

Luke's Gospel chapter 18 vv.1-17

Parables, widow & others

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

We continue our studies in Luke's Gospel chapter 18 vv.1-17. In these few verses we read of a widow who pestered a judge, a man who knew he was a sinner, a man who spoke to himself, parents who had faith and brought their children to the Lord, and disciples who were out of touch with the Lord.

When studying a passage of the Bible, it is good to look at the verses before and after. By doing this, we can better understand the setting, the context, and the application. In chapter 17 we learn that the Lord was heading for Jerusalem, and He was passing through Samaria and Galilee. As Jesus travelled with His disciples, He continually taught them by His actions and by His words. Jesus knew that He was in the last few months of His life on earth, and there was still a lot His disciples needed to learn. They did not always understand or take in what Jesus was saying to them. I suppose many of us are like that today.

Jesus was constantly watched, questioned, judged, and accused by the Pharisees. The so-called Pharisees were a strict religious Jewish sect, who were self-righteous, hypocritical and had a religious smugness. They constantly tried to catch Jesus out, but He was always ready for the questions they asked. Most of the time He would answer them, but they never understood or would accept what He said. Often after Jesus answered the Pharisees, He would turn to His disciples and explain what He meant. This was usually done in parables. A parable is an illustration that has a deeper spiritual meaning. I was always taught that a parable could be described as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The two parables of Jesus mentioned in this chapter are exclusive to Luke's Gospel.

As we come to the end of chapter 17 the Lord Jesus is looking past His death on the cross and to the future kingdom. This time He uses illustrations from the Old Testament, which the disciples would know very well. He talks about the days of Noah and the days of Lot and the state of the world then and the sinfulness of the world before His coming for, and then with, His saints to take up His kingdom. The disciples, I believe, did not understand, but later, things would become clearer as events took place.

Let us now look in detail at Luke 18 vv.1-17.

The first 17 verses are split into three sections: vv.1-8, the parable of the persistent widow, vv.9-14, the Pharisee, and the tax collector, and in vv.15-17, the Lord blesses the children. Having looked at the last few verses of the previous chapter, we now understood what was in the Lord's mind as He turns to His disciples and says: "that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." They were never to grow weary in doing the right thing. They were always to fully trust in Jesus. Jesus wanted them to depend on Him, rely upon Him and even in times of deepest trial keep praying. Jesus wanted to assure them of His thoughts for them. The Lord knew that times were coming very soon when His disciples would suffer, they would be mistreated, and He was

preparing them for this. Jesus hears the prayers, the crying, and the anguish of those who belong to Him. The Lord Jesus feels the oppression His people are under and, in His grace and mercy, He will one day deliver justice to those who mistreat His own.

A judge and a persistent widow

Jesus continues to tell His disciples a parable about a judge and a persistent widow. A judge in Bible times would arbitrate for many things. This widow had someone who troubled her, so she brought her case to this judge. The widow had a problem because the judge was not interested. He had no fear of God and no respect for anyone, far less a poor widow. But the woman never gave up; she went back to him time after time pleading that he would give her justice against her adversary. He was not interested in this woman's problem, there was no empathy in him.

But after a while, the judge makes up a plan in his heart. He speaks to himself. Listen to his sad words, "Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming." The judge eventually, because it suited him, gave the widow what she desired. She wanted peace, defence, and protection.

Jesus tells His disciples to listen to what the unjust judge said. I wonder if at this point, the disciples' minds were judging the judge and feeling sorry for the widow? Or were they confused as to why Jesus was telling them this story? Jesus tells them to listen! This is a message for us today. Stop and listen to what Jesus is saying to us through the Bible and through circumstances in our lives. Continuing, Jesus contrasts the unjust judge in the story to the only just judge, God Himself. The heart of God is so different to the heart of sinful men and woman. God is a god who cares for His chosen ones. He listens to their cries of anguish and He will not delay in helping them in His time!

