

A series of expository studies for  
Serious Bible Students and Honest Inquirers on

## HONEST PRAYER

from some of those Holy Scriptures  
that have to do with  
Sincere Prayer, Real Prayer,  
Honest Prayer.

Only Honest Prayer is in accord with the Word of  
God, which Sacred Writ is the sole determining Authority  
as to what constitutes prayer in its Spiritual Substance.

The third in this series is

## HONEST PRAYER TO THE HONEST GOD

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Being an exposition of Jesus' teaching in

*Luke 18: 1-7,*

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE,  
emphasizing the steadfast benefit of Honest  
Prayer to the Honest God. To wit, that the  
Honest Promises from The Honest God  
materialize in Honest Affirmations as well as  
Honest Perseverance by Christians, who must live  
amongst the evil by which we Christians are  
surrounded and with which we must steadfastly  
deal.

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## PREFACE

In times past a copy of each Sunday morning's sermon was provided in print for any who desired to study further or to share with others God's Word. Sometimes few copies would be taken. On other occasions many would be taken. However, on the particular Sundays when prayer was the topic, it was not unusual for every copy of that morning's Sermon to be taken by the members of the congregation. The lesson to learn from that was simple. Most folks have a sincere desire to learn more about prayer, and to discover how prayer may be more instrumental in their lives.

Interest in prayer is good. A keen interest in prayer to God is largely motivated by the almost universal acknowledgement that God does hear and answer prayer. People want and need many things in their lives that they know only God can give. Therefore, folks pray because they believe prayer may result in receiving some undeserved blessing simply because they asked God. Many folks know positively and experientially the value of prayer, but even those folks do not yet fully know the eternal benefits of prayer. Even those who use prayer most will have to wait until *that day* to learn the eternally profound effect of their prayers. Because of our partial knowledge it will take divine revelation in glory for Christians to give God the full measure of glory due Him for answered prayer.

We shall one day find ourselves with our Lord, where the unknown shall become the known concerning many spiritual truths and virtues. One of them will be the real outcome of our prayers, and the true affect they had on events on this earth. Surely, the vast majority of us Christians will be ashamed when we learn of the great numbers of our prayers that were answered in the affirmative (only Honest Prayers receive His approval), when we thought they had received a "No." God's "Wait" was mistook by us for a "No," either because of our unbelief or simply because of our ignorance or impatience.

What a time we shall have in glory learning more and more of the grandeur of His superlative wisdom! On the one hand, we will discover that He answered affirmatively all the honest prayers of all His children, even when on the other hand, their granting seemed to have been incompatible with the prayers (which He also answered affirmatively) of other of His children. And yet in all these seeming irreconcilable divergences and apparent antinomies, He fulfilled His very Sovereign Counsels and very Wise Designs from eternity! Praise God forever and forever! Selah! Amen!

In regard to this sovereign nature of prayer and our absolute dependence upon God through it, Mr. Jerry Falwell related several significant principles regarding prayer.<sup>0</sup>

1. "Prayer can do anything God can do...and since God can do anything, prayer is omnipotent."
2. "All our failures are prayer failures."
3. "Nothing of eternal importance is ever accomplished apart from prayer."
4. "What a man is...he is alone on his knees before God and no more."

Prayer will be shown to have been God's way of accomplishing His Sovereign will on temporary earth and in the eternal heaven. Even through the "waits," God, in intricate and interwoven and precise control of all events through the prayers of His saints, did all His will, and accomplished all His pleasure.

In all this, the importance of prayer is distinctly evident. It is eternally so on earth and in heaven. We intend this expository booklet, Honest Prayer to the Honest God, to be just the first in a series on Honest Prayer. Our intent through this work is that Christians will profit from prayer more and more. Then earth will be significantly bettered, because *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above*, and prayer is God's way of bringing more of those good and perfect gifts down from *The Father of Lights*. Amen.

<sup>0</sup> Jerry Falwell, Sermon at a Pastor's Conference, Jacksonville, Florida, n.d.

