

Commentary on Luke chapter 18, by Chuck Smith 10.9.22

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October memory verse **Matthew 1:21**

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

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Remember, we are now in the final 30 days of Jesus earthly ministry

Luke tells us that Jesus now

spoke a parable to them to this end ([Luk 18:1](#)),

In other words, the purpose of the parable was to encourage people to pray and not to faint.

that men ought always to pray, and not to faint ([Luk 18:1](#));

Now many times when He warns I think that they are needless. I think, "Lord, You don't need to talk to me about that. I've got that one wired, Lord. No problems there." And yet, it is in that area where the Lord has given me warning that I ultimately end up in trouble. Because I didn't listen; I didn't think I needed the warning. As I read through the scriptures, I find that those things that the Lord warned the kings about were the very things that ultimately they got in trouble for. God knows. He knows what lies down the road. And He doesn't warn us needlessly, nor does He exhort us needlessly. And in this parable, to the end that men ought always to pray and not to faint, that is the area where so many people have problems. They're always fainting and not praying, just turning it around.

Now, in the parable, do not make the mistake of thinking of it in parallelisms because Jesus, first of all, speaks of a wicked judge. The Roman judges, or those that were appointed by the Roman government, were notoriously crooked

And He said,

There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man ([Luk 18:2-4](#));

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It shows what kind of a person he was.

Yet because this widow troubles me, will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she wears me out ([Luk 18:5](#)).

She wearies me.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said ([Luk 18:6](#)).

And then He gives His lesson in prayer. Now, I said be careful that you don't get into parallelisms with this parable and think that this unjust judge represents God. That is not the case. Jesus often taught in parallels with sharp contrasts, and this is one of the those parables not of parallelism, but of sharp contrast. For surely He would not put God in the light of an unconcerned, unjust, judge, unfeeling. That's the exact opposite of what He teaches us of the Father, who loves, who cares, and who is concerned. So this parable is one of contrast. The contrast is this: if a wicked man, hard, who neither regards neither God nor man, if he can be persuaded just because of the persistency of this little widow, in sharp contrast,

Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry unto him day and night, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily ([Luk 18:7-8](#)).

Now Jesus isn't really then teaching that you've got to persist in prayer and continue and continue and continue until you get your answer. He is saying that God will avenge speedily those who call unto Him. So, don't in your mind draw the parallel, "This God is like this judge, and I've got to just keep pestering Him until I get what I want." If your cause is right, if your cause is just, I believe that God is only waiting for you to open the door through prayer so that He can do what He's been wanting to do the whole time. You see, I'm convinced, from the scriptures, that God knows what I really need long before I ever know it. God knows what I'm going to be needing six months from now. God knows what I'm going to be needing five years from now. Prayer is not really informing God of my needs. Jesus said, "Your Father knows what you have need of before you ever ask Him." Yet, so often we think of prayer, we are informing God now of what my need is. "God, let me tell You what I need here. And I'm going to cue you in, Lord, so You can understand what I really need." And I'm using prayer as a means to inform God. How ridiculous! God doesn't need that I should inform Him of anything, for He knows everything. God loves me. He is my heavenly Father. His chief concern is my eternal good. Notice, eternal good, not my temporary good.

Now, there are some things that I may feel would be temporarily beneficial to me, but God knows that eternally they'd be damning to me. And so, I try to inform God of my temporal need, and all the while He knows my eternal need. Now, if I could by persistence, just by dogged persistence, by bugging God through prayer, break God down so He'll say, "Oh, answer that nut! I'm getting tired of him calling!" then I could be

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bringing into my life all kinds of hurtful harmful things. And God loves me too much to be dissuaded from His perfect will for my life by responding to my prayers when they are not in accordance with His eternal plan.

I want to share something with you. I don't want God to switch His plan as the result of my continued requests. I want God's perfect will for my life, and prayer is not really intended to get my will done on earth. Prayer is intended to get God's will done on earth, and so true prayer begins with the purpose of God, the plan of God, the will of God. And He makes that known to my heart, and I express it to Him in prayer. And by my expression in prayer, what I am actually doing is opening the door and giving God the opportunity to do what He's been wanting to do, what He's desiring to do, but will not do against my will. You see, God has given to you this business of free will, the power of choice. God will not violate that choice. Therefore, prayer opens the door for God to do those things that He desires to do in my life.

In the fifteenth chapter of John, that glorious chapter of the relationship between the believer and Christ, Jesus said, "You've not chosen Me, but I've chosen you and ordained that you should be My disciples. That you should bring forth fruit," cause that's that fruit-bearing chapter, "I'm the vine; you're the branches;" "and that your fruit should remain. That, whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He may," notice, He "may," not He "shall," "He may give it to you." You see, it opens the door that God may do now what He's desiring to do. Your prayer has opened that door for God to act freely without violating your will. So, I am of the opinion that the wisest prayer any of us can ever offer to God is, "Lord, just work out Your complete perfect will in my life. Have Your way, Lord, in my life. Do for me what You want to do."

