**FAITHFUL PRAYER**

**The Warp & Woof Of My Life**

Confession time. The weakest link in my life of faith is persistent prayer. I’ve heard from many other Christians that their greatest struggle is also a consistent, fervent seven-day-a-week life of praying. We all have bursts of prayers, especially when sudden danger or crisis comes screaming into our world. It’s easy to pray in a foxhole when bombs and bullets are exploding all around you. “Lord, please help me” is probably the most quoted prayer, the shortest prayer, and the most sincere prayer ever brought before God’s throne. My guess is you have likely prayed it with great energy in your emergencies of life.

Remember George Bailey in *It’s A Wonderful Life*? Desperate. Scared. He had just been told by the jealous Mr. Potter, after revealing Bailey Savings & Loan has defaulted, and after seeing his $15,000 life insurance policy, said, “Why George, you’re worth more dead than alive.” Contemplating suicide, and at wits end, believing he was going to prison, he tearfully mutters this line: “Lord, I’m not a praying man, but if You’re up there and You can hear me, show me the way. I’m at the end of my rope. Show me the way O God.” Sadly, that’s how far too many treat prayer. They see God as a 9-1-1 call in moments of impending catastrophe. He is a drive-through ATM machine that dispenses help on demand.

What is our prayer life really like? Let us all be honest.

One of the most soul-searching questions in the entire Bible is found in Christ’s parable of the Unjust Judge & the Persistent Widow in 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*?”**

Does that soul-searching question haunt you as much as it does me?

This is one of only two cases from the 24 parables recorded in Luke’s gospel where the Lord identifies the specific purpose of the parable (the other one is the very next one in vss. 9-13). He says Jesus spoke this parable to teach us to keep praying, no matter what. In fact, I have nearly concluded from my reading of Luke that prayer is the heart and soul, the center and circumference, the warp and woof of saving faith. As the homespun proverb puts it, “seven days without prayer makes one weak.”

When I say that prayer is the warp and woof of saving faith I suppose some of you will wonder what on earth I’m talking about. In weaving a fabric together you must have the warp (the threads that run vertical – top to bottom) and the woof (the threads that run horizontal – side to side). It truly is the heart and soul, the center and circumference, of my relationship with God. In other words it is everything!

Prayer is first and foremost a total dependence on God’s omniscience (complete knowledge) and omnipotence (complete power) to hear and answer me. My faith comes from “*hearing*” God’s Word (Rom. 10:17), but then responds by full reliance on Him in prayer. That is why Jesus said regarding prayer – “*When the Son of Man comes will He find FAITH on earth*?” To the extent I live my life in dependence on prayer is the extent to which I display my faith.

Luke shows us that Jesus practiced what He preached. Just look at this incredible mosaic or portrait of His non-stop life of praying (Lk. 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,28; 22:41,44). Luke also shows us Jesus spent lots of time teaching His disciples to pray (6:28; 11:1-13; 18:1-14; 19:46; 20:47; 22:40,46). His prayer life leaves mine in the dust, causing great shame, but also stirring great hope of what I can yet become.

This parable of the persistent widow exposes the heart of God like few other stories could. In contrast to the unjust judge, God stands out in stark relief as the caring, benevolent, merciful judge who will both hear and respond to my cries. I don’t have to badger Him like this defenseless widow did the selfish judge. I have VIP status wherein my High Priest bids me “*come boldly to the throne of grace*” in order to quickly receive “*grace and mercy in time of need*” (Heb. 4:18). No answering machine. No voicemail., No call waiting. No “take a number.” No “don’t call me, I’ll call you.”

Brethren, besides the initial feeling of salvation found at baptism when we were promised Christ’s blood to “*wash away your sins*” (Ac. 22:16), the second greatest blessing we have on earth is this figurative “Red Phone” to heaven. During the Cold War between America and the Soviet Union there was a hotline established to provide instant communication between the White House and the Kremlin so as to prevent an accidental nuclear war caused by lack of immediate contact. At a moment’s notice the Presidents in Washington and Moscow could talk. But our heavenly Father provided a “hotline” (a Red Phone) to all His children the moment His Son ascended to His right hand. He now “*ever lives to make intercession for you*” (Heb. 7:25).

Which brings us back to our initial question. “*When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth*?” Will He find us praying without ceasing? (I Thess. 5:17). In this microwave instant world we demand immediate answers to our petitions. When we don’t get them will we lose heart and quit faith with God? Or will we by faith “see” God taking our prayers and giving answer in His own good time (study Habakkuk 1). As David reminds us repeatedly, “*wait on the Lord*” (Psa. 27:14; 37:7,34). So, let us wait patiently, knowing full well God will answer us at just the right time.

Keep praying. He’s coming. – Rick