



# **STORIES OF LIFE!**

**The Gospel of Luke**

## **A Story of Persistence!**

**Luke 18:1-8**

**Message #52 of 60 – S837**

**Sermon given on March 31, 2019**



**Sunday Morning Service**

**Pastor Rick Lancaster**

# A Story of Persistence!

**Luke 18:1-8**

## Opening Comments

- Turn to **Luke 18**
- We continue a study through the Gospel of Luke – **The Stories of Life**
- If you have been saved by the sacrifice of Christ, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in your heart – you are spiritually a member of God’s family – you are in His kingdom
- But until Christ comes back, that is a spiritual kingdom
- That creates a challenge of us as Christians
- You see, as Christians, we are members of one kingdom, God’s, and we are living in another one, this world
- And this creates a constant tension within our lives **Galatians 5:16-17**

**I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**

- Until Christ returns, the devil is ruling over this world
- His influence in this world is constantly stimulating our flesh, our natural desires, needs, wants to satisfy self
- It shows up in selfishness, self-centeredness, or the worst, self-worship
- The Spirit is calling and leading us to selflessness, Christ-centeredness, and true God-worship
- Chapter 18 of Luke gives us some of the tools we need to win more of the battles with our flesh
- And the story that God wants to write in your life is one of victory
- In Christ, we already have the victory
- But to stand in Christ’s victory, we need to develop the characteristics of Christ
- One of those characteristics is persistence
- Let’s pray and then get into the text for today
- **Pray**

## Teaching

- **A Story of Persistence!**

- A show I have been watching lately is Dwayne Johnson's – The Titan Games
- Contestants compete against one another in very difficult events
- Each contestant chosen is an elite athlete who has overcome something dramatic in life – they each have a story
- One common thread in these stories – persistence
- In our text for the day, Jesus is going to tell us be persistent

- **Luke 18:1**

- Jesus has just told them that He is going away, and that there were going to come days when they wished they could see Jesus again
- Life wasn't always going to be easy for them – hard – persecution
- Jesus is going to tell them a parable to encourage them during those times – and Luke tells us what the meaning of the parable is

- 'that men always ought to pray, and not lose heart'

- What do you think the word 'always' means? 'always'!

- Luke wasn't the only one who said it – Paul **Romans 12:12**

...rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer...

- Paul also said **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

- The reason most Christians don't pray always is because they don't understand what prayer is
- For many, prayer is about telling God what they need or want in life
- Those are petitions and we are right to bring those before God, but prayer is much more than just telling God what you need
- We were all created to be the objects of God's infinite love expressed and exercised through intimate, fellowship, communion with Creator God
- Prayer is all about opening yourself up to intimacy with God and communing with Him
- Prayer is all about entering into a constant dialogue with my loving Father in heaven
- But Luke tells us that the second exhortation found in this parable is to 'not lose heart' = don't get discouraged while praying

- Let's look at the parable and then see why Jesus inspired Luke to write that
  - **Luke 18:2-5**
  - The unjust judge didn't care what God thought or what men could do
  - He acknowledged no ethic outside of his own self-interest
  - He finally gives in to this widow because she is persistently bothering him – he will give her justice just to get rid of her
  - **Luke 18:6-8**
  - When we interpret parables, we have to be careful we don't try to make them say something they don't say
  - Some are similes, like **Luke 13:18-19**
- Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."**
- This is not a simile, it is a contrast
  - The unjust judge is contrasted against God and the widow is contrasted against God's people
  - The unjust judge is the opposite of God
  - The unjust judge didn't care about doing what was right unless it benefited him – God always does what is right at the right time/way
  - Even if that means sending His Son to die for our sins
  - A widow was completely defenseless and helpless in that time and culture
  - That is contrasted with believers, Christians, 'His own elect' **2 Peter 1:2-4**
- Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.**
- As God's children we can rest assured that God will answer our prayers
  - Look again at verse 8
  - **Luke 18:8b**
  - When Jesus comes back again 'will He really find faith on the earth?'
  - In context that is pointing back to verse 1

- When Jesus comes back, will He find people always praying and not losing heart?
- It is written in such a way as to say, that will not be reality for most Christians
- But why? Why don't Christians pray more than they do?
- Three reasons why Christians don't pray more
- First reason – **Sin**
- If someone is walking in sin, living a life or lifestyle that they know God doesn't approve of, they are less likely to go to God in prayer
- You can't walk in sin and live in an intimate, fellowship, communion with God
- They also know that as long as they walk in deliberate sin, God is not listening to their prayers anyway
- The prayer He will hear from them is a prayer of repentance
- The second reason Christians don't pray more is **Lack of Faith**
- The Bible teaches that one of the signs of the end times is a lukewarm faith in those who call themselves Christians
- Christians will be more like the world than they will be like Christ
- Some people only pray when they want something from God
- Listen – God didn't create you and then save you just so He could do stuff for you and give you stuff
- How would you describe my relationship with Kelly if the only time I talked with her was when I wanted something from her?
- You were created to be in an intimate, fellowship, communion with your Father in Heaven
- The better we come to know God through His Word and the Spirit, as we grow in faith, we pray better, we are actively communing with our God in intimate fellowship
- And that still blows me away that God wants that – with me!
- Third reason why Christians don't pray more – **Discouraged**
- Verse one exhorted us to not lose heart in praying always
- Why would someone lose heart or get discouraged?
- The fact that we are exhorted not to lose heart implies something
- God doesn't always answer our prayers when we pray them
- And sometimes He doesn't answer them at all

- Like praying for someone to be healed and they die = lose heart
- Why does God delay or not answer our prayers?
- Three reason – first one – **Prayer**
- The problem could be that we are praying the wrong prayer
- If God isn't answering your prayer – don't get discouraged – ask the Holy Spirit to show you how God wants you to pray about that matter
- Second reason God doesn't answer prayer – **Timing**
- Sometimes God intends to answer the prayer, but the timing isn't right, or something is going on that needs to happen first
- I am reminded of the account of Daniel praying – took three weeks for the angel to get to him with an answer – something spiritual was going on that Daniel knew nothing about
- If God isn't answering your prayers – don't get discouraged – ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be patient while you wait for God's answer
- Third reason why God doesn't answer prayers – **Faith**
- Sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers because He is trying to do something in our faith
- The apostle Paul had a physical ailment – asked God three times to take it away
- God told Paul no – this thorn in your flesh is teaching you that My grace is all you need
- In God's perfect knowledge, He knew that the only way Paul could learn that lesson was with this physical limitation that hindered his ability to do the ministry he was called to
- God may not be answering your prayer because He is trying to do something in your faith that cannot be accomplished any other way
- If God is not answering your prayer, as the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what God is trying to teach you
- God called you into an intimate, fellowship, communion with Him
- Prayer is one of the ways we engage that relationship
- The story God is trying to write in your life is a good story – it is the story of Jesus – and one of the characteristics of that story is persistent prayer
- **Pray!**