



Luke 18

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Tape #8062
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now in our Bibles to the gospel according to Luke chapter eighteen.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (18:1);

Whether or not Jesus announced that this was the purpose of the parable or Luke just looking at the parable has deduced that and introduces the parable such, is of no material note. But this is the gist of the parable, this is what He's getting at. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." So many times it seems like we become weary and fainting in prayer. Sometimes the question is asked, Just what is the purpose of prayer? If God has purposed to do something, will He not do it? Does prayer really influence God? Does prayer really change things? And of course, the whole thrust of prayer is that God does answer prayer. And I'm convinced that there are many things that are accomplished as the result of prayer that would not have been accomplished had there not been prayer.

However, at the same time, I do not believe that prayer is an attempt to change the mind of God, as some people seem to look at prayer, is convincing God, selling God or changing God's mind on an issue. But I believe that it is more opening the door for God to work as He desires to work, giving Him that open door opportunity to do so.

Jesus, in this parable of encouraging people to pray and not to faint, when you're coming up against a heavy trial, pray about it. Don't just faint. Don't say, Oh no, and faint. Just pray about it is what He is saying. You ought to pray, don't faint. Pray.

There was in a city a judge, which neither feared God, or regarded man (18:2):

That usually goes along, one with the other. If a person doesn't have a fear of God in his heart, he doesn't have respect for man. He doesn't have respect for his fellowman. And we see a lot of people today who, lacking the fear of God, also lack respect for other human beings. They have lack of respect for another person's properties or another person's being.

The fear of God always brings a greater respect for our fellowman. Because we realize that one day, we are going to stand before God. And He has commanded that we respect one another and we love one another and we respect one another's properties and another person's rights. But this judge, because he did not fear God, he did not regard man. Tough, crusty old judge.

There was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary (18:3).

She wasn't asking for revenge. She was asking for justice. That she might be given judgment against her adversary.

And he would not for a while: but afterwards 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 drives me crazy (18:4,5).

Everyday she was sitting there in court. Everyday she was asking that justice might be done in her case. Day after day after day. And finally, it got to him. He said, Boy, I don't fear God, I don't regard people. But this woman is driving me nuts. I'll go ahead and judge in her case.

And so Jesus then said, Hear what the unjust judge said (18:6).

Calling him an unjust judge which indeed he was. But then He makes the sharp and vivid contrast. Parables are often used to give sort of complementing kind of truths, parallel truths. But some parables, the thrust is in the contrast. And you get this vivid contrast and in this case, it's a parable by which the truth is revealed through sharp contrast. Here is an unjust judge. He doesn't fear God, he doesn't regard man. But because this little gal is there, day after day after day, nagging, bugging, pleading, he finally gives in.

So shall not God (18:7)

Who is fair, Who does regard man, Who is interested in you, Who is interested in justice, "shall not God,"

avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them (18:7)?

Jesus here is indicating that God sometimes delays the answer of prayer, Though he bears long with them. But if God delays in the answer of prayer, there is always a purpose for it. Take the case in the Old Testament of Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, the mother of Samuel.

You remember the story how that she went with her husband Elkanah up to the tabernacle for the feast. Elkanah had another wife who had a lot of children but Hannah was unable to bear children. And it weighed heavily upon her because the other wife was jealous of her to begin with because of Elkanah's love for her, but not only was she jealous, she was constantly just rubbing it in that she couldn't have children. And it became a very sore point.

And as she was on her way to the tabernacle with her husband, Elkanah, the other wife because she had all the kids had to stay home with the kids, and she was weeping and he said, What's wrong with you? She said, I want a child, I'm going to die if I don't have a child. And typical man, he said, Aren't I worth ten children to you? You got me, baby, what more do you want?

So as they were there worshipping she was praying but she was in such agony of soul, that only her lips were moving, no words were being uttered. The priest saw her. Eli, the high priest. And he said, Woman, stay away from the bottle, it's going to kill you. He thought she was drunk. And she said, Sir, I'm not drunk. My heart is heavy, I desire that God would give me a child. And Eli prophesied and said, Go your way, the Lord has heard your prayer. And she conceived.

While she was there praying, she said, God, if you will just give to me a son, I will give him back to you all the days of his life. The nation of Israel was in a critical state at that time of their history. God was needing a godly man to lead the nation toward the Lord. And so God withheld the prayer of Hannah for a son until He could bring her around to His purposes. When she finally became so desperate, she said, Lord, if you'll just give me a son, I'll give him back to you. He'll be Yours. But I've got to have a son. Got to close the mouth of this woman here. I want a boy.

