

The parable of the Persistent Widow

The opening words set the scene, and the reason for the parable

Luke 18:1 *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;...*

At times, life's situations can become challenging, and when involved in the work of God, and following the Lord Jesus, those challenges can even become magnified, and it can become difficult to deal with. Take for example Jonah who was confused greatly by the mission he was sent on, - bad enough in itself, but then to end up inside the guts of a great fish was on another level! So we can read: Jonah 2:7 *When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.* Instead of giving up the prophet prayed. It is a natural reaction to become weary due to the pressures and challenges of life. This is acknowledged by the Apostle in Galatians 6:9: *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* See also Hebrews 12:3-5: *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him:*

The Lord Jesus took the example of the widow woman in this passage who was being tormented in some way by an enemy of some kind. Widows were among the most vulnerable in society in those days, - there was no welfare available except the charity of friends and neighbours. In this woman's case it seems she had no one to advocate for her. Jesus emphasised the helplessness of her situation. She was forced to appeal to a civil judge, known for his lack of empathy, and not easily swayed by emotion or compassion, - *which feared not God, neither regarded man.* The worst kind of judge for a

widow to appeal to. This judge is typical of the faceless bureaucrats and penpushers who arbitrate and legislate taxation, and endless red-tape, with a view to extracting as much cash as possible from an unsuspecting population – typical in this modern world in which we live. In the times of the Lord Jesus when he taught this parable, the Roman empire also operated in such a way, with multiple layers of consuls, magistrates, tribunes, senates, praetors, quaestors, and so on.

The huge machinery of state with all its endless corridors of rules and regulations, disconnected from real life. And this poor widow woman, who had no option but to seek recourse from one of these representatives. It would have been a seemingly lost cause.

But this woman in the parable did not give up. She continued her appeals and long while passed, with the judge taking no action. But her visits interrupted his routine, and being irritated, he decided to listen to her, and take action, not because she had a case to listen to, or because it was a right thing to do – he was not concerned about justice at all, - but because he cared only about his own peace and quiet - *because this widow keeps on bothering me, I will give her justice, or in the end she will wear me out by her unending pleas.*

This of course is a nod to the corruption and injustice that lies at the core of the rotten system of law and order adopted by the world – inconsistent, hypocritical and self-serving. But the focus of the parable is not on that. It is instead on the actions of the widow woman, who refused to be intimidated, or overcome by the burden of her difficulties. She just kept on going.

Eventually because of her persistence, she achieved her goal.

The Lord Jesus immediately compared this to the needy and faithful praying to God:

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

The contrast and comparison between unjust judge, typical of human nature and organisations today, and

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| • Unjust Judge | • Judge of All men |
| • Feared not God | • God Himself |
| • Regarded not man | • God so loved the World... |
| • Motivated by self | • Justice belongs to Him |
| • Ignores plight of others | • Interested in the needy |
| • Responded after a long time | • Responds speedily |
| • Bothered by repeated requests | • Endured 6000 years |
| • Subjected to being weary | • Neither slumbers or sleeps |

The parable emphasises the power of prayer, and its usefulness.

Appealing to the origin of justice, the Great Judge in Heaven, who has appointed an Advocate in Christ Jesus, who is all powerful, and is the very epitome of compassion, mercy, and equity, and who responds to prayer – if made in accordance with His Will – the Gospel

There are many passages which teach the benefits of prayer, and talking with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. At times we might not think that there has been any response. It does not mean that the prayer has not been heard, and acted upon. Take forgiveness of sins for example, 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Is sin the greatest adversary? Are not we all as vulnerable to this great Adversary, this satan, just as that poor widow woman in the parable? Can we not be relieved of it's effects immediately through forgiveness? So yes, God does respond speedily.

The need for persistence is necessary however, because that Adversary returns again and again. The need for regular and persistent prayer is important, not because God does not hear but because our requests are many!

Psalms 55:16-17: As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

Romans 12:12 ... continuing instant in prayer;

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance ...

Philippians 4:6... every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Colossians 4:2: Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

1 Thessalonians 5:17: Pray without ceasing.

Seeing then we are all beneficiaries from such a ready and compassionate Judge, who exercises such extreme patience, so much the more should we who are relieved from our Adversary, show mercy and help in the hour of need...

1 John 3:16 -17: Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Brother Terry