



Teaching on Prayer and the Kingdom of God Luke 18

Introduction

Jesus taught much on prayer, both by word and example. Prayer was one of the most important parts of His life and perhaps His highest priority. He set the example of developing a powerful prayer life. Prayer was a spiritual discipline for Jesus, and it is for us as well. It is a high privilege to talk to Almighty God, as we see throughout the Bible. Prayer was prominent in the lives of godly men and women such as Abraham (Genesis 20:7), King David (2 Samuel 7:27), Elisha (2 Kings 6:17), and the apostle Paul (Philippians 1:9) to name only a few. Prayer is even seen in the lives of the ungodly such as Moab (Isaiah 16:12) and the people of Judah (Jeremiah 42:19-20).

Outline of Luke 18

- I. Two Parables on Prayer - Luke 18:1-14
- II. The Probability of Entering the Kingdom of God - Luke 18:15-27
- III. The Confusion of the Twelve- Luke 18:28-34
- IV. The Blind Man- Luke 18:35-43

I. Two Parables on Prayer - Luke 18:1-14

As Jesus finished speaking to His disciples about the kingdom of God, He turned to the subject of prayer. *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.* "Then" links this section to the last. If the second coming of our Lord seems delayed, believers are to pray and not give in to discouragement. Jesus illustrated with a parable.

A. The Judge and the Widow - Luke 18:1-8

1. The judge - 18:2

There was in a certain city a judge *who did not fear God nor regard man.* The judge in the parable was a self-determined man who answered to no one and made his own rules.

2. The widow - 18:3

There was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, Get justice for me from my adversary. She had an enemy who had cheated her, and perhaps harassed her. She needed help.

3. The decision - 18:4-5

At first the judge refused to help her, *but afterward*

he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' It was her persistence that won her a hearing and even a judgment in her favor.

4. The application - 18:6-8

Jesus told the disciples, *Hear what the unjust judge said.* The widow's victory over her enemy came less by the rightness of her case than by her persistent petitioning. Had she not persevered she would not have triumphed. God is like the judge in responding to persistence.

God is not like the judge in unwillingness to answer petitions, nor in needing to be worn down in order to relent. God is willing to give good gifts to His children, but our needs are part of a bigger plan. The fact that the answer has not come should not deter us from persistence in prayer if it is for something that is God's will, such as victory over our enemy Satan. Where are you discouraged because your prayers seem unanswered? Will you continue in prayer with renewed vigor and faith?

B. The Pharisee and the Publican - Luke 18:9-14

Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. We are glad to have the purpose of these parables given to us. Jesus spoke this one for the benefit of those who gave the appearance of being people of prayer yet harbored inflated opinions of themselves and low opinions of others.

1. The Pharisee - 18:10-12

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. He was indeed praying only with himself. *God scorns the scornful but gives grace to the humble* (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6). Take a close look at the Pharisee's prayer. Can you imagine praying like this? He used "I" five times and "God" once.

- a. Thankful not to be like others - verse 11

God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. He was comparing himself to others, and mistakenly, thought he looked very good.

b. Proud - verse 12

I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I possess. What was the motive of his heart? Was it to feel good about himself being better than other people? Surely our goal in life is more than to feel good about ourselves! Is being better than someone else the thing that stirs you to action? How pathetic that is. The Pharisee's religion was all external and sham. God did not count him righteous, but unrighteous.

2. The tax collector - 18:13-14

The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Tax collectors were particularly despised. Society condemned them, but Jesus did not. This man gave God equal mention and measured himself by God, not men. His attitude was humble, not proud. He relied not on his own merit but on God's mercy. Do you?

3. The results - 18:14

Consequently, it was the tax collector, rather than the man who lived a decent and disciplined life, who went home justified. He was pardoned from guilt and at peace with God and himself. "Is it then futile to live a decent and disciplined life? No indeed, but it is dangerous to imagine that a decent and disciplined life establishes a claim on God's favor," (Jesus: Lord & Savior, F.F. Bruce). The tax collector's prayer has become known as "the sinner's prayer" and has been prayed by thousands who were converted in the process. Have you ever invited someone to pray this prayer? Will you ask God to give you someone who needs it? Perhaps you need it. Will you pray it for yourself?

