

As a Junior High age kid... I learned that I was easily thrilled by playing practical jokes on people (friends... family... and total strangers.) I loved seeing what kind of a rise I could get from people by tricking them into believing something that I had contrived. ... In my younger years... one of my favorite pranks has since been named “door dash,” “door ditch,” and “ring and run.” ... Apparently many other people through the years have (also) enjoyed playing it... so it has been named.

The premise was very simple... I run would up to someone’s door... ring the doorbell... and then dash away and hide in the bushes of their yard... and watch the home-owner’s puzzled expressions. ... Did any of you ever do this... or am I the only “heathen” here...?

Unfortunately... this describes the prayer life of many Christians. They ring the Lord’s doorbell and run before He can answer the door. ... (LISTEN!) when it comes to prayer... God wants us to knock on His door and keep knocking. Take a look with me at the first verse of our study for today...

Luke 18:1

This is a call to **continued** prayer. The Lord tells us how often we should pray. He said we are to do it “**always.**” ... Praying always does not mean that we are to pray every second of the day. ... That would be pretty hard to do. ... It does mean (however) that we are to have a consistent prayer time with the Lord each day... and also be in an attitude of prayerfulness... as we work... walk... eat... and play. ... No matter what circumstance we may face (whether: serene or stressful... wonderful or woeful... in times of plenty or poverty)... we are to remain faithful in our prayer life.

But the passage before us today... is about a specific subject that we are to be praying about. ... Because of the passage we studied last week (the verses just before these) and because of what we will see in verse 8 (here in Luke 18)... it will be very clear that we are to be praying insistently for God's justice - at Jesus' return.

The point is... that before Christ's return... there will be horrible persecution of innocent and helpless victims... terrible injustice... and a seeming delay of Jesus' return. ... So as followers of Christ... we are to pray - and **NOT** just **once** - for justice (and for Christ's return that will **bring** justice.) ... We are **NOT** to play "ring and run," ("door dash") with this.

Last week... as we concluded Luke chapter 17... we saw Jesus describe the Kingdom of God as two phased. Part one is that - the Kingdom of God has come (it is Kingdom **Now**.) The second part... is the Kingdom that will come (it is the Kingdom **NOT YET**.) ... We are living in the Kingdom NOW (as I speak)... and we are waiting for the Kingdom NOT YET (which will be the ultimate fulfillment of God's Kingdom – were total peace and complete righteousness prevails. There will be no more injustice ANYWHERE!)

Our passage today... as we open Luke chapter 18... is an extension of Jesus' discussion with His disciples. He is explaining – how we are to live... in Kingdom NOW... as we wait for Kingdom NOT YET. Today's passage will be **8** verses... but we have already seen the answer (here) in verse 1. We are to live in constant prayer... yearning for Kingdom NOT YET (with its ultimate justice.) in the certain future. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

OK... allow me to get very convicting now. (Some might accuse me of crossing over from "preaching"... to "meddling"... But I believe that there is

a “pin-pointed” application of this to you and I - today...) ... Every time we turn on the news and find ourselves extremely disgusted by all the wrong and injustice that we see everywhere... it ought to drive us to our knees.

I confess that I get so mad... that for the last several years... I have cut out of my day... 95% (possibly more)... of watching and reading news programs.

I don't like the sense of hopelessness that arises in me from watching it. I have said out-loud many times... as I shake my head and turn off the T.V. – *“It's over! We will never again see the least amount of fairness... in our elections... from the courts... our politicians... in criminal justice... how our tax dollars get spent... how we will be protected from greed and/or communism destroying our once “great nation...”* Our public schools are a JOKE! (The animals run the farm.) ... Everywhere we look... the line gets blurred of what is appropriate behavior... of what should be celebrated... and if anyone doesn't... you will be accused of hate and intolerance. ... We see more and more scandals in sports... business... politics... and education.

Fairness is disappearing! There is little to NO justice. (And this is JUST America. The rest of the world faces much greater injustice – in places like China... Romania... Sudan... Israel... Africa... and South America... where thousands die unjustly every single day. But we can't just observe all this and shake our heads in disgust. That just leads us to lose heart!