As we mentioned earlier in the talk, Jesus is looking past the cross, past the Rapture to the time when great tribulation will take place in this world. The world will have had all its steadying influences removed at the rapture, namely Christians and the Holy Spirit. Both of these are forces that God uses to hold back evil. The Bible tells us that there will be peace for a while, then the world will descend into chaos. Leaders will make alliances, indescribable acts of evil will take place and Israel, as a nation will come under attack. However, there will be a small group of people whom the Bible often refers to as a remnant who have faith. Those men and women, boys and girls who love God will suffer horrendously at the hands of evil men. They will be hunted down; they will refuse the mark of the beast which will make their lives unbearable. They will cry to God, the righteous judge, the lover of His people, the protector of His chosen ones. He will hear their cry. Jesus tells His disciples that at this point, God will step in quickly. He will act decisively by instructing Jesus (referred to as the Son of Man in Luke's Gospel) to return to this world to protect His own, defeat every enemy and claim this world for Himself again.

Jesus ends this lesson by asking a question. Will He find faith on His return? Yes, He will! There will always be a representative of faith, maybe small but there will always be a remnant who will respect and honour His name. There are Christians in different parts of the world today who are suffering like this widow. Many who are praying persistently to be released from their torture and anguish. Jesus is saying to you today; "I AM listening to your crying, I feel your pain and suffering; keep trusting, keep praying, do not give up, and do not faint or lose heart."

The Pharisee, and the Tax Collector

The second section in our study of Luke 18 vv.9-14, is the second parable of the chapter which is about a Pharisee, and the tax collector. The audience this time are the Pharisees. Jesus refers to them as people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with

contempt. Many people today regard themselves as being upright and judge others. Men and women will not accept they are sinners who need to answer to a righteous and Holy God under His terms. The words of Frank Sinatra in his song, "I did it my way" is the cry of many today!

The parable Jesus tells is of two men praying in the temple. This would be a familiar and well-known scene to the Pharisees. The Pharisees, like many today, kept religiously to man made creeds and doctrines and by doing this assessed themselves to be righteous. He walked into the temple ostentatiously with his head held high, he stood, he did not need to lower himself to show any humility. He prayed to himself. I think this means he prayed silently and all about himself and how good he was. Listen to his sad prayer where five times he uses the personal pronoun, I: "God, I thank You that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get." Dear Christian friend, take note as there is a message here for you. I have seen and heard mature Christians take the moral high ground. I have heard prayers of justification concerning themselves, so be aware of your attitude! Remember, "God knows the hearts of men." The true example for us is Jesus. Look at the forgiveness, grace, and mercy He pours over us even as we are? Look at the attitude of God's servant, His Son Jesus Christ, the One who made Himself of no reputation who took upon Himself human form, to serve and be a sacrifice for many. We all need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God for true forgiveness and blessing.

The other man was a tax collector. They were hired by the Romans to collect taxes and they were always looked on with suspicion by the Jews. Most were dishonest, unscrupulous and were despised by all. We are not told what this man had done; maybe he was more honest than others in his dealings with money. We do not know, but what we do know is that he entered the temple in a totally different attitude of heart to the Pharisee. He slipped into the temple quietly and stood away from everyone else. With head bowed, and heart humbled, he openly confessed to God he was a sinner. He beat on his chest and cried out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." This man sensed his own utter unworthiness before God. The reference to "a sinner" literally translated is "THE sinner." [It is also interesting to note that the Greek word for "be merciful to" is found only once more in the New Testament. In Hebrews 2 v.17, it is applied to our Lord "making reconciliation" reconciling us to God by His death.](#)

The tax collector's attitude was genuine; he had a real spirit of self-humiliation. I say genuine because some would self-humiliate themselves for their own gain. This man came with a true repentant heart. He came knowing that there was nothing in him or about him that would persuade God to give him mercy and forgiveness. He knew the debt that had to be paid was too great. He knew that he could only come in the way that was acceptable to God. The tax collector found favour with God; he was forgiven, he was saved. The Bible says that he went down to his house justified; he had been made righteous in the sight of God. God saw the work of the cross done, although it was going to be a few days before Jesus, His Son, would lay down His life as the sacrifice for this man's sins on the cross of Calvary. This is a good example of the work of God in a sinner's heart. One comes humbly, with a repentant heart acknowledging one's sins, whilst pleading for mercy and God forgives.

[I am reminded of an old hymn.](#)

[The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Saviour's blood;
'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
His righteousness, yet wondrous grace.](#)

[God could not pass the sinner by,
His sin demands that he must die;
But in the cross of Christ we see](#)

How God can save us righteously.