When God brought her around to His purpose, then God answered and gave her a son, Samuel, and true to her vow she brought him back when she had weaned him and presented him unto the Lord and he lived there with Eli, the high priest, and grew up in the temple and became the great prophet and priest to the nation of Israel that led them in a godly path. So God delayed the answer as He was working in her heart to bring her around to His purpose so that He could have a leader for the nation.

Sometimes God delays the answers to prayer in order to bring us around to His purpose. Sometimes the delay is that He might give more. And so whatever it be, Jesus is saying, that if this unjust judge gives in over the persistence of this little widow, how much more will God answer His own elect when they cry day and night to Him though He bears long with them. But then Jesus went on to say,

I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth (18:8)?

God will hear and God will answer. Oftentimes speedily, sometimes the answers for prayer are instant. As we were looking last week at the ten lepers, as they went they were healed. Other cases of lepers, they were healed instantly. Jesus touched them and the leprosy was gone. These as they went. So sometimes God works instantaneously, sometimes there's a delay in the answer as God is working on our hearts, bringing us around to His position and His purposes. But then the question. "When the Son of man cometh," and Jesus is referring to His Second Coming, "will He find faith on the earth?"

The Bible tells us that "evil days are going to wax worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:13). "In the last days, perilous times will come" (2 Timothy 3:1). It's interesting that we are so far down the tubes that any ray of light, people just gravitate towards and grasp onto. The new contract for America, yes! Go for it, Newt, let's change things. Watch out. Evil days are going wax worse and worse. They're not going to quit taxing you. They're not going to bring you into a new utopia. It's just not going to happen.

Will the Lord find faith? I guess that's a question that each of us have to face ourselves. Will He find faith in my heart? Will I be faithful?

Now He gives another parable and this parable again is explained in that it was directed towards those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and they looked down on others (18:9):

Have you ever met such a person? They trusted in themselves, they're so wonderful, they're so good and they sort of look down on others. And so Jesus said,

There were two men who went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican (18:10).

Hated tax collector and acknowledged crook.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself (18:11),

Notice he prayed with himself. His prayer was to impress himself. How wonderful I am. Notice that he only speaks of God once, in the beginning, and from then on it is I, I, I, I, I. Impressed with himself.

God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican (18:11).

Looking down on him. Those that trusted in their own righteousness and despised others.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess (18:12).

God is just sort of mentioned in the beginning but he's praying really to himself or within himself, congratulating himself for how righteous he was.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (18:13,14).

This again is a principle that Jesus is emphasizing and we had it just a few weeks ago where He again was emphasizing the basic principle, You exalt yourself, you'll be abased. "Pride cometh before destruction, a haughty spirit before the fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Exalt yourself, you'll be abased. Humble yourself and you will be exalted. James it was said, "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He shall lift you up" (James 4:10).

At that time they were bringing to Jesus little infants, that he would touch them (18:15):

Today in Israel, there are Rabbis that are revered by the people and there by the Western Wall some of these Rabbis that have gained some kind of reputation among the people, you will see the people coming up to these Rabbis for a blessing. And they'll come up to him and they'll bow and he'll touch them. The idea is imparting to them a blessing. And so they were bringing the children to Jesus in that same kind of an atmosphere that He might just touch the children. A touch of blessing upon the children.

but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them (18:15).

They were acting in good faith. They thought, Now Jesus is too busy to be bothered with little children. And they thought that they were protecting Jesus, keeping the people sort of a distance from Him. Don't bother Him with little children. Don't you know He has more important things on His mind? Mark tells us that Jesus was indignant with His disciples. Luke tells us that,

Jesus called His disciples unto him, and He said, You allow the little children to come to me, don't forbid them: for of such is the kingdom of God (18:16).

You let the little children come.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein (18:17).

The little children in their simple faith, in their simple trust are an example to us of what it takes to enter the kingdom of God. Just that simple, pure trust. Can't you see how the little children would be attracted to Jesus? Coming up to Him, smiling, waiting for His greeting, waiting for His response. I love it. I love it.

Luke tells us then that,

There was a certain ruler that asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God (18:18,19).

What is Jesus saying? As you read it, you realize He's got to be saying one of two things. When He said, Why do you call Me good? There's only one good, that's God. He is either saying, I am no good; or He is saying, I am God. Why do you call me good? What is it that you have seen, what is it that you have recognized that you would call Me good? He's trying to awaken fully this man's consciousness. This man has had a glimpse of truth.

