

Pray without Ceasing

TBC Aug 14, 2011

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1 Thess 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

^{NRS} **Luke 18:1** Then Jesus told them a parable about their need **to pray always** and not to lose heart. ² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. ³ In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' ⁴ For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by **continually coming**.'" ⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who **cry to him day and night?** Will he delay long in helping them? ⁸ I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Introduction

1. My adventure began over forty years ago at Wednesday night prayer meetings with retired pastor Schroeder who prayed in German, one Wednesday ending with "und helfen uns . . . betet ohne Unterlass."

2. What did this mean, to pray without ceasing? How was it possible when you worked or talked with someone or did the 101 things we do in a day? Was I to be heavenly minded and no earthly good?

3. Example of Daniel (6:10) 3 times a day; *Didache* says Christians should pray 3X; *Ber 4:1* says Jews should pray 3X a day. Benedictines practice prayer all days and come together as community for the Office of the Hours. Seminary practice this year of 3X. But without ceasing?

4. Some have said we should be in an attitude of prayer all the time; others say literally we should set aside our lives to pray; most give up ever achieving such a thing.

Transition: let me open a parable for you that drives at the same point, then make application.

- The point: v. 1
- The parable: vv. 2-5
- The application:

1. Not to lose heart – continually coming (v. 5) – hear what the unjust judge says!

- Matt 7:7-8 “Ask and keep on asking”
- Luke 11 “the persistent friend”

- I don't understand fully, but it seems prayer is for us. We persist and in the process we change, our prayers change. When they match the Lord's will, we receive the answer.

2. Pray always

- Frank Laubach – missionary to Philippines in 1915; “to live in this hour in continuous inner conversation with God and in perfect responsiveness to his will”; Experiment of thinking of God each moment.
- Madame Guyon – “a continuous inner abiding”
- Julian of Norwich – “Prayer unites the soul to God.”
- Brother Lawrence (1611-91) – “an habitual sense of God's presence”; “actual presence of God” = “an habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God.”
- Richard Foster calls us to “a practiced habit of divine fellowship” (128).

Conclusion

What is praying without ceasing? It is a life in relationship with God. Brother Lawrence said that eventually he never participated in prayer times, acts of devotion, etc. because he was always in prayer in his relationship with God. I think that is what it means.