



Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8
“Not Giving Up”
June 22, 2008

Introduction: What is your functional theology about prayer? As I was pondering these parables today, I was impressed with the thought that God answers prayer.

Asking and Seeking

Jesus reinforces to us the importance of seeking God, of asking God for what we need, of affirming our need for God, for His provision, for His care. Jesus says in 11:9-10, “*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. For everyone who asks receives; they who seek find; and to them who knock, the door will be opened.*” There is no ambiguity here. We are invited. God invites us to come to Him, to ask and to seek Him. In the wider context of this passage, Jesus taught them how to pray, giving them the Lord's Prayer as how we should pray. One of the interesting elements of prayer is that God at times or often answers prayers in ways that are different than we expect or envision. Fortunately, in Psalm 91:15, God promises us, “*You will call upon me, and I will answer you; I will be with you in trouble and I will deliver you and honor you.*” The word here for boldness, *anaideia*, actually means honor. Just as hospitality is a matter of honor in the Middle East, so too is answering our prayers a matter of honor for God. God will not ignore our prayers, for He has already declared that He will hear and answer us. So as we ask and seek God, we know that He longs to hear from us, to bless us.

A Giving God

Jesus also affirms in this parable that our God is a good and giving God. Jesus reminds us of how our earthly fathers typically are loving and gracious in how they give to us. He says in 11:11-13, “*Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, will give them a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?*” Even though we may not always understand why God does some things, or why He gives us certain things, God is good. Just as our human fathers who are sinful, will and should be extravagant with love and care, so is God even more so. J.I. Packer says the true test of our Christian faith is whether we view and we understand that God is our loving and giving Father. In fact, Father is the Christian term for God. God is not just sovereign, God is loving, He is Daddy. In James 1:17, we are reminded “*Every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*” God, as our loving Heavenly father, gives us good

and perfect gifts. We can seek Him and ask Him in prayer knowing that He is good and giving.

Being Persistent

Jesus invites us to be persistent in prayer. In fact, Jesus provides this second parable so that, *“they should always pray and not give up.”* Jesus knows how impatient and shortsighted we are. Jesus also knows that God often will operate on a different time frame than us. Persistence in prayer is a part of the Christian experience and journey. George Mueller once prayed daily for over 60 years for two friends to come to Christ. One did shortly before his death and the other shortly after. After being united in heaven, do you think he regretted praying for them for so long? The word here for the widow *of wearing out* the judge is that of giving someone a black eye, of hitting them in the face. Persistence in prayer is important because as we wait, we learn to more fully trust in and hope in God. Rachel was sharing something with me from the Beth Moore study, of how in Isaiah 40:31, the Hebrew word for *hope* means to cling to God for dear life, to entwine ourselves, to grab onto Him and not let go. We are called to hope like this as we persist in prayer, to grab on to God, to keep on praying for as long as it takes. Paul reiterates the importance of persistent prayer, saying, *“pray in the Spirit on all occasions...always keep on praying...devote yourselves to prayer...pray continually.”* In Psalm 37:4, we are invited to, *“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this...Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.”* As we wait on Him and allow the Spirit to transform our hearts, we learn to rest in His goodness and grace.