

THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #009
A chronological Study
"Prayer and the Persistent Widow"
Luke 18:1-8



"The Persistent Widow"

"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and uttered things hidden since the creations of the world."

Psalm 78:2

THE INTRODUCTION

The parables are the direct words of Jesus! Now, open your ears, sharpen your understanding, and hear what He has to say!

Arno C. Gaebelein tells us "The Parable of the unjust judge is closely connected with the preceding announcement of **His second coming**. 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?' Apostasy and darkness will rule the day. But a faithful remnant of His people, His elect, will suffer and cry day and night to Him for help and deliverance. His coming will avenge them. The resources in those days will be prayer, as prayer is always the resource of the Saints of God. In the Psalms the Spirit of God has recorded the prayers of the suffering Jewish Saints during the great tribulation."¹ Keep this in mind while we look at the text and comment on it.

But First, just to clarify Gaebelein's comment – here's a quick list of future events:

1. The Pretribulation Rapture (not the second advent).
2. The Judgment seat of Christ.
3. The Marriage of the Lamb.
- 4. The Tribulation Period (Judgement)**
- 5. The Second Advent**
 - Resurrections
 - The Millennium
 - The Kingdom on Earth
 - Judgments – Israel, Gentiles, Angels, The Great White Throne
6. The Eternal Kingdom – The Heavenly New Jerusalem

[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,

Chapter 17:22-37 gives us Luke's report of Jesus' second coming and that the days that precede it will be just like the days of Noah... just normal - and then the rain started and their tribulation began. Noah had put away all his family and all the animals in the Ark, and God shut the door.

¹ Arno C. Gaebelein, The Annotated Bible, Moody Press, Loizeaux Brothers, 1970

Those who follow the "normal-literal" method of Biblical interpretation, believing the Bible and studying it like any other true historical document, language wise, will come to the logical conclusion that just as God saved the **remnant** of the believing Jewish people in the past, He will save out the **remnant** of believing Christians before the coming great tribulation. In the time leading up to that terrible event many will come and proclaim that the Christ has come. Jesus told his disciples, "They will say to you, 'look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them" (the fake Christs). He also says that at that time, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it."

So, what do these words have to do with our text? Remember what Gaebelin said? "His elect, will suffer and cry day and night to Him for help and deliverance. His coming will avenge them. The resources in those days will be prayer, as prayer is always the resource of the Saints of God."

Apparently, there will be a period of time before the Great Tribulation ends when life for Christians will be tough and the key to our courage will be our reliance upon prayer.

So, we need to forget about the chapter division between Chapter 17 and 18. Our parable of the Persistent Widow directly follows these troubled and informative verses.

[Luke 18:1-2] 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.

This general statement sets up the situation for Jesus to develop His theme. If you have been paying attention you will see that Jesus is continuing speaking to His disciples and He is going to use the following parable to get His point across to them about the

hardships that may be before them and what to do about them. Remember that the given instruction is: **“That at all times Believers are to pray and not lose heart.”**

[Luke 18:3] *There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'*

Two parables ago, in this series, we learned about, *"The Friend At Midnight,"* who went to his neighbor's door at midnight and kept on pounding on the door until his neighbor dealt with him – just go get him to stop pounding on his door. It would be good to remember that the lesson was not about being obnoxious to get your way, but to keep on "knocking" through prayer. Prayer is not about getting your way. You cannot change God's plan, but you are required to PRAY. God has three possible answers for every prayer – depending on His will in the matter: "Yes," "No," "Not now." Your prayers prove your faithfulness to God. You are to pray to Him, according to His will. **You are expected** to be found faithful in prayer.

[Luk3 18:4] *For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,*

Please notice how the parable indicates that this judge does not represent God. Our God cannot and does not fear Himself and He loves and respects righteous man. This story is an illustration concerning prayer and a human judge that this troubled widow has come to plead with. Also notice that the story sets us up for the judge's change of mind, "Even though..."

[Luke 18:5] *yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.”*

This human judge is worried that this widow just won't go away. This judge is godless and self-centered, and he chooses to hear and act on her request because of **her persistence**. He is an unrighteous judge and **her persistence** has caused him to choose a righteous decision.

Please don't confuse this judge with our righteous Judge. The parable is not about the judge, it is about the widow's persistence.



