

Luke 18

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THE STORY OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW (PRAYER)

(18:1.) One day Jesus told His disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. (2) "There was a judge in a certain city," He said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people.

- Jesus now tells a story stressing the need to **pray** and **never give up** even when we don't see an answer. He is not teaching long prayers, but repeated ones. This was about a judge who **neither feared God** or **cared about** people. **Barclay** describes characters like this one: "This judge was one of the paid magistrates appointed either by Herod or by the Romans. Such judges were notorious. Unless a plaintiff had influence and money to bribe his way to a verdict he had no hope of ever getting his case settled. These judges were said to pervert justice for a dish of meat."
- This is a story of contrasts between the atheist **judge** and **God** in Heaven.

(3.) A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.' (4) The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, (5) but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!'"

- A **widow** was often legally defenseless. If the court didn't help her, then she may have suffered severe injustice. She **came to him repeatedly** and asking for legal protection from an **enemy**. It is apt that someone was trying to take her house. At first the judge said "no," but her persistence caused the judge to review his decision. His response was out of self-defense and the judge granted her **request**.



(6.) Then the Lord said, "Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. (7) Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to His chosen people who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? (8) I tell you, He will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will He find on the earth who have faith?"

- If the unrighteous judge gave in, how much more our **God** who cares about **His chosen people**. God may just be waiting for us to ask Him. Or His justice for others may have granted them time to reverse themselves.
- When the **Son of Man returns** again, **will He find on the earth those who have faith?** Who will cry out to God for help in time of need? Sadly, not every believer is persistent in prayer. The promise is very specific to: **His chosen people who cry out to Him day and night**.

STORY OF THE SELF-RIGHTOUS PHARISEE

(9.) Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: (10) "Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector.

- This story is directed at those who trust in their own conduct for right standing before God. Further, they compared themselves with others and **and scorned everyone else.**
- The **two men** in the story were exact opposites in many ways, but both went **to the Temple to pray.** The specific times for prayer at the **Temple** were 9 AM and 3 PM. **Prayers** were said from the Court of Women. If a Jew was not at Jerusalem so he could **go up** to the Temple court, he faced toward Jerusalem when he prayed. This is what Daniel had done living in far off Babylon:

But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God. (Daniel 6:10 NLT)

(11.) The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank You, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! (12) I fast twice a week, and I give You a tenth of my income.'

- Mr. **Pharisee** announced that he was a good man, especially with external sins. He thanked God that he was above **cheating**, and **adultery** and being a crook like he supposed the **tax collector** to be. The **Pharisee** considered that he was in a class by himself.
- Beyond that, he **fasted twice a week**, probably Mondays and Thursdays. This was not required by the Law of Moses, but he considered his self-discipline a feature that God would like.

- He was also a **tithing** man. This would prove how important he was to God. He may not have had livestock and crops to **tithe**, but he could **tithe** on the garden herbs. Instead of confessing his sins, he confessed his virtues. This is hardly worship.
- **Burton Coffman** describes the Pharisee and his world: "The Pharisee belonged to the aristocracy of his time, a member of the ruling class; and both his virtues and his sins were those of the class to which he belonged.

His good points were many. He was not an adulterer, nor an extortioner, nor unjust. He avoided the outward, gross sins into which many fall. On the positive side, he was outwardly religious, as he should have been, keeping all the ceremonies of the law and paying tithes even beyond what the law required, and observing a hundred times as many fasts each year as God had commanded. He was superior to many of his own times, and also of our own times.

His failure was a lack of humility, a proud and selfish arrogance having developed within him that made him unsympathetic to others. Furthermore, he had fallen into the fatal error of supposing that he had placed God in his debt, that God owed him salvation on the basis of the good deeds that he did and his outward observance of the commandments in the law."

(13.) "But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' (14) I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

- This **tax** man looked down while he **beat his chest**, asking God for mercy. Instead of doing a quick evaluation of others in sight, he called himself a **sinner**. Re-read verse 9.

- Jesus himself reported the outcome. The **humble** man was **justified**. God heard the humble **tax collector** and forgave him.
- **The Pharisee** had not confessed any sin or asked for forgiveness or expressed any sort of lack or need. It is the presence of humility more than the absence of evil deeds that gets justification. All of this was before the death of Christ.

JESUS WELCOMED THE CHILDREN

(15.) One day some parents brought their little children to Jesus so He could touch and bless them. But when the disciples saw this, they scolded the parents for bothering Him.

