

Quit Pussyfooting



If there was ever a time when Christians needed to be clear about...

what they believe and

who they believe in...it's now.

I remember taking a group of missionaries to a mosque two miles from the church I was serving in Detroit. Every one of these missionaries was preparing to go to a Muslim country to "preach Christ". So we waited outside the mosque to have a little trial run, a little conversation, as the men came out from their afternoon prayers.

The missionaries soon discovered that these Muslim men were no pushovers.

They were all fired up.

They were committed.

They tore the missionaries apart with their questions and their words.

Now, it was not a matter of mouthing all the orthodox Christian doctrines, but rather, do I know Christ? Am I as committed to what I believe as these guys are?

The missionaries came back to the church to lick their wounds and realized.....

You need more than theology.

You need more than skills at cross cultural relations.

You need to know the one you're talking about.

To know him in the power of his resurrection and in the fellowship of his sufferings.

And what holds for the missionaries holds for us.

"Hothouse Christianity" will never survive the storms that are now brewing on the earth.

We need the real thing.

We need to hear the call of Christ.

And do the one thing he told us to do:

Seek God's Kingdom first.

How do you do that? How do you seek the Kingdom first?

Once we begin to hear the voice of the Lord coming through the confusion of this critical hour, our first response to that voice has to be prayer.

Prayer of some kind.

Like - "Lord, here I am!" or "Lord, help me!"

But it's exactly there, where so many people are confused.

When it comes to prayer, they have questions, doubts, bad memories, bitter disappointments.

"Prayer?" "What good is it?" "I tried that!"

"If I could believe that God really answers prayer, I'd do a lot more praying. But when I pray, nothing happens. Sometimes it even seems to make things worse. So what's the point? It all comes out about the same whether I pray or not." This church has been praying for a pastor for almost five years. How long are we supposed to keep praying?

Is God listening to us? Are these prayers reaching him?

What's the problem?

What's the problem when we pray...and pray...and pray...and nothing happens?

"And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city that kept coming to him saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.'"

Luke 18:1-3



Imagine what would have happened if the first time the judge said, "Get out of here!" The poor woman would have shuffled out of the courtroom, shed a few tears, and given up. That would have been the end of it.

Or if the widow came every once in a while, tiptoed up to the judge and said, "Excuse me, Your Honor. I hate to bother you, but I need some help." And the judge would summon a deputy, "There she is again. Get rid of her."

But this lady didn't pussyfoot.

She was aggressive.

She was persistent.

She was determined to get the judge's attention.

Every time the mean old judge turned around, there she was...hounding him with the same plea,

“Vindicate me against my adversary!”

Until the poor judge couldn't take it anymore,

“This woman's driving me crazy.

Vindicate her! Take care of it!”

Now let's face it. How many of us pray like that?

How many of us, even those of us who pray faithfully every day, pray like that?

Come on, we pussyfoot!

We tiptoe in and tiptoe out!

We say these prayers with our mouths while our hearts have as much fire as a pile of wet leaves.

And then we complain, “What's the use! It doesn't do any good!”

And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

In other words, keep doing it and put your heart into it like this woman did.

Every one of us has things that are troubling us:

Concern for one of our children.

Financial problems.

Health worries.

A broken friendship.

A strained marriage.

An impossible work situation.

Fear of the future.

We've done what we could, but this thing is beyond our power.



So we take it to God.

And we take it to God the way that widow took her problem to the judge.

We don't pussyfoot.

We pray.

We say it like it is.

We put our hearts into it.

AND...

We keep at it.

Not just once and done.

But day after day after day.

Maybe you skip a meal on a certain day of the week to remind yourself how much this thing means to you. You stay focused.

See, the problem is not with God.

It's not that God is too far away or too distracted with other things, indifferent to our need.

He's right here.

He's closer than our own skin.

The problem is our dishrag prayers.

Put something into it!

Stick with it!

Do like Jacob did when he wrestled with the angel...

Hang on and don't let go.

Think of how much energy we waste worrying about things.

If there's something you can do about the problem - get up and do it!

If it's beyond your power, don't sit there and stew - Pray!

Pray like the widow bugging the judge.



“And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?’ “

Luke 18:6-8

Will not God vindicate his elect?

Who are the elect?

- The people who pray.
- Who do not lose heart.
- Who cry to him day and night.

They are the elect...

And they will be vindicated.

Their prayers will be answered.

Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?

The people of faith are the people who pray - *really* pray

Where this isn't going on - there isn't any faith.

You can go through the motions of prayer.

You can mouth the words of prayer.

You can fall on your face five times a day with all the other people who fall on their faces five times a day and still be missing it.

Faith means you look to God and not to man.



You pray and don't lose heart.

You keep at it even when God seems distant like that grouchy judge.

You keep crying out to God day and night.

Pray like that and you won't have to wait until you die to be vindicated.

You will see answers to your prayers.

You will see God's hand coming down and moving those mountains of trouble.

You will see demons scatter.

The lesson of Luke 18 is one of the most practical lessons Jesus ever taught.

Prayer is where the rubber hits the road in the life of faith.

Everything else follows from prayer:

Start praying right

and you will live right.

Start praying straight

and you will see straight.

Pray with your heart

and your heart will hear the voice of God.

"Does God really answer prayer?"

If I could believe that God *really* answers prayer, I'd do a lot more praying."

Well, you'll never know whether God *really* answers prayer...

Until you *really* pray.

Until you quit pussyfooting and put your heart into it and keep at it.

Now you can hold any opinion you like about whether God answers prayer. But the only way you'll ever find out is to do it.

Don't waste time reading books about it.

Don't waste time talking about it.

Do it!

Do it like the widow going after that grouchy judge....

And you'll soon discover that the One you're crying out to is....

a good God,

a mighty God,

a Holy God...

Who never fails to answer the prayers of His elect...

- the people with guts enough and heart enough and humility enough to pray to Him day and night.
- who refuse to quit until they get an answer.



Prayer: Dear Lord, we admit we haven't been persistent enough with not only our prayers...but with seeking you and your Kingdom with all that we have. We've been weak and not fully engaged. We have been pussyfooting, tiptoeing, and not throwing our hearts into seeking you, seeking your answers, seeking your help. We admit there are so many things that are beyond our power, that only you can resolve. Dear God, give us the faith to see and trust that you can do it. Give us the courage to not give up on you. Answer our prayers...not just so we can have victory or relief.... but so that we can truly hear your voice and so that we can boldly proclaim your goodness, your holiness, your perfection and power to ourselves and others. Amen.

Message: Richard E. Bieber 2001

Featured Art: Most of the art courtesy of Chris Hopkins at chrishopkinsart.com. The 1st persistent widow piece by Eugene Burnand. The 2nd persistent widow piece by Fr. James Hasse.

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