The sin is on the Saviour laid,
'Tis in His blood sin's debt is paid;
Stern Justice can demand no more,
And Mercy can dispense her store.

The sinner who believes is free,
Can say: "The Saviour died for me";
Can point to the atoning blood,
And say: "This made my peace with God."

A Midlane 1825 - 1909

Jesus addressed this parable to the Pharisees and made it clear that everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled. However, I am sure Jesus was also speaking to His disciples. Jesus knew their hearts; He knew they would soon discuss together who would be the greatest in the kingdom. Later as the disciples entered the upper room with Jesus, they may have looked at each other and wondered where was the lowly servant to wash their feet? They may even have looked at each other thinking, "I am not going to offer to do this humble task!" But imagine the look on their faces when Jesus Himself takes the basin and the towel and kneels and washes all their feet, including Judas who would soon betray Him. The Lord Jesus goes on to humble Himself by giving up His life on the cross. We read in Philippians 2 vv.8-11, "And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Jesus humbled Himself but, thank God, He will be exalted! It is not easy for us to be humble, but the Lord Jesus was and is the example for us.

Parents who had faith

In the last three verses of our study, we have parents who had faith, children who were brought to Jesus and disciples who were out of touch with the Lord. Verse 15 speaks of "infants," this suggests new-born babies or very small children. Babies that are only a few weeks old can do nothing for themselves; they are totally dependent upon their mothers. The parents here bring their children to Jesus to be blessed. This was common practice in Israel where little ones were brought to famous Rabbis to be blessed. But those parents had seen for themselves what the touch of Jesus had meant to the lives of many. The touch that gave sight to the blind, the touch that could cleanse the leper and raise the dead. These were sensible parents who wanted their children to know the touch of God upon their children's lives. Young parents, bring your children to Jesus. Pray that He will touch them and that they will be drawn to Him in faith. Pray that God will use them for His glory and praise. Although this verse speaks of small children, their older siblings would be looking on, listening, and watching everything. Remember that children do not miss anything we do or say, so be careful of the influence you have on them!

The attitude of the disciples

The attitude of the disciples was not good and out of sync with the Lord. Here are men who walked daily with Jesus. Men who should have known the Lord better. They had heard His gracious words; they saw His acts of mercy; they must have known His loving heart. But it seems they were completely out of touch with the Lord. The disciples rebuked the parents, but the Lord overruled them by calling for the children to come to Him. This was another lesson for the disciples and for you and me. Do you feel that you walk with the Lord? You may read your Bible; you may pray but do you really know the heart of God. In Philippians 2 vv.4-5 we read, "Let each of you

look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” We are encouraged to seek to have the mind of Christ. You may be saying, that is impossible! But every Christian has the indwelling Holy Spirit living within, so it is possible. Christ lives in you. Unfortunately, we allow other things to influence our minds and we do not always act as Jesus would. Some of you may wear a band on your wrist that says WWJD; reminding you to think in circumstances of life, “What would Jesus do?”

Jesus turns to the disciples and tells them not to stop the children from coming to Him. He then tells them that children belong to the kingdom of God. The tenderness of Jesus and His love for children is seen here. No matter how young a child is and wishes to come to Jesus, they should be permitted to do so. They do not need to become adults to be saved, but adults do need the simple faith and humility of a child to enter God’s kingdom. These verses would also tell us that when little children die, they go to heaven. How little, we do not know but Jesus loves the little children and He is the righteous judge.

There are many lessons for us all in these few verses. Christians, you are encouraged to pray persistently; God is listening. I have heard of people who have prayed for over fifty years for a certain person before God moved their heart to believe. [Christians, you should desire that Christ is seen in you, by your actions and words. Christian parents and grandparents, bring your children to Jesus continually in prayer. Christians, beware of your own attitude and your attitude toward others. Dear unsaved friend, come like the tax collector; come with a repentant heart, accept the fact that you cannot save yourself, acknowledge that the death of Christ is the only way of salvation.](#) Do not be like the Pharisee who was so self-righteous and full of himself that he missed the blessing. May God bless you, Amen.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Luke’s Gospel. Parables, widow & others, talk number T1166.

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