

In our Scripture reading this morning we read the prelude to our text.

Now we need to summarize the teaching of that passage to see why Jesus teaches this parable.

This parable in the end refers us to the coming of the kingdom of Christ,  
v.8 However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

The prelude passage from Luke 17:20-37 concerns the kingdom of God, regarding Christ's return. In 17:20 the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was coming. What they really were asking was: When will Messiah come and overthrow our enemies and establish the throne of David and bring peace and righteousness to the world?

Jesus' answer was baffling to people who didn't acknowledge him to be the Messiah. He said in effect: If your only way of recognizing the kingdom of God is by miraculous signs that bring down the Roman tyranny, then you will surely miss it, because the kingdom of God is already in the midst of you (v. 21; 11:20—it should not be translated "within you" because Jesus would not have said that to unbelieving Pharisees). Jesus is the King and wherever he wins people into allegiance, his reign is established.

Then in 17:22-24 he warns against the opposite mistake. In verse 21 he warned against looking for catastrophic signs and said the kingdom was quietly but powerfully in their midst. But in verses 23 and 24 he warns against thinking that the final appearance of the Son of Man could be anything but catastrophic. It will not be quiet or hidden. If someone says, "Lo, here," or, "Lo, there," then you know they are wrong. "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day" (v. 24). The second coming of Christ will not be a hidden thing which one person sees and then shows to another. It will be obvious to all from horizon to horizon, like a streak of lightning. "But first," verse 25 says. "he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." The difference between the first and second comings of Christ is the difference between a little candle and a bolt of lightning.

Then in 17:26-30 Jesus describes what the days will be like leading up to the coming of the Son of Man. He compares the coming of the Son of Man to the flood in Noah's day (v. 27) and to the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone (v. 29), and says that the days before Christ's coming will be like the days before those two catastrophes, ordinary days showing ordinary life. Verse 27: "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they

built." Verse 30 says, "So it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." There will not be anything particularly unusual going on when Christ is revealed in the heavens. This is the plain teaching of Scripture. Yet we have all kinds of gloom and doom preachers and signs and wonders seekers who are convinced that a myriad of strange things must occur at Christ's coming. Jesus also teaches there will be wars and rumors of war in another passage, but that is an everyday occurrence. Since 2001 the number of wars has been on a decline and the wars that rage are mostly ethnic internal conflicts or civil wars. So we must not limit our interpretation of Scripture to mean only major global wars like WWI or WWII

Then in verses 31-37 Jesus warns us not to be like Lot's wife (v. 32). In other words don't love the world, don't turn to the world because it seems easier when some things are difficult. Don't turn back to the world with longing, or you'll be unfit for the kingdom. You will prove to be false. Remember, when the Son of Man comes he will separate the sheep and the goats, even if they are sleeping together or working side by side at the mill or are sitting together in the church pew. One will be taken into safety, the other left. "Left where?" the disciples ask. "Where the body is there will the vultures be gathered together" (v. 37). Not to be gathered to Christ at his coming is to be left for destruction. If we are not ready when Christ comes there is only judgement, condemnation and destruction.

This brings us to our text in Lk. 18:1-8

18:1\* ¶ Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

Because the kingdom is coming in its final and complete form, what we have been calling the consummation of the kingdom in our studies of the Sermon on the Mount and the kingdom Parables, Jesus tells his disciples that regardless of how long it seems before Christ comes and no matter what the circumstances of life are at any given time, persevering prayer is important. Prayer that does not lose heart. Prayer that does not become wearying in its exercise. Prayer that remains founded in and grounded in believing God and His promises.

The phrase do not lose heart is found in other Scripture.

Gal. 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Heb 12:3\* For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

These are only a sampling but relate to the same idea of not weakening in various circumstances.

There is not a time when prayer is not important and especially in the case of not seeing

prayer answered when we want it answered or how we want it answered. This is the reason He begins to teach the parable, to encourage them in the days to come to persevere in prayer without growing weary.

