

- ***READ Luke 18:1-8*** Beginning back in **Luke 17:22**, we see Jesus speaking to His disciples concerning the coming of the Son of Man. He states that this wouldn't occur until after He had suffered and endured rejection at the hands of the current generation. (**Luke 17:25**) He says that those days would look much like the days of Noah when everyone was eating and drinking having a good old time with one another. No one would have any concern for the impending judgment and then there it would come upon them all the sudden. (**Luke 17:26-31**)
- Therefore, His admonition was for them to remember Lot's wife who loved her passed life which was behind her more than the life that was before her. If they sought to save their lives then they would lose it, but if they were willing to lose their lives then they would be preserved. (**Luke 17:32,33**) Jesus then launches into the parable that we just read together concerning the judge and the widow that was in need as a means of encouraging them to endure the difficult days that they would endure in the future. Luke makes Jesus's point very clear to us in **Luke 18:1**, but we want to first dissect the parable before we get to the main points of Jesus's sharing this parable. With that in mind, let's look at the characters, the issue, and the outcome that can be found with this parable of the ungodly judge and the persistent widow.

I. The Parable

A. The Characters: The Ungodly Judge & A Widow

1. The first of the two main characters within this parable is a judge who resides in a certain city. This judge would've been a man who was a paid magistrate appointed either by Herod or the Romans who ruled over the area. Craig Manning writes that such judges were notorious for only helping a plaintiff who had influence or money to bribe his way into a favorable verdict. What's worst of all concerning this judge was that he was said to be a man *"who did not fear God and did not respect man."* According to one writer, this description, *"undermines all confidence that one could look to him for justice: he answers neither to the directives of God nor to patent needs of those around him. He is exactly how a judge should not be."*
2. Seems to me that the second character, the widow, was behind the eight ball from the beginning of this parables because this judge was not one who could be relied upon to deliver justice to those who were in need of his authority and favorable rulings. Nevertheless, we find this widow going to this judge for help in a time of need. More than likely this would've been an issue between Gentiles and not Jews or else a Jewish widow would've gone to the elders.

B. The Issue: The widow is under attack and seeks help from the judge.

1. Unfortunately, this parable spoken by Jesus would've been one that the audience would've been the all too familiar with. It was not an uncommon occurrence for widows to be horribly mistreated and abused in many different ways. Simply being a woman could be difficult enough since this society often kept women from having nearly all rights and privileges that we see women having today, and to be a widow all by yourself would be all the more difficult.
2. In his book *"Studying The Parables Of Jesus"*, Jones makes the observation, *"Widows in the New Testament world often were not allowed to remarry, leaving them two alternatives. They could return to their family of origin if the original purchase price was refunded, or they could remain in the husband's family in a very subordinated status."* Simply put, widows in the days of Jesus were not highly thought of and they were often the most vulnerable in society. Without their husbands, the widows had to hope that others would take them in in order for them to be cared for properly.
3. This was very much contrary to what God commanded within His Law concerning widows.
 - a) *"You shall not afflict any wide or orphan. If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless."* (**Exodus 22:22-24**)

b) *"You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing. "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing."* (Deuteronomy 24:17-21)

c) *"Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"* (Deuteronomy 27:19)

d) *"A father of the fatherless and a judge [f]for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation."* (Psalm 68:5)

4. Unfortunately, despite these warnings, Israel was often guilty of evil towards those who were seen as being helpless in society. *"Your rulers are rebels and companions of thieves; Everyone loves a bribe and chases after rewards. They do not defend the orphan, nor does the widow's pleas come before them."* (Isaiah 1:23) This verse is exactly what we see described to us in this parable. Therefore, it should not surprise us that some evil opponent was looking to take advantage of this widow in this parable of Jesus in this text. We can probably assume this was a financial matter of some sort, and the woman was looking to this judge for a means of providing protection and justice for her cause.

C. The Outcome: The judge initially ignores the woman, but her persistence causes him to eventually help her in her need.

