

RTO™ School of Prayer

The Persistent Prayer for GOD'S Justice

Luke 18:1-8 (ESV)

by Dave Mozdin

***1**"And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. **2**He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. **3**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, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, **5**yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" **6**And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. **7**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. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'"*

We live in a sin-cursed world where injustice abounds everywhere! Injustice has been with us ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command to not eat the forbidden fruit (an injustice towards God) ever since Cain killed Abel, an injustice towards another person. We see it on the TV news, in all forms of online media, *especially* social media, we see it in the lives of people all around the world, to our loved ones, and for those of us in prison and in prison ministry, we see it in the criminal justice and prison systems! And as one pastor famously said, "It's OK to tell the truth in church", **every one of us** has been both the victim AND the perpetrator of sins of injustice.

As thinking feeling human beings to whom God has instilled a conscience, we react or respond when we see or hear about instances of injustice, especially when it involves our loved ones or if it directly affects us, often in sinful ways. What are these sinful ways? Why is this so? What are some of the God honoring ways to respond? We will proceed to explore this.

Regarding this parable, the *Ellicott Commentary* states that “The whole verse (v.1) is remarkable as being one of the few instances (Luke 18:9 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, even when, concerning injustice, you are greatly tempted to take matters into your own hands through sinful thoughts, words, actions of revenge. And while the main thrust of this parable is persistence in prayer, it is interesting to note that the request is about obtaining justice for an injustice. In our 21st century culture, the onset of “social justice”, that is injustice (and perceived injustice) against entire groups of people has become prevalent, and is being addressed in highly sinful, God dishonoring ways. All that to say, along with our sinful bent concerning injustice, I believe we need to view justice, and correcting injustice God’s way, and His holy word, as always, provides the correct answers we seek.

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! Weak faith causes us to turn to sinful reactions of thought, word and deed, or to despair and just giving up, not turning to prayer as the answer. 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 *demand*s 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 resolve loss and possibly exact 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.”

This is the point where we are apt to take matters into our own hands, enacting our own self-proclaimed justice, which is sinful and will, at some point, bring God’s judgment upon us if we do not repent and refrain from such actions. In what ways might we react in sin? First, by actual punishment upon the offender, physical harm to them and to their loved ones. Second, harm to their well-being, damaging property, saying false things about them (gossip) to damage whatever good reputation they may have, i.e., character assassination. Third, thinking or wishing horrible things to happen to them in retribution, such things as thinking about exacting physical harm to them by your own hand. (I’ve been guilty of this more times than I care to admit, but thanks be to God, I am in repentance now, with such instances being fewer and farther between!).

How do we respond in a God-honoring way to all this? What does God’s word have to say about all of this? Plenty! Our all-knowing God (omniscient) knows our bent towards sin and that we would be prone to think, say and do such things. Psalm 139:1-4: “O Lord, you have searched me and known me!²You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.³You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.⁴Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.” The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26: “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger”. Barnes Notes on the Bible:” ‘Anger’ is a passion too common to need any description. It is an excitement or agitation of mind, of more or less violence, produced by the reception of a real or supposed injury, and attended commonly with a desire or purpose of revenge.”

And revenge, taking matters into our own hands, sometimes immediately or as soon as possible, whether through actions, words or thoughts, that is our chief sinful response. While it is a normal emotion to feel anger towards an injustice, we believe we are the righteous judge exercising what we believe is a suitable punishment, rather than trusting God to judge justly at

the appropriate time.

The Bible speaks very clearly about vengeance and what God wants us to know about it.

Romans 12:19, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord.'" Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35, "Vengeance is mine (God's), and recompense". (which means repay). Please note the promise here, God *will* repay. Note too how Paul follows this up in Romans 12:20-21, "To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not overcome evil by evil, but overcome evil with good." There Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21,22. Not easy to do for sure, but God blesses obedience! 2 Peter 2:6-13a lists both past and future judgments that God has and will enact to those who do injustice, all evidence that God will do what He says He will do.

Jesus Christ Himself addresses this subject in the Sermon on the Mount, especially in regard to thoughts and words. Matthew 5:21, 22, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'" But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." Christ does not mince words here!

So rather than sin against a holy God with sins of vengeance, your own self-styled justice, which most likely will be injustice, trust in God, trust in His mercy, that He will supply your every need in your situation, trust that in His justice, as He does in all of His attributes, He will be perfect in His timing, punishment, correction and timing.

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 19:9 (NKJV), "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether", 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! God’s track record in dispensing justice 2 Peter 2:1-10, the final judgment in Revelation “I will repay”. Revelation 18

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, 7And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8I 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).

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 in your closest circle of 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 (never sinned). All you’ve ever done is help people. (showing God’s love, grace, and mercy)

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, which is titled "Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Lord's righteous judgments". He WILL hear and answer. Repent, 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, 10so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11) Amen and Alleluia!

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Questions or comments? Email: dmozdin.dfp@gmail.com