4. Application

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Prayer is not a time to come to God on our merits, or as if we deserved something from Him. Prayer is only real when we come as undeserving, hell-bound sinners, dependent on the grace of God. What is your prayer attitude? Is it more like the Pharisee or the tax collector?

II. The Probability of Entering the Kingdom of God - Luke 18:15-27

Two incidents occurred which gave Jesus the opportunity to teach about the kingdom of God.

A. Jesus and the Children - Luke 18:15-17

Then they also brought infantsto Himthat Hemighttouch them; but when the disciples saw it they rebuked them.

Little children are as helpless as the tax collector felt he was. "They", who brought the children for Jesus to touch, were probably the mothers. Seeing them in the audience, Jesus may have invited them. Godly mothers desire above all else that their children be godly. They want them brought to Jesus as early as possible. How many will be in heaven because their mothers brought them early to Jesus? What can you do to bring a child to Jesus? Prayer is a beginning. When will you begin?

1. Value of children - 18:16

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. When the uncomprehending disciples held children back from coming to Him, Jesus was moved with indignation and called the little ones to come (Mark 10:14).

A happy memory of one church this writer attended is the story time during the service when the pastor sat on the platform steps and summoned the children. They came running from the balcony and down the aisles to sit around him. He always had an object lesson for them, and the adults listened as attentively as the children. Jesus valued children and the faith of their mothers. He used the moment to teach that the kingdom of God is wide open to those with the simple childlike qualities of eagerness, innocence, and trust.

2. Application - 18:17

Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. Here is the answer to the Pharisees' previous question regarding the kingdom of God (Luke 17:20). It comes when you trust Jesus with the simple faith of a child. In this context, the kingdom is the spiritual kingdom where Christ reigns invisibly in hearts. Are you in His kingdom? If you are, then His kingdom is in you.

However, the Pharisees saw the kingdom as a physical and political kingdom with the Messiah reigning visibly over the whole earth. The Pharisees were spiritually blind in this sense. *And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;* (Matthew 13:14).

B. Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler - Luke 18:18-27

A certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' This young man was trying to serve God and mammon, and was in the midst of a struggle for his soul. Although he had many advantages, he knew something was missing and it disturbed him.

1. Good or God? - 18:19

Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. Jesus began with the truth of who He was -- not just a good teacher, however respectfully it was meant, but God. No one can find eternal life without knowing who Jesus is. Do you say that Jesus was a good man, even the best that ever lived, but you are not prepared to say that He is God? If He is not God, He was not a good man, because He would have been a liar for claiming to be God.

2. Obedience tested - 18:20-22

You know the commandments. Jesus held him up to the standard of the law, naming the commandments concerning responsibility to others: Do not commit adultery, murder, steal, or bear false witness and do honor your father and mother. The young man claimed to have kept all these commandments from childhood, so Jesus tested his obedience. Would he believe and obey Jesus? *You still lack one thing,* Jesus said. *Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.* The rich young man had the opportunity to exchange his earthly riches for treasure in heaven.

3. The result - 18:23

But when he heard this he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. Money cannot buy happiness. *He went away sorrowful for he had great possessions* (Matthew 19:22). He chose his wealth but it did not make him happy. *Jesus, looking at him, loved him* (Mark 10:21). His look may have broken the young man's heart and eventually brought repentance.

4. Application - 18:24-25

Jesus told the disciples that it was very hard for those who had riches to enter the kingdom of God. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.* (The word for needle means a sewing needle.) Remember, it is people who are like little children who enter the kingdom of God. Very small children do not own anything.

5. Complication - 18:26

Those who heard it said, *Who then can be saved?* People assume unconsciously that worldly advantages and spiritual advantages are connected. Those who were with Jesus thought riches showed God's favor. So if the rich can barely be saved, what hope is there for ordinary people? Jesus exposed this faulty thinking: on the contrary, riches can be a barrier and stumbling block. Are you relying on wealth or position for spiritual advantages? Do you believe that you can be truly happy

without much money and possessions? Does your life reflect this belief?

6. Promise - 18:27

Jesus said, *The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* People sometimes give advantages to the rich and deny them to the poor. Only God can put His kingdom within reach of both rich and poor. Eternal life cannot be bought, but it can be received as a free gift from Jesus Christ. Do you think the young man came back?

