The Persistence Of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study on “The Principles Of Prayer”, we surveyed several essential principles.
   a. We must pray in faith
   b. We must pray with humility
   c. We must pray in harmony with the will of God
   d. We must pray with thanksgiving
   e. We must pray in the name of Jesus

2. There is another principle of prayer worthy of careful consideration.
   a. We must pray with persistence
   b. A principle of prayer that was very important to Jesus

3. The importance of “The Persistence Of Prayer” can be gleaned from the attention given to it in the Scriptures. Note first of all.

TEACHINGS OF PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT FRIEND...

1. Told in connection with a request for teaching on prayer
   
   Luke 11:1  And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

2. Following instruction providing a model for prayer
   
   Luke 11:2-4  And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

3. The parable itself, easy enough to understand
   
   Luke 11:5-8  And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the
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door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

4. Followed with an emphasis on being persistent in asking, seeking, knocking

Luke 11:9-10 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

5. Note how persistence is connected to learning how to pray!

THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW...

1. Told that men always ought to pray and not lose heart

Luke 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint:

2. The parable itself, illustrating the value of persistent requests

Luke 18:2-5 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

3. Adding that God will certainly heed His chosen who cry out day and night

Luke 18:6-8a And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.

4. Followed by concern for whether such faith will be found when He returns

Luke 18:8b Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

5. Note how persistence is related to having faith in the Lord!
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THE TEACHING OF PAUL...

1. “... continuing steadfastly in prayer”
   Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

2. “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”
   Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

3. “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;
   Colossians 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

4. “pray without ceasing”
   1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

5. Note how often persistence in mentioned in exhortations to pray!

6. Persistence in prayer must be very important to be stressed so often. Yet we find more than simply teaching on persistence, we also find...

EXAMPLES OF PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE...

1. When deeply distressed over His impending suffering
   Matthew 26:36-39 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on
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his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

2. While His closest disciples slept, he prayed three times

**Matthew 26:40-44**  And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

3. In which He received the necessary help to face what lay ahead

**Matthew 26:45-47**  Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

a. Strengthened by an angel;

**Luke 22:41-44**  And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

b. Heard by God, though His actual request was not answered
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**Hebrews 5:7**  
*Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;*

4. If the Son of God needed persistence in prayer, do not we?

**PAUL AND HIS THORN IN THE FLESH...**

1. Paul endured the infirmity of persecution

2 Corinthians 11:30-33;  
*If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.*

2 Corinthians 12:7,10  
*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Judges 2:3  
*Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.*

2. He prayed three times that it might be removed

2 Corinthians 12:8  
*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

3. It was not, but the Lord provided what he needed
   a. Sufficient grace and the strength of Christ to endure
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2 Corinthians 12:9  And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

b. Enabling him to even take pleasure in his infirmities

2 Corinthians 12:10  And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

4. If the apostle of Christ needed persistence in prayer, do not we?

THE PRAYERS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS...

1. The church in Jerusalem continued steadfastly in prayer

Acts 2:42  And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

2. When Peter was imprisoned, constant prayer was offered for him

Acts 12:5-12  Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And
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when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

3. Epaphras labored fervently in prayer for his brethren at Colosse
   
   Colossians 4:12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

4. Widows were assumed to be devoted to prayer
   
   1 Timothy 5:5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.
   
   Luke 2:36-37 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

5. If the early church needed persistence in prayer, do not we?

CONCLUSION

1. With such examples and teaching on persistence in prayer...
   
   a. The importance of persistence cannot be overemphasized
   b. Persistence in general (keep praying!); persistence in particular (don’t ask just once!)

2. Note well: persistence does not ensure God answers we may desire...
   
   a. Jesus still had to drink the cup of suffering by going to the cross
   b. Paul still had to bear his thorn in the flesh by enduring persecution for Christ

3. Yet persistence in prayer is key to receiving answers we need...
   
   a. Grace and mercy to help in time of need
   b. Strength to endure whatever it is we must face
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4. And so, through persistence in prayer, let us “ask, seek, knock” until God provides the answer to our prayers, giving whatever He graciously determines we really need…!

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.