## HONEST PRAYER TO THE HONEST GOD

*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

*Saying, 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;*

*Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.*

*And the Lord, said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.*

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

*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

*Luke 18:1-8*

Prayer is a peculiar phenomenon. We pray and nothing seems to happen. Again, we pray and great things happen. What determines the merit of prayer? What is the difference between prayer which is active and energetic, and prayer that does not change anything? All of us seems to have very contrasting, even seemingly contradicting, experiences in prayer. At times it seems to gain nothing, but other times prayer attracts great results. Is all prayer answered? Or is some prayer just ignored by God? Because of this apparent inconsistency in the phenomenon of prayer, these and many other questions are raised about its practice; however this much we know, this much God has revealed to us in His Word on prayer: **The honest God does always answer honest prayer.**

God's response may be a "Yes" without delay, and our request is immediately, or nearly immediately, granted to us. Or God may answer with a big "No! that cannot be, or ever become My will for you." Or the answer may be a "Wait." A "wait" is the more often heard answer to our prayers: "Wait, I will grant it." That kind of "Wait" from God may often be gleaned through His Word. We may

know positively that a prayer is fully in accord with His Word of Truth. We know absolutely that God must do this in order to maintain His integrity, or to vindicate His honesty, or to fulfill His promises, or for any one of a number of other scriptural reasons. We may know beyond any shadow of a doubt that our particular prayer is according to His revealed will, and that He is indeed hearing us (*I John 5:14*). Yet the answer does not come; He seems to delay the granting of it. This is how God says, “Wait, I will grant your request, but in My time.”

But meanwhile the temptation comes to us to accuse God of dishonesty, of His treating our honest prayer with betrayal. He becomes—at least according to our earthbound perception—tardy or negligent or sluggish in His dealing with our prayer. As far as we are concerned, God is delaying; He appears not even to be aware of our need. He does not immediately respond to our cries; therefore we begin to harbor thoughts that God is unfair, biased against us. We reason that prayer is not worth the effort. “Since God does not hear my prayers, I will just quit praying” is the usual response by us doubters. We actually give up on our real spiritual prayer life, because of a wrong perception about honest prayer and God’s answer to it. We become guilty of giving in to evil doubts about God and His goodness. We become guilty of murmuring against His willingness to do us good through prayer. Therefore we conclude, “I will not pray anymore.” To guard against that is the reason for this parable and Jesus’ teaching on prayer. Jesus teaches against that kind of reasoning in this Parable of the Unjust Judge. He teaches us not to give in to the evil in and around us. He teaches us that honest prayer to our honest God will indeed be answered, even though it seems at times to have been delayed.

This exposition of Christ’s teaching on honest prayer and our continuance in it will be divided into three major heads, namely:

- I. **The Essentiality of Honest Prayer, *Luke 18:1***
- II. **A Dissimilarity to Honest Prayer—A Contrastive Parable, *Luke 18:2-6***
- III. **The Potentiality of Honest Prayer, *Luke 18:7-8***

## I. THE ESSENTIALITY OF HONEST PRAYER

*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

*Luke 18:1 KJV*

*Now he spoke a parable to them to show that it is necessary to be always praying and not to be giving in to evil.*

*Luke 18:1 ADT<sup>1</sup>*

Of all Christ's parables, only this one and the next (*Luke 18:9-14*) has the reason for it given in advance. Whether Jesus actually told His hearers this reason is doubtful, because it appears to be Luke's word of explanation for our benefit in both parables. The reasons for this parable, according to Luke's inspired logic, are to encourage us men to be always praying, and not to be always fainting.

### Fainting and Giving in to Evil

Jesus had just finished teaching His disciples on the events leading up to His coming Kingdom (*Luke 17:20-37*), and continued this same line of teaching in our text verses. Therefore, when Luke writes that *He spake a parable unto them*, Jesus' disciples are meant. Notice the contextual determination of this back in *verse 22 of Chapter 17*,

*And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.* [Added emp.] *Luke 17:22*

The days when His disciples *shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man* will be the days of the Great Tribulation Period—days full of evil. That is why they will *desire* or long for Him. There will be days of wickedness *as it was in the days of Noah* (v.26), and days of depravity *as it was in the days of Lot* (v.28); both *days* being periods of great judgments from God for that kind of wickedness and depravity. These yet future *days* will be very difficult for all

