

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 18- Luke 18:1-8

286- Always Praying and Not Losing Heart

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Luke 18:1-8

1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

2 saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

3 "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'

4 "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'"

6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said;

7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

To the Glory of God

Now there are literally millions of sermons on the subject of Prayer- and many of them are pretty good. God has been so good to us that He would give us a precious and powerful "means of Grace" whereby we- as great sinners- may speak *with* and hear *from* the Almighty. Truly, Prayer itself is a great wonder, a miracle, a beautiful and yet odd activity. And believers in every nation, of every color, and who live under every conceivable circumstance pray to God on a regular

basis. And the collective testimony of the Church over the 2,000 years of its existence is- that God actually *hears* the prayers that are offered to Him. And that is a wonder of wonders- that the Owner and Creator of the Universe would hear my cry. And yet it gets even better than that- because there is another testimony from believers now and throughout all ages and that is that God actually *answers* our prayers!

Yes, we pray to God and God hears- and for a great King to hear my feeble plea would be amazing enough. But we see and read and listen to accounts that God has actually moved upon our prayers and God has changed things. Now God has revealed in sacred Scripture that God is Immutable and so He Himself never changes. But God changes *things*- He moves upon the prayers of His people and He raises up and He casts down. He stops and starts, He blesses and He curses, He helps in tender and kind ways, and He also wars with terrible Fury and Wrath.

Now it is important to realize that our prayers do not dictate to God what He may or may not do. No, no, no! God *alone* is Almighty; God *alone* is Omnipotent; God *alone* is Omniscient; God *alone* is Omnipresent. And those are not merely fancy three-dollar words- they illustrate to us that God has no lack. And so, for example, God knows *everything* about *everything*. And that means that God is never bewildered; He is never nervous; He is never at a loss as to what to do. And that means that God never changes His Mind. What God sets out to accomplish- He does not merely *want* that to happen, He does not merely *desire* for that to happen, He does not merely *know* what is *going* to happen- no, whatever God wants to happen- happens!

God never needs any counsel; He never seeks after Knowledge. God never learns anything new. And that is because God is the One Who holds all Power over everything that He created. *Nothing* that was created exists outside God's realm of Control and Ownership (including Man and all of *his* acts and thoughts, and satan and all of *his* acts and thoughts). So God's Power extends way beyond *anything* that His creatures or Creation possess. God can do whatever He *Wills* to do- yet God will never *Will* to do anything that is wrong. And God's Power is never limited by finite things. In other words- no part of Creation can in any way frustrate or defeat God's Plan for the future.

So while it is true that no created thing has the ability to limit God's Power- God is fully restricted within Who He is. So God *cannot*

be tempted with evil at any time, nor can He sin, nor can He contribute in any way to our sin.

God holds all Authority over Death, Hell, and the Grave. And the very same Power that God manifested in creating all things is at His disposal to *guarantee* our eternal Salvation.

The one, true, living God of the Bible is not limited by space or time as far as knowledge is concerned. And that means that God knows in fullness- everything that has *ever* happened, everything that is happening right now, and everything that *will ever* happen at any point in time with or to anyone and anything in the future.

Absolutely nothing is hidden to God. God knows the secrets of every Man who has ever or who will ever live- fully and completely and is able to answer the prayers of all of His people *simultaneously*- without conflicting or contradicting His Own Will in any way. God knows the entirety of time past, present, and future all at once without conflict or confusion, and is able to use this Knowledge to such an extent- that His Will is always carried out *exactly* as He Alone has determined it would be- for His Own Glory.

God's Presence is in all places. There is no place in the Universe where God is not. But we need to understand that it isn't just that God is present in all places at once- but also that God is *fully* present in every place at the same time. This is another Doctrine about God called "God's Immensity".

For example, believers in New York enjoy the fullness of God while at the same time- believers in Moscow enjoy the very same fullness at the very same time. God's Immensity, then, does not refer to God's *physical* size- but to His Divine Ability to be fully present everywhere simultaneously.

And all these Truths appropriately fill us with awe. Nobody is like our God. And it is the totality of all of the many glorious Perfections of God as to why we worship Him, and why it is sin not to.

