RTO™ School of Prayer The Persistent Prayer for GOD'S Justice Luke 18:1-8 (ESV)

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"And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, '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.'" And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'"

Introductory note: This lesson is a rewrite of a previous teaching, "True and Real and Lasting Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity from God ALONE" given about one year ago. That lesson was not directly connected to the RTO School of Prayer since it was an attempt to primarily educate inmates *biblically* on the current social/political issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity as they relate to social justice. After a discussion with Manny Mill after the lesson was taught, we determined that a rewrite was necessary because it was too bogged down in historical details and was lacking grace relative to truth. After several unsuccessful rewrites and much prayer and time in God's word, tying this subject directly to God's word (which was something I did not do initially) was the key to properly addressing it in a biblical way, GOD's way.

The primary audience is still the inmate, intended to give him/her GOD's truth, especially since many of them have only limited access to information, and I know from my own personal experience in prison visitation that inmates have been receiving worldly misleading information, which can provoke a sinful perspective and reaction in the one who believes these falsehoods. Nonetheless, the intended audience

includes any serious believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for the same objective, that is, to be biblically informed for a response that is righteous in God's eyes and honors Him and His kingdom. Remember, Christ prayed for His disciples to be IN the world, but not OF the world (John 17:15-19).

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Perhaps you may not know much about or the issues of diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice in today's world, but ignorance or indifference is no excuse. We are to be, as Christ has commanded, "wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16).

(And, as we always do in the School of Prayer lessons, another audience to which we direct our efforts is those who don't know Christ as Lord and Savior but may have a desire to do so. More details about this later in this lesson.)

Regarding this parable, the Ellicott Commentary states that "The whole verse (v.1) is remarkable as being one of the few instances (<u>Luke 18:9</u> being another) in which a parable is introduced by a distinct statement as to its drift and aim.", that is "....that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." This is about persistence in prayer, even when you want to give up.

Persistence in prayer is an element of prayer about which God has MUCH to say in His word, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some relevant passages are: "I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry." (Psalm 40:1), 1"Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you!

2Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call!", (Psalm 102:1-2), "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.", (Romans 12:12), "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,", (Ephesians 6:18), "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.", (Colossians 4:2).

Why does God's word contain many verses about persistence in prayer? Because we are prone to weak faith! Many of us have had critical situations where we tried to pray with persistence but heard no answer from God. As McClaren's Expositions says, "We have all had times when our faith has staggered, and we have found no answer to our heart's question: 'Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?' Many of us have felt what Mary and Martha felt when Jesus' abode still two days in the place where He was after He had received their message.... (about their brother Lazarus being sick and near death). The delays of God's help are a constant feature in His providence, and, as Jesus says here, they are but too

likely to take the life out of faith......But over against these we have to place Jesus' triumphant assurance here."

God's sense of timing is WAY different than ours, especially in our present age of "microwave or Google everything", where we have come to expect instant access to whatever we want. **8**"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **9**The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:8-9). These verses give one reason why God may wait so long to answer, that *all* will have a chance to repent, whether it occurs before one's own death, "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment," (Hebrews 9:27). Or at Christ's final judgment if one is alive at that time, "But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." (2 Peter 3:7).

Another reason why God may take so long to answer or apparently not answer at all is that, in His sovereignty, it is simply his choice. If you recall, in our lesson on Praying God's Will, we learned that God has a secret will as well as a revealed will, (Deut. 29:29). "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Perhaps He may answer in the next life, perhaps He will answer in a way we did not foresee. This may seem harsh, but, at the end of the day, remember, His view of time (and fulfillment of prayer requests) is different than ours. As the song "How Great is Our God" says, "From age to age He stands, and time is in His hands, beginning and the end, beginning and the end." So, stand firm through faith in Him because "He is faithful" and "will never leave you or forsake you", "no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" and has "loved you with an everlasting love". (1 Thess. 5:24, Deut. 31:6, Psalm 84:11, Jeremiah 31:3).

