

**PARTNERS IN PERSISTENCE**  
**Parables 17: The Persistent Neighbor and Widow**  
**Lk 11:5-8 and 18:1-8**

**I. QUESTIONS AND EXAMPLES**

1. **Personal**—what do you do when:
  - You know something is right to do—but can't seem to get it done?
  - You really *need* something—but there seems no way to get it?
  - You seek an answer to a difficult situation—but find no solution?
  - You keep hitting a brick wall—and are not making any progress?
2. **Church**—what do we do when:
  - We see society falling apart and families disintegrating all around us
  - We know people need God—but they have grown cold and apathetic about religion

**THAT WAS THE SITUATION IN WALES**  
**THEN THINGS CHANGED IN THE FALL 1904**

*The Western Mail, 10 November 1904*

*Cardiff*—A remarkable religious revival is now taking place at Loughor. For some days a young [26 year-old] man named Evan Roberts . . . has been causing great surprise at Moriah Chapel. The place has been besieged by dense crowds . . . unable to obtain admission. Such excitement has prevailed that the road on which the chapel is situated has been lined with people from end to end. Roberts, who speaks in Welsh, opens . . . by saying that he does not know what he is going to say, but . . . the Holy Spirit will speak, and he will simply be the medium of His wisdom. The preacher soon after launches out into a fervent and, at times, impassioned oration. His statements have had most stirring effects upon his listeners. Many who have disbelieved Christianity for years are again returning to the fold of their younger days. One night, so great was the enthusiasm invoked by the young revivalist that, after his sermon, which lasted two hours, the vast congregation remained praying and singing until 2:30 in the morning! Shop keepers are closing early in order to get a place in the chapel, and tin and steel workers through the place in their working clothes.

- The revival lasted two years—100,000 converted in Wales
  - Spread to Scotland and England—1 million estimated conversions
  - Spread to Scandinavia, parts of Europe, India, the Orient, Africa, Latin America
  - Helped spark Azusa Street Pentecostal revival in America
- ❖ The human key was not—worship style—charisma—theological study—preaching method
- ❖ It was persistent prayer
- ☆ People thought Roberts was obsessed with prayer
  - ☆ He skipped evening meals—went to his room and prayed
  - ☆ While his family was in bed—he stayed up for hours praying
  - ☆ His goal for his whole life to become one continual season of prayer

HERE IS A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT—AND CHALLENGE!

## II. BIBLICAL TEXT—LUKE 18:1-8

**Lk 18:1-8**—1 *Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to **pray and not to lose heart**, 2 saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. 3 There was a widow in that city, and she **kept coming** to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ 4 “For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by **continually coming** she will wear me out’ ” 6 And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 “I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”*

## III. BASIC THRUST OF PARABLE—BE PERSISTENT—KEEP PRAYING

**EXAMPLE—CHURCHILL—1941—HARROW SCHOOL AFTER THE ‘BLITZ’**

**But for everyone, surely, what we have gone through in this period—I am addressing myself to the School—surely from this period of ten months, this is the lesson: **Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.****

## IV. BACKGROUND

### A. CONTEXT

#### 1. SIMILAR PARABLE—**Lk 11:5-8**—FRIEND ASKING NEIGHBOR FOR BREAD

*5 Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ 8 “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his **persistence** he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 9 “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 “For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.*

#### a. Context—focuses on **earthly responsibilities**

##### 1. Comes in the midst of Jesus’ **everyday ministry**

- After sending out the 70—and the report of their daily ministry
- Parable of the Good Samaritan—how to be a good neighbor—here and now

