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Living In The Tension

LUKE 18:1-8

Introduction

1. If you are a Christian here today, there is a certain tension you encounter on a daily basis.
2. According to the apostle Paul, following our burial with Christ in baptism (Colossians 2:12), God “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).
3. In addition to that, God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in [those same] heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).
4. Because of all this, as Paul told the Christians in Colosse, we must
“keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:1–4, NASB95)
5. While we await the return of our King, living in His kingdom calls us to a radically different way of living (Titus 2:11-14).

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” (Titus 2:11–14, NASB95)

6. This is where the tension comes in:
 - a. As Christians, you and I are doing our best to live sensible, righteous and godly lives in a world over which Satan wields great power.
 - b. All during this time, as Jesus said to His disciples, we “long to see one of the days of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:22).
7. “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2b).
8. Until that day comes, we struggle with the tension of wishing that Christ would come and end Satan’s cruel dominion in the world, but knowing that we must be patient and continue living faithful lives while awaiting our Lord’s return.
9. If we aren’t careful, our tendency is to become discouraged and give up or lose heart.
10. For this reason, Jesus tells a parable which encourages us to continually pray and not give up.

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I. The Parable

A. THE JUDGE

“In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.” (Luke 18:2, NASB95)

1. He had no fear of God and he didn’t care what people thought.
2. As far as he is concerned, he is accountable to no one and nothing outside himself — not God, the rights of the individual nor any standard of justice.
3. He acted purely out of his own self-interest.
4. If he was a Jew, he was openly defying the primary qualification for judges — the fear of God.

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5. In 2 Chronicles 19, we find King Jehoshaphat, the great, great, grandson of Solomon, taking steps to restore order to the kingdom by appointing judges

with these instructions:

“Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord who is with you when you render judgment. Now then let the fear of the Lord be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the Lord our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.” (2 Chronicles 19:6–7, NASB95)

6. The fear of God is essential for a good judge — this judge was absent that.

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B. THE WIDOW’S REQUEST

“There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’” (Luke 18:3, NASB95)

1. Jesus tells us that there was a certain widow in the city who kept coming to this judge, asking him to give her “justice against [her] adversary.”
2. Widows in the Old Testament were the classic symbol of the most vulnerable adult in society.

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2. God was always concerned about their welfare, and addressed any mistreatment of them in the Law (cf. Exodus 22:22-24).

“You shall not afflict any widow 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, NASB95)

3. One of the reasons the prophet Isaiah condemned the rulers of his day was their treatment of widows (Isaiah 1:23).

“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 plea come before them.” (Isaiah 1:23, NASB95)

4. When Jesus introduces this woman to us, we realize that she is alone — she has no father, uncle, brother or nephew to speak on her behalf.
5. She had only three options for obtaining justice before such a rogue judge — she could bribe him, threaten him or continue to plead her case.
6. She chose the only option truly open to her — to persistently plead her case at every opportunity.
7. Every day she begged him to help her.
8. Jesus doesn't tell us how this was done, but we can imagine:
 - a. She may have pleaded with him in front of his peers.
 - b. She may have confronted him as he was walking down the street.
 - c. She might have pestered him when he went to the market.
 - d. She possibly even called out to him at his house.
9. One thing is for sure, she was determined not to drop the matter or leave him alone until she received justice.

Slide 6**C. THE JUDGE'S RESPONSES**

“For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’ ”

(Luke 18:4–5, NASB95)

1. Initially, the judge had no interest in her case or intention of doing something on her behalf.
2. However, the widow's persistent pleas were like water dripping on sandstone — they eventually wore him down.
3. He finally decided to act on her behalf . . .
 - a. Not because he suddenly developed a fear of God or respect for people.
 - b. But because it was the practical thing to do.
4. Her constant pleas were interrupting his life and taxing his patience — he was exhausted.

5. He said, “I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out” (v. 5).
 - a. “She will wear me out” is a boxing expression (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:27).
 - b. She will “beat me black and blue” (i.e. give my reputation a black eye).

Slide 7**II. Jesus’ Lesson**

“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? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.” (Luke 18:6–8a, NASB95)

A. OUR GOD WILL BRING JUSTICE FOR HIS ELECT

1. Through this parable, Jesus is not comparing His Father to this judge, but contrasting the two.
2. Whereas the judge in His parable was not only unrighteous, he was unloving, ungracious, merciless, evil.
3. God on the other hand is righteous, compassionate, merciful.

“Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;” (Exodus 34:6, NASB95)

4. In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul asked a question which we should all pause to consider (Romans 8:32).

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32, NASB95)

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5. Paul told the suffering Christians in Thessalonica that God would “repay with affliction” those who had been afflicting them (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

“For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (2 Thessalonians 1:6–8, NASB95)

Slide 9**B. GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS**

1. We are His elect, His chosen ones — He has adopted us — We are now His heirs.
2. Jesus wants us to know that if the unjust judge in His parable will finally grant justice to the widow, imagine how God (the just Judge) will see that you and I receive the justice we seek.
3. Jesus is teaching us to persist in our prayers not because . . .
 - a. God is ignorant and needs to be informed.
 - b. Or that He, like the unjust judge, is unwilling to answer and we must wear Him down.
4. We persist in our prayers because we know He cares and listens to us.

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5. The apostle Paul struggled with what he called “a thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7).
6. Twice, he said it was given to him to keep him from “exalting [himself] (v. 7).
7. Three times he asked the Lord to remove it from him (v. 8).
8. God did not remove it but gave Paul something to go along with it, His grace — “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9a).

Slide 10**C. GOD WILL BRING JUSTICE FOR US QUICKLY**

1. After telling us that God will bring justice for us quickly, Jesus speaks of His own return.
2. This helps us understand that “quickly” does not mean “immediately.”
3. His point is that when God does act, He will act quickly or swiftly.
4. It will be like our own resurrection which Paul said would happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52).
5. God’s timing is not our timing. In reassuring us of our Lord’s promised return, the apostle Peter wrote, “But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness . . .” (2 Peter 3:8–9a, NASB95)
6. It may seem that God is silent right now in answering your prayers.
7. Please know that even in His silence, God is still answering your prayers:
 - a. His silence may be a loving no.
 - b. His silence may be that we aren’t ready yet and He is waiting until the time is right.
 - c. His silence may be that He has something far better in store and we need to be patient.
 - d. Sometimes His silence is meant to instill dependence upon Him because to receive our request may lead us to self-sufficiency, pride and our own drifting away from Him.

Conclusion

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1. Jesus concludes this parable with a question. One which we should seriously consider.

“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth” (Luke 18:8b, NASB95).
2. What Jesus is implying through this question is that when He returns, He will

not find such faith unless we, who are His disciples, learn to “always pray and not give up” (NIV84).

3. Our constant prayer is not only evidence of our faith, but that which continues to build up our faith while we await His return.
4. Remember, you and I are His chosen ones.
5. Our God is “rich in mercy” and His love is great.
6. He delights in hearing our prayers and answering them.
7. He will continue to do so right up to the day He comes.
8. Are you His child? Has He washed your sins away?
9. If not, will you come to Him today?