But, in addition to the awe and reverence and holy silence that these Truths bring forth in us- they *also* prove to be very comforting. Because these Truths tell us that we can always be certain of God's undivided Attention. We don't ever need to stand in line or to make an appointment with God when we pray. When we are in God's Presence- He is not preoccupied with events on the other side of the earth. And all of this also means that our trials and our sufferings and the various

injustices that we groan under in this life are not *arbitrary*- they are *not* merely "given"- but they are given with Great and Wonderful and Good and Eternal Purposes in mind.

But these great and glorious Truths about the Character and Nature of God are not, however, comforting to the lost at all. All that God is- means that there is no place for a wicked man to hide from God. There is no corner of the Universe where a rebel can hide his sin. Even the unrepentant in Hell are not separated from God- only from His *Benevolence*.

So we need to know that God *never* overrules one Divine Decree with another one. He does *not* make a Promise and then change His Vow. God does *not* set about to do something and as He sees that His effort has failed- change course to try something else. God does *not* make a determination to Judge and then not fulfill that Judgment, and He does *not* set His Love upon someone to save them- and then back off.

Now, many of us have learned in our Prayer Meetings on Wednesday evenings that God *only* answers those prayers that are His Will. For example- here is what the Apostle John taught about this in:

1 John 5:14

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

So because God is Good- in His mysterious Sovereignty- God mercifully and periodically places *within* us- certain desires- so that we will want and seek after certain things that are His Delight to give. So the way I was taught about God over 40 years ago isn't true. I was taught that we cry to God with passion and emotion and great volume and every once in a while we "hit the jackpot". And "hitting the jackpot" was called "breaking through" or "touching the hem of His garment", which meant that God had actually heard and was going to move on that prayer.

And the implication was that it was either the passion with which we prayed, or else it was that God saw that we were really, really sincere, or some other factor as to why God heard and was going to answer. So it wasn't long before the goal of all our praying was to pray like that- to pray with lots of passion and lots of sincerity- which usually meant praying really loud and for long periods of time. Others

taught that God only answered prayers where faith was high and strong.

But God's Word doesn't teach that. Praying is *not* about talking God into something or trying to convince Him to do what we want Him to do- regardless of His Will. The Bible teaches that God is way more willing to answer and move for us than we are to ask or receive. But God will *never* do or say or move in any way that is contrary to His Will. So no matter how hard or how long or how loud we pray- no matter how sincere we are- we cannot *say* something or *do* something that will make God do or move in a way that is against His Divine Purposes.

So the Apostle John teaches us to learn to pray in accord with God's Will. And to pray in accord with God's Will is to pray in accord with Scripture. And so we have to learn God's Word and understand it in order to pray in accord with it. And all the *other* prayers that we pray- about all the *other* things- that are *not* specifically articulated in God's Holy Word must be prayed with this single caveat:

... if it be Your Will

... because ultimately we don't know what God's Will is- concerning those other things.

Prayer is also not about us throwing up as many requests as we can against the wall called "God" and hoping that some of them stick. No, it is God Himself Who sovereignly puts within us the knowledge and the desire to pray in accord with His Will- so that He may delight in answering them.

Now the Christian Church was birthed in a prayer meeting. And so the hallmark of Biblical Christianity is that God's people pray. We pray when we are scared, we pray when we are happy and secure, we pray when we need things, and we pray when our hearts are overwhelmed with grief and strife. But we pray. We pray and we pray and we pray again. We call out to God and He hears us, and He moves and answers in such a way that He is glorified and our joy is made full.

Now the heart of this Passage here in **Luke 18** is the Parable that Jesus begins to teach from verses 2 to 5. And so I want us to direct our attention, first of all, to the Parable itself and then we'll consider the surrounding material. And this Story is the illustration of the kind of prayers that the elect offer.

Now in context- the last part of verse 8 of this Passage refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ where Jesus says:

... However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

And the ending of this Parable shows that we should read this Parable in the first part of Chapter 18 as the conclusion to the section on the Coming of the Kingdom that came just before it in **Luke 17:20–37**. So this is *not* a stand-alone Parable- but should be read and understood in *connection* with what Jesus taught about the Coming of God's Kingdom back in **Luke 17**. So this is just another example where the Chapter divisions in the New Testament are not as good as they should have been.

Now if you will recall- back in **Luke 17:20** the Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God was coming. And we have discovered that in asking that question- they meant:

When will Messiah come and overthrow the Roman armies and restore the throne of David and thus bring peace and righteousness to the world in fulfillment of some of the Old Testament Prophecies?