- Martha and Mary—staying focused on important things God expects now
- 2. Between two passages in Matthew’s Sermon on Mount
  - **After**—Lord’s Prayer—Jesus taught them how to pray—mostly about current needs
  - **Before**—“*ask—seek—knock*”—meeting earthly needs/concerns
- b. Key word (v8) = **persistence** (NASV)—*αναίδεια*
  - NIV = boldness
  - KJV = importunity
  - Literal meaning = ‘shamelessness’
  - *Both* the widow and the begging friend were “shamelessly persistent”
- 2. **Luke 18 Parable of the Widow**—differs—in 3 ways:
  - a. Context—focuses on **Second Coming**
    - **Lk 17**—Jesus predicted signs of Second Coming
    - Parable of Widow—**v 8**—Son of Man comes quickly—bringing justice
    - Puts this Parable partly in an **eschatological framework**
  - b. **Explains process** of persistence—that is **implied** in “*ask, seek, knock*” (**Lk 11**)
  - c. Person petitioned—**judge**—is *not* a friend like **Lk 11**—but **antagonistic**
    - Persistence needed not only among friends—but especially in adversarial situations
- 3. Context of combined passages suggests **five ways to be persistent**
  - **Urgency**—have a heightened sense of anticipation about the Lord’s return
  - **Orderliness**—in the meantime—continue conducting our business regularly
  - **Readiness**—make sure to settle accounts—put things right—the Lord is coming!
  - **Faithfulness**—be found doing *God’s* business—when Jesus returns
  - **Prayerfulness**—in all matters—seek God’s will and provision

## **B. THREE PHASES OF PASSAGE—Luke 18**

1. **Purpose** of parable—to **encourage** disciples—**v 1**
2. **Parable**—Jesus tells a **story** to illustrate His point—**vv 2-5**
3. **Reality**—behind the story—**vv 7-8**
  - **Future** reality—the Lord will eventually come
  - **Present** reality—the Lord is in control now

## **V. EXPLANATION**

### **A. THE PARABLE—vv 2-5**

1. TWO CHARACTERS—WIDOW AND JUDGE
  - a. Judge

1. Godless man—who did not respect others
2. Breaks the two great commandments
  - He does *not* love God—“not” fearing God”
  - He does *not* love his neighbor—not “respecting men”

b. Widow

1. Socially disadvantaged
  - Women—second-class citizens
  - Poor—no resources and powerless to solve her own problem
2. Vulnerable
  - Alone—no male family advocate
  - Faced some formidable ‘opponent’
3. Like widows in—[Lk 20:47](#)
  - Victims of scribes—*who devour widows’ houses*

2. INTERACTION—BETWEEN WIDOW AND JUDGE

a. Widow **persisted**—‘kept coming’—[verb = *continuous* action]

- Eventually—she **wore down** his will to resist

b. Judge’s response

1. ‘For a while’—[aorist—final action—he thought]—he **did not will** to help her
2. *Finally* **relented**—‘capitulated’—because she was **relentless**—she did not lose heart
  - a. She ‘keeps bothering me’ = ‘keeps threatening me with trouble’
  - b. ‘By continually coming, she will wear me out’ = ‘might hit me under the eye’
    - ☆ She might ‘give him a black eye’
    - ☆ Concerned about his public image

3. MAIN POINT—the widow prevailed through **persistence**

SHE NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NO NEVER GAVE UP

**B. REALITY BEHIND THE SCENE—[vv 7-8](#)**

1. **Ultimate** perspective—**eschatological aspect**

- a. God is **ultimate** Judge—the ‘lesser to greater’ point
  - If an ungodly judge can be just—how much *more* will God be so?
  - He is the Judge who *really* counts—His justice is perfect
- b. God will eventually **vindicate** His people
  - Jesus—Righteous Judge is coming again—[chapter 17](#)

- Don't lose heart—He will set things right!—v8
- Until then—be persistent—pray to Him regularly—*cry out day and night!*—v7

c. Jesus expects to find us **faithfully at work** when He returns—v8

## 2. Present perspective—**providential aspect**

a. Biblical context

1. God—is the source of all **earthly** authority
2. He controls all earthly power—even of unjust judges!

**Jn 19:11**—Jesus answered Pilate—*You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above*

**Rom 13:1**—*For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.*

b. Implication—God REALLY IS in control—here and now

1. Even ungodly rulers—cannot act without His permission
  - Even their benevolent actions—come ultimately from God
2. Every circumstance of our lives—comes under God's oversight
  - Nothing—good or bad—happens without His permission
3. So—our reliance should be totally on God

