

**Luke 18:1** From Strength to Strength: Why, When and How to Pray

This series of ten messages is collectively titled, “From Strength to Strength” based upon **Psalms 84:7**: “**They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.**” This sixth message deals with the essential nature and practice of prayer.

**Luke 18:1**: “**And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.**”

- Grammatical Usage: “**ought**” or in the Greek, “dei” means, “necessary; duty; proper”; “**pray**” or “proseuchomai” meaning, “exchange”; “**not lose heart**” or “ekkakeó” meaning, “ek”, “out from” and “kakós”, “inwardly bad”: properly, not to be negatively influenced by experiencing inner weariness.”
- Literal Interpretation: He told them a parable on the necessity for them to pray, exchanging with God always and not to be negatively influenced by experiencing inner weariness.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word. Nothing is more important in a Christian’s life than a right understanding of, and a regular engaging in, the privilege of prayer. Prayer means contact with, communion with and fellowship with God. It is not simply asking God for things, though it does include that. Our Lord related the parable in **Luke 18:1-8** in order to stress the great importance of prayer. He said, “**they should always pray....**” This, of course, is a comprehensive word; it is the privilege of all to pray, and in **Luke 18** we are given five examples: a praying widow (**v. 3**); a praying Pharisee (**v. 10**); a praying publican (**v. 13**); a praying ruler (**v. 18**); and a praying beggar (**v. 38**) to demonstrate the five elements of prayer:
  - Worship & Praise
  - Gratitude & Thanksgiving
  - Confession & Humility
  - Blessings & Benedictions
  - Requests & Supplications

### 1. WHY should we pray?

“**Ought**” means “we owe it to pray” thus, prayer is an obligation. Why should we pray?

How is it an obligation?

A. We owe it to ourselves to pray. In the infinite mercy of God we have been given a new life, and by the miracle of the new birth we have been made partakers of the divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**), and this life can only be maintained and kept virile by prayer. Only as we pray can our lives be what God wants them to be, can we know the secret of victory over sin and the power of the enemy, and can our Christian service be what it ought to be. We owe it to ourselves to pray, for without prayer we can never be the Christians we want to be - or that God wants us to be!

B. We owe it to others to pray. We can exercise an amazing ministry on behalf of others if we know how to pray, and if this is true how solemn a thing it is not to pray for them! (**1 Samuel 12:23**). As we think of the need, the sin, the sorrow, the suffering and the broken hearts around us is it not an obligation for us to pray for

God's gracious relief, help and salvation to be given to those needy souls? We owe it to our loved ones and friends to pray for them.

C. We owe it to our Lord to pray. In His Word, God has given us many very great and precious promises (**2 Peter 1:4**), each of which invites us to trust Him and to secure from Him all that we need for life and service. This is not a blank check, but requests with the aim of glorifying God (**John 14:3**) from limitless resources (**Philippians 4:19**). We go to God regularly in prayer to draw upon the boundless supplies of divine grace and power that are available to us.

## 2. WHEN should we pray?

The answer is, "**always**" which means at all times and in all circumstances (**Ephesians 6:18**; **1 Thessalonians 5:17**). When should we pray?

A. At regular stated times. We do many things daily by habit, and we should form the habit of prayer (**Psalms 55:17**; **Daniel 6:10**).

B. When the Holy Spirit urges us. Have we not all had this experience? (**Romans 8:26-27**). As surely as we go into the place of prayer so surely is the Holy Spirit present to guide us in our praying. It is wonderful to be thus guided by Him to pray for someone for whom previously we had no thought of praying, and afterwards to discover that our prayer was the channel through which God met a special need.

C. When cares and troubles press upon us. Some people only pray when trouble comes. This is very sad, though it is true that the Lord does give a special promise for times of trouble. Notice **Psalms 50:15** - His promise is not for deliverance from the trouble but for something better: deliverance in the trouble. Paul and Silas enjoyed such deliverance (**Acts 16:25**).

D. At all times of special need. Such times arise in the life of all of us (**Acts 12:5**; **James 5:13-15**; **17-18**).

E. When we can and should pray with others. There is a place for private prayer (**Matthew 6:6**), but there is a special invitation to, and value in, united prayer (**Matthew 18:19-20**; **Acts 1:13-14**; **3:1**).

## 3. HOW should we pray?

In **Luke 18** we have three special illustrations of the way in which we are to pray. Notice these:

A. We are to pray like the publican and not like the Pharisee (**vv. 10-13**). That is, we are to pray with no confidence in ourselves, but all our confidence must be in the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for us so that we (though sinners) can approach a holy God in prayer (**v. 13**). If we come to God like the Pharisee, He will not hear us; if we come to Him like the publican He will.

B. We are to pray persistently, without fainting (**vv. 1-8**). Alas, how weary we get and how quickly we faint in this matter of prayer! Yes, and we so easily get discouraged if God does not seem to send the answer at once. Read this parable of the persistent widow and note that the lesson is this: if a bad man (and the unjust judge was that) will yield to the plea of a poor widow, how much more will God yield to the earnest prayers of His people! Compare **vv. 38-39**.

C. We are to pray with child-like simplicity and trust. **Vv. 16-17** suggest this. We must always come before God as children coming to their heavenly Father. Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips...and ours...can utter.

➤ Conclusion: Are you praying? Is there a true exchange between you and God?