

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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The Unjust Judge and Faith on the Earth

Louis Garbi

“Then 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.

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?

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*

continued on the next page...

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." (1 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.

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Fulfill the Law of Christ (Pt 2)

Steven Wright

The fulfillment of the entirety of God's Law is to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14). Look into this word "Neighbor"; it actually means "Stranger." In other words, not the one with whom you share affinities, but the one who is vastly different from you!

A woman, with whom I work at the Zoo, is what is today termed "On the spectrum." Since, as members of the "Guest Engagement Team," we interact with the public, this makes things "interesting" at times. When this woman talks, she is loud, she is forceful, and she is blunt. This does not bode well with some people. Many consider her "Rude." But she is not really rude, even though she can come across that way. I have witnessed her at various times taking a customer around the gift shop, suggesting to them just the right gift for someone. This almost always results in a sale. This woman, along with one other employee and I, has the top numbers for getting customers to "round up" and make donations for animal conservation.

Matthew, the tax collector, may have been like another fellow employee of mine. This guy has an amazing ability in terms of calculation that serves him, and the company, well. Inventory, ordering, and everything having to do with numbers are his skill set. I have never seen a human being who can count a cash drawer as fast as he can! Such abilities are particularly amazing to me! Precisely because I do not have them! There is a condition called "Dyscalculia" which is like "Dyslexia" but in terms of numbers, not words. You may research this condition for yourself; it is a real condition! And I have come to the conclusion after many years that I have it. But whereas this is a "burden" of mine, others lacking certain strengths I possess are "burdened" in these areas.

Some people are naturally empathetic, compassionate, and caring for others. Some people are just more equipped socially. Other people (even Christians) either just don't really care for others, or they simply lack the motivation to improve themselves in these abilities. Others really and truly "just can't help it!"

The point, as was stated in part one, is that we all have our skills and our limitations. Putting forth the extra effort because of our limitations is sometimes the very vehicle whereby the power of God can manifest to do great works through us that

would not have been possible if we had not had our own peculiar “burdens” to bear. As Paul said, “... when I am weak, then I am strong!” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

The ear, in its hearing, can make up for what the eye does not or cannot see. Lose a big toe on your foot and you gain an appreciation for what a precious thing balance can be! And thus do we see, and thus do we hear, and thus do we walk, when all of these parts are functioning correctly and working together.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

(Romans 12:3-8)

Most often, were it not for our weakness, the opportunity for someone else’s strength to come forth and shine would not present itself. And by God’s design, the complexities of our weaknesses and the diversities of our strengths produce the fruit that God seeks.

We are told by Paul in **Galatians 6:2** to “Bear one another’s burdens.” In **Luke 8:15**, it speaks of another kind of “Bearing.” There, we are told to “Bear fruit with patience,” which, as the context indicates, is only possible if we have “An honest and good heart.” The “Bearing” that Jesus speaks of in this text is the production of good works for him, our king. Part of that bearing pertains to “Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the LORD has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.” (**Colossians 3:13**).

We are not the same! It would be disastrous if we were. It is disastrous when we try to make all alike! God’s plan for our unity is accomplished by our diversity, not by our uniformity! (Exodus 35:29; Romans 15:1; Ephesians 4:2)

We may not think, speak, act, or perform the same, but we can bear with one another in an understanding way, in all humility, gentleness, and patience, walking worthy of the name of Christ,

This, dear brethren, is how we “Fulfill the Law of Christ.”
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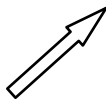
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Glory to God!

On September 7, the brethren in **Kirksville** rejoiced when **Sunshine Shafer** was baptized for the remission of her sins.

The **Nixa, MO Church of Christ** rejoiced when **Jeff Allen** and **David Carmichael** were appointed elders and **Greg McCleave** was appointed a deacon by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with the assistance of **Louis Garbi** on June 1.

Here and There

The **Fenton, MO Church of Christ** has made the difficult decision to disband. Their last meeting will be October 5. We pray for these brethren as they continue to seek opportunities to serve the Lord and His body.

The **Eldon, MO Church of Christ** has a new mailing address: 126 West 9th St, Eldon, MO 65026.

Special Meetings

The Winter Youth Rally, hosted by the **Gregory Boulevard Church of Christ, Raytown, MO**, and the Winter College Rally, hosted by the **Lone Jack, MO Church of Christ**, will take place December 29 - 31, 2025.

2025 Special Meetings

September 28.....Braymer, MO
October 3-5.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO
October 18-19.....Weekend Meeting, Ozark, MO
December 29-31.....Winter Youth Rally, Raytown, MO
December 29-31.....Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

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