

Day 154, Luke 18

by David Servant

Jesus' parables in Luke 18 teach us about the importance of prayer, humility, and repentance, and challenge our understanding of God's sovereignty and human free will.

Scripture: Luke 18:1-42, 1 Timothy 2:4

Topics: "Persistent Prayer", "Faith And Works"

Description

David Servant delves into the context of Jesus' parables, emphasizing the importance of understanding the underlying messages without misinterpreting them. He highlights the significance of persistent prayer and trusting in God's righteous judgment, contrasting the humble tax collector with the proud Pharisee. David also explores the challenge of wealth and the call to simplicity and generosity in following Jesus, as seen in the interaction with the rich, young ruler. Additionally, he addresses the role of faith in receiving God's blessings, debunking misconceptions related to Calvinistic theology and emphasizing the impact of belief on God's will.

Transcript

As always, it is important to consider context when we interpret Jesus' parable of the unjust judge. Remember that in Luke 17, Jesus was talking about the end times and His return to judge the earth, a time of great persecution for His followers. They will be longing then for His coming, and wondering why He doesn't return immediately to save them from the injustices that they are suffering. So Jesus told His disciples a parable "to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" (18:1).

The parable He told is a perfect illustration of the importance of not assigning spiritual significance to every detail of every parable. The unjust judge is by no means a representation of God, except in the sense that God is a Judge. Unlike the unrighteous judge, however, who granted the persistent widow justice just so he wouldn't be bothered any longer, God is a perfectly righteous judge. He dearly loves His children, and He will "bring about justice for them quickly" (18:8) as they "cry to Him day and night" during those difficult days.

Take note that Jesus was not talking about praying to be saved, baptized with the Holy Spirit, healed, or to have one's temporal needs met. Those requests and others like them do not require continual and multiple requests. This parable does not teach us that we need to bombard heaven with our prayers so that a reluctant God will become weary of them and thus ultimately grant us our requests!

We must also consider context in the next parable, that of the Pharisee and the tax-collector. It was targeted at those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt" (18:9). It is no surprise that Jesus used a Pharisee as His example of one who fit that description. The proud Pharisee wrongly thought that he had no need for repentance and God's mercy, believing salvation was something he had earned by his own efforts. Contrasted with him was the sinful tax collector, who realized his need for mercy, asked for it, and received it. The Pharisee was proud, the tax collector was humble. The Pharisee would be humbled in the end and the tax collector would be exalted, having been declared just in heaven's court. Amazing grace!

It is an inescapable fact that Jesus required the rich, young ruler to give up his possessions to inherit eternal life. What Christ said to him was not a unique requirement given only to him, as is often claimed. Jesus did not say, "How hard it is for that one guy to enter the kingdom of God!" Rather, He said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God" (18:24). The reason it is so hard for them is because they, like the rich, young ruler, love their money, and will not repent and follow Jesus, who commands them to live more simply and lay up treasure in heaven as they love their neighbors as themselves. They foolishly cling to what they must ultimately relinquish anyway, when they could have transferred all of it to heaven!

Finally, we read another story about someone who was healed, and Jesus again credited his faith (18:42). This story also illustrates a flaw in Calvinistic theology. (You are no doubt surprised to read me commenting about Calvinism!) Calvinists claim that whatever God wants, He gets, because He is sovereign. So, they say, if He desires that someone be saved, that person will be saved. To say otherwise, they claim, is to say that the unsaved person whom God desires to be saved is more powerful than God. This is absurd reasoning. God, who is sovereign, obviously permits people to do many things He desires that they not do. That does not diminish His sovereignty. Had Bartimaeus had no faith, he would not have been healed, even though it was clearly God's will for him to be healed. He could have circumvented God's will by unbelief. Indeed, unbelief is what circumvents God's will that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

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