Luke 18v1-8 **Parable of The Persistent Widow** 20th March 2025

"*And he spake a parable unto them to the 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 (the) faith on the earth?"

The idea that Jesus felt that people did not pray enough can easily be conceived. He was in attune with the spiritual health of the nation, and although Israel were God's people, they were not trying very much to follow His teachings preferring to go their own way.

The requirement to pray to God is a commandment and has been included in the Confession of Faith of the Apostolic Ecclesia no 5 on page 27. Other verses cited there are Matthew 7v7 "*Ask and it shall be given you*", 26v41 "*watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*", Ephesians 6v18 "*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit*", Philippians 4v6 "*but in everything by prayer….let your requests be made known unto God*", Colossians 4v2 "*Continue in prayer*", and 1 Thessalonians 5v17 "*Pray without ceasing*".

The parable is given with the Judge being one who was not intimidated by external considerations, "*he feared not God nor regarded man*" in that sense he was like God Himself, who obviously fears no one and presides over the affairs of mankind. He therefore made his decisions for his own reasons, like the Eternal. The judge did not to be wearied by her continual coming. Weariness is not something that effects God Himself, but the parable does not explain how and why God answers pray so much as the requirement that "*men ought always to pray and not to faint*". Too often we give up when we pray thinking that if we do not get an immediate answer then we never will. God does not work like that. He is not affected by time in the same way that we are, He will take as long as necessary to answer, depending on many factors we are unaware of, and we should not regard Him adversely because of that.

Not giving up or fainting, is an important part of the message of this parable. We are too easily swayed by the silence of having to wait. We can be very demanding, as bawling babes cry for their mother's teat. We want to receive the answer which we want in the timeframe of our choosing. This is immature and outside of the experience of scripture. There are many examples of those who had to wait a long time for something to be actioned but who never gave up or fainted against the long march of time.

Noah had to wait 120 years whilst the ark was being prepared during which time the world did not improve and the number of the saved did not increase despite his preaching of righteousness to which he applied himself with little reward. He would have been praying constantly during those long years.

Abraham had to wait many years for a son born to Sarah and himself. He did engineer an alternative strategy together with his wife, but that did not work out well, and they had to go beyond the non-solution of Hagar and Ishmael. It was 24 years before the angels came to them and prophesied that Sarah would have a son although past bearing. Did they give up on prayer during those years, or did they continue to pray to God despite the lack of substantive progress in the promise that God would make of him a great nation all the time he had no children.

Isaac and Rebekah were childless for twenty years before the twins were born. Their one and only pregnancy. Did they faint because their relationship appeared to be barren? Did they abandon prayer to the reality of same old lack of action, year after year?

What then of the woman. She was someone who had no avenger of blood to oppose his adversary, although there is no hint of a serious crime like murder. This is not a satan, which is a word often used as an adversary, from the Hebrew, but rather the Greek is anti-dikos, an opponent often in law, which fits the context of judge in the city.

The judge is described as being "unjust" perhaps because the case had not yet been resolved and hence required the woman to repeatedly appeal to the judge for justice to be served. This is the human element which permits the reader to understand the circumstance of the parable and apply it for themselves in their own situation. Why can this be attributed to a type of God Himself, who is never unjust? There is no perfect representation of God in any parable.

Jesus is the Lord here. In the previous chapter verse 22, the reader is informed that Jesus was no longer talking with the Pharisees, as in verse 20, but was now addressing his disciples. The chapter ends with the question "Where Lord?" which is answered by Jesus before turning to this parable. Parables are not always addressed to the disciples. We have already seen in this study that Jesus spoke to the wider community when using parables. He is not seeking to conceal truth in the dark sayings of ambiguity but wished to impress upon those who sincerely wished to follow him this approach.

Jesus says that God will avenge His own elect speedily. Does this mean that if God takes His time in responding to our prayers that we are not the elect? Mention has already been made of Abraham and Isaac, and we know that they are the elect, so what did he mean by this? Nevertheless, is translated from the Greek word "*plen*" which means but however notwithstanding, yet, rather except; all of which sits in contrast.

What Jesus is saying is that when God acts, He acts speedily, but that this may take time to be initiated. This apparent delay is what causes people to turn off God because in their superficialness they demand an instant response. See Ecclesiastes 8v11 "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*". Accordingly, despite the fact that God will answer the prayers of His elect speedily, this is not always appreciated by those whose point of reference is not set spiritually but by other considerations. Hence the question is raised by Jesus in this context, "*shall he find faith on the earth*?"

It is often pointed out that the definite article "the" is missing here in the KJV although the Greek has this in the original text. Jesus, as the Son of man, is not just looking for

faith when he returns, but he is looking for THE faith. The One and only faith of Ephesians 4v5 which many do not recognise even when they are confronted by it.

The Truth holders, having the One Faith, THE faith of the Bible, will be identified as a people of prayer who do not relent or faint in the midst of adversity and apparent inaction but press on in their cause. They cry unto God, day and night, never ceasing n their petitions of the Almighty knowing that when He does answer it will be speedily, but at the time of His choosing. Are we such a people?

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