Perhaps because this story follows in all of the gospels, the case of the little children. And perhaps he saw the way the children hugged Him and were drawn to Him and did not feel any fear around Him. But just were so comfortable and he thought, My, this man, attraction is even with the little children. They're attracted to Him. There's something about Him. What is it? There's a quality of His life there and so he comes to Jesus seeking. With all of his riches, there wasn't this quality of life. He realized that there was something missing. This man obviously has it. And so he came to Jesus saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit this quality, this age-abiding life, this quality of life that I see?

And so with his conscience partially awakened, Jesus seeks to awaken it further with the question, Why do you call me good? Think about it now. Why did you call me good? There's only one good, that's God. So He's awakening the consciousness of the man. You call me good because you've recognized something. A truth, a very important truth. I am God. But Jesus said,

You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother (18:20).

These are the commandments that were on the second table of stone. There were two tables of stone upon which God inscribed the Ten Commandments. The first four were on the first table and they had to do with man's relationship with God. The second six on the second tablet had the commandments that had to do with man's relationship with his fellow man. And these are the ones that Jesus flashed before his conscience. His relationship with his fellowmen.

And he answered Jesus and said, All of these I have kept from my youth up (18:21).

I've kept a right relationship with other people. It doesn't say Jesus said, You hypocrite. There was an honesty, there was a sincerity that Jesus admired. In fact, Mark tells us, And Jesus loved him. He was drawn to him. All of these I've kept from my youth up.

Now 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: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich (18:22,23).

Isn't that interesting? "He was sorrowful: because he was very rich." Most people have the idea that if they were very rich, they'd always be happy. That riches somehow provide happiness. That if you're rich enough, you'd never be sorrowful. But this man was sorrowful because he was very rich.

When Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God (18:24)!

Notice here, Jesus said, One thing you lack. What did he lack? Poverty? No. He lacked having God at the center of his being. What was at the center of his being? His riches. Whatever it is in a person's life that is keeping him from following Jesus Christ, that is the thing that the Lord will lay His finger on.

You see if you said, The riches, that's it. Then the story doesn't have any application for us. But when we come and we seek this age-abiding life, it comes through following Jesus. But whatever it is in your life that is keeping you from following Jesus, that's the thing that Jesus is going on put the finger on. He said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24). He doesn't say what, because it differs with different people. Deny yourself whatever it is that's standing between you and God. Whatever it is that's keeping you from following Jesus Christ, that's the thing that the Lord is calling on you to give up.

Why do you call me good? There's only one good, that is God. You've recognized a truth here. And one thing you lack. What is it? You lack following Me. So get rid of that which is keeping you from following Me.

Too many people they emphasize selling everything, giving to the poor. That isn't the, that's just incidental. The real thing that Jesus is saying, the one thing you lack was God at the center of your life. You got to follow Me. The other's incidental. That's the thing in his life that was keeping him from following Christ. "How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God."

It is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (18:25).

There are those people who are inveterate self-righteous people who want to by their own works have a righteous standing before God. So they will tell you that the eye of the needle refers to a little gate within the

major gate of the city. A little gate in which if you got down and you get a guy in front of you, pulling the camel and you are pushing the camel, if you push hard enough and squeeze him hard enough, you could get the camel through this little gate, the sub-gate that they was called the eye of the needle. In other words, work hard enough at it. You can make it.

But the disciples evidently understood what Jesus was saying differently because when He said that,

They said, O Lord, Who then can be saved (18:26)?

If it's that hard, whoever is going to make it?

And Jesus said, With man, it is impossible (18:27).

He didn't say, With man you just have to squeeze and push and shove and do your best. But He said, With man, it's impossible. Did you know that you're impossible to save? You're an impossibility.

But with God, all things are possible (18:27).

If you've ever tried to reform yourself, you know the impossibility of it. You know how deeply rooted habits and conduct is in our life. And it's not until we acknowledge, Lord, I can't do it, I need help; that the changes are wrought. With man it's impossible. But with God all things are possible.

And so tonight I'm saved because God has done the impossible.

Then Peter said, Lord, we have left everything, and followed you (18:28).

This guy went away sorrowful but Peter said, Lord, we left everything to follow You.

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brothers, or his wife, or his children, for the kingdom of God's sake (18:29),

For goodness sake, get that in. For the kingdom of God's sake.