<sup>1</sup> This is a more literal Author's Distinctive Translation, indicated simply ADT. To help clarify Jesus' teaching, it will be given along with the Authorized Version, indicated KJV. All Scriptures not designated are KJV.

mankind, and are detailed peculiarly in *The Book of the Revelation*. Notice the following statement of Jesus in Luke's Gospel concerning this difficulty, with added discernment and refinement of it inserted from *The Revelation*,

*Whosoever shall seek to save his life [through worship of the Antichrist, Rev.13:8-10] shall lose it [eternally in the lake of fire, Rev. 14:17-20; 13:5-8; 16:17-21]; and whosoever shall lose his [physical] life [by resisting the evil of the Antichrist, Rev. 6:9-10; 13:7] shall preserve it [for all of eternity, Rev. 7:13-17].*

*Luke 17:33*

The Antichrist will make that time (those *days*) severe for disciples and for all the inhabitants of the earth. God's people will even be called upon to renounce Jesus and to embrace the Devil's substitute, the Antichrist (*Rev. 13:16-17*). Jesus' references to those terribly trying days of tribulation for His disciples prompted Him to teach that honest prayer is the means to resist evil whenever or in whatever form it may come to us. And that faith in honest prayer is to be continued during our darkest periods of tribulation, both in our living today or in yet future days, regardless of the immediate or delayed response of God. We must believe in prayer.

When Jesus ascended, He left His church in the world with the Holy Spirit, but as far as having friends in this world are concerned, His disciples are in a sort of widowed, desolate, oppressed, defenseless, condition during the present absence of their Lord in the heavens (*John 15:18-27*). During His absence, disciples are surrounded by many factors not conducive to faith. The alternatives offered to us are either praying or fainting. Either disciples continue in believing prayer, or else they will give in to the evils of this age and fail in their appointed task to *occupy till I come* (*Luke 10:13*). In this manner Jesus' Parable of the Unjust Judge encourages us disciples *always to pray and not to faint*.

The Greek word translated *faint* is a combination of two Greek words which suggests its meaning in our text: en, "in" plus kakeo,



“evil.” Together they literally mean “giving in to evil,” and hence, “to despond, be fainthearted, be remiss.” The idea of carelessness and negligence and irresponsibility at combating evil is meant. Jesus means for us disciples never to lose heart because of evil opposition or evil in other persons in any course of action which we take, or in any endeavor we may attempt. We must not ever *faint* in or under any evil or threat of evil; and the way to insure that we do not give in to evil which surrounds and would overpower us is to pray in faith.

### Praying and Giving All up to God

The reason for this parable is not so much to teach the duty, but the necessity of prayer. Delays in God’s affirmative answers and hindrances of any label must not be permitted to depress our minds, and lead us to restrict prayer to God. Indeed, it is the very exercise of prayer that shall be the means for Christ’s disciples to find strength and perseverance right through any opposition to our every good work. If we disciples fail in persevering prayer, we will invariably fail to persevere against evil, which perseverance is absolutely necessary to do any good work in the kingdom. Evil is all around us; it hinders us, fights against us. If not from without, it is our own fleshly and carnal natures which cause us to “give up the good fight.” But evil is only combated successfully through prayer, whether the evil is from without or from within. Jesus must have disciples who persevere in prayer if He is to have disciples who persevere in His kingdom’s work. The two stand together or they fail together.

Since we disciples are constantly at war with the forces of the Evil One (*I Peter 5:8*), there will be delays as a matter of common course. When Daniel had sought the mind of God through three weeks of fasting and praying, a vision of the pre-incarnate Christ was provided him. Then the Lord said to him,

*Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.*

*But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*

*Daniel 10:12-13*

An answer to Daniel's petition was delayed because of the spiritual conflict between God and Satan. God has chosen to work against the evil of the Devil in a prolonged fashion for reasons known and unknown to us. But the answer came according to God's desire to answer it when He had worked it out.

