

“Keep Bugging Me?”—Luke 18:6-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Keep Bugging Me?”, is Luke 18:6-8 → *The Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Anyone who has been around small children will view the power of persistence. The small child who keeps poking his mother while her attention is invested elsewhere usually elicits a response such as, “Just a minute please.” Of course, this response doesn’t stop the poking which is probably accompanied with, “Mom. Mom! Mo - om!” Mom, taking the teachable moment at hand, tries to tell him that it’s not polite to interrupt someone while they’re talking. So, the child stops until mom is done, right? Usually the poking continues until it elicits an irritated reaction such as, “Would you quite bugging me? What do you want!” He now has her undivided attention, only it’s not quite the attention he wanted. The irony of it all is that by this time he’s probably forgotten what was so important that he had to interrupt her. The

focus was shifted from what he wanted to getting mom's attention. The power of persistence at work—it's time to ask grandma.

However, one can also experience the power of persistence daily amongst adults. Think about it: He who screams the loudest is heard the most. People are insistent to get their own way and know that if they keep yelling loud enough, keep "prodding and poking" long enough, keep "bugging" someone long enough, that it will wear down the powers that be to eventually give in to their desires. It is no different than the parent who finally gives in.

Jesus used a parable to encourage persistence of another sort—persistence in prayer. He stated the point of the parable in Luke 18:1 → *He told them a parable to the effect that **they ought always to pray and not lose heart***. It was about a widow who was seeking some kind of justice before a *judge who neither feared God nor respected man*. (cf. Luke 18:2) In the midst of constantly putting her off she kept "bugging" him in an effort to "wear him down" for some proper action. (cf. Luke 18:3-5) We are to constantly "bug" God in prayer and never stop seeking Him in our daily lives. As opposed to worldly persistence we are to continually come to Him **in faith**, not selfishness.

The need for a parable to encourage persistence in prayer comes in light of our tendency to give up so easily. Not only is this true with the everyday disciplines of life but especially when it comes to your relationship with God.

Why? 1 Peter 5:8-9 says: *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith.* Satan is constantly working in the daily activities of life in an effort to make you fall away from your faith relationship with the Lord Jesus. He wants you to lose heart, give up and despair of God's grace and power in your life. Persistence in prayer is one way to resist the devil as stated by Jesus in Matthew 26:41 → *Watch **and pray** that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Persistence and intentionality with prayer is a real challenge. How many times have you told someone, "You're in my thoughts and prayers?" These words are easy to say in an effort to share a genuine love and concern for someone else yet so easy to forget once the moment of being in his presence has passed and you're on to the next order of business for the day. "Out of sight, out of mind" can certainly be a reality when we fail to pray, thus failing to pray for them. Maybe the better option would be to stop at that moment and verbally pray for and with him.

Putting off, forgetting or neglecting prayer in our daily lives can happen when we lose heart when things don't seem to go our way and conflicts abound. We see the constant injustice in the world and, instead of continuing to look to the LORD for strength and help in submission to His will, despair

says, "What's the use!" However, Jesus makes a simple point in the parable: **If we are so persistent trying to get our own way shouldn't we be even more persistent in seeking the LORD through prayer?**

Jesus is actually contrasting the apathetic judge with Yahweh Whose concern is much greater for us than this judge's concern for the widow. Jesus said in verses 6-7 of our text: *"Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily."* Think about it: If we trust that another person, who may really care less about our concerns, will give us what we ask for if we "bug" him long enough, certainly we should trust the LORD Who created us and cares for us to give us what He has promised!

Maybe the problem is timing instead of perseverance. How *speedily* is God in bringing about His justice upon a sinful world? Time passes, sin continues, persecution against the Church of Christ rages on and things seem to be getting from bad to worse. As the Christians of the first century AD were experiencing these struggles, God promises in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 *to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, **when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.*** We have to wait until Judgment Day? Waiting until Judgment

Day for all this to take place presents us with the challenge of faith as Jesus said in verse 8 of our text: *Nevertheless, . . . that is, speedy or not . . . when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?* Since we do not know when Judgment Day will come, we must never quit “bugging” God in prayer, together with the souls of the martyrs in heaven who pray, *O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before You will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?* (cf. Revelation 6:10)

Actually a proper persistence in prayer can only be an act of faith based upon God’s persistence for you in Jesus Christ. It is God’s persistence of being willing to work amongst sinful, rebellious people in faithfulness to His promise of saving them that moves us to prayer. It is the Holy Spirit Whom He has given us in baptism Who, according to Romans 8:26-27, *helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words . . . the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* This is why we are told to pray *at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints* (that is, your fellow Christians). (cf. Ephesians 6:18)

Continually “bugging” the LORD is an expression of faith in obedience to His Word. It expresses our dependance upon His forgiveness of sins in Jesus.

Through prayer we thank Him for His faithfulness, continually “bugging” us to keep in this faith. It is a submission to His timing, His help, His strength and His will as we persistently come to Him daily in prayer. **It is an act of faith and submission, not a manipulative “bugging” Him to get our own way!**

So . . . *when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?* He will *find faith* in His people who are persistently submitting to and seeking Him in Christ, bringing your lives before Him in prayer throughout each day. He will *find faith* as Christians continually offer prayers of confession for their sins, prayers of intercession for others, prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of praise in worship around His means of grace! He will *find faith* as we keep “bugging” Him, trusting completely in the Person & Work of Jesus and praying, *Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.*

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

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

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