III. **The Confusion of the Twelve- Luke 18:28-34**

Peter was quick to remind everyone that the disciples had given up all to follow Jesus. What reward would they have?

A. Jesus' Assurance to Those Who Follow Him - Luke 18:29-30

Jesus replied, *There is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.* Mark says they will receive *one hundred-fold now, in this time, but with persecutions* (Mark 10:30). You cannot outgive God. He is no man's or woman's debtor. Jesus did not mean that we should leave a mate or children we already have, but to be willing not to have them if He requires it to serve Him better.

B. Confusion over the Cross - Luke 18:31-34

Jesus took the disciples aside from the crowd traveling to Jerusalem and again prepared them for what was ahead. Each time He did this, He added new details.

C. Foretold by the Prophets - Luke 18:31

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. All the prophets wrote concerning Jesus. All that they wrote had to be fulfilled. What were some of these prophecies?

D. Suffering and Resurrection - Luke 18:32-33

Messiah's suffering was foretold. Jesus knew in detail what awaited Him.

1. *Delivered to the Gentiles* - 18:32

He was taken from prison and from judgment (Isaiah 53:8). Pilate brought Jesus and sat down in the judgment seat (John 19:13).

2. *Mocked and insulted and spit upon* - 18:32

I am a worm and not a man; are reproach of men, and despised of the people. All those who see Me laugh at Me to scorn (Psalm 22:6-7). And now I am their taunting song...they do not hesitate to spit in my face (Job 30:9,10). Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards (Psalm 69:12). I did not hide my face from shame and spitting (Isaiah 50:6).

3. *They will scourge Him and kill Him* - 18:33

I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard (Isaiah 50:6). Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year... the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight (Exodus 12:5-6).

4. *And the third day He will rise again* - 18:33

For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption (Psalm 16:10). As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40).

E. Lack of Understanding - Luke 18:34

The apostles' lack of comprehension is described in three ways:

1. *But they understood none of these things.*
2. *This saying was hidden from them.*
3. *They did not know the things which were spoken.*

Jesus spoke plainly in clear sentences, yet they did not get it. *The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).* They would understand it better by and by, after they had the Holy Spirit. How well do you understand spiritual things? Do you listen with spiritual ears and read with spiritual eyes?

IV. The Blind Man- Luke 18:35-43

The pilgrim band crossed the Jordan and came into Judea at the ancient city of Jericho. There were two blind men, sitting and begging. Mark and Luke mention only one, but Matthew tells us there were two.

A. Bartimaeus - Luke 18:36-37; Mark 10:46-52

The more notable one was Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, who was probably well known in Jericho. The blind men heard the crowd and knew something was different. They asked who it was and heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

B. *Have Mercy on Me!* - Luke 18:38-39

They both cried out, *Son of David, have mercy on me!* They were calling Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David. The multitude rebuked them (Matthew 20:31). But Jesus stopped and asked that the blind men be brought to Him.

C. *What do You Want Me to do for You?* - Luke 18:40-41

Jesus asked what seems to be an obvious question. He was teaching His disciples and others about prayer, and to be specific in their requests. The answer to Jesus' question was, *Lord, that I may receive my sight.* That was what Jesus wanted to hear, but when they said it, Matthew tells us He was moved with compassion (Matthew 20:34). His heart went out to them. He had healed the blind before, but each one was new and precious to Him. Do you know how precious you are to Jesus? How specific are you in your requests to Him? Will you let Him do all that He wants to do for you?

D. *Receive Your Sight* - Luke 18:42-43

Jesus said, *Receive your sight, your faith has made you well.* Again, He emphasized the role of faith in their miracle of healing. They knew He could do it. Their prayer was that He would. Healed, they followed Him toward Jerusalem, glorifying God. The people who were looking on also gave praise to God.

Applications

1. How consistent and persistent is your prayer life? What will you do to make it more productive?
2. Do you value little children as Jesus did? What will you do to protect and teach them? Will you be like Jesus to one or two little ones you know?
3. Are you sorrowing because you have not let go of something you need to give up in order to follow Jesus? Will you give it up?
4. Do you understand the clear words of the Bible? Will you believe by faith what you do not fully understand?