

LUKE

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Chapter Eighteen

Considering context is always critical in our interpretation of Scripture and it is especially important in this first parable. The context is the possibility that disciples of Jesus might become discouraged as they endure affliction before the return of Jesus (the Parousia). We discussed this affliction in the previous chapter (17:22-37). It then applies to the generation of His disciples before His return (21:12-19) and to all Christians who suffer many persecutions: *strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."* (Acts 14:22) Christians have continued to pray for the coming of the Lord Jesus for 2000 years and it seems that nothing happens: *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.* (Rev 22:20) However our perspective is not God's timing and we must trust in Him.

Thus the teaching of this parable is not that the squeaky wheel gets the grease or that God will change His mind about our request if we just keep asking Him. Similarly the story about a friend knocking on the door of a friend asking for bread (11:5-10) is also not about "oiling the wheel". Please see my notes on that story for its explanation. The teaching is that God is nothing like this evil judge who changed his mind to keep the person from pestering him. God is faithful and Jesus will return at the timing of the Father. Thus the application is to be taken eschatologically much like:

2Thes 1:3-10 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; (4) therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. (5) This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (6) For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, (8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (10) when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed.

Luke 18:1-5

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, (2) saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. (3) "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' (4) "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, (5) yet

because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out."

To lose heart or to become disheartened is the verb used by Paul when he wrote that he does not lose heart when afflicted in every way:

- 2Cor 4:1 *Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,*
- 2Cor 4:16 *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

We will probably not be afflicted as Paul was when he said that he would not lose heart:

2Cor 4:7-10 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; (8) we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

The purpose of verse 2 is to show the great disparity between the character of the judge and that of God. This man's status would afford him many society benefits and respect to the point that he thinks he has no need to trust in God. He will even be shown to so characterize himself in verse 4. Saying that he does not respect man can mean that he is not capable of being shamed by any words or actions of a man. This total characterization of the judge shows that he is a callous unrepentant person and the chance of him awarding justice for the widow is very small.

The widow is a person under the special protection of God:

Exo 22:22-24 "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. (23) "If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; (24) and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

But this judge does not fear God so he will not be bound by this command. A widow has no protector and nobody to make an appeal for her much like Naomi (Ruth 1:20-21). The judge is likely a person who puts his judicial decisions up for sale and the widow has no resources. Jesus does not give any details about her situation but it likely is financially related due to the death of her husband and the other family members who may be keeping her from receiving any benefits such as the *ketuba*. The *ketuba* was an amount of money in a prenuptial agreement that should be given to a widow after the death of her husband. After the death of her husband she has the right to live in their house until the *ketuba* is received and then her rights cease. Since she has no resources and no person to represent her to the judge she has no recourse but to be persistent before him.

The judge says that his basic character does not require him to act on behalf of the widow but since she continues to pester him he will show some leniency. The judge shows that he is more afraid of the widow's persistence than he is of God.

Luke 18:6-8

*And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge *said; (7) now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over*

them? (8) "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Jesus then tells His disciples to listen carefully to what this unrighteous judge tells the widow in the parable. Jesus is comparing this judge to the loving and just God who will not take a bribe and defends the widows:

Deut 10:17-18 "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. (18) "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.

Jesus is limiting the application of this parable to His elect who suffer injustice and continually cry out to God for justice for His people as related previously by Rev 22:20. The answer of Jesus is essentially the same as given in:

Rev 6:11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

Jesus states that this justice will come quickly but that does not mean it will come during the lifetime of the disciples but that when it comes it will come with no warning and suddenly there will be judgment. But from the standpoint of God, Jesus asks if any of the people will have shown their faith by not doubting that God will bring about His judgment in His time. God's timing is not the same as our timing: *But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. (2 Peter 3:8)*

Luke 18: 9-12

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: (10) "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (11) "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. (12) 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

In the previous parable Jesus states that God answers the prayers of the saints. Now Jesus contrasts the attitude of people whom God hears and acts and those outside of God's family. Luke does not identify the people to whom Jesus is talking here but they could certainly be Pharisees who had such an attitude. Those who trusted in themselves would be people who were self-righteous as they meticulously obeyed the law. This prayer time would be a time for public prayer that occurred in the third hour (9:00 a.m.) and the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.). They would join in corporate worship as they prayed during the burning of incense and then waited for the priestly benediction. The prayers were usually said aloud but it is revealing that Jesus says that the Pharisee prayed to himself for it is not likely that God listened to his prayer. He did thank God for his present self-perceived righteousness but he does not recognize that indeed he is just like the swindlers, the unjust, and the adulterers in the sight of God. Stating that he is not like the tax collector drips with contempt.

