

The Unjust Judge and Faith on the Earth
Luke 18:1-8
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“**T**hen He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart. . .” (Luke 18:1) This parable of Jesus draws a comparison between the unjust judge and God. The unjust judge did not fear God, nor did he regard man. He was prevailed upon by a persistent widow that he should attend to her case. Today, we might say she pestered him. He finally ceded to her demand and granted justice to be done. The parable leaves us sorting out the disposition of God. He is just. He is also compassionate toward the cry of “*His own elect*”. “... *shall not God avenge...*?” Therefore, God is not like the unjust judge, uncaring and negligent of justice. However, He is similar in that He doesn’t always answer according to our expectations. “*He bears long with them.*”

Often, the circumstances for duress are not immediately removed, at least not in the way we would like. Our heavenly Father strengthens us by giving time for our patience and perseverance to grow. Consider the burden of Israel. Moses brought news from God that He would bring them to a land of milk and honey. Their deliverance didn’t come immediately. In fact, life became harder. (Ex 5:19-23) God had a reason for this. He prepared an opportunity for Pharaoh to show what kind of man he was. God knew that it would, in turn, showcase His power. “*But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*” (Ex 9:16) The foolishness of trusting in carnal power was put on display. Pharaoh was given time and time again to make the right decision. Think of the decimated land Israel finally left and the remains of Pharaoh’s army on the shores of the Red Sea. Egypt learned to fear Him. The surrounding nations, and perhaps beyond, learned of God’s power. The faith of Rahab was nurtured because of this. “. . . *I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt. . . for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.*” (Josh 2:9-11) Thus said the woman who became an ancestor of Jesus. Who knows how many unrecorded people worshipped God because of such reports? Time needed to be spent. Opportunities were made for learning about God. Faith was encouraged. Perhaps the most important reason for the delayed release was a lesson for His people to cry out in faith rather than complaining. They needed to trust God’s constancy and care for them. They needed to learn that their temporary suffering made way for a vast amount of good beyond comprehension. “*To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, For His mercy endures forever. . .*” (Psa 136:10) It is a lesson for our lives.

From time to time, we find ourselves praying, crying out to the Lord for help. There are many reasons for distress in this troubled world. Poverty, disease, oppression, hunger, and the sorrow of loss come upon us in various measures. Much in the world’s behavior is contrary to the good of God, the burden of “. . . *those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*” (Isa 5:20) We call on the Lord to help us, to alleviate the burden, to overcome temptations, and to give us strength to bear whatever we must. The aforementioned parable, among many other teachings, assures us the Lord will answer. “*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.*” (Ps 43:17) “*The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.*” (Ps.145:18-19) So, no matter how dire our situation, God gives us assurance that He will take care of us. All will be well.

However, there is an unsettling conclusion Jesus gave to this parable. It ended with a question: *"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"* We are taught about the Lord's coming: *"... we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."* **(I Thes 4:17)** It is clear there will be faithful souls to experience transformation without dying. There will be faith on the earth when the Lord returns. However, His question has left us with an uncomfortable implication. *"Shall He find faith on the earth?"* (KJV) It makes us think soberly. Will much of "Christendom's" prayers be selfish? Do the prayers have sandy foundations? Is the cry to God just for aches and pains? Are prayers made for the sake of making life better for ourselves- to have the world around us be the way we want it? Are we like Israel in the wilderness? – *"We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"* **(Num 11:5-6)** Not to deny the yearnings we may strongly feel, but what do we really want? Are we losing heart because our burden hasn't been taken away? Paul prayed three times that his *"thorn in the flesh"* would be taken away. He left us a valuable lesson about crying out to the Lord. *"... He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* **(II Cor 12:9-10)** True deliverance and salvation are not always found by taking away our burdens. Rather, deliverance comes from God helping us bear it to His glory. Let our cries and petitions be like Jesus, to show the wisdom and love of God – *"not My will, but Yours, be done."* **(Lk 22:42)**

Also, let us make intercessions for others so the focus is not just for ourselves. The parable of the unjust judge has this context: those who cry out, those whose confidence is in the Lord, will be found on earth at His return.