Who shall not receive manifold more in this life (18:30),

God will never be a debtor to you. You cannot outgive God. Jesus said, Whatever measure you use to mete it out that's the measure that's going to be meted back to you. You can't outgive God. "No man has left these things but what he won't in this life receive manifold,"

and in the world to come life everlasting (18:30).

This is what the young, rich ruler was asking about. How do I inherit this life everlasting?

So then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem (18:31),

Back in the ninth chapter, when Jesus was clear up at Caesarea, Philippi, the upper end of the country, He went up into the high mountain, Mount Herman, no doubt; with Peter, James and John and there He was transfigured before them. And Moses and Elijah appeared there with Jesus and they talked with Jesus concerning His death that was to be accomplished when He came to Jerusalem. That was back in the ninth chapter. And then later on, verse fifty-one of the ninth chapter, Jesus then set His face to go to Jerusalem. So from Caesarea, Philippi, He began His six months journey towards Jerusalem.

And so in Luke's gospel we find from the ninth chapter, the transfiguration, He's been moving, constantly moving, towards Jerusalem. Pausing for a while in the area known as Perea, passing through the borders of Galilee and Samaria, but always moving towards Jerusalem. And now begins the final ascent on up to Jerusalem. We're entering into the very final phases now of the life of Jesus. For six months, He's been moving towards Jerusalem, now He's ready to ascend from Jericho on up to Jerusalem.

So verse thirty-one marks the final movement of Jesus now to Jerusalem. "He took unto Him the twelve, and He said unto them, Behold, we're going up to Jerusalem,"

and all of the things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished (18:31).

We're going up to Jerusalem in order that I might fulfill all of the prophecies that were written concerning the Messiah. The Son of man is a Messianic term. Isaiah said, "He would be despised and rejected; a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. For all of us like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one of us to our own ways; but God laid on him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:3,5,6). There He is to be "numbered with the transgressors" in His death (Isaiah 53:12). Buried in a rich man's tomb.

Earlier, Isaiah told us that he would "give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those that would pluck out His beard: and they would spit upon Him" (Isaiah 50:6). Jeremiah said that He would be betrayed

for thirty pieces of silver. And on and on and on. The prophecies Jesus ever going up that they might all be fulfilled. All of the things that were written. Jesus begins to tell them some of the things that were written in the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on (18:32):

So these were all part of the whole prophetic picture.

They will scourge him (18:33),

“By His stripes,” Isaiah said, “we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). By the scourging. “They will scourge Him,” and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither did they know the things which were spoken (18:33,34).

It just went right over their head. You see, they still had visions of greatness, prominence. They were still arguing over who was going to have the greatest position when He set up the kingdom. And so He said, I’m going to fulfill all that is written in the prophets concerning Me. I’m going to be shamefully treated. They’re going to spit on Me. I’m going to be rejected. I’ll be turned over to the Gentiles. They’re going to scourge Me. They’re going to kill Me, but the third day I’ll rise again. They didn’t hear any of it.

It’s possible to have our minds so set in a thought or an idea that anything that is contrary to that, we just don’t hear. It doesn’t sink in. So these are the ones though that Jesus used. You think, you thick-headed, how can He ever use me? Well, these are the ones that were used mightily.

Now it came to pass, when he was come near unto Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the way side begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked them, What’s going on? And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David [another Messianic title, Son of David], have mercy on me. But those that were around him rebuked him, told him to shut up: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, Jesus asked him, What wilt thou that I should do unto you? And he said, Lord, that I might receive my sight. Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight: your faith has saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God (18:35-43).

On His way to Jerusalem to be crucified, still has time to stop and to help a blind man in distress. In Mark’s gospel, we read that as Jesus was passing out of Jericho, blind Bartimaeus cried out saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And the crowd told him to be still. But he cried the louder. Matthew’s gospel tells us that as He was leaving Jericho. So with those people that are always looking for something to grab hold of. See, the Bible contradicts itself. You can’t trust the Bible because here Luke says, He was entering Jericho and Mark says He was leaving Jericho. You can’t trust the Bible.

And of course, we who believe the Bible are always trying to find answers for the critics. And for a long time, the commentators were suggesting that there were two instances. They say in the old commentaries, don’t confuse this with Bartimaeus. There was more than one blind man, one as He was entering, another as He was leaving. Similar kind of cry, similar situation. But they are not to be confused because they were separate.