And Jesus' answer was very confusing to the people who didn't acknowledge Him to be the Messiah and to those who didn't really understand that the Messiah would come twice. So He said:

Luke 17:20b&21

**20 ... "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;
21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."**

In other words- Jesus was saying, *"If your only way of recognizing the Kingdom of God is by miraculous signs that bring down the Roman tyranny, then you will surely miss it, because the Kingdom of God is already here in Me."*

Now we already found out that the phrase **"in your midst"** is often misunderstood as meaning that Jesus was saying that the Kingdom of God was *inside* them. He did *not* mean that- because Jesus would never have said that to unbelieving Pharisees. By saying that the

Kingdom of God was "in their midst" Jesus was merely saying that since He is the King of the Kingdom- wherever He wins people into allegiance with God- His reign has already been established.

Then in **Luke 17:22–24** Jesus warned against the opposite mistake. In verse 21- the Lord warned against looking for catastrophic signs and said the Kingdom was quietly but powerfully already in their midst because He was there. But in verses 23 and 24 He warns against thinking that the final appearance of the Son of Man could be anything but catastrophic.

So while His first Coming was quiet and hidden- His Return to this earth will *not* be quiet or hidden at all. So if someone says, "Lo, here," or, "Lo, there," then you know they are wrong.

Luke 17:24

For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.

So the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth will *not* be a hidden thing which one person sees and then shares with somebody else. It will be obvious to all from horizon to horizon- just like a streak of lightning. But then he said,

Luke 17:25

But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

So the great difference between the First and Second Comings of Jesus Christ is the difference between a little candle and a bolt of lightning.

And then in **Luke 17:26–30** Jesus describes what the days will be like leading up to His Return. And He compares the Coming of the Son of Man to the flood in Noah's day (v. 27) and to the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone (v. 29), and He says that the days before Christ's Coming will be like the days before those two catastrophes, namely, full of busy, ordinary life. Verse 27 says:

Luke 17:27

they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

... and then verse 30 says:

Luke 17:30

It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

... in other words, we can expect that most of the world will be engaged in "business as usual" when the lightning of the Son of Man flashes from sky to sky.

Then in verses 31–37 Jesus warns us not to be like Lot's wife (v. 32). That is, in the hour of crisis, don't love the world. Don't turn back with longing, or you'll be unfit for the kingdom (9:61). Remember, when the Son of Man comes- He will separate the sheep and the goats, even if they are sleeping together or working side by side at the mill. One will be taken into safety, the other left. "*Left where?*" the disciples ask. And Jesus responded:

Luke 17:37b

... Where the body *is*, there also the vultures will be gathered.

So for us *not* to be "gathered" to Christ at His Coming is for us to be "left" for destruction. And so by saying all this- Jesus made it clear that our Eternal Life hangs on- not merely asking for forgiveness- but whether we are ready when He comes back.

So that is the context. And so now we can see that **Luke 18:1–8** is really just a part of this "end-time" Teaching. And so all of Jesus' Teaching about Him Coming back closes in verse 8 with the question,

... However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

In other words- will the Warnings of Jesus to remember Lot's wife, and to keep the heart fixed on Christ, and to *not* love the world- will these Warnings secure the faith of the disciples? Will they believe what Jesus says and will they put their trust in what He says and will they then endure to the end? Will the Son of Man find us busy in trusting

Him or will He find us busy securing our lives in this world when He comes back?

And so I think a natural question that the disciples would ask (and one that we should ask as well) is:

How can we endure to the end?

... How can we make sure that we *don't* become like Lot's wife; what can we do so that we will *not* love this present evil world and so we will go all the way with Jesus? How can we *resist* the relentless temptations of Sodom to be desensitized to God's Kingdom by the ordinary pressures of daily life?

Now did you notice back in verse 28 that Jesus doesn't mention the act of sodomy or homosexuality in the list of what characterized Sodom just before its destruction? In fact, He doesn't mention *anything* in His Teaching here about His Second Coming that is in itself overtly sinful. He merely says:

"They ate, drank, bought, sold, planted, and built."

Now we have just finished a study on "Human Sexuality and the Sovereignty of God", and so nobody can say that I am being soft on sin. And in that study- we found out that sexual perversion of *every* sort is condemned by God. And just last week we saw that in spite of what many people say- Jesus Himself was very vocal about condemning sexual immorality of every sort.

