

‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son’” (1 Cor 15:58 NIV). “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” Against all odds the Scriptures encourage us to persist in faith, in God’s Word and in prayer.

What our heavenly Father grants in response to our persistent prayer will be good for us. Jesus points out that an earthly father will not give anything bad to his children. So by way of comparison, how much more should we trust our Heavenly Father to give us good gifts? In answer to our prayers God will always give us what is best! (Luke 11:13 NIV) “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Help us, O God, to feel Your nearness to the world and to ourselves; help us to remember that You are never far away, but always with us, in joy and sorrow, in happiness and pain, and that even when we sin, You still are close to us; and grant that knowing this Truth to be with us – we may persist in faith, in work of Your Kingdom, and in prayer, so that we may be strengthened to do Your will. Amen.

THE LAMPLIGHTER



THEME: Jesus Spoke to Them in Parables – “Persistent in Prayer”

“Then he said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, {6} because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ {7} Then the one inside answers, Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything. {8} I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.’ {9} “So I say to you: ‘Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. {10} For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

(Luke 11:5-10 NIV)

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Dear People of Prayer,

Bill Hybels tells about an interesting experience after a baptism service in their church. He writes: “I bumped into a woman in the stairwell who was crying. I thought this was a little odd, since the service was so joyful. I asked her if she was all right. She said, ‘No, I’m struggling.’ She said, ‘My mom was baptized today. I prayed for her every day for almost 20 years. The reason I’m crying is because I came this close to giving up on her. At the 5-year mark I said, Who needs this? God isn’t listening. At the 10-year mark I said, Why am I wasting my breath? At the 15-year mark I said, This is absurd. At the 19-year mark I said, I’m just a fool. But I just kept trying, kept praying. Even with weak faith I kept praying. Then she was led to Christ, and she was baptized today. I will never doubt the power of prayer again.”

Sometimes when we pray and pray we feel like we are experiencing the law of diminished returns — so we stop praying. As I am in and out of our area nursing homes, I get the chance to visit with a child of God dealing with this impression of diminishing returns. She suffers from diabetes and lives miles and miles from her daughter. Chaplain, she says, “I pray and pray every day. I get on my knees next to my bed and I pray that God would heal me from this illness, but I don’t think He is

listening.” Have you ever felt like this woman? How do you respond to such statements?

In our text above we learn a lesson about persistence, especially in prayer. A man receives company in the middle of the night and had nothing to serve his guests. This lack of food would be an embarrassment to him and an insult to his guests if they were not served any food upon their arrival – whether they were hungry or not hungry. For this reason he goes to his neighbor and asks for a loaf of bread. While he strives to discourage him through his flimsy excuses (the door is locked and the children are in bed and asleep), the man is not going to be brushed off.

Persistence is an important factor in prayer. But persistence is a valuable commodity for every area of your Christian life, not just prayer. God blesses those who persist. So whatever you may be facing right now, don’t give up! If you’re ever tempted to give up, just remember the composer Brahms. It took him seven long years to write his famous “Lullaby.” (I guess because he kept falling asleep at the piano!) In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul says, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.” The author to the book of Hebrews writes, “And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: