

Due to the testimonies from the Israel trip we will have a shorter message than usual, but it is a very important message. It is full of cross-references so I hope that you will look at the text and read those cross-references that further illuminate the passage.

¹ And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. Luke 18:1 This is one of the few parables that begins by telling us the goal of the parable. It is unique to Luke. The first goal is to always pray. In other words, we shouldn't give up praying because we don't see the answers come right away. Keep on asking. We should be in continual prayer to God, an ongoing conversation with the Almighty. The Apostle Paul exhorts us in numerous passages to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17ⁱ), and to continue steadfastly in prayer (Colossians 4:2ⁱⁱ). (Also see Romans 12:12ⁱⁱⁱ; Ephesians 6:18.^{iv})

The second goal of the parable is to not lose heart. The Apostle Paul addresses this issue in a very personal way in 2 Corinthians 4:8-11^v. He wrote of his physical afflictions and trials as an opportunity for others to see the life of Jesus in him. He added that the promises of being raised to live in Jesus' presence also helped him to not lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:14^{vi}). Although we are in Christ and His kingdom even now, we anxiously await His return. Living in the kingdom amongst a fallen world is difficult. At one point, Paul declared that it was so difficult for his team that they despaired of life (2 Corinthians 1:8^{vii}). But he went on to say that God was teaching them to trust in God rather than themselves. Paul knew it was a challenge at times to keep from losing hope. Luke is telling us how Jesus taught us to live as we wait for Jesus' return.

² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' Luke 18:2,3 The scenario is of a judge who thinks he has no need to fear God or man. One of the primary qualifications for Israel's judges was the fear of God (2 Chronicles 19:6,7^{viii}). There will always be those kinds of judges in this fallen world. We can't count on the world to be just. A widow persistently appealed her case time and time again. Someone had wronged her, and she was seeking justice. Isaiah tells us that widows often dealt with injustice as they were one of the weakest groups in society (Isaiah 1:17^{ix},23^x) She refused to be deterred by each unfavorable verdict. She knew she was in the right and wouldn't give up. Unlike American courts, you could appeal limitless numbers of times. "Give me justice!"

⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' Luke 18:4,5 The judge resisted her appeals many times, but then he began to selfishly think that if he would just grant her justice, she would finally stop bothering him. He knew what was just, but he had resisted granting it most likely to ingratiate himself with her adversary. Her persistence made him feel it was better to give in than to be wearied/beaten down by her constant appeals. The Greek word is a boxing term, so it may be more correct to say he was worried she was 'giving him a black eye' (1 Corinthians 9:26,27^{xi}). If the public

keeps seeing him deny her justice, it will look bad for him. Like a boxer fighting someone above his weight class, her endurance won the fight. The language leaves open the possibility that she may have confronted him in other settings: the marketplace, or the road near his home. This dishonest judge could see she wasn't going to give up.

⁶ And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?" Luke 18:6,7 Jesus is using a rabbinical method of "if this, then how much more this" (*gal vahomer*). If an unrighteous judge who does not care about people or fear God and who only thinks of himself gives in to a person who will not give up appealing their case, then how much more will God who loves us and is seeking to bless us hear our pleas (Matthew 7:11^{xii})? Jesus said, "Hear what the unjust judge says." If an unjust judge would use such reasoning, how much more will our loving heavenly Father hear our pleas lifted to Him day and night? If we give up, it shows we were not that intent on getting the verdict we sought. If we persist, it shows how important it is to us.

The issue here is not a specific prayer we pray or how often we pray. The widow had to keep pestering the unjust judge. God's children only need to ask, and so they should ask often about many things (Matthew 7:7,8^{xiii}). Widows were the least esteemed in society, but we are God's elect. **Both the judge and the widow are contrasted with our loving heavenly Father and His sons and daughters.** Our persistence in prayer is a demonstration of our faith in God's goodness.