Fasting was only obligatory on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29, 31) but he went far beyond that requirement and fasted twice a week. He also goes beyond the requirement for tithing as he tithes on all that he buys because he is concerned that the seller did not properly tithe on what he bought. Jesus accused the Pharisees as being full of greed and wickedness and lovers of money while tithing:

- Luke 11:39 *But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.*
- Luke 11:42 *"But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*

Jesus and His followers have been accused for not fasting but eating and for having fellowship with the dishonorable people:

- Luke 5:33 *And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink."*
- Luke 15:1-2 *Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. (2) Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."*

Luke 18:13-14

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' (14) "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

We have discussed the worldly status of the tax collector previously and he does not pray to God about his unworthiness. He was unwilling to even come close to the temple and even though lifting up one's eyes to heaven when praying was the standard pose, he felt unable to even look toward heaven. Beating one's breast was a standard way for a Jew to show his great remorse such as at funerals and he felt so unworthy before God that he was demonstrating in this manner. He then prayed for God to have mercy on him as he declared himself as the sinner. Putting the word "the" before sinner indicated that he considered himself to be the chief sinner on earth. Some translations use "make an expiation for me" rather than "be merciful to me" as it seems to fit the context better. He does not seem to think that the temple sacrifices by the priest would apply to him. An atonement would mean that he had to repent and that he would have to make restitution for all that he had taken wrongly and he had done too much against God for him to make an atonement. He needs a special atonement and from Luke's perspective in writing about what Jesus was to do, such was being planned by God.

Jesus uses the same contemptuous words used by the Pharisee to refer to the tax collector as "this man" but He has a wonderful blessing for the tax collector. Jesus judges the actions of the tax collector to be more favorable toward God than those of the Pharisee who exalted himself but Jesus states that the tax collector would be exalted over the Pharisee. The tax collector is justified before God in contrast to the self-justification of the Pharisee. We are not to exalt ourselves regarding our religious accomplishments but to put our total trust in the works of Jesus Christ.

Luke 18:15-17

And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. (16) But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. (17) "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

This section is meant as a comparison with the previous discussion and not having a direct bearing on infant baptism. The people bringing even their babies to Jesus are probably peasant women wanting their babies to have the blessing of Jesus that they knew He had given to many other people (5:13; 6:19; 8:44). Perhaps some of the babies were very ill, deformed, or otherwise in a state of distress. Jesus did take time to touch these babies and to teach his disciples concerning who can receive the KOG. Luke uses the Greek word *paidia* for children as the ones Jesus is inviting and refers to a broad age group. It is not addressing any specific age group but is meant to address the mental attitude of people. Those who will inherit the KOG must have a mental attitude like the tax collector rather than like the Pharisee. We normally think of children as being trusting and open to new solutions and those inheriting the KOG must come as such a little child. This model sets up the next events discussed: the rich ruler (18:18-30), the disciples (18:24-30), the blind man (18:35-43), and Zacchaeus (19:1-10).

Luke 18:18-21

A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (19) And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. (20) "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" (21) And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

Only Luke identifies this person as a ruler whereas Matthew and Mark do not identify him:

- Matt 19:16 *And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"*
- Mark 10:17 *As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

The person called Jesus "Good" and asked what shall he do to inherit eternal life. This seems to be in response to the above discussion about being like a child and the person wants clarification as to what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked the man why he called Him good since only God is good. If the man had received faith from God, he could have replied: "You are God and so you are also good". But Luke does not tell us if the man made any effort to reply to the question by Jesus. Evidently the man is Jewish for Jesus then begins to quote to him five of the Ten Commandments. It is obvious that Jesus only lists the "second tablet" of the Law relating to a person's interactions with other people. I put those in bold type below:

Exo 20:2-17 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (3) "You shall have no other gods before Me. (4) "You shall not

*make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. (5) "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (6) but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (7) "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. (8) "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. (11) "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. (12) "**Honor your father and your mother**, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. (13) "**You shall not murder**. (14) "**You shall not commit adultery**. (15) "**You shall not steal**. (16) "**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor**. (17) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

He also leaves out the last commandment regarding lusting and then accuses the man of breaking that commandment. The man replies that he has kept all of these commands since his youth so he probably is feeling pretty good about his future at this point.

Luke 18:22-25

*When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "**One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.**" (23) But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. (24) And Jesus looked at him and said, "**How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! (25) "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."***

Jesus is willing to accept the man's declaration of his obedience to those five commands but He knows the heart of the man and brings up the real problem. He tells the man to sell all that he possesses, to distribute the proceeds to the poor, and to follow Him. The man is extremely rich so he became very sad at this statement by Jesus. Note that Jesus did not tell the man to give the proceeds to Judas for His ministry or to use the money to build a worship center for Him. He tells him to give the proceeds to the poor. But even if he was able to rid himself of his riches, he would still have to follow Jesus. Paul states that greed is idolatry: *Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.* (Col 3:5) Thus the man has broken the first and second command for he has as his god his riches and those are his idols. It also seems that he has broken the third command by taking the name of the Lord in vain since he stated that he obeyed the commands Jesus mentioned and that implies he thinks of himself as worshiping God. If someone states the he is worshiping God by attending services one day each week but his lifestyle reveals that he really worships something else, then he is taking the name of the Lord in vain.