I think that many times our prayers can be limiting God. We limit Him in our prayers. They're putting the boundaries and the restrictions on God. Like the children of Israel who limited the Holy One of Israel, so we so often do that in our prayers. "Oh, Lord, I need a hundred dollars! I need it desperately, Lord. You know the bills are overdue, and I need a hundred dollars. God, please send a hundred dollars." Why don't you just say, "Lord, please send what you know I need"? Why limit Him to a hundred dollars? He may be wanting to give you a thousand. So there are sometimes when I think that being very specific is not so good. For years I prayed for a church of 250 people. I thought that was the ideal size, and oh, how I dreamed of pastoring a church of 250 people. I prayed for that number for years, limiting God. God had other things in mind. I didn't know what He had in mind. Oh, that we would understand how much the Father loves us. Oh, that we would trust His wisdom in His dealing in our lives. Oh, that we could come to that place of total commitment of ourselves to Him, "Lord, You do what You want for Me. Lord, I rest in You." I'm not making any demands on God. I'm not trying to command God. I'm not trying to sit on the throne and be sovereign myself. I'm not trying to get my will done on this earth. That's not why I'm here, and that's not the purpose of prayer. It's to work in harmony with God, to get His program accomplished on this earth. It's to link together with God and join with Him in His great program of reaching this world with the love of

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Jesus Christ. "God, Your will be done! Your purposes be accomplished. Use me as ever You see fit as Your instrument, Lord, to do Your work. Here I am, I'm available to You and whatever You want, Lord, for my life. Whatever You want to do in me, whatever You want to do through me, Lord, I'm available. Here I am. Your will be done."
Commitment!

So, Jesus is not saying that God is like this unjust judge. He's saying He's totally unlike the unjust judge. But He's illustrating by contrast. If a man who is so hardened, so callous, so crooked, that he has no regard for God or man, if he can be persuaded by the persistency of the little widow, shall not God avenge His children speedily? "Yes," He said, "I say He will."

But then Jesus asked an interesting question. He said,

Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth? ([Luk 18:8](#))

We are told in Matthew's gospel, chapter 24, one of the signs of the end of the age would be the iniquity in the earth abounding, causing the love of many to wax cold. That goes along with this question. I believe that we are living in the hardest period of history to live a consistent consecrated Christian life. I don't believe that ever in history has there been more temptation placed so freely before men. Through the media, through the movies, through television, through magazines, we have been overexposed to sexual enticements. That area has been stimulated and aroused. And at the same time, there has been a deteriorating of the moral standards, a broad acceptance of relationships in the society in which we live. And I do not believe that ever in the history of man has there been such a broad exposure and a more difficult time to really live a truly committed life to Jesus Christ. And because the iniquity in the world is abounding, the love of many is waxing cold. And the question then that Jesus asked becomes very significant, "When I return, or when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" True, genuine faith and trust in His Word.

And he spake this parable unto certain of those which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and looked down on others ([Luk 18:9](#)):

These are those people, and you've met them, that are so critical of everyone else. They are like Job said to his comforters, "Surely you are the people and wisdom is going to die with you." People who are self-righteous, they feel no need of any help in that area. And they are critical, condemning and look down on everybody else. It's interesting that Luke begins to explain to us the direction that the parables are taking. So, this parable is to those who trust in themselves, that they are righteous and despised others.

And there were two men who went up into the temple to pray; the one was a Pharisee, and the other was a hated publican ([Luk 18:10](#)).

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The word *publican* became synonymous with *sinner*, of the rankest sort, the tax collector, the crookedest man in town.

So the Pharisees stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as that publican over there. For I fast twice every week, I give tithes of everything that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but he smote on his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [Jesus said,] I tell you, this man, [that is, the publican,] went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted ([Luk 18:11-14](#)).

I always come to God on the basis of His grace and His mercy towards me. Whenever I come to God it is always seeking His mercy. You see, justice is getting what you deserve. I never come to God and say, "Justice, God! I want justice!" I'm afraid I might get it. I come and I say, "Mercy, Lord! Mercy! God, be merciful!" For mercy is not getting what I deserve. But then I say, "Oh, God, grace!" Because that's getting what I don't deserve. So you see the fine difference between the three. Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting what's coming to you. And grace is getting what's not coming to you...God just giving to you on the basis of His love and grace towards you. You don't deserve it, but He'll do it anyhow. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And then, "Everyone that exalts himself shall be abased, but he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

And so they brought unto him also infants ([Luk 18:15](#)),

They brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and he said, Allow the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter in ([Luk 18:15-17](#)).