Many sermons mistake this parable to be saying we must pester God until he gives in. That isn't the point. In fact, that is how idolaters pray. Remember the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. They cried out over and over, even cutting themselves to get their god's attention (1 Kings 18:26-28^{xiv}). The contrasts the evil judge with how willing God is to hear our prayers and the poor widow with our honored status as God's children. That is why we should pray always. He hears us! He wants to give us good things! Good things are the things that will help us become more like His Son. What a gracious God we serve! That should get an Amen!

God doesn't answer because of the quality or eloquence of our prayers. Nor does He hear us because of the number of times we ask. We don't have to convince God that our cause is just or somehow move Him to compassion. God is not impressed with the passion or zeal with which we pray. He hears because in Christ Jesus we are His children and He is our loving Father in heaven.

I have heard it taught that we must pray until the bowls in heaven are filled and God must pour out the answer (a teaching from Revelation 5:8^{xv}). That implies God is like the unjust judge! We don't persist in prayer because the number of times we pray will finally meet His requirement, but rather because we know He cares and wants to hear our hearts. He invites us to cast our burdens on Him (1 Peter 5:7^{xvi}). He wants us to find the relief in knowing He has heard and that He will answer in His perfect way. The psalmist wrote: *⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah* Psalm 62:8 (ESV)

The specific issue in this parable is a prayer for justice. The closing sentence seems to connect the parable with the previous passage about the Second Coming. In the

Revelation we see the souls under the altar who were beheaded for the Word of God and their testimony. They cry out to God and God tells them to wait a little longer (Revelation 6:9-11^{xvii}). The rest of Revelation is about His justice speedily coming, or we could say suddenly falling, on an ungodly world (Babylon the Great). It is not that all prayers are answered quickly, but rather that when His justice falls on the wicked, it falls suddenly (1 Thessalonians 5:3^{xviii}).

However, the same principle of God caring and hearing our prayers applies to all prayers that are according to God's will (1 John 5:14^{xix}). Of course, God hears the prayers of His children and cares about what burdens us. He wants to answer in ways that are good for us. Our problem is that we don't always understand what God is working through the afflictions and trials that He allows. Those are times when the Spirit's peace and assurance can strengthen us and help us to trust in God with great faith knowing God works all things together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28^{xx}). Many mature believers will tell you that their sweetest times with the Lord were in times of trials.

Consider the Apostle Paul's three prayers for deliverance from the thorn in his flesh. The answer was sufficient grace rather than healing (2 Corinthians 12:8,9^{xxi}). We are to count it all joy when we face those trials (James 1:2,3^{xxii}). Nowhere does Scripture exhort us to pray to be immediately brought out from under them. The Psalms are full of complaints regarding life's circumstances and even illness, but often end in praise, trusting that God will answer in His time.

If we are kingdom minded and remember this section began in chapter 17 with Pharisees asking about when the kingdom would appear, then we will want God's will that matures us and causes others to see Jesus in us more than we will desire to have our way regarding life's circumstances. Sometimes we need Jacob's limp to keep us dependent on God (Genesis 32:31,32^{xxiii}). We know God uses all those things to mature us and present a witness to the world. That means that if affliction in my body will cause others to see the grace and power of God upon me, then I should patiently bear that affliction while rejoicing in hope (Romans 12:12^{xxiv}). If persecution will strengthen my character and bring me into a deeper walk with Jesus, then why would I pray to be delivered from it? Rather, pray continually for His strength to be an example of Jesus and don't lose heart. When He has accomplished the purpose of that affliction, He will deliver us. But again remember, the purpose of Paul's affliction was to keep him humbly dependent on God's power.

That is being kingdom minded. That is being like Jesus rather than the unjust judge who was only thinking of what was best for himself. The contrast is being made with God who cares about us more than we can fathom. And we are to be like our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48^{xxv}). *Jesus was saying that continual prayer until he comes is not only the evidence of faith, but the means of building faith until his return.*^{xxvi}

⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Luke 18:8 This does not mean that every prayer is quickly answered. We know that from Biblical accounts and our own experience. It does mean that when the answer comes, it comes all at once. That is why the last

sentence refers to the return of the Lord. It will be like lightning striking. All our prayers are answered by His return (2 Peter 3:8,9^{xxvii}).

