

God Centered Prayer

Lesson Six: Persistence, Patience, and Providence

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Introduction: “How Long Will My Prayers Go Unanswered!?!?”

- A. Over time, there is a tendency to lose heart and give up certain requests of God.
- B. We grow weary of waiting and question whether we should keep asking.
- C. Why put forth all the effort if God, in the end, never gives us what we ask?

I. Persistence in Prayer is absolutely essential.

- A. The Lord wants us to pray with persistence! (**Luke 11:5-13; cf. Mat. 7:7-11**).
 - 1. Because of *persistence* (**Luke 11:8**), we will be given what we need!
 - 2. God may not give us what we ask, but will *always* give us what is for our ultimate good (**Lk11:13/Mt7:11**; Metonymy-Holy Spirit/good things).
 - 3. How diligent, earnest, and persistent are you to pray for your needs?
 - 4. How “earnestly” or “fervently” do you pray for others? (**Col. 4:12**).
 - 5. Does the church “*strive together*” in prayer for others? (**Rom 15:30-32**)
 - 6. “*Great is your faith*” when you persist in prayer! (e.g., **Matt 15:21-28**).
- B. Never give up praying (**Luke 18:1-8**).
 - 1. Like the widow, when the church is persecuted we cry out for Jesus’ coming (**cf. 17:22-37**) and persist in prayers for deliverance and justice.
 - 2. “*At all times [we] ought to pray*” even when it seems the Lord delays long over our prayers or our prayers are not being answered at all.
 - 3. Until prayers are answered, let us pray without ceasing (**1 Thes 5:17**).

II. Patiently Waiting for the Answer.

- A. Persistent prayer requires us to patiently *wait* for the answer.
 - 1. Waiting for what we requested with an attitude of patience demonstrates our trusting dependence on God (**Ps. 25:1-5; 27:13-14; 33:20-22; 40:1-4**).
 - 2. Though waiting can be difficult, our soul can be at peace and we can remain strong because of whom it is that we put our trust in (**Ps. 62:1-2**).
 - a. Our trust is based on His great love for us (**Rom. 8:31-39**) and the promises of His word which is the basis of our hope (**Ps. 130**).
 - 3. Faith in God goes hand in hand with our ability to be patient as we wait for God to answer our prayers (e.g., **Rom. 4:19-22; cf. Gen. 12:4, 21:5**).
- B. God answers prayers in His time, not ours.
 - 1. The Eternal God does not reckon time as we do (**Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8**).
 - 2. We must trust in the Lord, that when and how He answers our prayers is always perfect and always in our best interest “*in His time*” (**Eccl. 3:11**).

III. Trusting in the Providence of God as it Relates to His Will.

- A. Praying in view of God’s providence.
 - 1. Though the actual English word providence is found only once in the Scriptures (**Acts 24:2**), the concept of providence is found everywhere.

Providence: God’s continual actions on our behalf to preserve and rule over His entire creation by His great power according to His perfect wisdom and goodness, to the effect of fulfilling His grand, wonderful, and eternal purpose to the glory of His awesome name!

- 2. When we make requests, we must do so with the utmost respect for God who will act *only* in perfect love according to His wise and perfect will.

3. Let us acknowledge the Lord's *complete* sovereignty (**Ps. 33:10; Prov. 16:9; 19:21**), *infinite* wisdom (**Rom. 11:33**), and *perfect* love (**John 3:16**).
- B. *The Will of God* (God's purpose, desire, and permission).
1. Sometimes the will of God refers to *God's desire and decision* that will be fulfilled according to God's sovereign will (e.g., **Isa. 14:27; Ac. 2:23**).
 - a. In this sense the will of God refers to those things God purposes or determines to happen which cannot be prevented by man.
 2. Most often, the will of God refers to *God's desire and man's decision*, God's precepts or will that may or may not be done depending on what mankind chooses (obedience or disobedience) (**2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4**).
 3. Other times, the will of God refers to *man's decision and God's permission*; matters that God has *not* purposed or desired by precept.
 - a. God "wills" or permits people to practice sin (**Acts 14:16**).
 - b. Nothing can happen unless God, who is in complete control, wills or permits it (**Ac. 16:7; 18:21; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Jas. 4:15**).
 4. When we understand the entire scope of God's sovereign will, we can rightly say: "Whatever happens is God's will"!
- C. Praying according to God's will (**1 John 5:14-15**).
1. Most certainly, we must do our best to present requests before God that are in harmony with His revealed will as written in the Bible.
 2. We must also ask in respect to what God *purposes* will happen (**Rom. 8:28**) and what God *permits* to happen (**Jas. 4:13-15**).
 3. When we make requests of God, let us have the attitude of Christ who said: "*Not my will, but Thine be done.*" (**Mat. 26:36-45; Luke 22:39-46**).
 - a. Jesus was not trying to violate God's will, nor was He asking as if He was unsure that His request was in harmony with God's law.
 - b. Jesus needed reassurance that the Father's will *necessarily* included crucifixion: Was there another way to be our Savior?
 - c. Jesus' example is one of persistence (He asked three times), but also of amazing trust in God and commitment to the Father's will.
 4. Sometimes what we ask of God may not be according to His will or *ultimate purpose*, even though it may be a "Scriptural" request.
 - a. Sometimes we are not ready to receive what we ask, even when we think we may be (e.g., **1 Tim. 3:6**).
 - b. An illness or a weakness we ask to be removed may actually be necessary for our spiritual growth or faithfulness (**2 Cor. 12:7-10**).
 - c. One possible example could be for us not to gain too much knowledge too fast, lest we become arrogant (**Col. 1:9/ 1 Cor. 8:1**).
 - d. Another case could be God's restraint on how quickly a church grows in number, lest pride or error sets in (**Rev. 3:1; Jude 4**).
 5. If answering our prayers would hinder God's purpose, then our request should be denied. May our attitude be: "*Not my will, but Thine be done!*"

Conclusion: Let Us Always Remember the Three "P's" in Prayer: Persistence, Patience, and Providence!