

Message Four

Praying Persistently with God as Our Faith

MR Hymns: 783

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:20-24; Luke 18:1-8; Rev. 8:3-5

- Mark 11:20 And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.
Mark 11:21 And Peter remembered and said to Him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.
Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered and said to them, Have faith in God.
Mark 11:23 Truly I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says happens, he will have it.
Mark 11:24 For this reason I say to you, All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them.
Luke 18:1 And He told them a parable to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart,
Luke 18:2 Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city who did not fear God and did not regard man.
Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.
Luke 18:4 And for a time he would not; but afterward he said within himself, Even though I do not fear God nor regard man,
Luke 18:5 Yet because this widow causes me trouble, I will avenge her, lest by continually coming she wear me out.
Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says.
Luke 18:7 And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them?
Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?
Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God.
Rev 8:5 And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.

I. In Mark 11:20-24 the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray by faith for executing God's will according to God's economy:

- Mark 11:20 And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.
Mark 11:21 And Peter remembered and said to Him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.
Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered and said to them, Have faith in God.
Mark 11:23 Truly I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says happens, he will have it.
Mark 11:24 For this reason I say to you, All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them.
- A. When the praying one is mingled with God and is one with God, God becomes his faith; this is what it means to have faith in God—v. 22.
Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered and said to them, Have faith in God.
- B. Only prayers that are out of faith will touch God; without faith prayer is ineffectual—v. 23.
Mark 11:23 Truly I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says happens, he will have it.
- C. Faith is believing that we have received what we have asked for—v. 24:
Mark 11:24 For this reason I say to you, All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them.
1. According to the Lord's word, we should believe that we have received, not that we will receive.
 2. To hope means to expect something in the future; to believe means to consider something as having been done.

3. Faith is not only believing that God can or will do a certain thing but also believing that God has done that thing already.
- D. The prayer in Mark 11:20-24 is a prayer with authority; this kind of prayer is directed not toward God but toward “this mountain”—v. 23:
- Mark 11:20 And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.
- Mark 11:21 And Peter remembered and said to Him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.
- Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered and said to them, Have faith in God.
- Mark 11:23 Truly I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says happens, he will have it.
- Mark 11:24 For this reason I say to you, All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them.
1. A prayer with authority does not ask God to do something; instead, it exercises God’s authority and applies this authority to deal with problems and things that ought to be removed—Zech. 4:7; Matt. 21:21.

Zech 4:7 Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain, and he will bring forth the topstone with shouts of Grace, grace to it.

Matt 21:21 And Jesus answered and said to them, Truly I say to you, If you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, it will happen.
 2. God has commissioned us to command what He has commanded and give orders to what He has given orders to—17:20.

Matt 17:20 And He said to them, Because of your little faith; for truly I say to you, If you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.
 3. A prayer with authority is one in which we tell the things that are frustrating us to go away.
 4. The church can have such a prayer with authority by having full faith, being without doubt, and being clear that what we do is fully according to God’s will—6:10; 18:19-20.

Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

Matt 18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

Matt 18:20 For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.
 5. Prayer with authority has much to do with the overcomers; every overcomer must learn to speak to “this mountain”—Mark 11:23.

Mark 11:23 Truly I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says happens, he will have it.

II. In Luke 18:1-8 the Lord Jesus told the disciples a parable “to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart”—v. 1:

- Luke 18:1 And He told them a parable to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart,
- Luke 18:2 Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city who did not fear God and did not regard man.
- Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.
- Luke 18:4 And for a time he would not; but afterward he said within himself, Even though I do not fear God nor regard man,
- Luke 18:5 Yet because this widow causes me trouble, I will avenge her, lest by continually coming she wear me out.
- Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says.
- Luke 18:7 And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them?
- Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