Besides persistence in prayer, there are four other parts of this parable that merit our attention, and they are:

First, the person making the request, the widow. Christ spoke this parable in the first century, and according to Barnes' Notes on the Bible, widows were "defenseless, were commonly poor, and were liable to be oppressed by those in power." They were also a minority group, with no base of political power apart from the judge. It is also important to note that in at least six places in the Bible (Ex 22:22,

Deut. 10:17-18, 27:19, Isa 1:17, 23, Ezek. 22:7) the plight of the widow is mentioned along with the plight of the fatherless.

In vv. 3-4 we read, "And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' **4**For a while he refused,". The words "kept coming to him" mean "continually coming". She is in a dire situation, wants justice, and has no other resolution. This, however, is not overlooked by God. Exodus 22:22, "You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child." Deut. 10:18, "He (God) executes justice for the fatherless and the widow....", See also Deut. 27:19, Isa 1:17, James 1:27. These Scripture verses demonstrate that God *demands* justice.

Second, the specific request. "Give me justice against my adversary." (v.3). Pulpit Commentary notes: "all she wanted was that the judge should deliver her from the oppression which her adversary exercised over her, no doubt in keeping from her the heritage to which she was lawfully entitled. Of course, the granting her prayer would revolve loss and possibly punishment to her fraudulent oppressor." Her adversary most likely was someone of power and privilege, and her only recourse was the judge who had the power and authority to make right of her dilemma.

Third, the administration of justice. "'yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" (v. 5). Gill's Exposition says: "so that it was not from a conscience of duty in him, as a judge, or from a commiseration of the poor widow's case; but from a selfish end, for his own ease, in perfect agreement to his character, that his house might not be disturbed, and his ears stunned with her noise and cry, and he was pestered with her company day after day."

At this point we will examine the administration of justice according to today's worldly standards, particularly as it relates to social justice, and how that is brought about by current standards of diversity, inclusion, and equity. In lieu of a detailed explanation of the social justice perspectives, we'll give a "fly over" view, preferring to emphasize God's biblical justice and His truths by contrast. According to the Corporate Finance Institute, "Social justice refers to a political and philosophical theory that focuses on the concept of fairness in relations between individuals in society and equal access to wealth, opportunities, and social privileges."

"The concept of social justice first arose in the 19th century during the Industrial Revolution as attempts were made to promote more egalitarian (the belief that all people should have equal political, social, and economic rights) societies and reduce the exploitation of certain marginalized groups due to the

vast disparity between the rich and poor at the time. Social justice initially focused on issues such as the distribution of capital, property, and wealth due to the extreme levels of inequality and economic distress prevalent at the time, resulting from the European social class structure."

"While activists and advocates significantly influence the widespread emphasis on social justice in the world today, the actual implementation of social justice policies is often left to administrators, such as the government, non-profit organizations, foundations, or agencies within the bureaucracy."

Pastor Voddie Baucham quotes author Paul Young, who says, "While often an amorphous (not clearly defined) term, social justice has evolved generally to (now) mean state redistribution of advantages and resources to disadvantaged groups to satisfy their rights to social and economic equality."

Like the Luke 18 passage, in the typical social justice scenario, there is a member of an oppressed minority group who seeks justice, from a privileged member of a rigged system that does not favor her. The difference today is that the justice and fairness are sought for *entire groups rather than individuals* based on discrimination and *man-made* rules based on real or *perceived* injustices rather than actual court cases concerning specific charges. The number of victimized groups has been steadily growing too.

What are the criteria used to determine the identity of a group which needs or requires social justice? The three main components are diversity, inclusion, and equity. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, published in 1988, diversity is defined as "the quality, state fact or instance of being diverse, based on the definition of the word "diverse": different, dissimilar, varied, diversified." The Global Diversity Practice website, circa 2020: "Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. In a nutshell, it's about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin."

These definitions show a continually evolving and widening meaning over time. Earlier societal and cultural meanings focused primarily upon ethnicity, nationality and race relative to one's position as a citizen of the USA. The addition of terms such as "any dimension that can be used to differentiate...." and "groups or organization" (rather than an emphasis on the individual) change the specific definition to one that becomes indefinite, vague, and leaves room for additional groups or dimensions to be added, creating more confusion.

