

JULY 6, 2025

SERIES 2: FAITH PASSAGES

## THE JUST JUDGE

### LESSON 2.1

#### FOCUS VERSE

**Hebrews 11:6**

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

#### LESSON TEXT

**Luke 18:1–8;**

**Hebrews 11:6**

#### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God is just.

#### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will persistently pray for justice.

#### Series Overview:

Faith is requisite to please God. Witness faith exemplified through the lives of heroes of faith who got it right and even some who got it wrong, encouraging us that we all have a place in God's kingdom.

#### TEACHING OUTLINE

**Icebreaker:** What is the most inspiring story of persistence you have heard?

**Lesson Connection:** Share the Lesson Connection. (I)

##### I. THE JUDGE AND THE WIDOW

- A. Although the Judge Had Power to Help Others, He Was Unwilling
- B. The Widow Was Powerless without Help from the Judge
- C. I Will Be Just toward Others When I Am in a Position of Power

» *In what roles do you currently serve that place you in a position to potentially bless others this coming week?*

##### II. THE WIDOW'S PERSISTENCE

- A. The Widow Was Persistent

» *Why do we sometimes have difficulty being persistent in bringing our requests to the Lord when we do not receive an answer after the first prayer?*

- B. The Judge Granted Her Request because of Her Persistence

» *What prayer request are you currently bringing to the Lord that has not been answered for a long time? What keeps you motivated not to give up?*

- C. I Will Persistently Pray for Justice

» *Why do you think the Lord sometimes waits before answering our prayers? What lessons might He be wanting to teach*

us?

### III. THE JUST JUDGE

#### A. God Is Just

» *How would your prayer life change if you knew every single request you made would be answered as long as it was in agreement with God's will?*

#### B. Because Our Vision Is Limited, We May Not Recognize God's Justice

#### C. I Will Trust God to Right Wrongs (V)

### Internalizing the Message

#### Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to grant us the faith to be persistent in our prayer life
- For God to help us recognize His justice at work in our lives and the world

### LESSON CONNECTION

*A supplemental image is available in the Resource Kit. (I)*

Verbal Bean was a well-known evangelist in the Apostolic church prior to his tragic death in an automobile crash in 1977. The audio of a series of teaching sessions he held for young evangelists was recorded and distributed throughout Pentecostal circles. Eventually it was transcribed and published as a book simply entitled *Prayer*.

He was explaining the concept of memorial prayers like a Roman centurion prayed in Acts 10. Bean used the analogy of buying a suit on layaway. This idea was certainly familiar to his contemporary audience but is likely foreign to current generations who have been raised with widely available credit and internet access. When making a purchase on layaway, a customer would select an item and make a small down payment. The store would then "lay the item away" so no one else would be able to purchase it, trusting the customer would make additional payments, usually weekly, until the price was paid in full. At that time the customer would be able to take their purchases home.

Parents often bought Christmas gifts on layaway throughout the year to keep from spending a fortune just before the most wonderful time of the year. To use Bean's suit example, on the day of the last payment, the customer would pay the same small amount of money he or she had paid the store every week, but that day the customer would take the suit home.

Bean made the point that our prayers often work in a similar way. God hears and answers our prayers, but sometimes He waits for us to ask in faith a few times. During those times our prayers come up as a memorial before Him like they did for centurion Cornelius. The critical point Bean was making in his session to young ministers was only God knows the untold number of unanswered prayers simply because people stopped one prayer away from receiving their answer.

What if the intercession you have made for a lost family member or friend is only one prayer away from an answer? What if the healing you need in your body is only a handful of more prayers away from coming up before the throne of God as a memorial? What if the revival our church has been praying about is one more passionate, corporate prayer meeting from being born into existence? Don't stop praying. Keep laying up one prayer after another. In God's perfect time, we will take our answer home.

### BIBLE LESSON

#### I. THE JUDGE AND THE WIDOW

### **A. Although the Judge Had Power to Help Others, He Was Unwilling**

The parables of Jesus bring to life principles concerning His kingdom and show us how we should live as pilgrims and strangers throughout every generation. Due to humanity's fallen nature, every society is exposed to a seemingly endless parade of injustice. On days when we feel tremendously blessed, we are often shocked to hear of yet another suffering soul. Even on our worst days, we can always find someone who has it worse. Thankfully, this common suffering has a common antidote: faith.

