

• *Prayer – a major theme in Luke's gospel*

• *Jesus' example and teaching on this theme*

• *A parable showing that people ought always to pray and not lose heart*

• *A persistent woman and an unjust judge*

### 1. Persistence

• *If the unjust judge responded to persistence, how much more will our just God!*

• *Unless God shows otherwise, we should persist*

### 2. Vindication

• *Jesus assumes that His people will often be in situations of injustice*

One of the major themes of Luke's Gospel is prayer. The gospel opens with the prayers of Zacharias<sup>□1</sup> and the praises of Mary<sup>□2</sup> and the angels<sup>□3</sup>. It portrays Jesus at prayer at His baptism<sup>□4</sup>, and often after that time<sup>□5□6</sup>. He was praying at the time of the transfiguration<sup>□7</sup>.

Also, there is much teaching in Luke's Gospel about prayer. We have had the parable of the friend at midnight<sup>□1</sup>. In the opening story of the gospel especially we learnt the danger of being unready for prayer to be answered. Zechariah was rebuked, and became dumb and deaf for a while (as 1:62 implies).

Now Luke returns to the same theme, in one of the parables of Jesus. The main point is put first: **people ought always to pray and not lose heart**<sup>□1</sup>. Then comes the parable, which makes the point more forcefully. There was a judge in a certain town who cared nothing for God nor for anyone else. There was also a needy widow who asked him for legal help. The judge cared nothing about the woman's needs, nor was he a devout person at all, but the sheer persistence of the woman made him eventually give in to her request<sup>□2</sup>. After the story Jesus presses home its lessons.

1. **Persistence.** The judge was unjust and unwilling to help the woman. God is just and willing to help His elect, His chosen people. If the unjust judge responded to persistence, God will respond even more to the persistence of His people in prayer. It is an argument by way of contrast. If an *unjust* judge will help, a *righteous* God will do so even more. Widows are people who are generally needy and defenceless. God's people are in a similar position. Often in the face of the world's wickedness, they need God's intervention on their behalf. They need God to 'come' in unexpected ways to rescue them in their plight.

It is easy to give up in prayer, but this displeases God. He wants us to persist. We may abandon prayers that we know are wrong. We may abandon a particular prayer if God tells us to stop<sup>□1</sup>, or if He has told us the answer is 'no'. But otherwise God wants us to persist. However long God may delay, if the prayer is good and right, we should persist in it until we have definite reason not to do so.

2. **Vindication.** Jesus says that God's people will experience His 'vindication' amidst injustice and oppression, if they will persist in prayer. '*And will not God bring about the vindication of his elect who cry out to him day and night?*'<sup>□1</sup>. 'Vindication' is being proved to be right. It is when something that is attacked or criticised is then proved to have God's approval. Jesus assumes that His people will often be in situations of injustice, like the widow of the parable. But He also assumes that God's elect will cry out to Him. One of the marks of salvation is prayer. God's elect pray! In answer to prayer God likes to demonstrate and make visible the sincerity and righteousness of His people. '*He will bring out your righteousness*

□1 1:8, 13, 67-80  
□2 1:46-55  
□3 2:10-20, 25-38  
□4 3:22  
□5 5:16  
□6 6:12-13, 28  
□7 9:28-29

□1 11:1-13

□1 18:1

□2 18:2-5

□1 see Jeremiah 11:14

□1 18:7

• He also assumes that God's elect will cry out to Him

### 3. Timeliness

• God is never too late with His help; He is never too early, either!

• When God's vindication does come it is swift

as the light<sup>12</sup>. He will uphold our cause when we are truly in His will. David said, 'The Lord has upheld my cause against Nabal'<sup>13</sup>, and we shall be able to say the same, as long as we stay in God's will, endure the trials He allows to come upon us, and cry out to Him day and night.

3. **Timeliness.** Jesus says, 'I say to you, He will bring about their vindication speedily'<sup>1</sup>. When God's people are in difficulty, one aspect of their troubles is that God seems to be slow to come to their aid. But God is never too late with His help, and He is never too early either! He sends His vindication at just the right time, at the time which will bring honour to His name and appreciation of His mighty sovereignty. It is not always as soon as we might wish, but it never comes too late. When God's vindication does come it is swift. He brings about our vindication 'speedily'. God's people often cry out, 'Lord, how long?' <sup>2</sup><sup>3</sup><sup>4</sup>. 'How long must I call for help?' said Habakkuk<sup>5</sup>. But God is no slower than He has to be. He always says to us, 'He who is coming will not delay'<sup>6</sup>. Although we may be impatient for His answer, when it finally comes we shall see that the delay was necessary and that God had His own reasons for it. But eventually He brings about vindication speedily.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 37:6  
<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 25:39

<sup>1</sup> 18:8a

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 6:3  
<sup>3</sup> Psalm 13:1  
<sup>4</sup> Psalm 35:17 and elsewhere

<sup>5</sup> Habakkuk 1:2  
<sup>6</sup> Habakkuk 2:3

### 4. Readiness


• The question is: when God seems to delay, will we go on believing that He is on His way?

• God wants us to pray and not give up


4. **Readiness.** The question is: when God seems to delay, will we go on believing that He is on His way? 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?' <sup>1</sup>. This is not a statement about the 'Second Coming' of Jesus at the end of the world. Jesus has been talking about prayer. And before that He had been referring to 'comings' of Jesus in such events as the fall of Jerusalem. In the context of Luke 17:20–18:8 the 'coming' of Jesus refers to any event in which He 'comes' to vindicate His people and answer their prayers. This was the mistake that Zacharias made<sup>2</sup>. He was not ready for God to 'come' to answer His need. When God did come, Zacharias was unready. God wants us to pray and not give up, to pray and then be full of faith when He comes.

<sup>1</sup> 18:8b

<sup>2</sup> 1:5-25



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