One of the effects of this widening and changing definition of diversity provides the gateway to the next term in this dynamic, inclusion. Diversity advocate Verna Myers coined the phrase "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." Karen Armstrong, on the National Association of Colleges and Employers website, defines inclusion as "Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources." Please note the words "shares power and ensures equal access". The introduction of the word power assumes that to be included as a part of diversity, a group needs to obtain some type of power. The introduction of the terms "ensures equal access" assumes that current laws and constitutional guarantees are not sufficient, that additional action must be taken. This opens the door to the next component, equity.

Our culture's definition of the word "equity" has also evolved over time. The Merriam Webster Dictionary simply defines it as "justice according to natural law or right; specifically: freedom from bias or favoritism." NACE's Armstrong defines it as: "The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups." Now the word "guarantee" appears, and the emphasis remains on groups over individuals. This transitions the definition of equity to mean a *guaranteed* equality of outcome. The flow of this process according to these modern definitions begins with diversity, adds inclusion, that is, equal access, which should produce equity, in effect, equality of outcome. This is also known as egalitarianism, as mentioned earlier, the belief that all people should have equal political, social and economic rights. Ideally, everyone is exactly the same, total fairness realized.

This egalitarianism is theoretically what socialist/communist governments aim to achieve. As the Corporate Finance Institute states: "Social justice initiatives are commonly seen in socialist and communist countries, which integrates them into their economic policies...." As Karl Marx, the father of modern communism has written: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

While the intentions of those who want to enact social justice through communism/socialism may be good, unfortunately, the implementation of such policies is far from ideal, and historically, it has been an outright disaster. To achieve this egalitarianism, this equality of outcome, the government must force people to do it. Over the history of communist/socialist governments in the last one hundred and five years alone, in nations such as Russia (the former Soviet Union), China, Cambodia, Cuba, *hundreds* of millions of people have died, been killed, oppressed, imprisoned, exiled. Such forcing of people to

redistribute wealth and opportunity goes against the nature of man. God has created every man, every woman as an individual, not as a nameless faceless member of some group. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27). Also: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139:16). These verses apply to ALL people, as individuals, whether they are Christians or not.

Nowhere does the Bible support *forcing* one person (or group) who has possessions or opportunities to give to someone who does not. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, God's people are lovingly commanded, exhorted, encouraged to give as God has given them. For example, in Luke 3:11, John the Baptist tells those who want to know what to do to bear fruit in repentance "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." He does not say that the government or some moralistic organization force or legislate them to do so. He says "whoever" emphasizing the individual, not "this group or that group". Acts 2:45, "And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need." This was completely voluntary, as the Holy Spirit moved them.

The main reason why social justice policies are a failure is because they are made apart from God's word, the Bible, which describes and prescribes *God's* justice. Romans 2:14 says: "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves," The key phrases here are "by nature do", and "they are a law to themselves." Matthew Poole's Commentary states: (for by nature do) "nature is opposed to Scripture and special revelation....", and (law to themselves) "they have in themselves such principles of reason and rules of equity, as are to them instead of a law," This further explains what Paul wrote in Romans 1:19-23 concerning those who "are a law to themselves", "19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images....."

Many activists and influential people in politics, business, government, and yes, even leaders in the Christian faith community who advocate social justice policies believe that they are part of a special group of people which can be described as "intelligentsia", ".... people regarded as, or regarding

themselves as, the educated and enlightened class." (Webster's New World definition). Many of them believe they have received "special revelation", some even claim this came directly from God Himself. Conservative writer, teacher, and economist Dr. Thomas Sowell calls them the "anointed". He writes: "....the vision of the anointed is not simply a vision of the world and its functioning in a causal sense, but it is also a vision of themselves and of their moral role in that world.....It is not a vision of the tragedy of the human condition (which, in my words, is sin): Problems exist because others are not as wise or as virtuous as the anointed." The biblical response to this? Romans 1:22, "Professing to be wise, they became fools...."

