



The Problem of Prayer

Luke 18:1-14

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Luke 18:1-14

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” To some who were confident of their

own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

What’s the most confusing thing about prayer to you?

- Does God hear when I pray?
- How does prayer work?
- Can prayer change God’s mind? Or is prayer just about changing me?
- Does God always answer when I pray?
- How am I supposed to pray?
- Why doesn’t God answer my prayer?

“Nothing brings a feeble human being face to face with spiritual conundrums as quickly as prayer. For many, balancing the prospect of a divine response to our cries for help against the disappointment of heavenly silence in the face of our suffering tips the religious scales in favor of skepticism, atheism, and renunciation.”

- David Crump, *Knocking on Heaven's Door*

Prayer remains our deepest longing.

Luke 11:1

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray...”

“In the presence of the Great Physician, my most appropriate contribution may be my wounds.”

- Philip Yancy