

MEET YOURSELF IN LUKE'S PARABLES

Part 12: The Parable of the Persistent Widow

(Luke 18:1-8)

INTRO: Jesus is still traveling through Perea, east of the Jordan (13:22ff). Show map. Soon He will cross the river for the final time. On the way He'll encounter Zacchaeus (19:10). Jerusalem and the cross only weeks away. Since He left Galilee almost 6 months ago, He has been teaching, largely in parables (16 so far 3 to go) and largely preparing His disciples. In this parable, Jesus returns to a favorite topic—PRAYER—specifically perseverance in prayer. Earlier He addressed this critical practice (11:1-13). He continues to press this issue. READ 18:1-8 . . .

MAIN TRUTH: Clearly and specifically He tells us the parable's purpose (v.1) – *We should always patiently persevere in prayer and to not lose heart.*

CONTEXT: 18:1 “and” connects to previous and transitions to this (explain 17:20ff . . .)

I. CHARACTERS IDENTIFIED

A. An *Unrighteous Judge* (v. 2) – his character:

1. “neither feared God” – unspiritual – no compelling interest to do right. Wiersbe writes . . . “nor respected man” – no compelling interest to follow the law or to be pressured, though bribing was all too common. He was a law unto himself, doing whatever he wanted. He was a bad man and thus an unjust judge.

B. *A Distressed Widow* (v.3). Luke mentions widows more than any other Gospel writer (6 times). Difficult life. She faced three obstacles: woman, widow, poor. She was on a quest for justice (don't know the details). She had been wronged and sought justice. She evidently had no male relative to help her and means to bribe judge. Pro. 21:15 Psalms 94: . . . She is frustrated over lack of justice, but she is relentless and persistent (“she kept on coming . . .”).

II. PERSISTENCE REWARDED (vv. 4-5)

“. . . I will give her justice . . .” Not told what told what justice was.

III. CONTRASTS EXPOSED (vv. 6-7)

- A. Pray vs. Faint (lose heart, be discouraged) – want to quit. Two options: Pray and Faint. Too often we faint (quit, give up, and complain).
- B. Unrighteous Judge vs. Heavenly Father. Parable argues from the lesser, the judges and the greater, our righteous God. *If an intimidating, unrighteous judge, who has no fear of God nor respect for man, rule in favor of a helpless widow woman because of her persistence, how much more, will our loving and righteous heavenly Father (the ultimate Judge) rule on behalf of His children?* In fact, He has already ruled in our favor!

- C. Widow vs Us. She was a stranger to the judge, had no advocate to plead her case, no promises to stand on. We are not like this woman. We are His very own children, who has Christ as our Advocate, and many promises to claim. We have access (Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 4:14-16). See 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:1). Look at v.7. We are His very own. We don't come to a court of law, but a throne of grace! We are not strangers. We are family! So be patient (v.7b). *“If a poor woman got what she deserved from a selfish, unjust judge, how much more will God's children receive what is right from our loving heavenly Father?”*

IV. PROMISES EXPLAINED (v.8)

- A. (v.8a) speedy justice is coming, someday (2 Thess. 1:7-5).
- B. (v.8b) Remain patient, faithful, and persistently prayerful. While we wait don't lose faith.

“BUT WHAT DO I DO IF IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT'S WORKING?”

Intellectually and biblically we know: God love us, He answers prayer, He cares, etc. But quietly and secretly we wonder, “Is He really listening?” We just don't *feel* like He's there. You've prayed over something for a long time with no apparent results – easy to get discouraged and give up (enemy wants you to). What should we do?

- *Be honest with God about how you really feel.* He will meet us where we are.
- *Believe He can move the mountain.* Have faith He is working but on His timetable (one day = 1000 years). The moment we stop believing that God can doesn't change God; it changes how we pray or if we pray at all.
- *Ask God to reveal the bigger picture.* Ask Him to teach you how to pray . . . to reveal His will. God is not hiding or keeping secrets from us.
- *Borrow someone else's faith by asking them to pray for you and with you.*

MAIN TRUTH: *We should always patiently persevere in prayer and to not lose heart.* The true condition of our faith is often revealed in the state of our prayer life, especially when life is hard.

CONC: Persistent prayerfulness – so hard but so necessary. Parable is preparing us for the trials to come (Matt. 5:10-12; Jn. 15:19-20; 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12). Don't lose heart or faith.