2\* saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

The first character in the story is a judge who is a God hater and one who has no concerns for people. He is called one who did not respect men. Now this is not the sense of Scripture when it says that God is no respecter of persons. That means that God, by His grace saves his elect from all sorts of people. He has no respect for their works or anything else. We are all sinners but God saves those whom He chooses.

This man has no sense of care for people and their difficulties.

Now some would comment that he was cruel, possibly took bribes, was dishonest and the like but Scripture does not say that. It says he had no respect or reverence for people. The greek can mean a turning away from. In the negative sense he turns away from or evens shames people rather than giving them reverence or turning toward them in their pleas before him in court. We can't even say that he was just a judge who acted only according to the letter of the law, because a judge in Israel would have laws that apply to helping the poor, the needy, the widows or anyone else depending on their claim before him.

His is not necessarily just a fictionalized idea. All throughout Israel's history God brought judgement and accusations against the very people that were supposed to help the needy or anyone else.

In Micah for example, God speaks against those who plan evil against the poor, the prophets who are false and judges who take bribes and the powerful who act as if they are not accountable to anyone.

In Zephaniah God says Zep 3:3 Her princes within her are roaring lions, Her **judges** are wolves at evening; They leave nothing for the morning.

The disciples could know or at least be familiar with such a judge.

3\* "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'

The second character in the story is a widow. She has an opponent that requires her to go to a judge for legal protection.

Some interesting things are said about widows in Scripture

Ps 68:5 A father of the fatherless and a judge for the **widows**, Is God in His holy habitation.

Isa 9:17 Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men, Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their **widows**; For every one of them is godless and an evildoer, And every mouth is speaking foolishness. In spite

of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.

1Ti 5:3\* Honor widows who are widows indeed;

Jas 1:27\* Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

We see God being concerned for widows and widows can also be godless people deserving every judgement God brings against them or anyone else.

It is obvious that some widows were prey for others.

Mt 23:14\* ["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]

We do not know the exact circumstances of her case nor do we have to know.

4\* "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

For some period of time this judge would not hear her case. He continually turned from her. It is obvious she returned more than once and he just was determined not to help this woman. He even admits His hatred for God and his lack of concern for people. It appears he only hears cases as he decides to whether or not there is a just cause.

This is moral corruption to the utmost and clear evidence of a nature that is depraved because of sin.

5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'

He finally capitulates. He gives in to her. He does not do it for justice sake, he does not do it for her sake, he does not do it to show any mercy, concern or kindness. He does it to keep the widow from coming back anymore, which she obviously had the legal right to do. The only reason he helps her is because she persevered and was persistent in bringing her plea to this man who only did his job when it was convenient for him.

6\* And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said;

7\* now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

And now Jesus in the context of his return at the end of the age is going to tell them the central point of the teaching.

God will bring justice for those who are His elect, the chosen of God, His adopted sons, those who will inherit the earth, those who will see the kingdom of God.

Every wicked thing done against God's elect will be judged by God

The persistent prayers, the day and night cries of the saints will be heard and He will bring justice quickly.

8\* "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.

This verse must be looked at carefully.

At first reading and it appears that as God's people persist in prayer God quickly brings His justice.

Unlike the judge who only does so because of his discomfort with the widow, God responds out of his love and concern for His people and on the basis of His character which is rooted in holiness and righteousness. Any unjust acts towards God's people are attacks on God himself. Vengeance is mine says the Lord, I will repay.

But what does quickly refer? Is every unjust act toward God's people judged by God immediately? Has someone attacked you for being a Christian and in some way either physically or personally harmed you and they are still walking around and maybe even boasting about what they have done?

Were those who murdered and persecuted the early church all struck dead on the spot for attacking God's people? No. Does this mean that such people are never judged on the spot for being God haters. No

So we must conclude that the reference to quickly means that when Jesus returns all justice will be swift. There will be no lingering. Who and whatever must be judged and served justice from God's courtroom will receive it swiftly.

In the meantime God's people are to pray, persistently. It is one of the things that marks one out as not being like Lot's wife or like the people in the days of Noah who perished. We endure to the end, in part, a large part because we pray.