And yet we have to understand that Divine Judgment *did not* come upon Sodom *only* because it had practicing homosexuals in it- but *also* because all the good, ordinary activities of life were entirely self-centered and godless.

And from that fact- we receive the grave warning that what is commonly looked at as being "good" and "innocent" and "normal" can make us *just* as insensitive and *just* as dead to God and His Word and *just* as far removed and rebellious to the reality of God and His Will as what is blatantly "evil" and "immoral" and "terrible".

So the true disciples of Jesus are left in a tremendous battle- which most people don't even know is going on: the battle to maintain radical, heartfelt, self-denying faith in Jesus Christ- not only in the

threat of persecution (21:12–19) and sinful temptations, but also in the threat of the ordinary and normal “cares” of this life- which Jesus said can blunt all our sensitivity to God's eternal Kingdom and choke the Word of God until it has no effect on us.

So the great danger that we face as disciples today as we wait anxiously for His Return- is stressed even more clearly by **Matthew 24:11–13** which talks more about being lukewarm than it does about being overtly evil.

Jesus says this concerning the days just before His Coming:

Matthew 24:11-13

11 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

So here in **Luke 18:8** Jesus *could* have asked:

- ✓ When the Son of Man comes, will He find fervent love in His people?
- ✓ When the Son of Man comes, will He find us being fruitful in His Kingdom?
- ✓ When the Son of Man comes, will He find us busy in the Work of the Lord?
- ✓ When the Son of Man comes, will He find us *less* obedient than those who came before us- or *more*?
- ✓ When the Son of Man comes, will He find us striving for Biblical Holiness?
- ✓ When the Son of Man comes, will He find us satisfied with the cares of this life to the degree that our Love for Him has grown cold?

You see, the great danger we face today is that our faith in Christ and our love for Him and for each other might be swallowed up by opposition or by the sheer ordinariness of daily life. So the question is:

How can we endure?

How can we be found filled with faith and love when He returns?

How can we avoid being like Lot's wife and like those who are left in Judgment? In other words- how can we endure to the end?

And Jesus gives us this Parable here in **Luke 18** to provide the answer.

“Pray, Pray, Pray!”

Now we have to understand that this Parable from verses 2- 5 is one of those *rare* Parables that Jesus actually interprets for us lest we miss the point. And **Luke 18:1** comes right out of the chute telling us the point of the entire Parable:

Luke 18:1

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

So we see that not only is it God's Will that we *not* lose heart- but God has also provided a “means of Grace” by which we will *not* lose heart- *if* we avail ourselves of that means. And the “means” is Prayer. God gave Prayer to us so that by praying- we would not lose heart. And that is why the Apostle Paul said we should,

1Thessalonians 5:17

pray without ceasing;

In fact, James said,

James 5:16b

... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

And so we see that there is a connection between ongoing, continuous, and effective prayer and the condition of our heart.

So Jesus gave us this Parable here in **Luke 18** so that we would understand that the heart of those who pray, of those who pray *continuously*, of those who pray *effectively* is “kept” by God. And that heart is “kept” to the extent that it will *not* grow weak, it will *not* pass out, it will *not* give up, and it will *not* grow weary and it will *not* faint. But the heart of those who pray will be “kept” so that it will *not* be like

Lott's wife, and so it will *not* be overtaken by the cares of this life, and so that it will endure to the end.

So Jesus' answer to the question of *how* we are to endure to the end and be found faithful when He comes back is, Pray! Pray! Pray! And we are not to grow weary of praying- even when it seems nothing is happening. So let's examine the Parable together:

Luke 18:2b-5

2 ... In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

3 "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'

4 "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'"

Now while this may seem to be a generalization here- it is actually a very well thought out characterization because you will find common references to both the widow woman and the unjust judge in ancient literature outside the Bible. And so the average Jew of the 1st Century would be familiar with this kind of description as it was used to describe both the most helpless person in the land along with the most wicked person around.

Now, by Jesus Himself calling this judge “**unrighteous**” in verse 6 tells us that He was trying to get the people to imagine a man who has absolutely no reverence for God and no interest in people. This judge would be someone who had no concern regarding the Law of God or the Will of God and would be completely *indifferent* to the needs of people and their plight. So this man is ultimately and finally wicked.