Paul further explains in 1 Corinthians 3:18-20, "18Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their craftiness,' 20 and again, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.'" (Citing Job 5:13, Psalm 94:11). Matthew Henry writes: "To have a high opinion of our own wisdom is but to flatter ourselves, and self-flattery is the very next step to self-deceit." And: ".... the proud man, conceited of his own wisdom and understanding, will undertake to correct even divine wisdom itself, and prefer his own shallow reasonings to the revelations of infallible truth and wisdom." This is correcting GOD'S truth and wisdom, which is impossible for sinful man to do.

This is what Abraham acknowledges in Genesis 18:25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" Do you see that? The Judge of ALL the earth? Amen! Psalm 50:6, "The heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge!" Hebrews 12:23, ".... God the judge of all...." In Deut. 32:4 we read: "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he." The Benson Commentary: "He is a rock — Stable in his nature, invincible in his power, fixed and immutable in his counsels, promises, and ways; with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning, James 1:17. His work is perfect — All his works, whether of creation, providence, or grace, and all his actions are unblameable, perfect, wise, and righteous. All his ways are judgment (justice) — His dealings with you his people, and his administrations in the world toward all mankind, are just and holy in the highest degree. A God of truth — Ever faithful and constant to his promises. And without iniquity — Although we are often ignorant of the methods and reasons of the divine procedure, yet it is as impossible there should be injustice or iniquity in God, as that infinite and unchangeable wisdom should act foolishly, or essential goodness should degenerate into malice, or, in the Scripture

language, that light should become darkness." THIS is the one True Living Perfect Judge to whom we appeal!

We return to Luke 18, verse 7, "And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night?" This is true no matter who you are and how you have been wronged, oppressed, victimized by injustice, persecuted. And who are His elect? Barnes' Notes on the Bible says: "His own elect - People of God, saints, Christians; so called because God has 'chosen' them to be his. The term is usually given in the Scriptures to the true followers of God, and is a term of affection, denoting his great and special love in choosing them out of a world of sinners, and conferring on them grace, and mercy, and eternal life. It signifies here that they are especially dear to him; that he feels a deep interest in their welfare, and that he will, therefore, be ready to come forth to their aid. The judge felt no special interest in that widow, yet he heard her; God feels a particular regard, a tender love for his elect, and, therefore, he will hear and save." Christ uses a lesser to the greater analogy, that is, if the unjust judge answers the widow's persistent cries, how much more will the One True Living Perfect Judge answer?

Are you one of God's elect? The fact that *He calls you* is a great mystery, and we won't undertake that discussion now, but what we do know is that if you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, for the forgiveness of your sins and repent, that is, change your ways, you will know that You are His, He will welcome you into His Kingdom, both here on earth, and most importantly, in the joy and bliss of heaven, sparing You from His awful justifiable wrath in eternal hell. You really do not need to be concerned as to whether or not you are one of His elect because, remember, we said earlier that Jesus Himself said, "....whoever comes to me, I will never cast out." (John 6:37). If you come to Him, He will never say "No"!

Summarizing this in the context of Luke 18, we read in vv.7-8, **Z**And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? **8**I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily." This is God's *sure* promise and "For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him." (2 Cor 1:20)

Remember we said earlier that God's timing is different than ours, and He could bring justice for us at a time much later than we would like. Nonetheless, when He does decide, as He says, He will bring justice *speedily*. And remember, Jesus Christ, God's Son, embodies all the perfect attributes of the Father, just as Scripture affirms. For Christ, as the Lord's Chosen Servant, is God's perfect judge for all. (Isa 42:1, 3-4) 1"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 3.... he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4He will not grow

faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth." And to you, the inmate, "The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners." (Psalm 141:7 NKJV).

Concerning those who believe their moralistic rules are best, but in a message for all from God, we read: 30"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man (Jesus Christ) whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31). Concerning those who believe the number of oppressed minority groups is growing: And He made from one man (Adam) every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...." (Acts 17:26). There is ONE race, the human race, a race of people with different skin colors, ethnicities, nationalities, physical characteristics, etc.