I love to observe children. There is a beauty, there's something almost sacred and divine surrounding that little child. There's just such a purity. And Jesus said, "Unless you receive the kingdom as a little child, you're not going to enter therein." But Jesus was always interested in the children.

Now there was a certain ruler and he asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why do you call me good? there is none good, except one, and that is, God. You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother. And he said, All of these have I kept from my youth up. And when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet you lack one thing: sell all that you have, distribute unto the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven: come and follow me. And when he

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heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw how that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hard it is for those who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God ([Luk 18:18-27](#)).

When this young ruler came and kneeled at Him and said, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit this age abiding life?" He's talking about a quality of life, not the quantity. A quality that he observed in Jesus. "What must I do that I might have this age abiding, this quality of life that You possess?" And Jesus said, "Why did you call Me good? None is good, except One, and that is God."

Now, do not jump to the conclusion that Jesus is saying, "I am not God." For I think a careful observation and you'll discover He's saying just the opposite. You see, He is saying one of two things: He is saying, "I am no good," or He is saying, "I am God." So the question, "Why do you call Me good?" is to arouse and elevate the conscious level of this fellow's mind. And as much He is saying unto this young fellow, "Look, you've had a divine revelation. Why did you call Me good? There's only One good and that is God."

Then Jesus flashes across him the six commandments in the second table of stone. Those commandments that deal with man's relationship with his fellow man, which constitutes righteousness. And as Jesus flashed across him the second table of the law, "Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery, bear false witness, honor thy father and mother, don't steal," he said, "I have kept all of these from my youth up." Mark tells us that he asked the question, "What lack I yet?" And Jesus, when He heard these things, said unto him, "You lack one thing. Go and sell all that you have and distribute to the poor. You'll have treasure in heaven." Now again, don't misread this. Is Jesus saying that his lack was poverty? No, because we could all get in easily then. Go back. "Why do you call Me good? There's only One good, that is God." Now Jesus said, "Go," and let's leave out what He said at that point, just "Go." And then He said, "Come, follow Me." Now the essential word of Christ to this young man is, "Come, follow Me." You see, your problem is, God is not at the center of your life. You have another focal point upon which your life is revolving. In his case, it was money, his riches. His life was revolving around his riches. His riches were at the center of his life. And Jesus touched the thing that was at the heart of his life, and He said, "You've got the wrong God. Follow Me. Get rid of that false god. Follow Me. If you want to be perfect, get rid of those idols, get rid of those things that are standing in the way, those things that are keeping you from total commitment. Follow Me, put Me at the center of your life."

And so the Word of Christ would be the same to you tonight. It would be "Go," and then He would put His finger in your life at that which is hindering you from completely following Him. Maybe it'd be selling that little sports car. Or getting rid of this, getting rid of that. To some, it might even be dropping out of your educational pursuits. If that's

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become the center of your life and the chief focal point and your life is revolving around that, that's the thing He's putting His finger on and saying, "Look, you'll never find it there; you'll only find it when you follow Me. It's not that these others then cannot be added and become a part of your life, but they should not and cannot be the center part of your life. I've got to be at the center of your life. Come, follow Me."

The young man went away sad. Now it is wrong to assume that he was lost. I don't know if we'll meet him in heaven or not. It may be that he was sad at the thought of what he had to do next. It could be that he went to his accountant and said, "Hey, get rid of everything, distribute it to the poor. I'll see ya later. I've got to follow a Man that I met today. Nothing else counts, but following Him." Or it could be that he went away sad, thinking, "The price is too great. Can't do it. I wish I had it, but I can't pay that price." And he had reason, then, to be sad. Jesus then said, "How hard it is for those who have riches, tough to enter into the kingdom of God." Riches can be such a powerful god in a person's life; they can get such a strong hold upon a person. They can possess you so quickly. The people said, "Lord, who then can be saved?" Of course, He talked about the camel going through the eye of a needle. And Jesus said, "With man, it is impossible." Luke said He said, "All things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

Now, I get upset today when we travel to Israel and the guides will tell you about the subgate that they call the "eye of the needle." This is a concocted story as are so many of the stories that the guides tell. They're interesting. You know, they are paid to know and so they'll tell you something, even if they don't know. Because they're expected to know. And I have looked at some of the various sites and I've had four or five explanations given to me of what caused it and all by the four or five different guides that we've had over a period of time. So they're not really that authoritative. There's just a awful lot of guesswork still in archaeology as to periods and times and datings and so forth. There's just an awful lot of guesswork of what that really was, and what that was intended for. And they'll tell you, "Oh, that was to do this or that." And you know, as I said, they've got to have some answer

