

## Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

### “Persevering Prayer”

#### Introduction

Prayer is one of the best gifts given to us by God. To have direct access to God without any human intermediary is the greatest honour and privilege bestowed upon the believer. God commands the believer to enter into His presence boldly. The message is not to be ashamed. Do not be reluctant to come before God. He will accept and receive the believer into His holy presence. His ears will always be inclined to hear his cry. His hand is never too short that He will not come to his aid. He never sleeps nor slumbers. God will always be there for him, any time, any day, and anywhere. There is no issue too big that God is not able to help. There is no issue too small and insignificant that He is not interested in. Therefore God says to the believer, pray without ceasing as you sojourn on this earth.

Nevertheless, believers ignore and tragically abuse prayer. Believers pray when they feel like it, as if God is an emergency exit that they can go to whenever they are in trouble. If all is well, there is no need for prayer. If believers ever ask God for something or for help in time of need, they treat God like a Santa Claus. His demands must be granted on their terms and immediately. When believers do not get what they want from God and according to their time frame, they sulk, murmur, and complain. These kinds of self-serving and man-centred prayers are very common in Christendom today. Pastors pray the same way like their congregation. Like pastor, like members! Believers who pray perfunctory prayers give up very easily and quickly. They regard prayer as stuffing slips of paper into wall cracks, hoping that someday, somehow God will check the wall and decide to answer certain prayers. Sadly, these believers do not expect their prayers to be answered! Persevering prayer is a rare oddity to them.

In this short parable of the unjust judge, the LORD Jesus Christ explains the purpose as well as provides the reason for the parable. The purpose was to teach believers that “men ought always to pray, and not faint.”

**Elements of the Parable** – The unjust city judge refers to God. The widow refers to believers. The widow crying for justice refers to the prayers of the elect.

**Explaining the Parable** – Since Christ has explained the purpose of the parable, the meaning of this parable is not too difficult to determine. The city judge was not a God fearing man. This means that he feared no one and was accountable to no one, not even God.

He also did not regard man. He was a man of power and probably possessed absolute power in those days. He did what he wanted. He was answerable to no one but himself. He could help if he chose to do so. He had the power to help but the will to help lay with him alone.

He was not interested in justice. He helped according to his convenience or fancies. He was not merciful or else he would regard man. If the judge regarded man, then he would have carried out his duties faithfully and judged the interests of all who came to him righteously. However, he did not fear God and cared for no one but himself! The judge was a powerful self-serving despot!

Then, a widow came seeking justice. She lived in the same city as the unjust judge. Nevertheless, he was her judge and she had every right to demand justice from him. The passage does not indicate whether she was a poor or rich widow but only that she came to demand justice because the imperative was used for the word “avenge.” The word for adversary is also in 1 Peter 5:8, referring to the Devil. This word describes an opponent in a suit of law. The thrust of this initial scene is that the widow had every right to seek the judge, whose duty was to dispense justice, because of the adversary who had probably taken her to court! She demanded that the judge hear her case!

The widow must have been demanding a hearing from this judge for a short while, as the word “while” means time. Whether it was a short or long time it is not possible to determine with any certainty. However, the fact of the matter is that she did not come to the judge and merely made a perfunctory gesture and then left. She remained and persisted in her demand and refused to leave until she got her hearing!

After some time had passed, the unjust judge reasoned with himself that “though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.” This was a selfish statement albeit an honest one. He decided to help not because he wanted to. It was also not because he was the judge and it was his duty. He definitely did not do it because he was concerned about justice. He did it so that the widow would stop pestering him! This is the shocking truth! The unjust judge was tired of her incessant nagging. The reader must bear in mind that parables are true earthly accounts with a spiritual meaning. This means that there were powerful despots in the days of Christ who committed such great injustice!

**Applying the Parable** – The application of the parable is clearly given by Christ Himself. **6** “And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. **7** And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? **8** I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” The contrast is stark and vividly portrayed by Christ. The judge was unjust but he finally answered the widow when she persisted in her demand for justice. God is not remotely like the unjust judge. God is good, always just, gracious and merciful. He will surely answer all who call to Him for justice. He will avenge them speedily.

Jesus asked a rhetorical question that demanded an absolute affirmative reply. Furthermore, believers are not like the widow in terms of her relationship with the judge.

She was insignificant in his eyes. However, believers are God's children. He will surely answer their cries for justice. He knows when His children are being persecuted for the faith. He allows persecutions to happen so that His children will learn to trust Him not only in good times but also in times of adversity.

Christ had just revealed to His disciples (cf. Luke 17:22) some of the signs that would take place before His glorious and global return. They would be tested and persecuted. Many would lose their lives for Christ's sake and in the defence of God's holy and perfect Word. They would cry to Him for justice in the face of these persecutions. However, the persecution will intensify and not relent. Justice will seem to have disappeared from the face of the earth and lawlessness will prevail. Evil will abound and prevail during the final years of humankind's existence in this known world. God's children will cry for deliverance but deliverance will not come. Many will die for the faith during the great tribulation. **Revelation 20:4 (KJV)** "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." All will seem to be lost. The parables of Christ teach all believers to persevere in prayer and never give up. They must trust in God to do what is best and right. God hears. He will answer in His time. Do not doubt Him. Keep on praying. Do not think that His delay in answering the believers' cries for justice means that God does not care or that He has gone to sleep!

The question is, "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" This question from Christ elicits a negative answer. This means that when Christ returns, He will NOT find faith on the earth. The word "faith" is not used with reference to "salvation" faith as if there will be no saved persons on earth when Christ returns. The "faith" used here is with reference to faith-filled persevering prayer. Christ was asking whether He will find believers persevering in prayer as they cry to Him for justice when they are persecuted by the whole world as never before in the last days. The answer is a resounding NO!

Dear readers, the lesson for believers today is to persevere in prayer, even though they know that there will be none persevering in prayer in the last few days before His glorious return. The heat of the great persecution will become so intense that such faith will be absent! In the meanwhile, let all true believers keep on praying. Our heavenly Father knows and hears and sees all that His children are subjected to in this sin-sick world. Never doubt His faithfulness and love and care for His beloved children. Did He not show His love for us by sending Christ to die for us when we were His enemies? How much more now that we are His children! Amen.