And there is simply no way to penetrate this man's wickedness either from the viewpoint of the Law of God or from the viewpoint of the need of people. He is not moved by reverence or worship, and he is not moved by compassion or sympathy. He has absolutely no interest in the First Great Commandment- which was to love God. But he had no interest in the Second Great Commandment either- which was loving people. So Jesus wants His listeners to understand that this judge is *entirely* godless and wicked.

And his wickedness is compounded because he is in the role of a judge. And that means that he renders his verdicts in complete and utter disregard to either the Law of God or to the needs of people. And since he is not moved by either- he is, as Jesus characterizes him, an **“unrighteous judge”**.

Now, the word **“unrighteous”** as used here- has more to do with being “dishonest” and “corrupt” and unmerciful than it does with not being “righteous” in a *spiritual* sense. And not only is this man evil- but he is fully aware of being evil and is completely comfortable with being evil. In verse 4 he said to himself,

“Even though I do not fear God nor respect men...”

So this is not simply a definition that has been placed upon him by those that know him- but this is his *own personal assessment* of himself! So this characterization is not only what other people think of him- but it is what he agrees that he is.

So Jesus is describing the worst possible human being in a very, very important position of responsibility- whose disregard for God and man has massive implications in regard to all the people who come into his court.

Now the kind of court that a judge like this would be a part of would be a “Civil Court”. And back in the 1st Century in Israel- in towns and villages, or in large cities, these Civil Courts were in a lot of locations. Every little town had to have one, and a place like Jerusalem would have many of these Civil Courts. So this is *not* a position of national responsibility in a *religious* court where they were interpreting the religious things, or the traditions, or the law of the Old Testament. This is a Civil Court. But even though that is true- this judge would have a very serious responsibility before God to uphold the Law of God and to uphold sympathy and compassion toward people.

You have to remember that the Government of Israel was a “theocracy”- not a democracy. The Government was *not* secular- it was run according to God’s Law. And so every judge in Israel back then would be very familiar with Old Testament instruction regarding being a judge.

For example- please turn with me to in **2 Chronicles 19**:

2 Chronicles 19:4-7

4 So Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem and went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and brought them back to the Lord, the God of their fathers.

5 He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city.

6 He said to the judges, "Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord who is with you when you render judgment.

7 "Now then let the fear of the Lord be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the Lord our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe."

So everyone who was ever appointed to any judicial responsibility in Israel back then would know that Passage very well. But even in the Old Testament, in spite of the clear instruction of God, judges were corrupt. For example- in **Amos 5:10** we read:

Amos 5:10-13

10 They hate him who reproves in the gate, And they abhor him who speaks *with* integrity.

11 Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor And exact a tribute of grain from them, *Though* you have built houses of well-hewn stone, Yet you will not live in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.

12 For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, *You* who distress the righteous *and* accept bribes And turn aside the poor in the gate.

13 Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps silent, for it is an evil time.

Now the term “**gate**” referred here in verse 12 was the place where the civil law was adjudicated. And so these judges that Amos mentions here are corrupt, and, therefore, he says they will know the Judgment of God.

Now what is even worse is that this kind of judicial corruption was not limited just to the Old Testament, it was also true in the time of our Lord Jesus. Alfred Edersheim, who has written the classic book *“The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah”*, which is the great history of that period of time, describes the judges in Jerusalem as being so corrupt

that the people changed their title. The judges of Jesus' Day were called "robber judges".

And these robber judges did *exactly* what the Bible told them *not* to do. They showed partiality. They were unjust and they took bribes. And the Talmud said they were so perverted in some occasions that they would actually pervert justice for a single meal. And so, when our Lord says this is an unrighteous judge- He means that this man had no sense of justice at all and was entirely dishonest and corrupt. And because he agreed with that assessment of himself- he was also a man who had no shame.

Now remember, the Middle Eastern culture then, and as well as now, is built around the culture of the Old Covenant- which is a culture of "shame and guilt". And a person living in that culture does what brings honor to him at all cost and he avoids things that produce shame at all costs. And that was typically the way life was lived in Israel. And so the way to understand the expression that the judge "**did not respect man**" would be to understand that he is not ashamed before people or in other words- he has no shame and so he cannot be put to shame.

