

Following Jesus: Persistence in Prayer (Luke 18:1-8)

Background

After Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus resolutely heads towards Jerusalem. During this journey, he prepares his disciples for his departure.

In Luke chapter 17, Jesus discussed his return with his disciples; in this passage he encourages them to continue in prayer while they wait for his return. These verses consist of three parts: the narrator's introduction (v1), the parable itself (v2-5), and Jesus' application (v6-8).

Points to ponder

In verses 6 and 7, Jesus makes an argument from the lesser (the justice of the unjust judge) to the greater (the justice of God):

If an unjust judge, who does not care about God or men, grants the request for justice of a persistent widow, *how much more* will God grant the request of his elect who cry to him day and night!

Therefore, since God is the God of justice who cares about us, **shouldn't we be certain that he will answer our requests for justice?**

The first part of verse 8 tells us that God will act swiftly. Although there may be a delay, it is not due to any reluctance or slackness on God's behalf (as 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 9 tells us). Therefore, since God has promised to act speedily for us, **shouldn't we continue faithfully in prayer?**

The second part of verse 8 ties this parable to the preceding chapter. It is not designed to make us speculate about the future but to encourage us to examine ourselves. While we wait for Christ's return, **shouldn't we remain firm in our faith? Shouldn't we continue faithfully in prayer?**

In verse 1, Luke broadens the application of this parable to all prayers, not simply prayers for Christ's return or prayers for justice. **If you continue steadfastly in prayer, at the right time, and not one moment later, God will help you.**

Luke 18:1-8 The parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow

¹Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, ²saying:

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

³Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him,¹ saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'

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

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

⁶Then the Lord said,

"Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?² ⁸I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.³ Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

¹ "She came to him" should be understood as "she kept coming to him".

² This verse should probably be understood as two closely related questions: "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him? And shall he be patient on account of them?" Both questions are then answered by verse 8 (the first is answered positively and the second is answered negatively).

³ "Speedily" may refer to a speedy action rather than a short delay. This would fit better with the previous chapter, where Jesus says his return will be sudden and unexpected.