In the last few years, the archaeologists have been doing quite a bit of work in the New Testament site of Jericho. The New Testament site, the city of Jericho in the New Testament was moved to a different location than the present location of Jericho which is next to the old ancient tel that Jericho whose walls fell down in Joshua’s days. That tel is still there. You can go up on that tel and still look at the walls that fell in Joshua’s day. And there is the present city around that ancient tel.

But about three miles south of the ancient Jericho, the ancient tel was the New Testament Jericho. It is closer to Jerusalem by the three miles or so that it is south from the ancient site and as they excavated the New Testament site of Jericho, which would be where Zacchaeus was which we will get next week, where Jesus was in Jericho, this new Jericho they have discovered had a lower Jericho and an upper Jericho. As they’ve been excavating, they discovered that the wealthier people lived in the upper part of the city. And there were actually two Jerichos, the lower Jericho, then the upper Jericho.

Today you can go there. You can see the diggings. You can see the lower Jericho and the ruins, the

smaller houses in the area of the lower Jericho. Then you can see the ruins of the palaces that were in the upper Jericho. You can see the huge swimming pool that Herod built for he had a palace there in Jericho, again with one of those huge swimming pools. Size of the auditorium here. You can see the ruins of the larger houses and all.

In reality, with the two Jerichos, you would be leaving the one while you're entering the other. So the whole discrepancy is solved by the fact that the city was divided into the upper and lower sections. As He was leaving the lower section of Jericho, He was entering the upper section of Jericho and so the archaeologists have found really the answer to what seemed to be a discrepancy. Where Mark says that He was leaving Jericho and Luke tells us He was entering Jericho. He was entering the upper part and of course, that's where Zacchaeus would live because he was a very rich man, a tax collector in that area. And the upper part was occupied mainly by the Romans and the wealthy class; and the lower part occupied by more the common people.

So problem solved as if a person waits long enough or looks hard enough, you can always find the answer. Many times the archaeologists are the ones that discover it when they are uncovering some of these ancient sites.

Bartimaeus, the blind man. Knowing that Jesus is passing by, no doubt hearing of Jesus, His reputation, realized that this was his chance. And no doubt his only chance to ever see. When you are in a hopeless kind of condition or situation, and suddenly there is a ray of hope someone holds out to you, you're not going to be easily dissuaded from trying. So realizing that his only hope of ever seeing is right now. He started calling out to Jesus. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Those who were around him say, You're too noisy, man, shut up. You're disturbing things. But he was desperate. And if you're desperate enough, no one's going to dissuade you.

It's interesting that how many times when a person is in a hopeless state, their friends don't always recognize what they know about themselves. You know that you're in a real mess. You know that your condition is, you're grasping for straws. You know that you're going down. And sometimes when you start to move towards the Lord, your friends, Come on, that stuff, you don't believe that, do you? Get real, man. They try to dissuade you. They try to discourage you. And unfortunately, many times a person who is in very desperate straits are discouraged as a result of those that are around them. And they don't call anymore. They just die. They're just destroyed.

This man was not to be dissuaded. He began to cry all the louder, all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus called for him to come. And He asked him, What would you like Me to do? He said, Lord, I want to see. Jesus said, Okay, see. Your faith has saved you." Immediately he could see. Can you catch the emotion, can you catch the feelings, can you catch all that's here? You've never seen before. Suddenly you can see. I'm sure the first one that he gazed upon was Jesus Himself. He had heard His voice and it's interesting, when you hear a voice, you always sort of develop in your mind some kind of a what it must look like.

I'm always having interesting experiences when I go into a restaurant and order my food. Or when I'm in a place and I'll say something and a person will turn and say, I know that voice. And then you see the strange look on their face. They suddenly see the face behind the voice and you don't look anything like they thought you were going to look. And I imagine the first thing he did was just fix on Jesus. The voice, now the face.

He followed Jesus. Stayed with Him as he glorified God and gave praise unto God. Great stories.

Father, we thank You for the life of Jesus, the way He impacted people during His life. And the way He impacts us today. Lord, we thank You for these lessons. Help us, Lord, to learn from them. Help us, Lord, to always pray and not to faint. Help us, Lord, that we will not think more highly of ourselves than we ought and look down on others and think we're so much better than they are. Help us to realize, Lord, our only hope is that You would have mercy upon us. Teach us, Lord. Help us, Lord, that we might humble ourselves before You, that You in turn might be able to exalt us. May we be Your disciples indeed, Lord. Remove anything that keeps us from following You. May there not be any other idols, any other gods, any other interests that hold first place in our lives. But Lord, may You be first and at the heart of our being and

existence. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.