And while we illustrated God's emphasis on the individual, rather than the group, in the end, Christ's judgment will be based on your belonging to one of two groups, no more, no less. These groups are those who set their minds on the (Holy) Spirit, and those who set their minds on the flesh, the saved and the unsaved. "For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8:6). For those who believe in Christ, "and God himself will be with them as their God. 4He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev 21:3-4). This is God's true and lasting justice for the oppressed who are His. For those who don't believe in Christ, "12And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.13 and they were judged, each one of them...15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire..." (Rev 20:12-13, 15),"where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:48). One other outstanding characteristic about this is that there will be perfect diversity, inclusion, and equity for those in both groups, "For God shows no partiality." (Romans 2:11). There will be people from every tongue, tribe and nation in both heaven and hell.

Fourth, Christ's desire to see faith in persistence to pray always and not lose heart. At the end of this parable, v. 8, Christ asks, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Why does He ask this? You might think this seems out of place in relation to the whole of the parable but consider the context. In the previous chapter, Luke 17, Christ is discussing the judgment of all people when He comes to establish His kingdom on earth, and He mentions the days of Noah, where only Noah and his family, a total of eight people out of *millions* on the earth just prior to His judgment of the great flood, had faith, they did not lose heart. He also references the same condition for Sodom and

Gomorrah, which were destroyed in His judgment because there were less than 10 people of faith there. (Genesis 18:27-32). This is His consummate reasoning for persistence in prayer because His judgment IS coming, and those who have faith in Him must not waver or be indifferent.

If you are a victim of injustice, and virtually every one of us is, consider these thoughts from Jordan Peterson. He is a Canadian psychologist, author, speaker and teacher, a former atheist who now professes belief in God. (And we pray he moves forward and names the Name of Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.). In a podcast with commentator Joe Rogan, he says this about the cross of Christ (I have taken the liberty to paraphrase portions and to add emphasis):

"You cannot write a more tragic story. (And I would add a more unjust story). Why?

Because it is a story of an aggregation, a collection of *everything* that people fear.

There's no death more painful than crucifixion, a slow agonizing death by suffocation, dehydration, and exposure. Extraordinarily painful!

Plus, you know (as Christ did) it's coming, as you follow the narrative, you know it's coming, you see it coming. One of your best friends, Judas, betrays you. Plus, all your people turned against you. They are led by a tyrant who doubts truth.

Plus, you're a victim of the Roman Empire. (A victim of the governmental and judicial systems.)

Plus, you're completely innocent.

Plus, everyone knows that.

Plus, they choose to release Barabbas, a criminal, to go free instead of you even though they know he's a criminal and you're innocent.

And you're young and you've done NOTHING wrong. All you've ever done is help people.

You and I are somewhere in that scene too. Maybe you're Pilate, you doubt truth, but maybe you'll go along with the crowd. Maybe you're Judas because you betray your best friend. Maybe you're a part of the mob, not thinking for yourself, but going along on the emotional roller coaster in the heat of the moment. Maybe you're the criminal, getting released at the expense of someone who's completely innocent, but you only think about yourself and your own self-interest.

You look upon Christ on the cross as the summation of all those things, all that EVIL, all that sin. You see death, destruction, pain, terror, tyranny, frailty, betrayal, you see injustice, GROSS INJUSTICE!

Look harder, look harder, look harder, what do you see?

You see the death, you see the resurrection, you see GOD's justice. You look far enough into the abyss; you see the light."

To reference this to God's word, Hebrews 12:3, "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."

Christ WILL bring true, right, and lasting justice! Pray always and do not lose heart! Read and pray Psalm 9. He WILL hear and answer. Embrace Christ by faith and be among those in the group that will enjoy His blessing forever in heaven, rather than those who will have everlasting punishment and misery in hell. Whether you will be in heaven or whether you will be in hell, you will know that: 9"Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Amen and Alleluia!

For a copy of a transcript or questions, please contact dmozdin.dfp@gmail.com

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