

Pray, Trust And Wait
Luke 18:1-8

Too often, as we go about all the many matters of our day, we mistakenly think that our God thinks the way that we think, that His ways are much like our ways. But oh dear Christian, that just isn't so!

And in the Book of Isaiah chapter 55, God tells us so. There He tells us simply, but firmly that,

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

And we really do need to always keep this truth in mind as we make the choices that we make and as we go about all the many matters of our daily life and especially as we encounter some of the more difficult trials of our day.

As we are told in the Book of Psalms, our "God is good and He does good". And that is always, always true. And though in some, or perhaps many, of the circumstances of our daily lives we might not understand or even like the way that our Lord is handling a matter that we are involved in, He is still "good" and He is doing "good".

Our part in all those matters of life is to earnestly seek God's help through "prayer". Then, as we "Pray", we are to patiently "wait" upon His answer, "trusting" Him in all that He does. And if we are faithful to "pray and trust and wait" upon Him, then He will surely do "His good" for us.

Pause with me for a moment and let's read about a circumstance in which waiting and trusting in our Lord is so vitally important. These words are given to us in Luke chapter 18, beginning in verse 1.

¹ Then He (the Lord Jesus) 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?" (Luke 18:1-8)

I confess to you that as I read these words, and others like them, I am fascinated with the manner in which our Lord addresses some of these kinds of matters of life.

Here, as we read these words, we immediately see that God does not wrestle with the same insecurities that you and I often wrestle with. He is not bound by a need to justify His purposes or His intentions, or to defend His character and His behaviors.

Here, He freely presents Himself in comparison to an "unjust judge", a judge, who by his own confession does not "fear God or regard man".

God, of course, is not at all like the "unjust judge". All of His purposes and intentions are, in every way, perfectly righteous, and His character is beyond question.

So then, why does God align Himself with such a comparison? He does it because He knows that we do that! He knows every thought that we think, and even the inmost attitudes of our hearts. And He knows that as we appeal to Him for all the many things of life, but then don't receive them right away, we get impatient and begin to suspect Him of being "unjust" and "unfair" towards us.

And especially so, as we present our requests to Him over and over again without receiving what we believe to be the answer that we should receive.

And that is especially so for those who have not truly committed their lives to Christ and have not received the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit. They have no hesitation in blaming God for their misfortunes and for not delivering them out of the fires of their dilemmas.

God is often cursed for His perceived lack of care for their suffering. How many times have you heard people say, “where was God when . . . and they name a suffering?”

A question . . . while yes, we who believe in Christ and have Him as our Savior do trust that He truly cares about all our many needs. But what about all of the other people of this world, people who don't believe in Him at all, who never call upon His name, or at best call out to Him as being some form of a pagan god? Does God care about all those people and about their needs?

The answer is, yes, yes God does care about them! God loves every one of us, both those who receive Him and those who don't. And He wants the very best for every person.

And yes, He does also provide for them, and especially so through what the bible teachers call “common grace”. “Common grace”.

Through “common grace”, God showers blessings upon all the creatures on this earth every moment of every day. As these scriptures tell us, He causes the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust alike, watering the fields of both the sinners and the saints.

Through His “common grace”, God continually provides benefits to every person on the earth. Though most people fail to understand that it is His provision, it is God who has put within the minds of mankind to provide such benefits as medical care, police departments, fire departments, financial systems, governmental controls, and on and on, benefits that people receive whether they believe in God or not.

And again, those are blessings that we might not recognize as having come from the hand of God, and we take them for granted. But all of those benefits are common graces that have come from His loving hand. And we need always to remember that they do.

As I look back on my own days before I knew the Lord Jesus as my Savior, there were many times that I would cry out to Him for His help, and even then, He would shower His blessings upon me.

But folks, God will only do that when those requests are in keeping with His divine “Will”.

And dear Christian, we need also to remember that the same will be true for all the prayers that we pray. God will not go outside the boundaries of His “Will” to answer our prayers. His “Will” is perfect and holy. And He cannot vary from it for some specific petition that we might desire Him to fulfill.

And that, very often, is the difficulty that takes place with us, with our prayers and our petitions. Our hearts and our minds get caught up in one matter or another, one hope or another, one desire or another, and we want God to validate our ideas and our purposes. But so often, He will not. He loves us too much to let us go off too far in a wrong direction.

But with that being said, we still must be careful with the requests we make to God. These scriptures do also reveal that yes, God will sometimes give us the things we petition for, even when those things will cause us harm. That took place with His Israelite children as they wandered in the desert. Listen to these words given in Psalm 106,

¹² . . . they (His children Israel) believed His words; They sang His praise. ¹³ (But) They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, ¹⁴ But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert. ¹⁵ And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul. (Psalm 106:12-15)

Here, the beloved children of Israel kept petitioning God for some of the desires of their hearts. And He went ahead and answered their prayers and gave them what they asked for, but along with it, God “sent a leanness into their souls”.

Unfortunately, we see such things taking place far too often within the hearts of modern day believers. We see things and opportunities that we really, really want and we pray and we petition God over and over again for them.

Two very common prayers quickly come to my mind, that of prayer for a particular job that we might want. And also, prayer for a particular marriage partner that we might really, really want. Only then later to find out that our desires have led us astray and that wonderful job or our marriage did not work out well for us.

Too often, devoutly believing Christians who faithfully attend church every Sunday and praise and worship God with great enthusiasm, fail then to turn to Him when they make some of those important life choices. They too quickly choose where they will work based solely upon perceived opportunities and higher pay.

And our culture has invented clever arrogant sayings to encourage our “rush to judgment” in those kinds of matters, sayings like, that’s a “no-brainer”, as if perceived opportunities and higher pay were the only things that matter.