Enter the widow in Luke 18. Clearly she has suffered. She was married, but she had already buried her husband. Now we find out she had enemies who were trying to take away her land. For her, gray skies had just turned even grayer. Jesus began His story describing "a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man" (Luke 18:2). This judge was in a position of power. He had both the ability and responsibility to help those in need who were in the right and to punish those in the wrong. Unfortunately for a desperate widow, this judge neither feared God nor had any regard for even the most desperate people in his jurisdiction. This judge was driven by his own comfort more than by a sense of justice. His cold heart has earned him the moniker of "the unjust judge."

### **B. The Widow Was Powerless without Help from the Judge**

For anyone listening to Jesus' story, it was not looking good for the widow. Jesus did not include any details about how long she had been struggling or how often her enemies were coming after her; Jesus simply repeated her constant refrain to the unjust judge: "Avenge me of mine adversary" (Luke 18:3). The Lord was aware of our human tendency to sometimes blame the victim (they must have done something wrong) and He knew sympathy for her situation was necessary to properly understand what she was going through.

Let us not underestimate the severity of a widow's place during the New Testament period. She lived long before the days of disability benefits, Social Security payments, and life insurance settlements. Without a male member of the family to provide, a widow often faced a grim future. It is obvious from the scant details provided that Jesus' audience understood her inability to solve her own problems.

### **C. I Will Be Just toward Others When I Am in a Position of Power**

Before casting ourselves as the widow, it is important to consider how we would respond if we were the judge. We would be quick to declare our commitment to justice and our unselfish concern for others. We would never hesitate to help the widow and we may even seek out additional family members to bless.

So, let's pause and consider the areas in our lives where we are already in a position of power. We all have power and influence, but we often overlook areas where we have the opportunity to be a blessing to others. Parents have a wonderful ability to either bless or curse their children. The same is true for employers, coworkers, friends, and siblings. The similarities in our lives to the judge in this parable are more common than we probably realize.

*In what roles do you currently serve that place you in a position to potentially bless others this coming week?*

## **II. THE WIDOW'S PERSISTENCE**

### **A. The Widow Was Persistent**

The apostle Paul instructed the church in Galatia to "not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). As often as we quote this passage and attribute this understanding to Paul, who wrote the most books in the New Testament, we often forget Jesus explained this concept first in this parable. It takes grit to ask and keep asking, and this widow was built of grit. We do not know how often she approached the unjust judge. Perhaps she rose early in the morning and interrupted the magistrate's morning coffee. (No one wants that.) Maybe she returned before lunch and then again as he was preparing for his

afternoon nap. She may have lifted her voice just as he was enjoying supper and then returned to disrupt his sleep at night. We do not know all the details, but we do know Jesus used the word *continual* and later referenced the prayers of His people “day and night” (Luke 18:5, 7).

*Why do we sometimes have difficulty being persistent in bringing our requests to the Lord when we do not receive an answer after the first prayer?*

## **B. The Judge Granted Her Request because of Her Persistence**

Jesus also did not share the transcript of her argument. Did she use flowery language to appeal to the judge’s educational background? Did she flatter him? Did she weep and wail to tug on his emotions? Did she threaten to appeal to Caesar if he did not rule in her favor? Jesus did not tell us because we do not need to know. We only need to know that she never stopped asking. She refused to grow weary in “well asking.”

Jesus never said the judge had an encounter with the Lord. He made no declaration like the chief tax collector Zacchaeus made to repay those he had cheated in the past. The judge did not experience a season of blindness like the apostle Paul had. This carnal, selfish judge decided to grant the request of this desperate, persistent, won’t-take-no-for-an-answer widow to get her to leave him alone. In an irony only Jesus could successfully employ, the unjust judge gave up when he said: “Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me” (Luke 18:5). Other translations suggest she was giving him a black eye, beating him up, or wearing him down like a boxer who delivers one punch after another. He could not stop thinking about her request, and he ruled in her favor because she simply would not stop asking.

*What prayer request are you currently bringing to the Lord that has not been answered for a long time? What keeps you motivated not to give up?*

## **C. I Will Persistently Pray for Justice**

In the altar call to this parable, Jesus encouraged everyone to pay attention, not to the words of the widow, but to “what the unjust judge saith” (Luke 18:6). The implication of this statement is to understand the potential that lies within us when we, like the widow, refuse to allow ourselves to become discouraged when our request is just.

In a world that is becoming increasingly obsessed with social justice, economic justice, and environmental justice, we as children of God must commit to tirelessly seek the Lord for wrongs to be righted either here and now or when Jesus returns. There is no need to downgrade pure justice by categorizing it. God loves justice, and He calls us to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him (Micah 6:8). Do not allow people with selfish motives to pervert justice. Our God is the God of perfect justice.