Actually, delays in prayer are sometimes essential. The conflict of the ages is being drawn out for the good of the combatants and for the meditative glory of God; that is, His work in Christ's victorious cross is plainly and painstakingly manifest to all creation through what we consider delays. Therefore, in order for the necessary faith, love, and gratitude, for the Savior and His work to find successful expression, disciples must continue in prayer. Faithfulness and prayer are inseparably united. This parable is to persuade disciples to endure difficulties and to persist in His kingdom's work until His return no matter what the delay to our prayers seems to imply. But this is only possible, according to Jesus, through faithful and believing prayer. In this parable and His subsequent teaching concerning it, Jesus says in effect:

**My kingdom will fight and win out finally and completely, but only in the future. The conflict's drawn out peculiarity is necessary for the building up of My Body, for your own maturity, and for My Father's maximum glory. Therefore, do not stop seeking the end of evil in your everyday lives as well as through your ministries. In all you do for Me, you will meet opposition. Confront it with prayer. I will win, but seek its end now through prayer which resists its activities; because only through the means of faithful and believing prayer will you actually experience victories now, and also be able to withstand the evil and to serve faithfully until that day of My return.**

## II. A DISSIMILARITY TO HONEST PRAYER— A CONTRASTIVE PARABLE

*Saying, 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;*

*Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.*

*And the Lord, said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.*

*Luke 18:2-6 KJV*

*Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city fearing not God, and feeling no regard for man.*

*Now there was a certain widow in that city, and she was coming to face him saying, Begin maintaining the right, mine apart from my opponent in a suit.*

*And he was not willing for a time. But after these things he said to himself, Since even God I am not fearing, neither am I feeling regard for man,*

*Yet because this widow is bringing forward trouble to me, I will maintain her right in order that in the end her coming should not be greatly damaging to me.*

*Now the Lord said, Begin hearing what the judge of unrighteousness says.*

*Luke 18:2-6 ADT*

This parable is a contrastive illustration, meant to show what God is not like. Many dissimilarities exist between God and His ways, and the persons and events of this parable. Obviously, the judge represents a contrast to God, while the widow represents us disciples, though also with minor dissimilarities. Notice the following distinctions:

#1. The judge was *unrighteous*, but God is righteous.

#2. The judge did not regard man, that is, he cared

nothing for man, or for the good of men; but God cares greatly for all men without distinction (*John 3:16*), and seeks always to glorify His name among them in all the earth.

#3. The judge was *wearied* by the continual comings of the widow; but God is neither wearied nor bothered by any who come to Him no matter how often or how forcefully they might plea.

#4. The judge had to be made to respond, but God is never forced to do anything. Honest prayer certainly would never seek to intimidate God Who is love.

#5. The judge granted the widow's request only for self-serving or selfish reasons that would benefit himself, but God loves and cares for His elect not for only self-serving reasons; it is entirely from His mercy and grace.

#6. The judge was not moved to compassion for the poor and needful widow, but God is merciful and has promised never to forsake His elect, just because they have such needs.

#7. The judge was difficult to be persuaded and had to be entreated over and over during a long period of time, but God is easily entreated and *knoweth that ye have need of these things before we ask and shall grant our desires while they still are in our mouths*.

#8. The widow, knowing the unrighteousness of the judge, felt that she had to brow-beat him in order to gain recognition from him and attention to her problem; but God would never have any of His own feel or pray that way. He will give immediate and generous attention to His elect.

#9. Jesus taught elsewhere that we would not *be heard for our much speaking* (*Matthew 6:7*); much less, therefore, is this parable to be taken to be anything other than an illustrative contrast to honest prayer to our real and honest heavenly

Father. As concerns the overall meaning of the parable, the judge is mostly a contrast to God, while the widow is a variable contrast to what the real prayers of Christ's disciples ought to be.

However, the parable as a whole does display certain similarities to real prayer and God's attention to it. These will be noted with the dissimilarities as we consider: First, **A Dishonest Judge, verse 2**. Second, **A Demanding Widow, verse 3**. Third, **A Distressed Judge, verses 4-5**.