Andrew Murray wrote this about prevailing prayer:

Our great danger, in this school of the answer delayed, is the temptation to think that, after all, it may not be God's will to give us what we ask. If our prayer be according to God's word, and under the leading of the Spirit, let us not give way to these fears. Let us learn to give God time. God needs time with us. If only we give Him time, that is, time in the daily fellowship with Himself, for Him to exercise the full influence of His presence on us, and time, day by day, in the course of our being kept waiting, for faith to prove its reality and to fill our whole being, He Himself will lead us from faith to vision; we shall see the glory of God. Let no delay shake our faith. Of faith it holds good: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Each believing prayer brings a step nearer the final victory. Each believing prayer helps to ripen the fruit and bring us nearer to it; it fills up the measure of prayer and faith known to God alone; it conquers the hindrances in the unseen world; it hastens the end. Child of God, give the Father time. He is patiently listening to you. He wants the blessing to be rich, and full, and sure; give Him time, while you cry day and night. Only remember the word: "I

tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly."

Nothing is answered in prayer outside of the purpose of God and that includes when the answer comes.

Here I quote John Piper:

If a judge who has no fear of God can be swayed by persistent petitions, how much more certain we can be that God will help those who cry to him day and night.....Disciples of Jesus are not in the category of strangers to God. They are his elect. He has chosen them. He has set his favor on them. He has adopted them to be his children. As Paul says in Romans 8:31-33, "If God is for us, who is against us ... Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." There is no condition of man more precious to be conceived than to be chosen by God. It means he has set his favor upon us fully and freely. He is for us with all his might. Therefore, Jesus argues, if an unjust judge can be moved by persistent petitions to help a stranger for whom he has no regard, how much more "will God help his own chosen ones who cry to him day and night!"

v.8 However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

So this parable is intended to be an encouragement for us to pray continually until Jesus comes back.

The phrase will he find faith is not accurately translated in our English bibles. It should say will he find the faith, a persistent faith linked to believing prayer not faith in general. A definite article should precede the word faith.

Faith in Christ will be evident because Christ comes for His people. But will believers be marked by that kind of faith of the widow.

And it seems that it must be so because only those who endure to the end will be Christ's.

Again I quote John Piper:

Faith is the furnace of our lives. Its fuel is the grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer. If you lose heart and lay down the shovel, the fire will go out, you will grow cold and hard, and when the lightning flashes from sky to sky and the Son of Man appears in glory he will spew you out of his mouth (Rev. 3:16). Two will be sleeping in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. And the test will not be whether you once walked an aisle, or prayed a prayer, or made a vow, or were baptized. The test will be whether you continued in prayer and did not lose heart. God's elect will surely be saved; and, as verse 7 says, the sign of the elect is that they cry to God day and night. Those who endure to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:13).

Brethren, we must at times evaluate the nature of our praying.

Are we praying for what God tells us are the priorities/

When we continue to read the model prayer of Jesus are we using it as the pattern of our

praying.

Are we first seeking for the kingdom of God to be manifested in all of its various ways as we studied from the Sermon on the Mount? Is your prayer specific and in accord with the will of God? Are you growing weary in prayer or are you confident that God in His sovereign purpose will accomplish everything He has willed in His time.

Is your prayer focused on getting what you want or on the purpose of God for His glory?  
If you are lacking in prayer why are you lacking?

Yes, prayer is an endurance trial but we are equipped for it. The spirit cries Abba Father through us. Jesus has already prayed for us and represents us at the throne of God. We have the full assurance of God's promises but if we are not diligently studying God's word then we will not be familiar with them.

One of the evidences of a new heart given by God is a desire to pray no matter how difficult the circumstances and to deny prayer is to deny the sovereignty of God in your life. Moments of weakness and struggle are normal for us but prayerlessness is lifelessness. Lifelessness is death.

The warning is only those who endure until the end are God's people. They will see the quick justice of God. All their pleas for justice concerning the kingdom of God will be taken into account

You have the right to say that you will not persist in prayer.

And God has the right to condemn you forever if that is your attitude concerning prayer.

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Luke:18:1-8 August 6, 2006 First Baptist Evans Pastor Joseph Krygier

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