

Series: Parables: Did You Hear That?  
Message Title: ***The Parable About Perseverance***  
Date: Sunday, October 7, 2018  
Scripture: Luke 18:1-7  
Speaker: David H. McKinley  
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## Introduction

"Fatigue has a way of making cowards of us all."

The wear and tear of life has an impact, and if we are not careful, the most common result could be doubt, fear and disillusionment.

We see this on the playing field. A team is most vulnerable when it is most weary. When things get difficult, it can be easy to think it's over, but this can also be the moment that pushes to the greatest moments of play!

Fatigue can be physical (example: yawning), emotional or mental, and it can be spiritual.

The ever-growing resistance we see in the face of faith and the relentless struggles life puts in our path cause us to wonder if we can sustain and survive.

Jesus addressed the matter with His disciples in Luke 18. Thankfully, His “pep talk” has some great sustaining power and insight for us today.

“And He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1 ESV).

What was Jesus trying to teach? Prayer.  
Why was He teaching them about prayer?  
Perseverance. Do not to lose heart.

All of us come to quitting points in life. What are your quitting points today? Business? Marriage? Dreams? Miscarriage? Failing health? Even your faith?

To lose heart = discouragement.

“Discouragement, which is the result of fatigue, is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust for the future.” —William Ward

Luke 18:1 frames the parable—the story Jesus was about to tell. What He says next is all because of what He wants them to see, know and do.

## The Story:

"He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, "Give me justice against my adversary." For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, "Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming."' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?'" (Luke 18:2-8 ESV).

We are introduced to a widow. She's known the pain and separation of loss. The love of her life is gone, and if that were not burdensome enough, she has an adversary, and the judge (the one whose job is to provide justice) is hard, harsh and dismissive.

We don't know the adversary or what adversity this one has caused and afflicted

upon this lonely and needy woman. We do know what was happening had legal ramifications, and for this reason she sought the protection and the provision of the court.

At the end of the day, the judge didn't want to hear the case or act on behalf of this woman. He was uncaring, unmoved and unjust! Why? Because of his own lack of character toward God and others.

Much of the issue we see in our world today flows from those who have places of authority and power who are ruthless, heartless and careless. But in the end, this judge used his authority to overcome her adversary. Why? She was relentless!

"Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming" (Luke 18:5 ESV).

Now, before we go any further, I want to be sure you understand something. This parable, this story, is not one of comparison, but rather of CONTRAST. It is teaching the opposite of what you are reading. Several of the parables

we have studied have been parables/stories of comparison—the kingdom of God is like.... Or they are complete—celebrations when lost things are found. What is the outcome, the response?

A contrast is like meeting a guy who is 6'5", weighs over 300 lbs., and everybody calls him Tiny.

Jesus used this image of the resistant judge as the backdrop to remind and to affirm to us as His disciples that we have a righteous Father who, by contrast, seeks our blessing and our good when we call upon Him. How do I know?

"And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them?" (Luke 18:7 ESV).

Do you think if this hard-nosed, hard-hearted judge relents to this persistent woman, God would withhold His gracious love and care for His children?

With this as a background, let's identify and address some of the contrasts in our story

and gain insight to enable us to persevere and not lose heart.



## **How Do We Persevere?**

*(under pressure, in pain and through problems)*

### **1. The Dependence of Prayer**

Do you see it? There is prayer and there is losing heart! There is hope and there is despair. Prayer is the way we persevere in faith and fellowship.

Honestly, most of us struggle with discouragement regarding our prayer life. Talking about prayer and learning to pray are two different things. One of my greatest challenges (though I have read books, been to prayer meetings and am always the designated “pray-er” at the events I attend) is praying and persisting in prayer. And I think this is true for many of you also.

The practice of prayer was something the disciples observed in the life of Jesus and asked that they be given direction and instruction.

“Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1 ESV).

In the model prayer, Jesus gives us a different image—not an irrational, distant judge, but a faithful friend and loving father.

Here they were given encouragement in prayer, so Jesus provides a basic format or structure for prayer (model prayer). He never says, “Say this prayer and repeat it often.” Instead He says, “Pray in this manner.” It’s not the process, but the principle that matters.  
**PRAY!**

Jesus follows up with two examples and exhortations to continue in prayer—the response of a friend and the faithfulness of a father.

### **Prayer is:**

- **Appealing for the intervention of God.**

“He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock,

my refuge is God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah" (Psalm 62:6-8 ESV).

Asking for help is both an expression of humility and maturity. It is the opposite of arrogance and common injury. Prayer is an active, strenuous pleading with God at a point of need in life.

- **Surrendering to the will of God.**

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10 ESV).

- **Drawing close to the presence of God.**

God is personal and near, not impersonal and distant. We hear His voice, gain His guidance, and receive His comfort as we open His Word and draw near to Him. God has spoken and God still speaks.

"The nature of prayer is determined by the character of God, who is at once our friend, father, lover, shepherd and king. We must not decide how to pray based on what types of prayer are the most effective in producing the



experiences and feelings we want. We pray in response to God Himself. God's Word to us contains the range of discourse—and only if we respond to His Word will our own prayer life be rich and varied." —Tim Keller

### • **Relying on the Grace of God.**

What we need, He has and promises to give in the place of our need and concern.