In fact, if you were to study Middle Eastern translations of this verse in New Testament Syriac and Arabic, they *never* translate this any other way over the centuries than that this judge "was not ashamed before people." He had no shame; he could not be shamed no matter what he did. Good social behavior in those cultures basically was encouraged by an appeal to shame. And I understand that.

As a 4th grader in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, I had learned how to play marbles. And so I was cleaning out everybody else- I was winning huge bags full of marbles because I could shoot marbles better than anybody else. And one day over the loudspeaker- the Principle got on there and said, "*I understand that some of you boys are playing marbles for keeps. Shame be upon you!*" And I felt like everybody in the class was staring at me and I wanted to crawl under my desk. And that afternoon, I gave everybody their marbles back. So this woman was playing on my sense of shame. All through my life, before I was saved, I was constantly being told, "*You ought to be ashamed of yourself!*" And that was a rebuke to shameful behavior- to behavior that brought shame to me and my family. And it worked- for a while anyway.

So to say about someone back then that he had absolutely no reverence for God and could never ever do anything that would feel

shame in his behavior toward people is to say he is impervious to any appeal to justice or righteousness. So this judge was absolutely shameless. He had no spark of honor, no sense of character, no area of his life to which he could be appealed either for God's sake, or for man's sake- he could *not* be moved to do what is right. So this is the worst possible human being and his wickedness has all kinds of tragic implications because he is making decisions that affect other people's lives.

Now I wanted to really get detailed with the characterization about this judge because Jesus likens this judge to God. And that fact throws a lot of people when they realize this. And there has been all sorts of terrible statements made because of that through the years and I hope to explain that later on.

Now the woman that we meet in verse 3 is a widow. And Jesus says about her:

There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'

So evidently someone has defrauded her. In fact, someone has so *seriously* defrauded her that she is now completely destitute. And not only is she destitute by virtue of the fact that she keeps coming and keeps coming and keeps coming which is our Lord's way of pointing out that she really was in a situation where she was very desperate.

And we know that her destitution goes way beyond the financial- because she apparently has no man in her life to go before her. There is no brother or father or son or brother-in-law- not even a distant cousin or nephew. So she had no man who could plead her case because Courts in 1st Century Israel belonged solely to men. Courts did not belong to women. Men came to court but women were not allowed in Court. The only time a woman would come to court was when there was no man to plead her case. So by that- we know that this woman is all alone. And she represents the destitute and the powerless and the helpless and the deprived and the oppressed and the lowly. This widow woman is part of the unknown and the unloved and the un-cared for and the desperate.

And it's wonderful to use the illustration of a widow because her case is clear-cut, as far as the Old Testament goes, if not on a legal basis, purely on the basis of mercy that this judge should have done

something to care for her. The Old Covenant is crystal clear that widows were to be shown mercy. Widows were to be cared for and their needs were to be met. Now the New Testament expounds on that Divine Standard and calls upon her family to care for her first- but back then- she was to be cared for. And yet this judge is utterly indifferent to her.

Now evidently, this widow woman had the law on her side because she is asking for legal protection. She has been defrauded. So somehow property or money which belonged to her had been wrongly taken from her.

Now notice that Jesus says that she comes in verse 3, and she keeps coming and she keeps crying out- which means she's relentless. This old widow woman is there in court every single day and she's saying,

"Give me legal protection"

In other words, *"Give me what is mine! Vindicate me! Justify my complaint! Render it a righteous complaint and give me what is mine!"*

But consistent with this judge's utter disdain for the Commandments of God and any sense of justice and his utter disinterest in showing compassion to anyone, even a lowly widow, verse 4 says starts out by saying,

For a while he was unwilling...

So he just couldn't care less. So he is the worst kind of human being who is then the worst judge imaginable. But then it goes on to say in verse 4,

Luke 18:4b

... but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

Now this is just like the prodigal son who "came to his senses" and talked to himself. And so here this judge speaks to himself,

Even though I do not fear God nor respect man...