- These **parents** were being sent away by His **disciples**, but Jesus was always willing to receive those who came. The parents wanted Jesus to **touch** their **children**.

(16.) Then Jesus called for the children and said to the disciples, "Let the children come to Me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. (17) I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it."

- As at other times, Jesus uses the moment to illustrate a truth: His listeners must become **like a child** to enter the **Kingdom of God**.
- Jesus further indicates the sinlessness of the children, something that some systems of Biblical interpretation overlook. They were not guilty of Adam's sin.
- There is nothing said about baptism in this passage, so it does not support infant baptism.
- Those who **receive the kingdom of God** must become child-like. **Paul Butler** observes: "Why was Jesus so emphatic about this matter of children? Because the kingdom of God belongs to children. Unless any man become like a child, he cannot enter the kingdom. That does not mean, of course, an

adult must regress to the infantile level of maturation mentally and physically. It means become child-like in nature. It means to strip oneself of all the sophistries and facades of adulthood and return to the uncomplicated, guileless simplicity of a child's pure faith. What is a child like?

- a. conscious of imperfection—always eager to be taught
- b. unprejudiced—receives peers without bias as to race, color, etc.
- c. malleable—will give in, bend and surrender to truth
- d. impressionable—trusting, receptive, vulnerable
- e. unhypocritical—honest, open, candid
- f. delights to make others pleased with him by giving love and affection.”

THE RICH YOUNG LEADER

(18.) Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: "Good Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" (19.) "Why do you call Me good?" Jesus asked him. "Only God is truly good.

- The **religious leader** in question may have been an administrator under a local king or tetrarch or he may have been a synagogue ruler. It is Matthew who calls him a *young man*.
- An expert in the Law of Moses had asked this question back in 10:2 but only to trap Jesus. But the sadness spoken of in vs. 23 indicates that this ruler was asking a sincere question.
- Jesus focused on his word **good**. Jesus asked if he was calling him God, since **only God is truly good**. **Paul Butler** observes: "Much evangelism today is based in an insipid sentimentality which begins, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.' Jesus did not begin that way! He said, 'Young man you had better get straightened out first in your own mind who God is!'"

(20.) But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.'"



- Jesus lists five of the 10 commandments as examples of the rest.

(21.) The man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young." (22) When Jesus heard his answer, He said, "There is still one thing you haven't done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." (23) But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he was very rich.

- He quickly claimed to have obeyed these **commandments** since he was a youth.
- **Jesus** pointed out that he also needed to divest himself of his wealth: **give the money to the poor**. The reward for doing this would be **treasure in heaven** and then he would have the right to follow Jesus personally.
- This requirement saddened the ruler. It is doubtful that he did what Jesus asked. Jesus taught that men must surrender whatever is separating them from God. Consider what Judas may have thought when he heard this conversation.

(24.) When Jesus saw this, He said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God! (25) In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

- Wanting to retain **riches** at all costs takes control of a person's life, making it difficult **to enter the kingdom of God**. A similar

statement could be made about chemical addictions, immorality and other vices.

- There is a story that a low gate in Jerusalem was called the *needle's eye*, but the setting of this event was not at Jerusalem. The traveling party had not yet reached it.
- **Jesus** is showing that it is *humanly* impossible for a **rich** man to **enter the kingdom**. According to verse 27, there is a way.

(26.) Those who heard this said, "Then who in the world can be saved?" (27) He replied, "What is impossible for people is possible with God." (28) Peter said, "We've left our homes to follow You."

- The crowd believed that wealth signaled God's approval and if the wealthy aren't **saved**, then who will be?
- It is God who determines **who can be saved**. Wealth is not the key to eternal life.
- **Peter** saw that he was qualified because of the sacrifice that he and the other apostles were making to **follow** Jesus.

(29.) "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, (30) will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come."

- Jesus commends his followers for putting the **Kingdom of God** ahead of loved ones.
- The reward for doing this in this **life** is many fold and the time after this **life** is even more rewarding.

JESUS AGAIN PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

(31.) Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus said, "Listen, we're going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true.

- Jesus' focus is now on the **twelve**. Their destination was still **Jerusalem** and there were Old Testament prophecies for the **Son of Man** to fulfill.

(32.) He will be handed over to the Romans, and He will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. (33) They will flog Him with a whip and kill Him, but on the third day He will rise again."