### A Dishonest Judge, verse 2

*Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man;* Luke 18:2 KJV

*Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city fearing not God, and feeling no regard for man.* Luke 18:2 ADT

The Law of Moses required that judges be in the "gate" (court) of every city to deliver decisions between disputants in various matters—civil, religious, etc. They were of course to be fair and impartial, rendering strict and righteous judgments without respect of persons (*Ex. 23:6-9; Lev. 19:15*). Such municipal tribunals existed during Jesus' time on earth, according to *Matthew 5:21-22*. But this judge in Jesus' parable was neither fair nor impartial; he was an *unjust judge* according to Jesus (*v.6*). He was literally "a judge of unrighteousness," that is, a judge who was unfair, dishonest, and sought only what he determined as best suited his own selfish purpose. He cared not for good in God's or man's sight. The verse says that *he feared not God* which was the Old Testament criterion for piety. He also failed in the other gauge of righteousness: he *regarded not man*. In other words, this judge failed in both aspects of the righteousness of the Law of Moses; he loved neither God nor man. The two great restraints upon men are the fear of God and respect or regard for other men. He had neither. Jesus would have us take note of this great contrast to His and our heavenly Father, because in verse 6 He directed us to take note of *what the unjust judge saith*, but not of what he *doeth*.

### A Demanding Widow, verse 3

*And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. Luke 18:3 KJV*

*Now there was a certain widow in that city, and she was coming to face him saying, Begin maintaining the right, mine apart from my opponent in a suit. Luke 18:3 ADT*

A widow was defenseless, commonly poor, and was liable to be oppressed by those in power.<sup>2</sup> She was easily injured and not readily protected among men; therefore the law had special regard for her. Ordinarily, judges were bound to show peculiar attention to a widow, but when this defenseless widow brought her case before the “face” of this unjust judge, she received no redress against her *adversary*. Literally from the Greek, she was in legal contest with “one against the right” who had become her persecutor; and she had sought to be avenged by the decision of this judge. Notice it is avenge, not revenge that she was seeking. The word denotes the maintaining of the right, and not the retaliating for the wrong. She sought to be vindicated of the wrongs done to her by this person who was “against the right.” She had a clear case of right versus wrong.

While the judge is a clear contrast to God, this widow, at least in regard to this right/wrong aspect, is a clear representative of the believer as he relates to and stands before the unjust world. The cry of the elect has ever been, “Avenge, Oh God, the wrongs done to me. Set right the evil and unjust persecutions against me.” The *Psalms* are full of cries of anguish that are addressed to God to set right the injustices and the injuries brought to bear upon God’s people in this evil world.<sup>3</sup> The widow does indeed represent the elect who cry unto God day and night, “Avenge me of mine adversary. Begin maintaining the right.”

<sup>2</sup> Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, Luke (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> See *Psalms 54-59* et al.

### A Distressed Judge, verses 4-6

*And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;*

*Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.*

*And the Lord, said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.*

*Luke 18:4-6 KJV*

*And he was not willing for a time. But after these things he said to himself, Since indeed I am not fearing even God, neither am I feeling regard for man,*

*Yet because this widow is bringing forward trouble to me, I will maintain her right in order in the end her coming should not be greatly damaging to me.*

*Now the Lord said, Begin hearing what the judge of unrighteousness says.*

*Luke 18:4-6 ADT*

In the parable Jesus said that the widow *came unto* the judge (v.3). The tense in the Greek is the imperfect, which refers to repeated comings. The widow sought to badger and harass this unjust judge until he relented on the unfair and evil verdict of her case. Finally, the judge did just that, because he reasoned,

“Even though I care not for justice for justice’s sake, yet it would be in my best interests to grant this particular widow’s grievance; because I am wearied already, and in the end<sup>1</sup> if she keeps this up I will suffer even more from her.”

The judge acted only because her endless complaining became unendurable to him, and because, as he put it, *by her continual coming she weary me*. The very literal translation of this phrase provides much insight into the troubled feelings of the judge. More literally he said, “In order that with regard to the end [of this matter] she will not give me a black eye.” The Greek word rendered *weary* is a compound word, hupopiazei; consisting of hupo, “under,” plus ops, “eye,” the noun refers to “the face below the eyes.” But the

<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, this very significant and meaningful phrase, “in the end,” is not translated in the KJV. It is eis telos, literally “unto finish’ or “into [the] end.”

verb used in our text denotes a blow to the area under the eye, in other words, “to give a black eye.”<sup>5</sup>

This judge was concerned with his reputation after all, as becomes obvious in the words, “Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet in the end of this matter I may receive a bad mark on my person—a black eye.”