1. The character of this judge is clearly seen in the way that he tries to just shrug off the trouble this widow was facing. The text tells us that the judge *"for a while was unwilling"* to help her with protection from her opponent. Was this because he didn't find her as being wrongfully attacked? Nothing in the text seems to indicate that as being the case. Instead, it seems pretty clear that he simply did not want to help her. He seems to have zero care or regard for this widow. More than likely he was straight up ignoring her when she came into his presence in order to request aid to be given to her. And yet we see him eventually giving into the woman's requests simply because he was tired of her continually coming to him for his protection. *"Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this wide bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out."* (Luke 18:4,5)
2. Notice just how crass this man truly was. He openly admits that he cares nothing for God or his fellow man. He wasn't ignoring who he was, or at least Jesus was really trying to emphasize just how ungodly of a man he was. He truly cared not nor respected the will of God in fearing Him and he obviously cared not for God's commands that he love his neighbor as himself. He only cared for one person...himself, and yet we find him eventually helping this one out. But why? Why was he willing to help her? He makes that clear as well. He simply wanted to get her out of his hair so that she would quit bothering him with her persistent requests for help. He didn't want to actually help her. He only wanted for her to leave him alone. He knew this was going to be the only way to get rid of her and her requests. It very well might be that some of us have found ourselves in similar circumstances with others in one for or fashion. They continually pester us until we give in just so they will leave us alone and quit bothering us. That was this man's mentality and might be ours at times...but we'll see, thankfully, this isn't how God views us or behaves towards us.

II. The Lessons:

- A. Unlike the judge, our heavenly Father is faithful to hear and answer those who seek Him in prayer.
1. As Jesus concludes this parable, He seeks to draw the listener's attention toward the actions of the judge. *"And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?'" (Luke 18:6,7)* This judge was obviously an extremely self-centered and hateful individual who was serving in a position that he had no business serving in. However, this simply isn't the case when it comes to our heavenly Father and that is what Jesus is wanting for the listeners to hear, understand, and grasp moving forward when they faced difficult times.
 2. This isn't the first time that we see such a thing spoken by Jesus. In fact, we see this addressed back in **Luke 11:5-13** in the form of another parable and an illustration using our earthly fathers. In the short parable of **Luke 11:5-8**, Jesus speaks of a man who goes to his friend late at night and asks to borrow some supplies so that he might feed another friend who has come to him after a long journey. The second friend yells that he is already in bed and can't get up to help, but the original friend persists until the lending friend gets up to help. *"I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs."* (**Luke 11:8**)
 3. Jesus then goes on to talk about how those who come before God seeking will find and those who come knocking will have doors opened for them. *"Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"* (**Luke 18:11-13**) Jesus's point? If we, who are sometimes very selfish, know how to give good things to our children, then why would we not expect for a perfectly loving God to be willing to give every good thing and need to His children when they come to Him seeking and asking? This is Jesus's point concerning God: He WANTS to give us many good and wonderful things! He wants to bless us! We simply need to put into practice our second lesson from this parable.
- B. Like the widow, we must be persistent in our prayers to God.
1. This woman had to be very persistent in order for the ungodly and unrighteous judge to give into her request, and while we don't have to do such a thing because God wants to bless us and give us what we need...that doesn't mean that we still shouldn't be in the habit of constantly going to God with our cares and our needs for they certainly are many. This is exactly Jesus's point that Luke points out for us in **Luke 18:1**, *"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not lose heart."*
 2. This woman was persistent in her attempts to gain protection from this judge, and we too must be persistent in our prayers offered up to God. Paul says it plainly in **I Thessalonians 5:17**, *"Pray without ceasing."* Peter speaks to this as well in **I Peter 5:6,7**, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty and of God, that He may exact you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."* We must be like the widow in our constant coming before God in prayer.

It might be that we sometimes feel more like this widow than we know. We might be constantly coming before God for aid and help in our times of need, but we don't feel like things are improving. However, we must keep in mind that God knows better than we know. Things might be happening that we simply don't know about. Therefore, we must keep always in our memory from **James 5:16**, "*The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*" Often in our minds the only right accomplishment is for our issue to be resolved, but we don't know if God is using a struggle of ours for a reason. Therefore, let us all simply keep our hope, faith, and trust in God and commit to the belief that He knows best for us. Let's accept this as being the case and simply move forward having faith that He has us in His hand and that He will do what is best for us. May this type of hope and trust be what each of us possess within our minds, and may it lead us to be stronger and more faithful servants of God day by day.