

# Justice Will Prevail!

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

As we have typically done in this series on the parables, we once again encourage you to look at the contextual setting for this parable.

The previous chapter concludes with a very interesting teaching from Jesus on the subject of the end times. This is a shortened version of the teaching found in Matthew 24. Here is Luke's version.

“The days are coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 They will say to you, ‘Look there!’ or ‘Look here!’ Do not go, do not set off in pursuit. 24 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. 25 But first he must endure much suffering and be rejected by this generation. 26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of them. 28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them 30 —it will be like that on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day, anyone on the housetop who has belongings in the house must not come down to take them away; and likewise anyone in the field must not turn back. 32 Remember Lot’s wife. 33 Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it. 34 I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35 There will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken and the other left.” 37 Then they asked him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.” (Luke 17:22-37)

The end-of-the-age scenario Jesus describes is deeply troubling. It is not difficult to understand how the disciples may have been shaken in their faith. Within that context, Jesus gives them the parable of the Unjust Judge.

Your Bible may title this, “The Parable of the Persistent Widow.” Either title only address half the story. It is not just about a judge, and it is not just about a widow. This parable is what we call a dyadic parable (having two prominent characters). Those two characters deliver two major points.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1-8)

# Justice Will Prevail!

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## I. The Unjust Judge

### A. The Character of the Judge

Twice, the judge is described as a man who had no fear of God nor any respect for people, once by his own admission. These characteristics tell us two things about the judge. First, that alludes to his impartiality. Second, (and more popularly observed) it refers to his spiritual coldness. Jesus declared the two most important commands to be loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. The judge was a man who broke both of these.

### B. Why did judge keep denying the woman justice?

People sometimes like to speculate about the judge's hesitancy. Some have suggested the judge was merely lazy, or considered the case too trivial compared to the rest of his work load. Some speculated the judge was partial to the other party in this lawsuit. Some even suggest that the judge was prejudicial against the woman because she was a woman.

But here is the real reason – because this is Jesus's parable; the judge denies the woman because Jesus wanted him to. That is the way Jesus wanted the story to go to make a point. That is it!

You cannot make everything in this parable a parallel to God.

God is not unjust like the earthly judge.

God is not perturbed by our prayers and our cries for justice.

God will not put us off. He will move in his timing, which may seem slow to us, but is always perfect.

This parable is basically what we call an “a fortiori” argument. As already stated, we are not expected to find a way to draw parallels between the judge and God on every detail. But the “a fortiori” argument simply means you use a stronger case to make a weaker case.

Example: “Do you think this man can build me a dog house?”

“He is a master carpenter. He has built million dollar homes. He can build you a dog house.”

Jesus used the same kind of argument when he said, “If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father which is in Heaven give good good gifts to those who ask.”

In this parable, the argument is similar. If a hard –hearted earthly judge can deliver justice, how much more can the perfect judge of all bring justice.

Jesus did not intend to use this parable to teach us to pester God. The point is to encourage us never to quit praying. God doesn't bring justice because we pester him. God brings justice because He is a just God.

# Justice Will Prevail!

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Jesus did not intend to use this parable to teach us to manipulate God with persistent prayer to get anything we pray for. It is imperative that you keep in mind two prominent features of this parable.

First, Jesus is using this parable to teach His disciples to remain faithful to the end, even through whatever difficulties may arise as the His coming draws closer.

Second, Jesus summarizes the parable, not by saying whatever you believe hard enough for and whatever you pray long enough for, God will grant. No, the summary is about God bringing justice and us remaining faithful until justice is served.

## II. The Persistent Widow

### A. God will ensure justice prevails

Who isn't interested in justice? We are disturbed by what we believe to be injustices all around us. We read of criminals getting off too easy. We see powerful politicians get away with breaking federal laws that we know we could never get away with. We are born with a sense of fair play we hold others accountable to. In his classic book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis makes the case for God's existence by citing our basic sense of fair play. He says when someone says, "you took my seat" they are appealing to a sense of fair play and justice. When someone sees someone have an orange and says, "give me some of your orange," they are appealing to one's sense of fair play and justice. Evolution does not create an inward sense of right and wrong. The Creator has ultimately defined right and wrong and instilled that understanding in the hearts of humankind.

Because we have this innate sense of fair play, we are sensitive to the appearance of injustice. Sometimes people blame God for injustices. Some who are only superficially familiar with the Bible read of the complete destruction of tribes and villages and cities in the Old Testament and accuse God of the unjust murder of innocent babies. Some look at the starving people around the world, or the abuse of helpless, innocent people and think, "If there is a God, then why does He allow this to happen?" It seems to them either there is no God, or God is a heartless monster.

In this parable Jesus depicts a widow who goes before a heartless judge and demands justice against her adversary. Jesus didn't give any further details. It wasn't necessary. But if we wanted to relate more fully to the situation, we might imagine this poor widow being taken advantage of by some unscrupulous shyster. With no one to protect her, she appeals to the judge, only to find the judge a harsh, uncaring man. But the widow is feisty and refuses to be casually dismissed. Every time she is denied, she returns to the judge to confront him again with the same case. The judge was so irritated by this widow's persistence that he said, "Even though I do not fear God nor respect any person, this woman is wearing me down! I would be better off the go ahead and rule in her favor than

# Justice Will Prevail!

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to spend the rest of my life being relentlessly pestered by her. She just won't go away!"

Actually, the original language says he is concerned she might eventually give him a black eye. Now we don't know if that was intended to be taken as a physical attack, or if it was metaphorical for ruining his reputation. Either way, the judge wanted nothing to do with the direction this was going, so he gave her the justice she sought after.

It was a fictitious story. But Jesus used it to point out that if a corrupt, heartless earthly judge will ultimately bring justice, then we can rest assured the righteous, holy, just God of all creation will certainly bring justice for those who are crying out to him day and night.

"Will he keep putting them off?" No. He hears their cry. He hears your cry.

Here is the key point illustrated by the widow in the parable.

First of all, Luke tips his hand in his introductory comment in verse 1.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

That is very clear and straightforward. There should be no ambiguity about the purpose of this parable. The disciples, shaken by the previous revelation of the conditions of the world previous to the second coming, are urged not to quit. Keep praying. Don't give up.

The point of never giving up in prayer is to teach us never to lose hope. The act of unwavering prayer doesn't eventually move God, it merely keeps us faithfully occupied until God makes his move.

Next, Jesus concludes his teaching on this parable by saying, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

First, this ties the parable to the last part of the previous chapter when Jesus mentions his second coming.

Second, the rhetorical question makes a powerful point – who will endure to the end? Will you? Even if you are not living when Christ returns, will you endure to the end of your life? Are you in this for the duration?

When Jesus returns, will He find faith on earth? Yes He will, but the question is personalized. Are you living with such unswerving devotion that if Jesus comes before you die, will you be found among the faithful? Are you bouncing in and out of church? Are you playing games with God? Are you running hot and cold? The only way you can guarantee you will be found faithful to the end is to be faithful day to day. Don't let seeming injustices discourage you. The judge of all the earth will do right. If you have ever struggled in bitterness because you think God has allowed injustices to happen, don't forget that in eternity the books are always balanced.