THE END OF OUR STORY

[Luke 18:6] *And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge ^{*said};*

Jesus turns to His disciples and tells them "**You**, hear what the unrighteous judge said." No matter how dull any one of Jesus' disciples might be... they would understand the importance of Jesus' command. So, now you hear what the unrighteous judge said!

Because of her persistence the unrighteous judge ruled in her favor!

Now, hear what Jesus has to say!

[Luke 18:7-8a] *now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? **8a** I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.*

Our God is absolutely, without question, the righteous judge of everyone and everything. So, what's the real issue here? Are YOU a believer who keeps on keeping on? Our video study on the book

of Hebrews speaks of the importance of being a believer who continues to the end. It says there that true Christian is the one who keeps his faith in Jesus Christ all the way to the end of his life. Soon we will be dealing with the Parable of The Sower, The Seed, and The Soils, where the many fall-away from their faith – some even with a good start and intention. It is very important to understand that the Christian is the one who runs the race and finishes it all the way to the finish line. There is no honor for the runner who never finishes the race.

So, at the end of this parable concerning faithfulness in prayer.. Jesus closes this message on faithfulness, with a true warning for all who profess [vs confess] belief upon Jesus...

[Luke 18:8b] However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

If that is Jesus' concern, then we should be concerned. We need to do everything we can do to not lose our faith, and the faith of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus. Will there be hard times? It would be my guess that every one of us has already found the answer to that question, and it is "Yes." And there are hard times to come – especially if you find yourself in "that day" that comes near the end of the age. That day, when like Noah, the whole world around you has no faith in God at all. That day when God has promised His salvation in His Son, and like Noah, carries you away in His Ark, and He closes the door behind you.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Why is it important to include the chapters and verses that come before, and after, when beginning a study on a particular section of the Bible?

The bible is one book. All that comes before a particular section - and all that comes after it is part of the story of that section. It is easy to come to wrong conclusions about the meaning of the area of your study if you don't know the whole story. In this study it is possible to come to all kinds of wrong conclusions about the meanings contained in it - if you don't know that Jesus is continuing His teaching on His second coming.

2. Why is it important to know your whole bible - specifically when preparing study materials for others [Sunday school, small group, etc.]?

Like the answer to #1 above: The bible is one book. Any teaching materials that you may put together cannot contradict the rest of Scripture. 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." So, there are two elements here. First, proper bible study for teaching others requires both understanding the Spirit of God's meaning and have a Spirit led heart. Second, because the word of God is "God breathed," then every word and meaning throughout the Scriptures can not contradict another passage when properly understood - no verse stands alone.

3. This study began with Luke 18:1. Why does Jesus tell His disciples this parable?

As we often say, "Don't miss the little things!" Here at the very beginning of this parable Jesus tell His disciples why He is telling it to them: "that at all times they ought to pray and not lose heart." For soon, their leader will be taken from them and be killed upon the Cross. And for us that means we should at all times pray and

not lose heart - for this life has both its "Mountain tops," and it's "Valleys," But God remains true.

4. What should we learn from this arrogant human judge in the first few verses?

Absolutely nothing except that the story concerns the sharp contrast between this arrogant human judge and the God of the Bible - who does listen, He does love and care for us, and that it is to Him we should keep on seeking, knocking, and He will keep on opening the door for us.

5. What is Jesus' main concern about us and our world when He returns to us at His second coming?

Like in the time of Noah, who lived in a world that had gone evil. A world where only Noah is said to be found as a friend of God. [His family was rescued, but there is no word concerning their faith, so we don't know for sure]. As we look at our world today... and if He continues to delay... will He come and find faith still alive on our world? That is His stated concern.

6. Why is this important for us to consider?

As stated in the lesson, the book of Hebrews offers a series of warnings for all who call themselves Christian. By definition a Christian is one who has given his/her self to the Christ, yielded their will to the Spirit of God, and worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit - to the end of their lives. The book of Hebrews warns all of us that many will, and do, fall away. Their lives are not based on a solid foundation of true Christian Faith in Him. Christian Faith is not about going to church, not about striving to be "good enough to be saved," not about "keeping the rules." It is about surrendering yourself completely to Christ, allowing yourself to be filled and led by the Holy Spirit of God, and to fall on your knees before God the Father - and allow His marvelous grace to bring you to His salvation and life eternal.

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Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

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