The parable closes with an alarming question. "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" Prayer is an expression of faith (Matthew 21:22^{xxviii}). When people of faith pray God's will into the earth, it slows the decline of cultures (2 Chronicles 7:14^{xxix}). As people increasingly turn away from God and become self-absorbed in the things of this short life, faith around the world declines, and that speeds up the decline. In my brief lifetime I've seen changes that were once unthinkable. What is being accepted today would not have been tolerated even twenty years ago (Matthew 24:10-13^{xxx}). You can see videos of politicians saying things ten years ago and demanding the exact opposite today. Too often, they simply reflect the current public sentiment to gain votes.

Some of what is being promoted is so self-destructive that it is evident that there are spiritual powers inciting the evil policies (1 Kings 22:22^{xxxi}). We see politicians retire so they can work as lobbyist for our adversaries. What is the answer to this erosion of our culture? How do we live while we await the reign of Christ on the earth? Always pray and don't lose heart! Don't give up praying for God to raise up godly leaders and for people to desire that godliness be restored. Don't give up praying for families, for your children, grandchildren, and neighbors. Pray because we know God is good and just and loves us more than we can imagine! Don't lose heart! Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power (Ephesians 6:10^{xxxii}). And let us pray for one another that we can be a light in this dark world. Amen?

Jesus is coming back (Revelation 22:12^{xxxiii})! When He does, will He find faith on earth? He will, if we learn to pray and not lose hope!

Questions

- 1 What are the two goals of the parable?
- 2 What is the scenario of the parable?
- 3 What did the widow do about injustice?
- 4 Why did the judge finally decide in her favor?
- 5 What is the contrast set forth and the method of teaching Jesus was using?
- 6 What is the contrast trying to tell us?
- 7 How is this message often misunderstood?
- 8 Why should it give us great hope?
- 9 What should we expect from prayer?
- 10 Why do we need to keep praying?

ⁱ **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ pray without ceasing,

ⁱⁱ **Colossians 4:2 (ESV)**

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Romans 12:12 (ESV)**

¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

^{iv} **Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

^v **2 Corinthians 4:8-11 (ESV)**

⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

^{vi} **2 Corinthians 4:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

^{vii} **2 Corinthians 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

^{viii} **2 Chronicles 19:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ and said to the judges, "Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. ⁷ Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes."

^{ix} **Isaiah 1:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

^x **Isaiah 1:23 (ESV)**

²³ Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them.

^{xi} **1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (ESV)**

²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

^{xii} **Matthew 7:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

^{xiii} **Matthew 7:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

^{xiv} **1 Kings 18:26-28 (ESV)**

²⁶ And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. ²⁷ And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

²⁸ And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them.

^{xv} **Revelation 5:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

^{xvi} **1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)**

⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

^{xvii} **Revelation 6:9-11 (ESV)**

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

^{xviii} **1 Thessalonians 5:3 (ESV)**

³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

^{xix} **1 John 5:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

^{xx} **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

^{xxi} **2 Corinthians 12:8,9 (ESV)**

⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

^{xxii} **James 1:2,3 (ESV)**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

^{xxiii} **Genesis 32:31-32 (ESV)**

³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

^{xxiv} **Romans 12:12 (ESV)**

¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

^{xxv} **Matthew 5:48 (ESV)**

⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

^{xxvi} Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word - Luke, Volume II: That You May Know the Truth

^{xxvii} **2 Peter 3:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

^{xxviii} **Matthew 21:22 (ESV)**

²² And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

^{xxix} **2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

^{xxx} **Matthew 24:10-13 (ESV)**

¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

^{xxxi} **1 Kings 22:22 (ESV)**

²² And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.'

^{xxxii} **Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

^{xxxiii} **Revelation 22:12 (ESV)**

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.