... so he's a self-confessed wretch and he isn't ashamed of it. He has no noble motive and he admits it. But then in verse 5 he says,

Luke 18:5

yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'

And in the Greek, this is *"She causes me trouble; she is irritating me. Every day she's there. Every day she's pleading her case. It's becoming very troublesome. I will give her legal protection lest by continually coming..."* Now the word **"continually"** is sometimes translated in the Bible as *forever*. So the judge is saying to himself, *"This lady is going to come here forever if I don't get rid of her, and she will wear me out."*

So while he has no regard for God or man- he *does* have regard for *himself*. He doesn't care what pleases God or men. But he cares a lot about what pleases *himself*, and this woman coming continuously does not please him at all. So this is an irritating, troubling, nagging that he hears out of this widow every single day.

Now the phrase **"she will wear me out"** actually is a boxing term, and it means: *to strike someone with a full blow in the eye*. So this widow woman is punching this judge silly day after day after day- she is emotionally beating him up. Some translations would be, *"To blacken the face,"* to indicate the severity and the strength of the blows. So this woman is giving this judge a black eye.

So this powerful and impervious judge is being defeated by the weak widow through her persistence.

Now we need to know something else about Middle Eastern culture. Women were really powerless both then and now. And so men were commanded to respect and honor them. And so while the women had no power- they *did* have honor. And so they could get away with things that men couldn't get away with.

For example- a woman could scream and complain at the top of her voice relentlessly and get away with it because women are to be honored and respected. But if a man did that- he would lose his life. And so, even today you see pictures in that part of the world where women are pleading their case by screaming and yelling. And this

would be the crying day and night kind of relentless approach of this woman that is characterized here.

The crying day and night comes in the explanation in verse 7. So she's driving this man to destruction in his own mind. He's got to get rid of her. And so he rules in her favor. Go back to verse 5,

"I will give her legal protection."

And that simply means that this judge is going to vindicate her. It's the word from which we get the word "righteousness" or "justice" from. So this judge is going to execute justice or righteousness on her behalf. And he is going to do that because he cannot tolerate her any longer. So that's the story.

Now we have to be careful here not to be offended that Jesus compares God to an unjust judge. Don't read more into this than you need to. Jesus is *not* equating God as being unjust, and He is *not* teaching here that the only reason why God answers our prayers is to get rid of us. Neither is Jesus equating our prayers with nagging.

This is merely the same as when Jesus' Own Coming is compared to the coming of a thief in the night (**1Thessalonians 5:2**). The point of comparison is not that Jesus is a thief but that His Coming is sudden and unexpected. So here the point of comparison is *not* that God is an unjust judge- but that God responds with help to those who cry to Him day and night- which Jesus says the elect do.

In verse 7 Jesus draws out the lesson which He intends:

"Always pray and don't lose heart."

So if you cry to God day and night, if you *always* pray and if you don't lose heart- you will *not* be like Lot's wife, and you will *not* be left in judgment, and you will endure in faith and love, and God will vindicate you when the Son of Man comes. Therefore, *always pray and don't lose heart.*

Now here I should make plain the concern that drives me this morning. Many of us have spent many hours in prayer this week. Some of us have fasted and prayed. Some here in this room have literally spent years of their life in prayer. But now what? The Word from Jesus to us this morning is:

Don't stop praying!

Don't grow weary of well doing. Don't be easily discouraged in your prayer life. *Always pray* and don't lose heart. And this word *increases* in urgency as we see the end of the age drawing near and as we see ungodly lawlessness abound. As the Apostle Peter said in **1 Peter 4:7**,

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.

The pressures of worldliness will become *greater* as the end draws near; the temptation to just settle back and be consumed with the cares of life and the deceitfulness of money and possessions and the temptation to be overwhelmed with the lust of other things will grow as time goes on. Therefore, all the more- we must watch and be sober unto prayer, and not lose heart!

So how does Jesus' Parable here in **Luke 18:1–8** encourage us to keep on praying earnestly until the Lord comes back? A widow comes to an unjust judge and pleads for help. She is being oppressed unjustly and wants him to use his authority to seek her relief. That's us, the widow. Weak, poor, and no "Husband"; no Man to speak up for us. So like the widow woman- we need Someone to intercede for us. We need a Mediator, an Advocate to go to the great Judge of all and plead our case.

And this widow knew that she had only one source of help- the judge. And our only Source of help in these troubling times is: God. She comes again and again until he gives her the help she needs just to get her off his back. And we are told to pray effectively- without ceasing. We, as the elect, are to cry day and night.

