

§190. The Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

Introduction

1. This parable is the climax of the section on faithfulness at the coming of the Son of Man (17:20–18:8). Context of judgment: Jesus has just spoken of Noah's day (only eight saved) and Lot's (only three). The natural question is "Will anyone escape the next judgment?" Verse 8 answers it, so the parable is mainly about vindication, not prayer technique.
2. Verses 1 and 7–8 frame the passage: how should we live *now*, in light of the end?
3. The Purpose of the parable is given ahead: Pray and Do Not Lose Heart. Subject of prayer: The prayer in view is for conditions in the end times and for God's avenging of His people (v. 7; cf. Rev 6:9–11).
4. There is no change of scene. This continues Jesus' teaching to the disciples, with the Pharisees still listening.
5. Jesus teaches us to hold on to hopeful, fervant faith in the midst of present trials.
6. **Two main truths:** (i) **God is faithful.** He will surely and speedily act for His elect. (ii) **The widow is our model.** She shows perseverance in the face of wrong.
7. Jesus asks about "*the* faith", the kind of faith the widow showed, not faith in general.
8. **The problem Jesus foresees (17:22–25):** disciples will face hostility, look for deliverance, not find it quickly, and lose heart.
9. **Jesus' answer:** (i) Suffering is part of how God brings salvation: apparently God is not doing anything against the judge! (ii) Though it seems delayed, God's vindication is certain. A parable of solace: Believers will face perilous days (17:22), and those days will be shortened

for the elect's sake (Matt 24:22). The message is "Do not worry. God will remember you and avenge you."

10. Prayer (11:2) is now widened to mean not only asking for the kingdom but also actively seeking justice.
11. Praying and crying out to God against injustice describes the whole life of the believer.

Exposition

18:1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

1. "Losing heart" is the opposite of faith. It means growing slack in discipleship, living "business as usual", and forgetting the end.
2. The cure is continuous prayer. It is a necessity, not an option.
3. This is not repeating words to wear God down.
4. Prayer here means trust in God and openness to His goodness.

18:2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.

18:3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'

1. The Judge and the Widow

2. Two opposite characters: a powerful judge and a powerless widow.
3. The judge "neither feared God nor respected people". This is not neutrality. It means he was thoroughly wicked.
 - (a) God's judges were meant to fear the LORD (2 Chr 19:7).
 - (b) God is not blind to the poor. He shows special care for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.
 - (c) Luke often portrays widows as devout and cared for by God.

4. The widow had no standing, no male relative to plead for her, and no money for a bribe.
5. Scripture shows God's concern for widows because His people so often neglected them.
6. Her claim probably involved property or resources withheld from her.
7. The judge refused her because of who he was, with no fear of God and no care for people.
8. The key is the widow's astonishing boldness. She should have been a helpless victim, yet she kept coming back, like the woman with the bleeding in 8:43–48.

18:4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man,

18:5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' "

18:6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said.

1. **Verses 4b–6 – The Judge Gives In**

2. The judge talks to himself, as in other parables (15:11–32; 16:1–9).
3. He admits he has no fear of God or respect for people.
4. He acts only because the widow wears him out, not out of justice or kindness.
5. The wording is humorous, borrowed from boxing. The mighty judge fears being "slugged" by the weakest person in town.
6. Jesus highlights the persistence and initiative of one who seemed powerless.
7. Jesus, "the Lord", tells the disciples to *listen*, meaning hearing that leads to action (cf. ch. 8).
8. Disciples can learn from worldly examples (cf. 16:8).

9. Lesson: pursue justice even when it means acting outside the world's rules.

18:7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?

18:8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

1. Verses 7–8 – God Will Give Justice

2. Jesus applies the parable with a lesser-to-greater argument: if an unjust judge gives justice, *how much more* will God!

(a) Luke has already shown God's good and generous character (6:35–36; 11:1–13; 12:32).

3. The widow stands for God's **elect**, who "cry out to him day and night" (cf. Anna in 2:37; 1 Tim 5:5).

(a) Crying out to God goes hand in hand with persistent pursuit of justice.

4. God's people will suffer injustice in this world (17:22–37), but **vindication is certain and soon**.

5. This call to steadfast faith closes the discussion that began in 17:20–21.

(a) The Pharisees asked *when* the kingdom would come. Jesus changes the question.

(b) The real question is not "When? Where?" but "**How will people respond?**"

6. The final question is urgent: "*When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" It is addressed to everyone, in every age, until He returns. The question in v. 8 is rhetorical: It is answered in part by 17:34–35, which says there will be people of faith on earth when Christ returns. The force of the question suggests they will be relatively few.

Application

1. **Pray always like the widow:** Prayer guards against losing heart. Persist in faith, prayer, and the pursuit of justice.
2. **God is far better than the unjust judge.** He is certain to vindicate His people.
3. Don't ask **"When?"** Ask *Will the Son of Man find faith in me?* Ask whether you will be found faithful.
4. Suffering is not wasted: A believer should be willing to suffer if it brings glory to God through a soul saved. God rewards temporal effort eternally, so suffering is richly compensated. Why God seems slow to act: His chief concern is people's salvation. A believer's temporary suffering may serve the salvation of others, through time, example, conviction, or preaching, and that is a small price against another person's eternal loss.