It is so easy for us to lose heart... It is so easy for us to lose hope! ... I lose sight of what God is doing and wants me to do.

The word Luke used in the original language of the New Testament for “lose heart” in verse 1... is the Greek word **ekkakeo {ek-kak-eh'-o}** which means “*to be utterly spiritless or lose heart, to be exhausted, to give up or be wearied out.*” This same word is used in Galatians 6:9.

Galatians 6:9 (ESV)

⁹ *And let us not - **ekkakeo {ek-kak-eh'-o}** - grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

Multitudes of Christians have fainted in our day. It often looks like... “*Oh well... what can I do...? I’m just one person... What is going to happen is going to happen...*” But our passage today will tell us that we are NOT to do this. (You know)... I confess that I am so tempted whenever I watch or read the news. ... Why? ... Because I walk away shaking my head... and do not allow it to prompt me into praying.

Do you feel worn-out...? Is this NOT a message that has been “pin-pointed” for you and I (in such a time as this)? ... Our feeling worn-out is a sign that we are not in prayer as we ought. ... Put your eyes on God’s government (the Kingdom NOT YET) and yearn for it. Let God increase your faith and give you sustaining power.

What a GREAT passage we come to today! Let it encourage you. Let it prompt you into much more praying! No more “door dash – ring and run”... Its time for us all to grow up.

Luke 18:1-8

As believers we are to identify with the widow’s persistence in praying for justice. We need to be persistently praying for the decisive coming of God’s justice in the Kingdom NOT YET. ... She pictures someone

vulnerable and in dire need — like the believer in a hostile world. ... And the judge provides a contrast for us to see. ... If a dishonest judge responds to a persistent woman... how much more will **God** respond to his children!

A Christian's attention is to remain on God's kingdom. The passage calls for maintaining a hopeful perspective about God's plan. ... The believer is to persistently pray for the kingdom's full coming... trusting that God will respond to this request... even though there is delay. ... (And) Jesus expresses the hope that He will find faithful people on His return... which is our call to stay faithful.

In verse 1... the word "ought" (as in "they ought always to pray...") is from the Greek word **dei {die}** which means "it is necessary, there is need of, it is right and proper." It is also translated "must" 58 times in the New Testament. Praying is necessary and vital if we are to guard against quitting or fainting. Our schedules are filled with things that we feel we need to do. God, however, states emphatically that praying is something that is necessary, it is something we need to do, and it is something we must do.

Luke 18:2

The story begins with a judge whose reputation is clearly stated. The judge is probably a Jew and may have been a powerful man... since the Romans allowed the Jews to manage many of their own legal affairs. The Romans stayed out of most matters (except those involving capital punishment.) ... Many concerns were left to religious authorities (like the Sanhedrin and synagogue elders.)

The dispute is probably financial. The widow's reference to an adversary suggests a problem with someone alive... who was being unjust with her.

The judge is not known for his compassion: he does not fear God or respect people. (Ideally) judges should defend the poor and widowed. God's law was so clear!

Exodus 22:22-24 (ESV)

²² You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. ²³ If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, ²⁴ and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Deuteronomy 24:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ "You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge, ¹⁸ but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

Psalms 146:9 (ESV)

⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

But this judge was not the type to be moved out of compassion. Neither the laws of God nor public opinion can stir his conscience. This man took the job of judge... yet served only his own interests; he didn't honor God's values in his deliberations... nor did he care for the needs of people.

Luke 18:3

The story's second character is the helpless widow. The widow is probably facing some financial difficulty and so appeals to the judge again and again to give her justice. The imperfect ἤρχετο (*ērcheto*, was coming) in this context is the *iterative* tense (of the Greek) – which suggests repeated (relentless) appeals for aid. She seeks relief from the opponent who

wronged her. The helpless... powerless woman appeals over and over to someone with the authority and power to vindicate her.

Jesus did not say that God's people are like this woman. ... In fact... He said just the opposite. ... Because we are ***not*** like her... we should be encouraged in our praying. He argued from the lesser to the greater: "*If a poor widow got what she deserved from a selfish judge... how much more will God's children receive what is right from a loving Heavenly Father!*"

Consider the contrasts. To begin with... the woman was a stranger... *but we are the children of God...* and God cares for His children. ... God's children have an open access into His presence and may come at any time to get the help they need.