The judge was not fearful of a physical black eye, but used a figure of speech much as we use today. Often persons are said to “have a black eye,” meaning they have some kind of stigma or blame upon their character. The English figure denotes “vituperation,”<sup>6</sup> that is, bitter speaking and blame being heaped upon another. The judge was fearful of this widow’s case becoming widely known and that it would result in his being spoken abusively about. Even though he cared not for man or God, yet he knew that his reputation in the end did count for a great deal if he was to be allowed to continue in his lucrative position. Only for selfish reasons did the judge grant her request. Only because of the continual *troubling*, and the threat of an eventual “blacking of his reputation” did he grant the defenseless widow’s request.

Herein is a key element of the parable. This “in the end” thing is the similarity of this judge to God. Notice that Jesus pointed His disciples’ attention directly to what the judge said, *Hear what the unjust judge saith* (verse 6). Jesus singles out the words of the unjust judge as especially to be scrutinized by His disciples. In those words are the principal values of the parable’s

<sup>5</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (comp.), A Greek-English Lexicon (9th Revised and Augmented Edition, Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, revisors; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 1904. “Strike one under the eye, give him a black eye.” This is the meaning of this Greek active voice as used in our text by Jesus; however the passive voice is listed as meaning to “have a black eye,” while the noun forms of the word mean simply, “a blow to the face, a black eye.” meaning to “have a black eye,” while the noun forms of the word mean simply, “a blow to the face, a black eye.”

<sup>6</sup> Brewer, Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 116.



application to the disciples' praying and not giving in to evil. Namely, we must believe in God's vindication of all good in the end if we are to be enabled to continue praying and not giving in to evil. It is the assurance that God will maintain the right because of His own name's sake that encourages disciples to persevere in prayer against evil. Either in this life or in the next, God will vindicate all the depressed widows' (Christians') claims against their opponents. He will *bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday (Psalms 37:6)*. He will act to protect His Person from any probable taint upon His reputation in the end of all things. He will set it right in the end for His name's sake.

### III. THE POTENTIALITY OF HONEST PRAYER

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

*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*

*Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

*Luke 18:7-8 KJV*

*Moreover, should not God in every way make the legal remedy for His elect ones crying aloud day and night, and even have long patience over them?*

*I say to you that He will make their legal remedy with dispatch. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, will He find (that) faith upon the earth?*

*Luke 18:7-8 ADT*

Here is a majestic promise for all persevering prayer: that its potentiality enters into the next world. Real spiritual prayer transcends the boundaries of this world with its circumscribed and limiting parameters. Real spiritual prayer—honest prayer—goes out beyond this life, and travels into the eternity where God perpetually resides. This persevering spiritual prayer sees the greater things not visible to the natural eye. Jesus alludes to this potentiality of honest prayer in His interpretation and application of the parable through three particulars: First, He pledges that God is **No Stalling Father**, *verse 7*. Second, He promises from God **A Sudden Vindication**, *verse 8a*. Third, He prophesies there will be among men **A Scarce Faith**, *verse 8b*.

#### No Stalling Father, verse 7

*And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? Luke 18:7 KJV*

God is very unlike the unjust judge. Jesus means to contrast God and the judge in the words of this verse. The words, *And shall not God avenge*, draw a distinction between the hesitancy of the judge and God's sure-to-come remedy of all injustice against His *elect*. God is dealing with those whom He has chosen unto salvation *from the foundation of the world* (Eph. 1:4). Therefore, He is

attentive to their every cry, and knows them intimately (*Rom. 8:20; I Peter 1:2*). He will guard them always, and will keep them as the apple of His eye (*Ps. 17:8*). Jesus is assuring His disciples that God is not delaying, stalling, or otherwise hesitant to *avenge* or make the legal remedy for His elect. Just as their salvation is sure in the end, so is the vindication of their right. However, the time is the determinate factor in this vindication. What appears very much as a delay is not at all such in the eternal program and purpose of God.