- A. The significance of this parable is profound, and we need to know God as He is revealed here—vv. 7-8.
- Luke 18:7 And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them?
- Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?
- B. The widow in verse 3 signifies the believers; in a sense, the believers in Christ are a widow in the present age because their Husband, Christ, is apparently absent from them—2 Cor. 11:2.
- Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.
- 2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.
- C. Like the widow in the parable (Luke 18:3), we believers in Christ have an opponent, Satan the devil, concerning whom we need God's avenging:
- Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.
1. This parable indicates the suffering we have from our opponent during the Lord's apparent absence.
 2. During His apparent absence, we are a widow whose opponent is troubling her all the time.
- D. While our opponent is persecuting us, it seems that our God is not righteous, for He allows His children to be unrighteously persecuted—1 Pet. 2:20; 3:14, 17; 4:13-16, 19:
- 1 Pet 2:20 For what glory is it if, while sinning and being buffeted, you endure? But if, while doing good and suffering, you endure, this is grace with God.
- 1 Pet 3:14 But even if you suffer because of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not be afraid with fear from them, nor be troubled,
- 1 Pet 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God should will it, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.
- 1 Pet 4:13 But inasmuch as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice exultingly.
- 1 Pet 4:14 If you are reproached in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.
- 1 Pet 4:15 For let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler into others' affairs;
- 1 Pet 4:16 But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name.
- 1 Pet 4:19 So then let those also who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator.
1. Throughout the centuries, thousands upon thousands of honest and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus have suffered unrighteous persecution; even today many are undergoing unrighteous treatment—Rev. 2:8-10.
- Rev 2:8 And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and lived again:
- Rev 2:9 I know your tribulation and poverty (but you are rich) and the slander from those who call themselves Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
- Rev 2:10 Do not fear the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
2. Our God seems to be unjust, since He does not come in to judge and vindicate; because of this situation, the Lord Jesus used an unjust judge to signify God, who does not seem to do anything on behalf of His persecuted people—Luke 18:2-6:
- Luke 18:2 Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city who did not fear God and did not regard man.
- Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.

- Luke 18:4 And for a time he would not; but afterward he said within himself, Even though I do not fear God nor regard man,
- Luke 18:5 Yet because this widow causes me trouble, I will avenge her, lest by continually coming she wear me out.
- Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says.
- a. Our God is a God who hides Himself (Isa. 45:15), as the book of Esther indicates.
Isa 45:15 Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior.
 - b. We need to realize that the omnipotent and omnipresent God whom we serve hides Himself, especially when He is helping us—John 14:26; Rom. 8:26.
John 14:26 But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and remind you of all the things which I have said to you.
Rom 8:26 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.
 - c. We cannot see Him, and apparently, He is not doing anything; actually, in a hidden way He is doing many things for us—vv. 28, 34; Esth. 4:14.
Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
Rom 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
Esth 4:14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place, and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?
- E. The widow in the parable kept coming to the unrighteous judge and asking him to avenge her of her opponent; we ought to pray persistently for this avenging and should not lose heart—Luke 18:1, 3:
- Luke 18:1 And He told them a parable to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart,
- Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.
1. When our Husband is apparently absent and we are left on earth as a widow, temporarily our God seems to be an unrighteous judge—v. 6.
Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says.
 2. Although He appears to be unrighteous, we still must appeal to Him, pray persistently, and bother Him again and again, for He will carry out quickly the avenging of His chosen ones, who “cry to Him day and night”—vv. 7-8a.
Luke 18:7 And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them?
Luke 18:8a I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. ...
- F. Revelation 8:5 implies the answer to 6:9-11 and Luke 18:7-8:
- Rev 8:5 And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.
- Rev 6:9 And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had.
- Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Master, holy and true, will You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?
- Rev 6:11 And to each of them was given a white robe; and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little while, until also the number of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed, even as they were, is completed.
- Luke 18:7 And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them?
- Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

1. The prayer of the saints in Revelation 8:3-4 must be for the judgment of the earth, which opposes God's economy.
 - Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
 - Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God.
 2. God's judgment upon the earth—casting fire to the earth—is the answer to the prayers of the saints with Christ as the incense—vv. 3-5.
 - Rev 8:3 And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
 - Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God.
 - Rev 8:5 And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.
- G. "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"—Luke 18:8b:
1. Literally, the Greek words rendered "faith" mean "the faith"; this denotes the persistent faith for our persistent prayer, like that of the widow.
 2. The faith through which we were saved is the initial stage of faith; the faith that brought us into a life union with Christ is the linking faith—the faith that comes into us through our contacting the Triune God continually so that we may live by the Son of God—Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20; John 14:19.
 - Rom 1:17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, "But the righteous shall have life and live by faith."
 - Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - John 14:19 Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live.
 3. The linking faith is the divine requirement for the overcomers to meet Christ in His triumphant return—Luke 18:8b:
 - Luke 18:8b ... Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?
 - a. Linking faith is the Triune God moving in us to link us to His unsearchable riches—Eph. 3:8.
 - Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
 - b. Linking faith is the faith of the believers who have no trust in themselves; rather, their trust is in God—2 Cor. 1:9.
 - 2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;
 - c. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will find a number of overcomers who are living by the linking faith and will regard them as treasures for His kingdom in the thousand years of His reign—Luke 18:8b; Rev. 20:4, 6.
 - Luke 18:8b ... Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?
 - Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
 - Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.