The woman had no friend in the court to help get her case on the docket. First of all... she was a woman who had no rights... (women were not allowed to bring their own cases) and (no doubt) she had no money for a bribe. All she could do was walk around outside the court tent and make a nuisance of herself as she shouted at the judge. Part of her incessance might have been following him around town and trying to shame him in public. (This is actually suggested by the judge's response... that she did... in fact... do this.)

But Christian believers have much better weaponry for fighting against injustice. ... The woman's tools were all she had... and tools of the flesh are all that a non-believer has. Why do we often use these inferior tools as OUR first – or primary - recourse...?

I had a high school friend (Ron)... who I had the privilege of seeing pray to receive Christ when I shared the Gospel with him in college. What a delight it was for me to re-connect with Ron a few years ago on Facebook. He is active in a church and vocal about his faith. ... But Ron is also very active politically. Nearly all of his posts on Facebook are exhortations to fight injustice strictly by politics... and shame-based tactics (like this widow.) ... I sometimes responded positively to his posts... but then I stopped. ... Not long ago he asked me why I had lost my enthusiasm for demanding justice. ... I tried expressing to him that I am placing my primary energies elsewhere (fighting with spiritual weaponry) which I believe will be more effective.

Our passage today is telling us that we have something better – by contrasting us with this widow. Trying to effect public opinion and shaming the judge (giving his public image a black eye) was all that she had.

But when we pray... we can open the Word and claim the many promises of God. This poor widow had no promises that she could claim as she tried to convince the judge to hear her case. We not only have God's unfailing promises... but we also have the Holy Spirit... who assists us in our praying (according to Rom. 8:26–27).

Perhaps the greatest contrast is that the widow came to a court of law... but God's children come to a throne of grace. ... She pled out of her poverty... but we have all of God's riches available to us to meet our every need. The point is clear: if we fail to pray... our condition spiritually will be just like that of the poor widow. - ***That*** should encourage us to pray!

Luke 18:4-5

For a time the judge remained unmoved... but eventually... despite his cynical resolution... he gave-in... thinking that she would eventually wear him out with her coming!' ... The literal translation of “*wear me out*” (in the original language) is “*blacken my eye.*” ... That is why I said (a moment ago) that this widow was trying to shame him... and tarnish his public image. Her persistence had been “*punching him out*” in the sense of public embarrassment... giving his reputation or prominence a black eye. ... And it worked! Suddenly there was justice! ... The old rogue judge had met his match.

Luke 18:6-7

(PLEASE LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY!) The parable of the unjust judge and the pestering widow is a parable of **contrast**. ... The clear lesson of the parable is that God is **not** like the judge... The judge was unloving... evil... ungracious... merciless... and unjust. ... But God is loving... good... gracious... merciful... and just. ... Unless we see that Jesus is pointing out **contrasts**... we will get the idea that God must be “*argued,*” “*bribed,*” or “*threatened*” into answering prayer! No. God is **not** like this judge.

And we are **not** like the nameless widow... In the parable the woman was an insignificant nobody. ... But in life... as Christians we are God’s elect... His chosen ones... created in His image and redeemed by the Son of God. Because of who God is... and who we are... there is no reason to frantically assault His door... or nag Him... or threaten Him for a response. ... So we are to pray (as the passage exhorts us to do.) God is listening!

Perhaps this would be as good a time as any for us to evaluate our prayer time. Let me begin by asking some questions.

- Do we repeat a request because we think that the quality of a prayer is dependent on the quantity of words?
- Do we repeat a request because we think that God is ignorant and needs to be informed, or if not ignorant at least He is unconcerned and therefore needs to be aroused?
- Do we repeat our prayers because we believe that God is unwilling to answer and we must prevail upon Him... somehow transforming a hard-hearted God into a compassionate and loving one?
- Do we repeat a petition because we think that God will be swayed in His decision by our putting on a show of zeal and piety (as if God cannot see through the thin veil of hypocrisy)?