- Jesus is adding detail about his coming death. We learn for the first time that **Romans** are involved.
- It was important that Jesus reveal details about his coming death so the Twelve will know that it is part of God's plan for mankind.
- Jesus also said that **on the third day He will rise again**, but the truth of this did not stick with the Twelve.
- **Paul Butler** comments on this sentence: "Jesus' prophecy about His death and resurrection clearly demonstrates His supernatural knowledge.
 - *He knew ahead* of time where He would die (Jerusalem). Had He been only a man He could never have been so specific.
 - *He knew ahead* of His death how He would die (crucifixion, Mt. 20:19). Being a Jew and really having committed no crime against Rome, one would expect Jesus to meet death normally or, if executed by the Jews, by stoning.
 - *He knew prior* to His death who would be involved (Jewish and Gentile rulers, Mt. 20:18-19). All His enemies would have to do to prove Him a false prophet was to not fulfill His predictions—but they were fulfilled to the letter. Not only

were Jesus' predictions of His death fulfilled but the prophecies of the Old Testament made centuries and millenniums before were also fulfilled."

(34.) But they didn't understand any of this. The significance of His words was hidden from them, and they failed to grasp what He was talking about.

- It does not say that God kept them from **understanding**, just that they didn't get it.

JESUS HEALED A BLIND BEGGAR

(35.) As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road.

- Matthew mentions two blind men and he was present. Luke researched from others and his source only spoke of one blind man.
- **Jericho** was a high-traffic area for travelers and was probably a fruitful place to **beg**.

(36.) When he heard the noise of a crowd going past, he asked what was happening. (37) They told him that Jesus the Nazarene was going by. (38) So he began shouting, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (39) "Be quiet!" the people in front yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

- The blind man **asked** about the commotion as Jesus passed nearby.
- While the person answering called him **Jesus the Nazarene**, the blind man had other information and **called** him the **Son of David**.
- The blind man knew that Jesus had healing power for he asked Jesus to have **mercy on me**.

- Some in Jesus' travel party wanted the blind man to **quiet** down, but that only made him cry out more.

(40.) When Jesus heard him, He stopped and ordered that the man be brought to Him. As the man came near, Jesus asked him, (41) "What do you want Me to do for you?" "Lord," he said, "I want to see!"

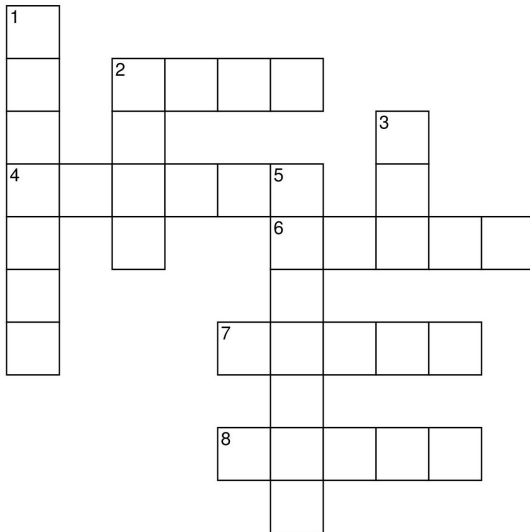
- Jesus knew what the man wanted, but had him say it. Prayer is like that, too. God knows what we want and need, but we must ask.
- His was a statement of faith in Jesus: **Lord, I want to see!**

(42) And Jesus said, "All right, receive your sight! Your faith has healed you." (43) Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all who saw it praised God, too.

- The healing was **instant**.
- The result was that **he praised God** and the people watching **gave praise to God** and that is the primary intent of all of the miracles of Jesus.
- **Barclay** summarizes the action of Jesus: "At that moment he was discoursing to the crowd like any rabbi. But at the blind man's cry of need he stopped, the discourse forgotten. For Jesus it was always more important to act than to talk. Words always took second place to deeds. Here was a human soul in need. Speech must end and action begin. Someone has said that many teachers are like men throwing chatty remarks to a man drowning in a tempestuous sea. Jesus was never like that; he leaped to the rescue of the man. There is many a man who could not put two sentences together but others love him because he is kind. Men may respect an orator but they love a man with helping hands. Men admire a man with a great mind but they love a man with a big heart.

Luke 18

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ACROSS

- 2 Jesus said it was ____ for a rich man to enter the Kingdom.
- 4 Jesus would be handed over to them.
- 6 The tax collector beat his ____.
- 7 The beggar at Jericho was ____.
- 8 The Pharisee gave a ____ of his income.

DOWN

- 1 Jesus had a story for those who ____ everyone else.
- 2 Peter said that he had left his ____ to follow Jesus.
- 3 The beggar at Jericho wanted to ____.
- 5 The disciples ____ the parents for bringing children.