We must be willing to continually bombard Heaven with our pleas and never grow weary in praying for the will of God to be performed. We must understand that if we take on the posture of the widow in prayer, we should be confident our heavenly Father will grant our request. We have the promise from Jesus that when we show persistence in our prayers, He will “avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them” (Luke 18:7).

*Why do you think the Lord sometimes waits before answering our prayers? What lessons might He be wanting to teach us?*

## **III. THE JUST JUDGE**

### **A. God Is Just**

To properly understand how this parable applies to our lives, we must realize how unlike the widow we often are and how unlike the unjust judge God always is. The Word of God declares: “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deuteronomy 32:4). Additionally, the Lord, who cannot lie, described Himself as “a

just God and a Saviour” (Isaiah 45:21).

This truth is essential for us to embrace, for only by the justice of God can we have the opportunity for salvation. The Bible declares: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The mere fact that justice demands our forgiveness emphasizes how perfect Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross of Calvary was. Just as the Bible declares the “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,” the effectual death of the sinless Christ Jesus purchased our forgiveness (James 5:16).

Once we express faith to receive forgiveness through repentance, remission of sins through baptism in Jesus’ name, and the infilling of the Holy Ghost, we can express that same level of faith in prayer to see that justice is enforced in our world. After all, this same Jesus also taught: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:11).

*How would your prayer life change if you knew every single request you made would be answered as long as it was in agreement with God’s will?*

## **B. Because Our Vision Is Limited, We May Not Recognize God’s Justice**

We often fail to see when the justice of God has been performed, even after we have prayed for it. At times we may feel like the psalmist Asaph who declared in Psalm 73 that his feet were almost gone and his steps had nearly slipped because he was envious at the foolish when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. But when he walked into the sanctuary of God, he could clearly see and understand their end.

Often in a church service or prayer meeting, we discover the limitation of our own understanding. As we read the familiar passage in Isaiah 55 where the Lord said His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts, we sometimes look at our lives and the state of the world and wonder how we could be so off base in our prayers. In those moments remember the persistence of this widow. And remember that we pray to the just Judge of all the earth who has promised He will avenge us speedily (Luke 18:8).

## **C. I Will Trust God to Right Wrongs**

We must trust that God will right all wrongs—some now, and some on that glorious day when He shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying (Revelation 21:4). To receive all these promises, we have to live by faith because “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

**Teacher Option:** *A supplemental video is available in the Resource Kit. (V)*

## **INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE**

In the early days of the 1800s American gold rush, Rill Darby’s uncle set out west to strike gold and strike it rich. When he reached Colorado, he heard daily reports that others were discovering gold there. He spied out a plot of land, staked his claim, and began digging with a pick and shovel. It was exhausting work with no guarantee of reward, but his excitement about the prospect of prospecting gold kept him going.

After weeks of manual digging, he finally spotted a glimmering speck in the mud. He dug more, and he saw more. And more. And more. He was in the throes of discovering gold. He was ecstatic. He needed machinery and a drill to bring the gold ore to the surface, so he covered up his discovery to keep anyone else from stealing the gold he rightfully mined, and he quickly headed home to

Maryland for help and cash.

He first reached out to his nephew Rill Darby. They both reached out to their friends and family for money for machinery. Once they raised the funds, they both headed west to Colorado to unearth their gold mine and write their names into the history books. The first ore they discovered proved to be one of the richest veins in Colorado. They drilled with even more fervor, and then suddenly, the glimmering golden vein disappeared. They drilled deeper and deeper and deeper, but the gold was gone. They drilled for months. Still nothing. What was once the richest vein in the state—which would make them two of the richest men in the state—was gone. They were disappointed, disillusioned, frustrated, exhausted.

Rather than pick up their tools and machinery and drill elsewhere, they packed it all up and sold the mine and machinery to a junk man for a few hundred dollars. Their initial discovery had made news in the area, so the junk man consulted with an engineer and geologist who explained the Darby men did not realize there was a fault line where they were drilling. The golden vein had not disappeared; they just did not drill in the right place. When the new owner of the mine and the drill began drilling, he struck gold and struck it rich—three feet away from where the Darbys stopped drilling. They had no idea they were so close. After months of drilling, had they only gone thirty-six inches farther, their names would be in the history books for a much better reason.

What about you? You have been praying for someone to return to God. Do not stop praying. You may be one more prayer away from helping someone fight and win the spiritual battle they don't have the strength to fight. Pray and keep praying. Our judge is just, He listens to our prayers, and when His time is right, He will move His hand to answer because He is God, and He is good.

### **Prayer Focus**

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to grant us the faith to be persistent in our prayer life
- For God to help us recognize His justice at work in our lives and the world