And then, after a person quickly makes that “no-brainer” choice, they later find that the grass, while yes it is greener in some ways, is also “bitter” to the taste. The new boss is unfriendly, and far too demanding. Or the new job puts that person within unholy and tempting circumstances.

There, as with those children of Israel, God gave those beloved children the request that they asked for, but along with it, He has given them “leanness of soul”.

Think about what is taking place in those circumstances folks! As we make our self-centered choices to seek our place of employment solely through our own volition and wisdom, we have denied God His sovereign providence over our lives. We have said to Him, “yes, I will worship you on Sunday, and perhaps even all through the week. But with this new opportunity for employment, it just looks too good to pass up.

So, I will usurp your authority over my employment and be the Lord of my own life, and make this wrong choice.”

Another question, as we make our choice, will we recognize at the time that we are being openly defiant? Most often, no we won’t! Most often, we just simply get caught up in our plans and we move on forward. But though we may not intend to be defiant, our wrong choice is still wrong and with it will come “leanness of soul”.

Importunity and persistence when wrongly applied can be destructive to us.

Also, as we mentioned a moment ago, another similar application of “persistence” that can bring about failure and “leanness of soul” can come as

we choose a husband or a wife. A person's heart is a powerful force within them. And though we know that the Prophet Jeremiah has warned us that our heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things, untrustworthy in all its ways, we still listen to its pleadings. And we follow it.

So often, even the strongest of believer can be taken down a wrong path into a marriage that God does not intend for us. And with it comes a "leanness of soul".

Do we not know, have we not been clearly told in these scriptures that God has an exact place and exact circumstance of life that He wants us to live and abide within?

Listen carefully to these words! These are some of my favorite words within these scriptures. They are given to us in Acts chapter 17.

²⁶ . . . He (God) made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for In him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:26-28)

Folks, these words are plain and simple. Our God is truly sovereign. And He has sovereignly chosen "pre-appointed times, and pre-appointed places, and pre-appointed circumstances", in which He intends for us to live and to carry out the matters of our daily lives. And that includes all the accompanying relationships such as the place where we will work and the person we will marry.

And He has done that for a purpose, so that we would have the opportunity to seek Him and find Him and receive Him as Lord and Savior of our lives.

So then, as we choose our employment, or as we choose the one we will marry, or any of the other many, many opportunities and venues of daily life, we must always ask the same question of God, and we must be willing to wait upon His answer and then to follow it. And that question is, "God where do you want me to be and what do you want me to do?"

And if we do that, if we surrender up our choices to God, He will surely answer our prayers and petitions, and His answers will be the very best ones we could

ever hope for. And with those answers, He will never send us a "leanness of soul".

And we must not weary while waiting upon His answers. As here, with the "widow before the unjust judge", the process of persistent prayer will often be twofold, "persistence in praying" and also "persistence in waiting".

If we have been diligent to seek God's wisdom in the choices and decisions that we have made, then we must "wait" and "trust" that He will surely answer our prayers.

Folks, "waiting" upon the Lord, "tarrying with Him" in His carrying forward of His plans is a great and wonderful privilege.

Why and how is that so? It is because what seems to us as just being a delay is really God being busily at work, carrying out many other attending needs in other people's lives, people who may not be as forthcoming as we would like them to be. And folks, it is a blessed privilege for us to "wait" as we take part in all of God's many plans.

Was that not so when, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked His disciples to wait with Him, to tarry with Him and to pray with Him, as He carried forward the greatest of all blessings for mankind, the salvation of souls?

Should we not also patiently wait with Him, tarry with Him, and pray with Him, as He carries forward other sweet blessings in our own personal lives and in the lives of those within whom we have to do?

Consider these words that I am saying! If we are making a petition to God and He delays in His answer to us, will His delay not be because of someone or something that is intimately close to us?

If we are praying for the salvation of a loved one, and he delays in answering that prayer, we must trust that, in His apparent silence, He is still busily at work, bringing about events and circumstances within that person's life to bring them to that all-important decision that we have been praying for?

Folks, I firmly believe that such things are most always the case. Yes, God could simply force our loved one to take the steps of receiving Christ as Savior, but

that might violate God's holiness. God wants each of us to willingly make our choice to receive Him.

For our loved ones, sometimes, God needs to take those dear family members through some deep and difficult waters before bringing them to Himself. Sometimes, those dear ones are caught up in sinful habits and behaviors and God needs to draw them out of it all into repentance before bringing them into salvation.

At other times, it may be that our loved one is a believer and has been a believer for most of their life, but is caught up in some long-term family bitterness, a bitterness that has separated them out from us for many years.

But even so, we must not become weary in our praying and in our waiting. We must trust that God has the very best intentions and the very best plan to get our loved one from where they are to where they need to be.

And also, within any and all of those struggles, we, you and I, must not assume our own souls to be innocent and without fault. We need to use our time of waiting to carefully examine ourselves, to do as King David did, daily crying out to the Lord and saying,

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24)

Folks, in the last verse here of our passage, the Lord Jesus asks the question,

⁸ . . . when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

That dear Christian is the ultimate question that needs to be answered within our souls. Will we have the "faith" that is necessary within our souls to yes, be persistent in our prayers, but to also be persistent in our "waiting upon the Lord" for His answer to our prayer. And yes, "waiting" is so very, very difficult and it requires a great deal of faith!

Oh dear Christian, our God is calling us to always be persistent, diligent, persevering with dogged determination, never doubting, and having the faith to trust that even though we are not able to see any visible results taking place,

God is still really and truly always at work bringing about His perfect answer to our need.

Our part is to remain faithful to always pray and to wait and to trust that our God is “good and that He does good”.

Listen to this simple truth given to us in James 5:16 as we close.

¹⁶ . . . The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
(James 5:16)

Pray with me.