So, they point to a small little cut in the bottom of the gate, and they'll say, "That's the needle's eye." And it is small enough, that to get through the gate, to get through this little hole, there's like a cat, things that they have in the house where the cat can come through and all. It's like that. You get down and you can squeeze and crawl through the thing. You'd never get a camel through one of those things. But they say, "Oh, there was a subgate. And at night when they close the main gate of the city, if a guy arrives at the city late, the only way he can get in...they won't open the main gate at night...so the only way you can get in is to take all of the baggage off the camel and you get him down on his haunches and you push the thing through. And with a lot of effort and a lot of work and a lot of strain, you can push him through the needle gate, or the "eye of the needle" gate. **Wrong!**

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Jesus said, "With man it's impossible." You know, there are a lot of people that would like to believe a lot of struggle, a lot of effort, a lot of guts and drive and determination, you can save yourself. Wrong! You can't save yourself. I don't care how much pushing and pulling and effort you make, you can't save yourself. With man, it is impossible. You can't enter into the kingdom of heaven on your own works. With man, it is impossible. But thank God, with God all things are possible.

Now Peter said, Lo, Lord, we have left all and followed thee ([Luk 18:28](#)).

We gave up our houses and homes and all.

And he said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or parents, or brothers, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake ([Luk 18:29](#)),

Now notice that: "for the kingdom of God's sake,"

Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting ([Luk 18:30](#)).

The qualifying phrase is "the kingdom of God's sake."

Then he took unto him the twelve, and he said unto them, Behold, we're going to Jerusalem, and all of the things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished ([Luk 18:31](#)).

Now they are on the final leg of their trip to Jerusalem. They're down at the Jordan River and they are now going to go on up to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover where the scriptures are to be fulfilled. Not the scriptures of the establishing of the kingdom as the disciples thought. Not the scriptures of sitting on the throne of David, but those scriptures that related to His being delivered to the Gentiles, to be mocked, spitefully entreated, and spit upon ([Luk 18:32](#)):

Jeremiah speaks of this mockery and the spitting, the plucking of His beard. They shall scourge him ([Luk 18:33](#)),

Isaiah tells us that in chapter 53, and put him to death ([Luk 18:33](#));

[Isaiah 53](#) and [Daniel 9](#) and the third day he shall rise again.

And they understood none of these things: this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken ([Luk 18:33-34](#)).

They were blind to it. "Okay, fellows, we've got to go up to Jerusalem, that all of the scriptures concerning Me might be fulfilled." "Alright, let's get on with the kingdom!" And

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He then tells them what He's referring to. "I've got to be delivered to the Gentiles, I have to be mocked, spitefully entreated. I'm going to be spit upon. I'm going to be rejected, I'm going to scourged, I'm going to be slain. But the third day I'll rise again." "Let's go to Jerusalem, set up the kingdom." So anxious were they. I am somehow encouraged by this though. These men that Jesus chose to be nearest to Him, these men that Jesus chose to establish the church were not spiritual giants. They were not perfect men. They did not have keen spiritual insight. They were people just like you and me. God uses ordinary people. God uses you if you'll just let Him. And so here they were, they really didn't understand what He was talking about. In fact, they were just miles apart in their thinking.

And so it came to pass ([Luk 18:35](#)),

Now remember, He is on His way to Jerusalem. He's coming first to Jericho, about eighteen to twenty miles from Jerusalem.

It came to pass, as he was come near to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging ([Luk 18:35](#)):

So as He was on His way to Jericho, "a certain blind man was sitting by the wayside begging."

And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant ([Luk 18:36](#)).

"What's going on? What's happening?" He couldn't see.

And they told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by ([Luk 18:37](#)).

Now he had heard of Jesus. I think that everyone who has some kind of a physical disability is attune to possible cures. Unfortunately, because of this deep desire to be cured, in the present day they often become victims of evil charlatans who promise them cures. And it's amazing how a person who is desperate will hope for anything. And there are people who are willing to take advantage of that hope and give to them a false hope. But somehow he had heard of Jesus of Nazareth; the name registered.

And so he began to cry aloud, saying, Jesus ([Luk 18:38](#)), And used the Messianic title,

thou Son of David, have mercy on me. Then those that went before [those that were around him] rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more ([Luk 18:38-39](#)),

Using now just the Messianic title,

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Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, What do you want that I should do for you? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God: and all of the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God ([Luk 18:39-43](#)).

Notice that. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they will glorify your Father which is in heaven." If people are constantly coming up and praising you for being such a wonderful person and "you're so marvelous, and you're so this and that..." then you better take a quick self examination and find out how you're letting your light shine--evidently in the wrong way, because it's attracting attention to you. It's bringing praises to you. "Let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they will glorify your Father which is in heaven." And Jesus was somehow doing it that way. So when they saw this blind man able to see, following Jesus in the path, they glorified God. They praised God. They gave praise unto God.