

CHAPTER VI

"ALWAYS PRAYING AND NOT FAINTING"

by

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In two parables in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus teaches with great emphasis the lesson that men ought always to pray and not to faint. The first parable is found in Luke 11:5-8 and the other in Luke 18:1-8.

And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer him from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence [importunity] he will rise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:5-8).

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard men, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?'" (Luke 18:1-8).

In the former of these two parables, Jesus sets forth the necessity of importunity in prayer in a startling way. The word rendered "importunity" [persistence] means literally "shamelessness," as if Jesus would have us understand that God would have us draw nigh to Him with a determination to obtain the things we seek that will not be put to shame by any seeming refusal or delay on God's part. God delights in the holy boldness that will not take "no" for an answer. It is an expression of great faith, and nothing pleases God more than faith.

Jesus seemed to put the Syro-Phoenician woman away almost with rudeness, but she would not be put away; and Jesus looked upon her shameless importunity with pleasure, and said, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire" (Matt. 15:28). God does not always let us get things at our first *effort*. He would train us and make us strong men by compelling us to *work* hard for the best things. So also He does not always give us what we ask in answer to the first *prayer*. He would train us and make us strong men of prayer by compelling us to *pray* hard for the best things. He makes us *pray through*.

I am glad that this is so. There is no more blessed training in prayer than that which comes through being compelled to ask again and again and again, even through a long period of years, before one obtains that which he seeks from God. Many people call it submission to the will of God when God does not grant them their requests at the first or second asking, and they say, "Well, perhaps it is not God's will." As a rule, this is not submission but spiritual laziness. We do not call it submission to the will of God when we give up after one or two efforts to obtain things by action; we call it lack of strength of character. When the strong man of action starts out to accomplish a thing, if he does not accomplish it the first or second or one-hundredth time, he keeps hammering away until he does accomplish it. And the strong man of prayer, when he starts to pray for a thing, keeps on praying until he prays it through and obtains what he seeks.

We should be careful about what we ask from God. But when we do begin to pray for a thing, we should never give up praying for it until we get it or until God makes it very clear and very definite to us that it is not His will to give it.

Some would have us believe that it shows unbelief to pray twice for the same thing, that we ought to "take it" [claim it] the first time that we ask. Doubtless there are times when we are able through faith in the Word or the leading of the Holy Spirit to *claim* the first time that which we have asked of God. But, beyond question, there are other times when we must pray again and again and again for the same thing before we get our answer. Those who have gotten beyond praying twice for the same thing have gotten beyond their Master (Matt. 26:44). George Müller prayed for two men daily for upwards of sixty years. One of these men was converted shortly before Müller's death, I think at the last service that Muller held. The other was converted within a year after Müller's death.

One of the great needs of the present day is men and women who will not only start out to pray for things, but who will pray on and on and on until they obtain that which they seek from the Lord.

Chapter VI from *How to Pray* by R. A. Torrey (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900). **Note:** The text has not been modified, except that punctuation has been updated and the New King James Version has been used for scripture quotations.