



Condensed Milk

Reasons for Denied Prayers

Reasons in Us for Denied Prayers, 4

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

Luke 18:1

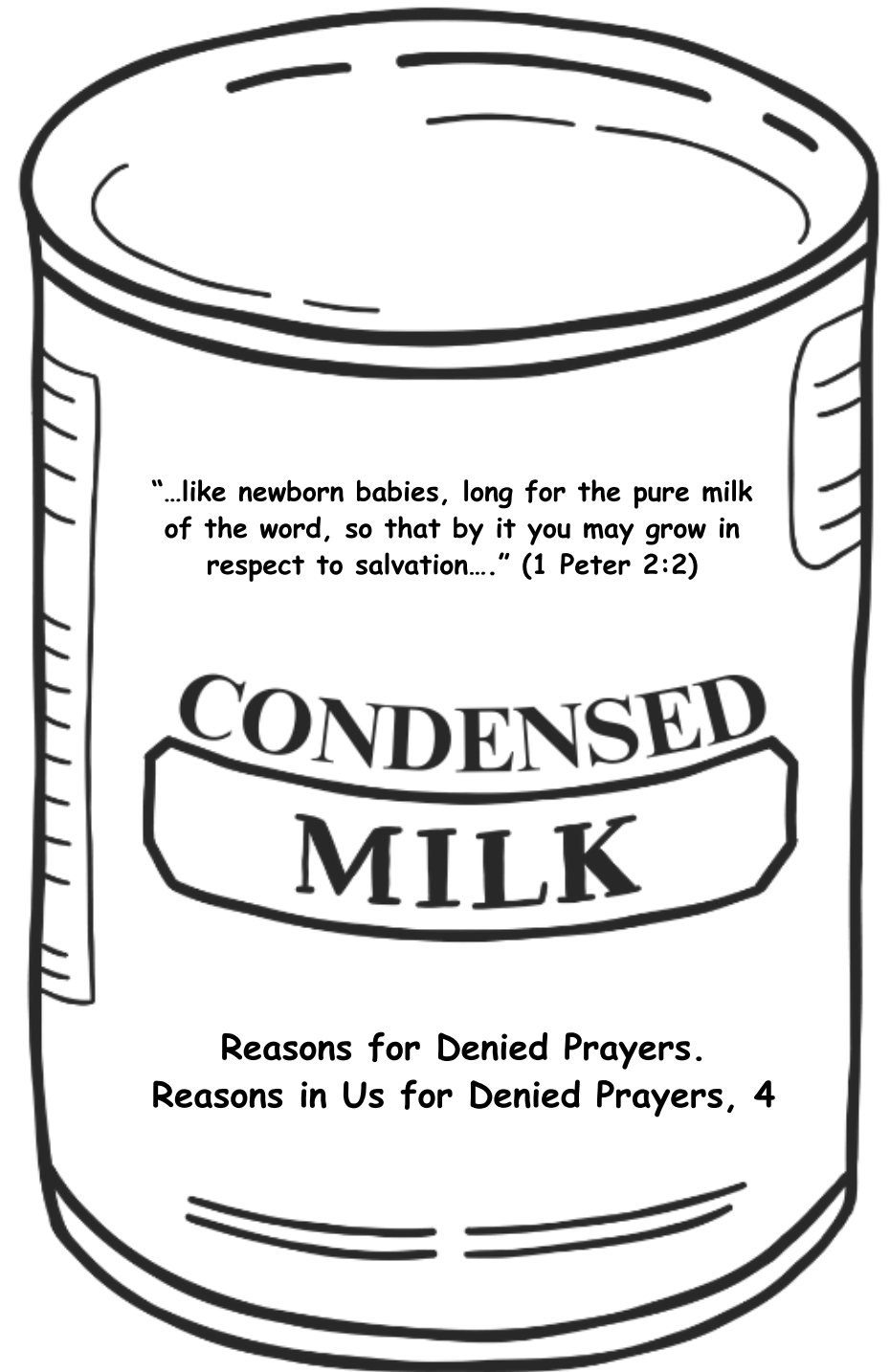
So far in our readings we have discovered that self-centeredness, unrepented sins, and lovelessness can stand in the way of granted petitions. In the Gospel of Luke (18:1-8) Jesus tells a story about a widow that illustrates a fourth reason for denied petitions.

Once upon a time there was a widow who needed help from a judge. She had an “adversary” who was cheating her in some way and so she went to her local judge to get legal protection. Sadly, the judge was unrighteous and was not motivated to do what was right by any fear of God. What kind of judge would not enforce the law! And in that culture, a widow had no authority, power or influence. However, she badgered the judge constantly. She knew what his job was and she knew that what she asked of him was right. The judge finally relented, just to get her off his back. The application Jesus makes is this: If an unrighteous judge will give a petitioner what a judge ought to give a petitioner how much more will a righteous God give what God ought to give to his petitioners?

A little earlier in Luke (11:5-8) Jesus makes the same point with a different story. Imagine, he says, that you get surprise company one evening but you have no bread to offer him for food. Now, in the Jewish culture of that day hospitality was extremely important and so this would be a major dilemma and embarrassment. You hurry over to a friend’s home to ask him for some bread but the friend is already in bed and is not willing to get up. What kind of friend would refuse to help you with such a need! Then Jesus says, “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need” (8). Jesus then applies this to prayer – ask, seek, and knock, he says -- words that describe persistence. The lesson we are to learn is this: what kind of God would not meet a legitimate need if you persistently ask him to do so? We are to pray with shameless audacity for the things a true God should grant us as part of his God-ness.

In both these stories Jesus is using the “if this... how much more that” argument. He moves from the lesser to the greater. Is God not more righteous than an unethical judge? Is he not better than a rotten friend? When our petition is right, when it is something God should do because it is consistent with his character and his promises, then be persistent. Go to God over and over. Remind him of his character (for your sake, not his), of his promises (for your sake), and of your dependence on him to be your God.

At the end of the story about the widow and the judge, Jesus asks a searching question. If he should return today, would he find us motivated by enough faith to pray persistently? The question implies doubt. It implies that persistence in prayer is not common. And this likely means there are some things God is willing to grant us, but doesn’t, simply because we are not persistent.



"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...." (1 Peter 2:2)

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