"And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:13-16 ESV).

Opposite of the unsympathetic ear of the judge is the sympathetic love and care of the Father toward you. He sees. He knows. He cares.

- **Focusing on the glory of God.**

"And He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be Your name"' (Luke 11:2 ESV).

"Your name be magnified. Your kingdom be extended. Your will be accomplished."

"The greatest fault of the church of God is they do not continue in prayer—do not persevere. If they desire anything for God's glory, they should pray until they get it."  
—George Mueller

Yet even with Jesus' example and teaching on prayer, the disciples fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Could you not tarry with Me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40).

Here we see the contrast between the widow's focused dependence and our frequent independence.

"The self-sufficient do not pray, the self-satisfied will not pray, the self-righteous cannot pray. No one is greater than their prayer life." —Leonard Ravenhill

Unlike the persistence of this woman who “stalked” the ruthless judge, we fail to fix our hope on a God who loves and cares for us.

The story is not only a contrast of the goodness of God in the face of a ruthless judge, but it is also a contrast of the persistence of this woman and the leanness and weakness of our prayers.

“We can prove the reality of prayer only by praying.” —Sherwood Eddy

## **The Confidence of Justice**

The picture of the woman is one of vulnerability and poverty, and the picture of the judge is one of power and authority—but without heart and without care. The whole scene is unjust and unfair.

Everything about this woman’s circumstance is exasperated by the fact that the one who has the position to change it, uses this position for his own indulgence. He is like a “Grinch on the Bench!” Remember Dr. Seuss’s description?—heart four sizes too small.

*You're a mean one, Mr Grinch...  
You're as cuddly as a cactus  
You're as charming as an eel...  
You're a monster, Mr. Grinch!  
Your heart's an empty hole  
Your brain is full of spiders  
You've got garlic in your soul, Mr. Grinch!...  
The three words that best describe you  
Are as follows, and I quote  
"Stink, stank, stunk!"*

—Albert Hague and Theodor S. Geisel  
"You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch"

Widows had a prominent place in the Bible. The eyes of God are upon them and the measure of our faith can be seen in our care for them.

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27 ESV).

See Luke 17:20-37 concerning the coming kingdom: doom, disaster, corruption; hard and uncertain times; end of the world times. Everything is unglued and everyone is at risk—days of Noah.

The judge this woman appeals to is not in it for justice, but for greater status, profit and power.

This is not an image of God—someone who has to be bombarded with human care to be moved. While it is true that God is what theologians call, *Aseity*—exists and works independent of anyone or anything else—God is revealed throughout Scripture as compassionate (contrasted to this heartless judge).

You may not see, hear or know the justice you seek in life in these days, but be sure your Father in heaven sees, knows and cares for you. He knows your fears. He sees your tears. He has heard your prayers. Don't let delay cause you to doubt the mercy and grace of God.

Every day we seem to read and hear about victims of injustice—court cases in our system of justice that are anything but just. Our legal and judicial process is flawed. Our personal experiences in life are marred. Yet you are not a victim of this world and its injustice. There is a massive movement of victimization in our

world today. You are not a victim in this world. We are all fallen and God is our Restorer.

You are God's ELECT—those who belong to Him, those whom He has called, converted and sealed in salvation. There is NO greater word of security. You didn't just find God, He chose you!

We are kept by the promises of God.

"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13-14 ESV).

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:19-21 ESV).

While there are many injustices in this world, the One who is Just will judge the unjust and justify us.

When I feel life is unfair and when I think I need to accuse Him of injustice, I simply remember, He rules in righteousness!

## **The Assurance of Hope**

*When, not if:*

“I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, **when** the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8 ESV).

In the end, this parable is connected to the promise of the second coming of Christ and our preservation until that day. This story is about the struggles of faith and how easy it is for us to lose heart and even fall away.

In 2 Peter 2, it is almost as if Peter is reviewing and rehearsing this same overview of the last days: lawlessness, unfairness, unrighteousness.

“The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment”  
(2 Peter 2:9).

Yet our strength is not in us, our resolve or our will; it is in our faith and our faithful Judge and Father. The shift is from the unfaithful judge on earth to the faithful believer who remains and relies upon God’s promise to sustain and deliver. Just as this weak and obscure woman held fast in faith, the judge (though ruthless) relented. How much more is the weak faith of believers in the grace of God?

Amazing Doctrine = “perseverance of the saints.”

“Perseverance may be defined as that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end... The denial of the doctrine of perseverance virtually makes the salvation of man



dependent on the human will rather than on the grace of God. —Louis Berkhoff

Because salvation is not dependent upon our works to obtain it, it is not dependent upon our best efforts to sustain it. It is fully and wholly the work of the Holy Spirit who seals and secures us all the way home.

Knowing the end of the story gives us confidence, clarity and stability in a world filled with uncertainty and injustice.

Our challenge to persevere in faith? Faith is the only way through this tattered, torn, unjust and ungodly world.

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7-8 ESV).

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in

the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain: (1 Corinthians 15:58 ESV).

Are you struggling today? Discouraged? Frustrated? Remember the dependence of prayer, the confidence of justice and the assurance of hope in Christ.

“Trials, obstacles, difficulties and defeats, are the very food of faith.” —George Mueller

God’s perseverance:

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9 ESV).