## V. LESSONS

### A. WHEN FACING DISCOURAGEMENT

1. DO TWO THINGS

- **Always pray**
- **Never lose heart**

2. IRONY OF THESE ACTIONS

- **Always pray** = be **exhaustive** in prayer
- **Never lose heart** = don't be **exhausted**
- In order not to become **exhausted** in heart—always be **exhaustive** in prayer

3. IN WHATEVER WE DO FOR GOD—NEVER GIVE UP!

a. **Example: Michael Jordan**

- Scored 38,279 points in 15 seasons
- Second only to Kareem Abdul Jabbar 44,179 in 20 seasons
- **Missed** over 9000 shots—one-third!
- **Lost** almost 300 games
- 26 times **missed** the 'winning' shot—and lost the game

**Jordan—I have failed over and over and over again in my life:**

**And that is why I succeed.**

b. **Other examples:**

- **Walt Disney**—went broke 7 times; had a nervous breakdown
- **Colonel Sanders**—recipe was rejected 1009 times
- **Van Gogh**—sold only one painting—to his own brother
- **Richard Hooker**—war comedy rejected 21 times—M.A.S.H.—11 seasons
- **Thomas Edison**—10,000 times to find light bulb filament

**Edison—Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.**

NEVER—NEVER—NEVER—NO NEVER—GIVE UP!  
JESUS NEVER GIVES UP ON US—HE IS ALWAYS THERE—TO HELP US!

**THE PERSISTENT SAVIOR—NO, NEVER ALONE**

I've seen the lightning flashing. I've heard the thunder roll.  
I've felt sin's breakers dashing, which almost conquered my soul.  
I've heard the voice of my Savior, bidding me still to fight on.  
He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.

No, never alone, no never alone. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.

The world's fierce winds are blowing, temptation sharp and keen.  
I have a peace in knowing, my Savior stands between.  
He stands to shield me from danger when my friends are all gone.  
He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.

**I've heard the voice of my Savior, bidding me still to fight on.  
He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.**

**B. THE POWER OF PERSISTENT PRAYER**

1. *HUMAN PERSISTENCE BY ITSELF IS NOT ENOUGH*

- a. Activity is not enough—**doing things** for God—**hard work** is not enough
- b. It is not enough to have a **passionate heart**—a **positive attitude** is not enough
- c. **Persistent prayer**—should be what fuels our works—attitude—and faith

2. *WHY BE PERSISTENT IN PRAYER?*

- a. Some say these parables are **not** about **persistence**
  - Because **αυαυδεια** can mean—'shameless'—or 'boldness'
  - Their concern—we should not 'badger' God—trying to get what we want

- b. They miss the point—**persistence** *does not affect God*—it **transforms us**
- c. When God does not answer immediately—but we continue praying—we learn more about
1. **Patience**—endurance and not instant gratification—builds character
    - If God answers instantly and never allows us to go through trials
    - Then our faith is never tested—and we do not grow spiritually
  2. **Humility**—when God is silent—our inadequacy is exposed
    - We learn that we cannot do it all by ourselves
    - Even Jesus realized this—He could do nothing without the Father
    - So—He was constant and persistent in prayer
  3. **Gratitude**—we appreciate things more—when God finally does answer
  4. **Certainty**—we discover exactly what God wants us to do
    - It is not so much about **our provision**—but **His vision**
    - Prayer is not just—*telling* God what we want—not just listing our needs
    - Prayer is more about—*discovering* His will—for us and His kingdom
    - Usually—this discovery does not happen quickly or easily
    - We must work long and hard at prayer—“*always pray*”
  5. **Intimacy**—we become closer to God—the more time we spend with Him
    - It is not so much about **our preference**—but **His presence**
    - God wants us to talk *with* Him and to *listen* to Him
    - God wants to have *enduring* conversations with us

**EX: long and intimate conversations with the one you love**

## V. INVITATION

### WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

**What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and griefs to bear  
And what a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer**

**Oh, what peace we often forfeit  
Oh, what needless pain we bear  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer**

**Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged  
Take it to the Lord in prayer**

**Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness  
Take it to the Lord in prayer**