

# Coach House Church

# BEACONS

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**P > U > S > H**

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**5TH AUGUST 2020**

A young man went into a shop to buy 3 boxes of chocolate: small, medium, and large. When the shop manager asked him about the three boxes, he said, "Well, I'm going over to a new girlfriend's house for tea. Then we're going out. If she only lets me hold her hand, then I'll give her the small box. If she lets me kiss her on the cheek, I'll give her the medium box. But if she really lets me smooch seriously, I'll give her the big box." He made his purchase and left.

That evening as he sat down at the table with his girlfriend's family, he asked if he could say the prayer before the meal. He began to pray, and he prayed an earnest, intense prayer that lasted for almost five minutes. When he finished his girlfriend said, "You never told me you were such a religious person." He said, "And you never told me your dad was a shop manager!"

It's a good thing to pray—whatever the circumstances! According to many UK reports, prayer is very important to us Brits. In May of this year reports were stating that many were turning to prayer in Lockdown.

The title of this Beacon is "P.U.S.H.," an acronym for Pray Until Something Happens! Jesus had a great deal to say about prayer. His disciples watched Him, and they said, "Lord, teach us how to pray." They never said, "Teach us how to do miracles, or to teach, or to love people." One thing about His life that they wanted to imitate was His incredible prayer life. In Luke 18:1-8 He shared a parable about prayer: Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them they should always pray and not give up. You don't have to wonder about the meaning of this parable because the interpretation is given in the first verse.

***"There was a judge in a certain city," he said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people. 3 A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me***

*justice in this dispute with my enemy.' 4 The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, 5 but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!'"*

*6 Then the Lord said, "Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. 7 Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man[a] returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?"*

The story begins with a widow who had an adversary who was trying to take advantage of her. This was prevalent in Bible times, because women had few legal rights. In the wonderful Old Testament story of Ruth, she and Naomi returned to Bethlehem as widows. They had no legal right to claim the land that had belonged to their husbands. Fortunately Boaz married Ruth and he became her kinsman/ redeemer.

In Jesus' parable this widow not only had the hurdle of being a female, she faced a terrible judge. He didn't have any fear of God, nor did he care what other people thought about him. He was probably a Gentile judge designated by the Roman authorities. Judgeships were sold and bought, and a judge could make a good living from the bribes that were a common thing. This widow had no money to bribe this wicked judge, so her only recourse was to come before him repeatedly crying, "Grant me justice against my adversary! Grant me justice against my adversary!" He dismissed her claim, but she kept coming back, constantly begging him for justice. He must have thought, "Oh, no, not HER again!" In verse 5, he admits she bothered him. The word translated "bothering" literally means to "poke in the eye." He was upset because she was constantly in his face. This constant begging and nagging finally paid off—he ruled in her favour.

There are at least three important prayer principles Jesus taught in this parable, and we are going to take a quick look at them now.

### **1. DON'T WORRY—PRAY!**

In the parable, the widow didn't sit at home doing nothing about her problem. Instead of worrying, she got up and approached the only person who could help her— the judge. In verse one Jesus said we ought always to pray and not to give up. The NIV version of the bible it says, " pray and never give up."

The Greek word translated "give up" is ἐνκακεῖν (enkakein). It literally means to "be filled with bad thoughts." Worry is filling your mind with bad thoughts of the worst that could happen. Worry is like water. It begins as a trickle of doubt that creeps into your mind. If it isn't stopped, it soon becomes a stream of fear which creates a pond of paranoia which overflows into a river of distress which develops into a raging torrent of tension. And before you know it, the flood of worry has carved a Grand Canyon of anxiety in your mind!

## **2. DON'T QUIT—PRAY PERSISTENTLY!**

In the parable, the poor widow kept on begging the judge to grant her justice. She didn't just ask once and say, "Let me know what you decide." She peppered his ears with persistent petitions. Have you ever asked God for something, and when He didn't answer your prayer immediately, you quit praying? That's a big mistake.

The most effective prayers in the Bible are those that were prayed persistently.

*In Psalm 55:16-17, David wrote: But I will call on God, and the Lord will rescue me. Morning, noon, and night I cry out in my distress, and the Lord hears my voice.*

David wasn't one of those one-a-day vitamin prayers. He was an all-day pray-er!

In the Old Testament, Hannah desperately wanted a child. For many years she prayed and prayed to have a child. After her prayer was unanswered for years she didn't say, "Well, it must not be God's will for me to have a child." She kept on praying for years, and eventually God gave her a son—Samuel, the mighty prophet. Even Jesus prayed persistently. On the night before the crucifixion, He was in the Garden of Gethsemane pouring out His heart to His Father. His prayer burden was so intense there were drops of blood, like sweat on His forehead. He prayed, "Father, take this cup from me—but not my will but yours be done!" He prayed it again and again. Three times He cried out to His Father—and His Father heard Him and gave Him the strength and resolve to face the cross.

## **3. DON'T DOUBT—PRAY POSITIVELY!**

In this parable, we are represented by the widow—she didn't worry and she was persistent in her requests. But is God like that crooked judge? Does He have to be pestered and coerced before He will answer your prayers? Not at all.

Parables not only contain comparisons but contrasts as well. Jesus used the mean judge as the antithesis of our loving Heavenly Father. He said, "And will not God bring justice to His chosen? Will He not answer their prayers quickly?"

You must expect God to answer your prayers. If you doubt that you'll receive an answer, chances are you won't. In James 1, we are told when we pray for wisdom God will give it to us generously. Then James adds a powerful warning about letting doubt creep into your prayers.

***He writes: "But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord." (James 1:6-7)***

***Compare that to the positive promise we find in I John 5:14-15: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."***

The difference is learning to pray positively, without doubting. Sadly, many Christians pray, but they really don't expect an answer. I've known people who have quit praying because they didn't seem to get an answer. If I walk into a room and flip the light switch, I expect the light to come on. If it doesn't, I don't curse Thomas Edison and say electricity is a lie. I start looking for the problem. Maybe the light bulb is burned out, or a breaker has been thrown, or the power is out. If it seems your prayers aren't answered, don't quit praying—start looking for the reason. It may be the wrong request, or you may have unconfessed sin in your life, or the timing may not be right. God always answers prayer.



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