

## Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. <sup>2</sup> He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

<sup>4</sup> "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

### **Persist in prayer, like someone who's got nothing to lose!**

In this parable Jesus makes the point that God is far more just, and keener to listen to you than an unjust judge, so persist in prayer, and God will grant you justice. God is good, and we should persist in prayer.

I think the questions that we have about prayer are a bit different to those of Jesus's time. To illustrate it, here is a sort of parable for our day, and our sometimes bad prayer habits.

A mother loved her son very much, and wanted to bless him above all things. One day he asked, 'Will you always tidy my bedroom for me, so that I never have to? That would be such a help to me!'

'You know I can't always do that for you,' mum replied, because your room is your responsibility, and you won't become the best person you can be if you don't learn to do keep your room clean and tidy.'

Another time he asked her if he could have a swimming pool in the back garden. His mum replied — 'this is the first time you've ever shown interest in swimming! If you took the bus to the swimming pool every Saturday for a year, because you were that keen, then we might build one — and you could invite all your friends around!'

Another time, he asked to go gambling in a casino. 'You know you shouldn't do that!' replied his mum. 'Gambling is dangerous, let alone for young minds like yours: I would never allow that!'

A final time he asked her if they could have a McLaren P1, because they're cool. Mum was fed up with these ridiculous requests and had a moment of weakness. She led him outside, and waved her magic wand. Kaboom! With a clap of thunder a new McLaren P1 was sitting there in the driveway! But... her son realised for the first time that his mum had tremendous power, and having such power he feared her. From then on, he didn't ask for anything else, and he was very obedient. But he was only obedient from fear, not because he was good in his heart. His heart was fearful and nervous to the end of his days. The End.

The problem that nags many people is unanswered prayer, or only occasionally answered prayer. Is God listening less, or less powerful than Jesus implies?

Following this silly story, think about these questions and some of the things we petition God with:

- If God answered our prayer, would we fail to grow in responsibility?
- Would a miraculous answer terrify us? Terror of God isn't faith!
- Do we really want it?
- Are we in line with God's thinking?
- Can God reasonably do this?

It is right to persist in prayer, and tell God the people we want healed, and the injustices we want corrected, and the things we need. But prayer is also listening to God, so that our desires are shaped by God's desires, and our expectation grows, because we know God, and we know that Christ's is the victory.

*All blessings, Tim.*