When you come to God in prayer... do you think that God is an *unjust judge*? ... When you come to Him in prayer... do you think He is a cheap politician? ... Do you think God is doing things just for political reasons?" My friend... if you think along any of these lines... you are wrong. God is not an unjust judge.

Is all this to say... that we are NOT to fervently beseech God...? Is that the point I am trying to make...? Not at all! ... We must continue in our prayers - even when there seems to be no answer - because God (unlike the unjust judge) is loving... good... and gracious. ... We persist in prayer not for any of the reasons that I (just now) mentioned... that we use in our prayer evaluation.

We persist in prayer because we know He cares and will hear us. We worship Him for this... and we know that He will act in the BEST way. ... This might be (exactly) what we are asking for - or something better! We persistently ask... in worshipful submission to Him... knowing that He wants our greatest good. We persist in prayer – expecting Him to change or adjust us. We persist in prayer as He deepens our faith while we wait on Him.

The Apostle Paul engaged in such prayer when three times he pleaded with the Lord for the removal of his thorn in the flesh (you can read this in 2 Corinthians 12:7–9). These were three sustained... passionate times of intercession. ... Paul did not think that his repetitions were due to a defect in his faith — *“Sorry, Lord, but I’m back. Please forgive my lack of faith! My prayers will be better this time.”* There was none of that. And in the end... the thorn was still there... but God gave him something better to go along with it — *more grace!* ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Luke 18:8

Through the centuries many believers have struggled with the seeming silence of God to their prayers. ... But here Jesus says that God answers all pleas for justice... and does so quickly.

How can this be? (Well) in the very next sentence... Jesus refers to His coming. Because of this context – I don’t think “quickly” (here) means “immediately.” (Jesus’ second coming has not been immediate to Luke’s writing or the time Jesus spoke this... The idea is (more likely) “swiftly” — when God acts... it will be quick or swift.

When we consider God's timing... we must keep in mind what Peter wrote about God's promises: "*But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness*" (2 Peter 3:8, 9a). ... To us... it may seem to be a long time until He answers... but afterwards... we will realize (I guarantee you) that it was very short... in light of all eternity!

But many are still discouraged by God's seeming silence. We need to learn that... in the silence ... our loving God is answering... whether we see His working or not.

Sometimes the silence means that God's answer is a loving "no." Perhaps we asked for the wrong things... or though the request was good... a better way is coming. Far better - for Paul - than the removal of his thorn was God's sufficient grace... which was perfected in his weakness.

As Oswald Chambers explained: "*Some prayers are followed by silence because they are wrong... others... because they are bigger than we can understand. It will be a wonderful moment for some of us when we stand before God and find that the prayers we clamoured for in early days and imagined were never answered, have been answered in the most amazing way, and that God's silence has been the sign of the answer.*"

Sometimes (we must also recognize)... the silence of God is meant to instill a stronger dependence upon God. He is deepening our faith. In the case of Paul... he was left with his thorn - so that he would lean entirely upon God. We are so prone to independence... that the granting of many of our requests... would lead us to self-sufficiency... pride... and independence.

There can be no better way to cultivate a sense of dependence upon God than the need for persistent or determined prayer.

Sometimes the silence is a delay to allow our prayers to mature. The Holy Spirit hones us. Our desire gets tweaked.

As we live in the Kingdom of God NOW... waiting for the Kingdom of God NOT YET... longing for the return of the Son of Man... and true justice... Jesus' closing question (in verse 8) has the same force as it did in A.D. 33: "*However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?*" (v. 8b). ... Jesus' question implies that such faith will not be found on earth unless His followers learn to "*always pray and not give up*" (as verse 1 tells us He wants).

Jesus was saying that continual prayer until He comes is not only the evidence of faith... but the means of building faith until His return. ... The God to whom we pray is not like the unjust judge (who could only be badgered into responding.) ... Our God is loving and gracious. ... And we are not like the nameless widow... but we are God's chosen ones. ... Because of this... He delights to hear and swiftly answer our prayers.

"When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Yes... He will - if we have learned to live a life of prayer in the Kingdom NOW... as we wait for the Kingdom NOT YET.