But the argument of this Parable is *not* that since you can wear out an unjust human judge, then you may stand a chance of wearing out God so that He helps you just to get you off His Back. That would contradict **Luke 12:32** where Jesus says,

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

But even more important is that the Parable itself shows that everything hangs on God being *different* from the judge. Jesus tells us two things about the unjust judge in verse 2:

1. He neither feared God
2. Nor regarded man

And these are repeated in verse 4. In other words, these two marks of the judge are *obstacles* to him helping the widow. First, he has *no* fear of God and is, therefore, not inclined to even care for her. But that means that the fear of God *would* prompt a judge to care for a needy widow. And if the fear of *God* would prompt a judge to help a needy widow, then *God* is *not* like this unjust judge- but is the kind of God Whose Heart inclines to help those who cry to Him.

So when Jesus tells us that the obstacle that almost kept the judge from helping the widow was his failure to fear God- He makes it crystal clear that having the fear of God would incline a person to give heed to cries for help. And by saying this- Jesus is saying that God Himself is ready in Mercy to all who call upon Him.

Therefore, if a judge who has no fear of God can be swayed by persistent petitions, how much more certain we can be that God will help those who cry to Him day and night?

The second mark of the judge was that he had "no regard for man." The widow was unknown to him, and he had no interest in her. The assumption is that if he cared about this widow, if she were his mother, he would help her. So we must ask: Does God have no regard for us? Is He indifferent to our needs?

In verse 7 Jesus gives us the answer:

will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

So, true disciples of Jesus are *not* strangers to God. They are *His elect*- He has chosen them. He has set His Love upon them. He has gone to great lengths- at great Cost to Himself- to forgive them and make them righteous and has adopted them into His family. As the Apostle Paul says in **Romans 8:31&32**,

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

There is no condition of man more precious to be conceived than to be chosen by God. It means that the Almighty has set His Love upon us fully and freely. So God is *for* us with all His Might. Therefore, Jesus argues, if an unjust judge can be moved by persistent petitions to help a stranger for whom he has no regard- how much *more*

will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

So this Parable is intended to be an encouragement for us to pray continually until Jesus comes back. When Jesus asks at the end of verse 8,

"When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

... He means,

"Will the Son of man find that his disciples have kept praying, or have lost heart and given up?"

So the implication seems to be: prayer and faith stand and fall together. If we lose heart and drift away from prayer, then the Son of Man will *not* find faith in us when He comes. So faith is the furnace of our lives. And its fuel is the Grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer. So if you lose heart and lay down the shovel- the fire will go out, you will grow cold and hard, and when the lightning flashes from sky to sky and the Son of Man appears in glory- He will spew you out of His Mouth (**The Revelation 3:16**).

Two will be sleeping in one bed, one will be taken, the other left. And the test will *not* be whether you once walked an aisle, or prayed a prayer, or made a vow, or were baptized. The test will be whether you *continued* in faithful prayer and did not lose heart. God's elect will most surely be saved, and, as verse 7 says, the sign of the elect is that they

cry to God day and night. Those who endure to the end will be saved (**Matthew 24:13**).

O, how essential, how crucial it is that we not leave prayer behind. If you are saying to yourself that daily earnest prayer for more power to live a fruitful life of Christ-likeness is only for spiritual heavyweights, and that you intend to make your way to heaven without such pious excesses, then you are greatly deceived. Somewhere along the way someone has put the deadly, unbiblical teaching into your head that you can be saved even if you don't persevere in prayer.

But you can't. First, because without persevering prayer, faith and love become lukewarm, and lukewarm faith does not save. Second, because Jesus *commands* us in **Luke 18:1** always to pray and not to lose heart. Therefore, prayerlessness is disobedience and so those who do not pray are rebels because the Lord said that His elect- those who are chosen for Salvation- pray day and night.

And if rebels do not repent and begin to pray as Jesus taught us- they will not be found faithful when Jesus comes back. For **Hebrews 5:9** says,

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

So we must remember the Words of Jesus to us this morning that we ought always to pray and not lose heart. First, because if we grow weary and leave off praying- our faith will wither, and the Son of Man will not gather us with the elect. But second, and more positively, we should not grow weary in prayer because God is *not* like the unjust judge, but much more kindly disposed to us. As verse 7 says, He will surely vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night.

So I call upon you this morning to *confirm* your Calling and your election, brothers and sisters (**2Peter 1:10**). Always pray and do not lose heart!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.