

The Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8)

This parable follows a time when Jesus spoke about his final coming. In that discourse, the Lord also alluded to the temptation toward weariness for his people living in the last days.

¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

1. In the parable, is the widow’s cause a just one? What is the only weapon available to the widow as she pleads her case? Why?

2. The judge in the parable represents God by way of contrast. Explain.

3. Complete the following sentence: “Jesus is teaching us that if an ungodly and unjust judge can be moved to action by a widow’s persistence, certainly . . .”

4. Jesus had taught about the importance of persistent prayer in his parable of the friend at midnight (Luke 11). In this parable, he applies that lesson to a Christian’s life in the last days. What activities of the last days—some are mentioned in the following passage; others are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture—make persistent prayer for God’s justice a necessary activity?

Jesus is speaking: *“They will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me”* (Luke 21:12,16,17).

5. Why do we sometimes become weary and inconsistent in our prayer life?

6. The widow received justice after a relatively short period of time. In verse 7, Jesus suggests that God, in his wise dealings with his people, may at times “keep putting them off.” List several reasons why God may delay his answer to our persistent cries for justice and deliverance.

7. Agree or disagree. If Christians are not led to cry out persistently for God’s justice and deliverance, it is because they are avoiding persecution by conforming to the world.

8. In the Seventh Petition we pray, “Deliver us from evil.” Review the meaning of this prayer by filling in the blanks below. Apply this prayer to the trials of the Christian life in these last days.

- Keep _____ away from us.
- When evil does touch our lives, let it serve our _____.
- Take us to _____ where there is no evil.

10. “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Although we are given no details of the case, the words of verse 5 indicate that the widow’s cause was just. Because this particular judge had no fear of God, no concern for the welfare of the people he had been called to serve, no principles, no sense of justice, and no conscience, the widow’s only weapon was her persistence; she “kept coming.” (2) Unlike the judge in the parable, God is a perfectly just and righteous judge. Furthermore, he is merciful and compassionate, faithful to all of his promises, and has a genuine interest in the welfare of his people. (3) “. . . a just and gracious God will respond to the persistent prayers of those whom he has chosen to be his own.” (4) Christians can expect persecution, sufferings, hatred, accusations, injustices, and betrayal of every type because of their confession of Christ. They must contend with a world and society that are becoming more and more anti-Christian, with the devil who knows that his time is short, and with their own sinful nature. Persistent prayer is not only important but needed, lest Christians abandon their faith. (5) Answers will vary. When prayers are not answered immediately or according to our wants, we may sense that prayer does no good, that God doesn’t care about our sufferings and situation, that he will do what he wants regardless of our prayers, etc. (6) God may delay in answering our prayers for justice so that he might produce “perseverance . . . [proven] character . . . [and] hope” in us (Romans 5:4); so that we might have the privilege of participating “in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 4:13); so that we might become more heavenly minded, more patient, more sympathetic toward others, etc. (7) This statement is not necessarily true because a gracious God will protect his people in this world and grant times of peace to them. Nonetheless, because the world loves its own, Christians who experience no form of persecution will examine their faithfulness to their God-given roles of being salt, light, witnesses, ambassadors, and priests. (8) evil . . . good . . . heaven (9) While the implication of Jesus’ question seems to be that faith will be hard to find, we have the promise that through the almighty power of the Spirit working in Word and sacrament, saving faith will be preserved. God grant us this blessing.