The first portion of *verse 7, And shall not God avenge his own elect?*, is a question which demands a strong affirmative answer, while the last portion, *though he bear long with them*, is expressing a static fact of God's dominion which warrants no reply. The last phrase of *verse 7, though he bear long with them*, might be rendered "and even have long patience over them," meaning that God exercises longsuffering toward all evil whether that committed against Himself or His *elect* (*Eccles. 8:11*, et al.). He has an eternal program to fulfill and will be sure to execute fair and proper judgments against all offending parties, especially those guilty of offending His *elect*. But this all will inevitably take place in the end.

It sometimes appears to God's people that He prolongs and unnecessarily delays this vindication; however Jesus assures the *elect* that, as objects of a supposed delay, "it cannot be thought that it should endure endlessly...; but He denies that God can to the last withhold a help which His elect so ardently entreats from Him."<sup>7</sup> Though God tolerates oppression against His *elect* for what seems to them a long time, He will at length interpose in behalf of them, if not in this life, then in the end. The prayers of His *elect* transcend this life and are accurately and very literally fulfilled in the future. "In the end" means that we may or may not see them answered in this life, but of this one thing our Lord would have us be assured: He will not withhold any necessary vindication of His *elect*, either in this life or beyond.

<sup>7</sup> Lange, Commentary of the Holy Scriptures, Luke (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) p. 271.

A Sudden Vindication, verse 8a

*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*

*Luke 18:8a KJV*

*I say to you that He will make their legal remedy with dispatch.*

*Luke 18:8a ADT*

*The Book of Revelation* ends with a thrice repeated promise of Jesus, *I come quickly* (*Rev. 22:7, 12, 20*). The same Greek word is there used as was used by Jesus in our text, rendered *speedily*. By the use of this word in *The Revelation*, Jesus did not mean that He would return soon as measured by our time, but that when He did come again, the events of His coming would occur with haste, suddenly, easily, quickly. There would be no delays, no deferrals, no postponements, that would affect His coming; but it would be in accord with God's plan. The word connotes not only speed, but adds to speed the implication of efficiency, and stresses the facilitation of everything necessary for His return; it strongly stresses promptness in finishing His revelation to the world.

Jesus used the word and its same meaning in our text. Jesus means that when God acts to vindicate His elect, He will do so efficiently and without delays, deferrals, postponements, or extenuations. All prayers for vindication will then positively be answered with dispatch, though up to that point in time it appears to us, and is true indeed, that He has been patient over them.

Since Jesus' teaching concerning His second coming preceded this parabolic teaching on prayer, it is relevant that He should end it similarly. Christ here refers to the time of Great Tribulation that constitutes the bulk of *The Book of Revelation* (*Chaps. 4-19*). During that time, the persevering prayers of His *elect* for the avenging of their grievances will be, to a large degree, answered, as according to the testimony of that Book. Notice the following reference to these

avenging prayers of the saints to set right the wrongs done to them throughout the ages, to be fulfilled and answered during the coming tribulation period and beyond,

*And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:*

*And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

*And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.* [Added emp.]

#### *Revelation 6:9-11*

This group *under the altar* represents all the saints of all the ages who were physically killed for the word of God, and also all those who were no more than hated and treated with contempt, unfairly and unjustly, which actions are equivalent to murder (*Matthew 5:21-22; I John 3:15*). During the tribulation period many saints will be physically killed. This group under the altar represents them, but also portrays (or *signifies*, *Rev. 1:1*, i.e. “symbolizes,” Gk.) all saints killed both physically and in men’s hearts. Through this murderous hate—unjust, unfair, and illegal treatment—the elect have suffered perpetually in this world. Throughout the ages God’s elect have been crying day and night for vindication before their oppressors, and in that day it’s promised fulfillment will come *speedily*.

*The Book of Revelation* throughout describes one of the aspects of this *speedy*, or efficient and thorough, avenging of His *elect*. Jesus’ Revelation includes this vindication of the right of His people, as in the following,

*The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*

*And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

*Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.* [Added emp.]

