our daily jobs), wherever we are and whatever we do.

God is not speaking here about prayer int he sense of bowing the head, closing the eyes, moving the lips, but about the lifting up of our hearts to Him in repeated utterances throughout our daily routine.

Though we do need seasons of prayer and set-apart appointments with God like Daniel and David, our praying should not be limited by time and place or to set hours of prayer.

When God brings someone to your mind, that is a time to pray.

When God burdens you with spiritual need, that is a time to pray.

When you are worried, that is a time to pray.

When you think a sinful thought, that is a time to pray and confess it.

Throughout the day, pause and pray.

C. GOD DESIRES CONSISTENCY IN OUR <u>GIVING OF THANKS</u> (v. 18)

Ps. 92:1-2 - "It is a <u>good thing</u> for us to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing

praises unto thy name, oh Most High. To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."

A. THANKING GOD FOR OTHERS

Paul begins most of his Epistles by saying how he thanks God for fellow Christians (Rom. 1:8; I Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; Philem. 4)

B. THANK GOD FOR MEALS

ILLUS: How Samuel gave thanks (I Sam. 9:13)

ILLUS: How Jesus, when on earth, gave thanks (Mt. 15:36; 26:26)

ILLUS: How Paul, even in front of the heathen, gave thanks Acts 27:35

Other exhortations to give thanks - Rom. 14:6; I Cor. 10:30; I Tim. 4:3.

We are not to limit our thanks giving to the fourth Thursday in November (We are not to restrict our thanks giving to "Thanksgiving")

C. THANK GOD FOR GOOD TIMES AND HARD TIMES

The only way we can give thanks for everything is by:

1.Letting God take control of our lives

2.Knowing that God is in control of our lives

How can we thank God for everything? (Where is our power to always be thankful?)

1. Letting God take control

a.God can control us when we are following Christ (Eph. 5:1-

4) NOTE: V. 4 - Our tongue is not for foolish, unclean speech but for thanksgiving.

b.God can control us when we are <u>filled with His Spirit</u> (Eph. 5:18-20)

When the Spirit is in control we <u>can do</u> that which does <u>not</u> come <u>naturally</u>.

Thanking God for trying, tough times does not come natural or easy. Even being thankful for good times and expressing it does not come natural.

<u>Why</u> should we thank God for everything? (What is our <u>motive</u> to always be thankful?)

2. <u>Knowing God is in control</u>

a. Remember: God is in control in <u>good</u> times. TURN TO Col. 3:17.

Because what we do for God is accomplished through the power of Jesus (Jn. 15:5), we are to thank God the Father by Jesus.

(Even our power to thank God comes <u>by means of</u> Jesus).

b. Remember: God is in control in <u>hard</u> times. TURN TO James 1:2ff.

The trials we experience are for our spiritual maturity.

1. God is teaching us about ourselves "Trying of your faith" = testing to prove genuineness.

2. God is producing patience and completeness

CONCLUSION:

V. 18
What God commands can only be done by those "in Christ Jesus" (believers).

An unbeliever does not have the desire or ability to rejoice, pray, and give thanks unconditionally.

"In Christ Jesus" = Our union with Christ gives us the ability to perform what God asks of us.

Remember, though it seems hard to be consistent in performing these activities, God never demands that which He does not give the power to perform.

This power comes only as you abide "in Christ."

Rom. 8:28 - "All things work together for good . . ."