

PARABLES OF JESUS

TWO PARABLES ON PRAYER, LUKE 18:1-14

A. The Parable of the Persistent Widow (18:1-8)

1. The context of the parable (1), **And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.**
 - a. *and He told them*
 - 1) Jesus is continuing what He was teaching in Luke 17:22-37, on His second coming.
 - 2) He was speaking directly to His disciples, Luke 17:22, *And he said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.*
 - 3) The focus of His teaching is also seen in Luke 17:22, the delay of His return and how followers of Jesus should respond.
 - b. *they ought always to pray and not lose heart*
 - 1) Kingdom truths from parables are designed to strengthen Jesus' followers during His absence.
 - 2) He was encouraging them to give priority to prayer in light of coming trials (Luke 17:22) and delay in His return.
 - a) Prayer keeps believers on track.
 - b) William Taylor, *The Church on earth must never allow herself to become so hopeless and unbelieving, in regard to the second coming of her Lord, as to give up praying for that great consummation, when all her wrongs shall be redressed, and all her troubles shall be brought to a blessed and everlasting end.*
2. The setting of the parable (2-3), **He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'"**
 - a. The judge in this parable did not fear God nor respect man.
 - 1) A judge in Israel was to represent God in making righteous judgments.
 - 2) The basis for this judge's rulings (or lack of) was not tied to fear of God nor respect for others.
 - 3) We don't know what he based his rulings on which is the same as it is today. When rulings are not based on absolute truth, one must create his own truth.
 - b. A widow in the same city kept asking him for justice.
 - 1) Tom Constable, *Widows were the personification of dependence, helplessness, and vulnerability in Israel.*
 - a) Exodus 22:22, *You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.*
 - b) James 1:27, *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*
 - 2) J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Lord was showing the disciples that one who has a right cause may rightly persist in pursuing it.*
3. The response of the judge (4-5), **For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, "Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming."**
 - a. The judge was not motivated by justice but by a desire to be relieved of the bothersome widow.
 - b. The phrase *beat me down* is literally *give me a black eye*, which meant to damage one's reputation.
 - c. The judge based his decision solely on selfish reasons.
4. Jesus interprets the parable (6-8), **And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"**
 - a. This parable is not comparing the unrighteous judge to God but contrasting them.
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *His point was that persistence is effective with unjust judges. How much more will it be effective with the righteous Judge.*
 - 2) J. Dwight Pentecost, *If an unjust judge can be brought to administer judgment in response to the persistent plea of one who presents a right cause, will not a just and merciful God respond to those who present a persistent plea to Him for what is right?*

- b. God's justice may seem delayed but when it comes it will be swift.
 - 1) Darrell Bock, *God longs to vindicate the saints, and he will do so. When he does, his justice will be swift and sure, and our suffering will seem short-lived compared to the glory to follow.*
 - 2) H. D. M. Spence, *The time will come when we shall understand why God did delay to answer us.*
 - a) It is certain that it is not because of God's lack of concern or unwillingness to help.
 - b) It is most certain that God waited for our good and for His glory.
- c. Jesus raised the question of whether He will find faith on earth when He returns.
 - 1) The question is whether there will be those persistent in praying for Christ's return (Luke 24).
 - 2) Jesus is encouraging them to persevere in praying *Your Kingdom come* because Jesus is worth the wait.
 - 3) Illustrations of wavering faith
 - a) His disciples did not have faith that Jesus would rise from the dead.
 - b) The Church prayed for Peter's release but could hardly believe he was actually delivered by God (Acts 12).
 - 4) We are to look forward to the Lord's return, 2 Timothy 4:8, *Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

B. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14)

- 1. The recipients of the parable (9), ***He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:***
 - a. Jesus addressed this parable to the self-righteous, those who trust in themselves.
 - b. The self-righteous always compare themselves favorably to others but are unwilling to look at themselves in the light of God's holiness.
- 2. Jesus examined the hearts of two men by their prayers (10), ***“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.***
 - a. The prayer of a Pharisee (11-12), ***The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’***
 - 1) The Pharisee gave a prayer of thanksgiving for himself.
 - 2) He was not talking to God but to himself, reviewing his own self-righteousness based on his good deeds.
 - 3) He approached God on the basis of his perceived righteousness based on a standard in which he compared himself to others.
 - b. The prayer of a tax collector (13), ***But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’***
 - 1) *But* introduces the contrast between the Pharisee and the tax-collector.
 - 2) He realized that he was helpless and in great need.
 - a) He realized that God was the standard for measuring righteousness.
 - b) He knew he had no righteousness of himself.
 - c) There was deep conviction of sin.
 - 3) He threw himself on the mercy of God for forgiveness.
 - a) He was pleading for God's blood covering of atonement.
 - b) Today, mercy is shown not by the temporary atonement but the permanent atonement of Jesus Christ, 1 John 2:2, *He is the propitiation* (satisfaction of God's wrath) *for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*
 - 4) It was the tax collector's cry of saving faith as will be seen in verse 14.

3. Jesus interprets the parable (14), *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*
- a. The tax collector was justified (declared righteous).
 - 1) He focused on the grace of God.
 - 2) He humbled himself and was exalted by God.
 - b. The Pharisee was not justified.
 - 1) He focused on his assumed righteousness which he thought he attained by works.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, ...*Jesus meant that to be righteous in God's sight one must acknowledge his lack of personal righteousness rather than pretending to have righteousness that he does not have. Justification depends on God's grace, not on human works or merit.*
 - 3) He exalted himself and was humbled by God.
 - c. Darrell Bock, *This parable is really the parable of the two prayers. In those prayers appear two kinds of hearts, whose contrast is not only seen in the way they make their request, but also in the way they approach God.*

CONCLUSION

- A. God wants His children to seek Him through prayer.
- B. We are to be persistent in praying for what we know is God's will or not known to be against God's will.
- C. The foundation for prayer is a right relationship with God based on grace not works.
- D. Quotes on prayer
 - J. I. Packer, *Prayer is finding our way through duty to delight.*
 - Elton Trueblood, *At the profoundest depths in life, men talk not about God but with him.*
 - D. A. Carson, *One of the foundational steps in knowing God, and one of the basic demonstrations that we do know God, is prayer—spiritual, persistent, biblically minded prayer.*
 - R. C. Sproul, *It is our privilege to bring the whole of our finite existence into the glory of His infinite presence.*
 - Martin Luther (16th C), *As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.*
 - John Owen (17th C.), *He who prays as he ought will endeavor to live as he prays.*