*Revelation 14:10-12*

When these prayers for avenging the wrongs done against God's people (*Rev. 6:10* and our Luke text) are fulfilled in the future (*Rev. 14:10-11*), that is the patience of the saints. That will be the vindication of all the wrongs brought against God's *elect*. That will be the fulfillment of the *faith of Jesus* that produced prayers in those widow-like, turn-the-other-cheek, believers who persevered in believing prayer. They are described as those who *kept the commandments of God*; that is, they refused to give in to evil. The prayers of us saints have a vital part in this *avenging of mine adversary* during the tribulation period, which prayers will be known by all creation as then being answered in precise accord to how they were prayed through the ages. Accordingly, the potentiality of honest prayer extends into the next life when God, having heard through the ages, will answer the prayers of those who crowd *under the altar* all through the times of oppression and injustice toward His own. Through the hate generated in evil hearts, God's *elect* are *slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they hold*. But Jesus promises that *God will avenge them speedily*—efficiently and thoroughly.

*A Scarce Faith, verse 8b*

*Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

*Luke 18:8b KJV*

*Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, will He find (this) faith upon the earth?*

*Luke 18:8b ADT*

The kind of faith that perseveres amid injustices and evil errors will be scarcely possessed by the worldly masses when Jesus returns. Jesus warned in another prophecy that *because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold* (*Matthew 24:12*), and in our text, He asks,

Will I find this faith on the earth.<sup>8</sup> He means the kind of faith that perseveres against evil through prayer.

Therefore, one might ask, “How does true faith endure?” The answer is in this teaching from Jesus, namely, **Faith endures through its living temperament manifest in honest prayer to the honest God.** In other words, faith given from God persists in His own children through the prayers that it produces. That is a fundamental truth of this Parable of the Unjust Judge, and Christ’s subsequent teaching concerning it.

As Luke began this parable so Jesus ends it; it began as an encouragement *that men ought always to pray and not to faint (v.1)*. We must believe in prayer even when the answer seems to be delayed, because prayer is the means to keep faithful to Christ and to His cause of the gospel in a world of unjust and evil opposition to it. *The patience of the saints* relates to constancy in prayer when no answer comes except a “Wait, I will grant your request to set it right.” The answer to our faithful prayers will be realized, but not yet. It will come to pass just as we have prayed to be *avenged*, but not yet. Meanwhile, the experiences of God-searching prayer have in themselves been the means to continue in the *faith*.

Prayer for vindication, which has not come in this life, has itself been the way that God has kept us in Christ and in His work. On the other side of this life, when we get to that celestial city over there, when we look back on this life of injustices and wrongs experienced and unfair dealings and wicked devices against us, when we see it more clearly, we shall thank God that He answered them in His Own time. We will then know the value of those spirit-wrenching prayers for relief. We will then agree with our Lord Jesus Christ that God did indeed *avenge us speedily*, because we will then see

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<sup>8</sup> The Greek has it, ten pistin, “the faith.” “The definite article [“the”] may sometimes have the full force of a demonstrative pronoun [i.e. a “this” or “that”],” H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 147.

clearly the holding, the sustaining, the persevering power of all those prayers as they effected strength and encouragement in us not to *faint* in this life.

We shall also remember the periods of prayer spent asking for immediate avenging of our opponent but which was, to our estimation, prolonged unnecessarily. But we shall at that time realize, that though the relief was not forthcoming immediately, and though the prayer seemed to us to be not heard, yet our experiences in prayer were better for us than our sought for remedy would have been. The “seasoning” in prayer, though from bitter need and from most deeply felt destitution, was, after all, the greater blessing. Because, if the relief had come, if the unjust treatment had been suddenly avenged, if the prayer had been immediately answered, we would have suffered spiritual loss. We would have lost the protracted blessings of experiencing real and honest prayer to the real and honest God.

The absence of the discipline and correction that we would receive through making heart-wrenching prayer to our heavenly Father could be the first traces of faithlessness and a reason for our fainting. Since God would have faithful and strong disciples for His Son’s work, He will condition them through prayer. Not through prayers that are words only, but real heart-felt and soul-xhausting prayer, because of the great need, will leave its supplicant better off for having prayed. That is the way of God in persevering prayer. He answers, “Wait,” in order to motivate us to more prayer, and to more prayer as He works out His program. Those “waits” will some day prove to have been the cause of even more persevering prayer, and the source of our continuing faith amidst the evil of these last days; and, therefore, the vehicle of great and wondrous things shown to us because we prayed and fainted not. Amen!

*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee  
great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*

*Jeremiah 33:3*