When we read the similar accounts as recorded by Matthew and Mark, we see that only Luke states that Jesus looks at the man as he talks to him.

- Matt 19:21 *Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*
- Mark 10:21 *Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*

This emphasis by Luke keeps the focus on the man and then the application applies to the one who has the attitude of the man. To obtain the treasure that he wants, he will have to give up the treasure possessing him. Jesus acknowledges that giving up something that one has allowed to possess him is very difficult. The "eye of a needle" was the smallest opening imaginable to these people and the camel was the largest animal known to them. Thus Jesus is using hyperbole to state the difficulty a rich person has to enter the KOG. There is a myth that has circulated that there was a small gate in Jerusalem named "The Needles Eye" and that a camel could go thorough it if it got down very low and put off all its load. Such a myth ruins the hyperbole that is teaching it is all but impossible for the rich to enter the KOG.

Luke 18:26-30

They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" (27) But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God." (28) Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You." (29) And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, (30) who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

Matthew also answers this pertinent question based upon Jesus' hyperbole: *And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* (Matt 19:26) Peter then responds by stating that the disciples have left their homes to follow Jesus. We have already discussed the strict requirement of Jesus regarding leaving behind family relationships: *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.* (Luke 14:26) Jesus then states that those who have demonstrated their superior love of Him by leaving behind his house and family will receive much more here and in the reality to come that will involve eternal life. This understanding will not come until after the resurrection when the apostles will learn to experience a deep affection for each other as their understanding of family is enhanced. This statement is not a promise of a bigger home and earthly riches as some have espoused.

Luke 18:31-34

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. (32) "For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, (33) and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." (34) But the disciples understood none of these things,

and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

Jesus then told just the apostles the mystery of the passion and resurrection. He has told them this before but not in as much detail:

- Luke 9:22 saying, *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."*
- Luke 9:44 *"Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men."*
- Luke 17:25 *"But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."*
- Luke 13:33 *"Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem."*
- Luke 12:50 *But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!*

Mark records this version of Jesus telling them about His passion and resurrection:

Mark 10:33-34 saying, *"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. (34) "They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."*

This prophecy covers all three aspects of His coming situation (trial, execution, and resurrection) and makes it clear what it means to follow Jesus and to take up one's own cross. Despite all of these statements of Jesus and the writings of the prophets, they did not understand. They will not understand until after His resurrection and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Luke attributes this lack of understanding to a supernatural withholding of comprehension as will later also be stated: *But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. (Luke 24:6)*

Luke 18:35-43

As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. (36) Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. (37) They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. (38) And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (39) Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (40) And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, (41) "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" (42) And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." (43) Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

Jesus is continuing to Jerusalem as He now was getting close to Jericho, which is about 15 miles northeast of His target. It is at about 700 feet below sea level and just above the Dead Sea:



A blind man was begging by the road and heard a crowd coming by so he asked someone what was going on. Matthew and Mark give slightly different versions of this event:

- *Matt 20:29-34 As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. (30) And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" (31) The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (32) And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (33) They *said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." (34) Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.*
- *Mark 10:46-52 Then they *came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. (47) When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (48) Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (49) And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they *called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." (50) Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. (51) And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" (52) And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.*

We cannot know precisely why there are two versions of this event. Matthew and Mark report that the event took place as they were leaving Jericho whereas Luke states that it took place as they were approaching Jericho. It is possible that there were two events. It is also possible that they were leaving the old Jericho that was famous in OT times and coming into the new Jericho established by Herod the Great. All three tell that the blind man called Jesus Son of David meaning that He is the Messiah. This statement would have let Jesus know that the blind man had received faith from God to give him this information and so He told them to bring him to Him. Mark informs us that this blind man was named Bartimaeus. Matthew alone states that there were two blind men but Luke and Mark only record what happened to one of them, which is not so unusual in eyewitness accounts of events.

The blind man had just been asking Jesus for mercy so Jesus asks him what he wanted done. Of course Jesus knew the problem but He wanted the man to specify what mercy he wanted from

Jesus. It was a usual case that these beggars wanted alms: *When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms* (Acts 3:3) so Jesus wanted the man to specify the mercy he was seeking. Matthew reports that Jesus touched the man's eyes but Mark and Luke only report that Jesus told him that his faith had restored his sight. Matthew and Mark report that his eyesight was restored and he immediately followed Jesus. Luke reports the same except to let us know that the man glorified God and the people began to praise God. This is a usual aspect of the writings of Luke:

- Luke 5:26 *They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."*
- Luke 17:18 *"Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?"*
- Acts 2:47 *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*
- Acts 3:9 *And all the people saw him walking and praising God;*

This is the last miracle of Jesus before He enters Jerusalem.