

## 59. Jesus Taught About Prayer

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others the need to be prepared at all times. Those who prepare will be ready when Jesus comes to take the church to heaven at the rapture. After the rapture, the earth will experience the tribulation described in Revelation 6-19. Those who have never heard will have the opportunity to believe during the tribulation so that they can be ready when Jesus returns to rule in an earthly kingdom. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus taught His disciples some key lessons about prayer.

Jesus had just taught the disciples about difficult times coming in the future and so He wanted to teach them several lessons about prayer. Luke 18:1-6 says, “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, “Get justice for me from my adversary.” And he would not for a while; 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.”’” Then the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said.’” Jesus wanted the disciples to understand the importance of prayer.

The word translated “ought” means *it is necessary or it is right*. The word translated “faint” means *to be utterly spiritless or to be exhausted*. Here, we see that Jesus made it clear to the disciples that it was right for them to pray so that they would not be exhausted and spiritless. The same is true for us in our lives. When we depend on our strength, we will be spiritless or exhausted. When we pray and ask the Lord for His strength, we are able to act in the power of the Holy Spirit. To illustrate the fact that God would hear them and give them strength, Jesus told a parable about an unjust judge.

The judge did not fear God and he did not respect people. This meant that this judge was a very evil man. In contrast, Jesus wanted the disciples to know that God would hear them and answer their prayers. One day, a widow came to this evil judge. She asked him to give her justice from her adversary. The word translated “get justice” means *to defend*. An adversary was a person that was an opponent in a lawsuit or an enemy. At first, the evil judge did not want to give the widow justice from her enemy. Later, we see that he changed his mind and we are given the reason that he changed his mind. He changed his mind because the woman kept coming back to him with her request. Then, the evil judge decided that even though he did not fear God or respect people, he would honor the request of this widow so that she would stop bothering him. Jesus wanted the disciples to hear what the evil judge did even though he was evil.

In contrast, the next verses go on to tell us what God will do when we pray. Luke 18:7-8 say, “‘And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’” Here, we see that God will certainly defend His elect who are crying out in prayer to Him day and night. God will judge evil people even though He is very patient with those who are evil.

In 2 Peter 3:8-9, we read, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Here, we see why God is so patient. He waits a long time to bring judgment on unbelievers because it is His desire that they would come to repentance. However, once God is ready to bring judgment on the unbelievers, judgment will be very swift.

We saw, in our last topic, that Jesus said the time of His coming would be like the time of Noah. That is why Jesus asked here if He will really find faith on the earth when He comes. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, we see that many will live to please themselves rather than turning to Jesus prior to His coming. Those verses say, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” Later, in that same chapter, we read in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” When people turn away from God, Christians need to be prepared for persecution because we see that persecution will come. That is why the Son of Man will act swiftly when He does come to judge.

Jesus went on to give a parable to show the difference between false prayers and genuine prayer. Luke 18:9-14 says, “Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘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, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” And 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!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’” Jesus had told the Pharisees in chapter 17 that the kingdom of God in their time would be in the hearts of people. In this parable, Jesus gave a warning to the Pharisees about their false prayers.

Jesus knew that many of the Pharisees that heard Him were people who trusted in themselves. They thought that their lives were right in the sight of God and that they would be accepted by Him because they taught the commandments of God. At the same time, they despised other people especially the tax collectors and sinners. The word translated “despised” means *to treat with contempt or to despise completely*. This same word is used in Luke 23:11 where the soldiers of Herod mocked Jesus. That verse says, “Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.” These Pharisees felt the same way toward tax collectors and sinners as they felt toward Jesus.

In this parable, we see that Jesus made it very clear that pride is just as sinful as any other sin and is the sin of those who think that they can earn their salvation and become righteous in the sight of

God. In this parable, Jesus identified the two groups of people so that there would be no question about what Jesus taught that day. Jesus said that a Pharisee and a tax collector both went to the temple to pray. The prayer of the Pharisee is given first. Jesus chose to say that the Pharisee prayed a prayer about himself. This Pharisee mentions nothing about his own sin. Instead, he tries to tell God that he should be accepted into heaven because of his own works to earn his salvation.

First, the prayer of the Pharisee told everyone who could hear him pray that he did not think that he was a sinner. He said that he was not like other men. He was not an extortioner – a robber who robs in a different way than the average robber. He said that he was not unjust – one who is sinful or unrighteous. He said that he was not an adulterer – one who commits sexual sin or who is faithless toward God. He said that he was not like the tax collector. Here, we see that this Pharisee had a very good opinion of himself. Second, the prayer of the Pharisee told everyone who could hear him the works that he was doing that he thought would earn him salvation. He said that he fasted (abstained from food) two days each week. He said that he paid a tithe (10%) of all that he earned or acquired. It was very clear that he thought that he did more than God required.

In contrast, the tax collector stood a great distance from the temple. He did not even raise his eyes toward heaven. The word translated “lift up” means *to raise up or to exalt one’s self*. He also struck himself on the chest. Then he said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” This man realized that he needed the mercy of God because he knew that he was a sinner. The word translated “be merciful” means *to make propitiation or to be satisfied*. He knew that, because of his sin, he needed a sacrifice that would satisfy God to take away his sin. He also knew that there was nothing in his life that would provide that satisfaction. He knew that he needed someone that would pay the penalty for his sin so that God could deal with him in mercy. Jesus was the One who paid his penalty

Jesus told those who were there that day that the man who was a sinner was able to go to his home justified rather than the Pharisee who thought that his own efforts would satisfy God. The sinner was declared righteous in the sight of God while the Pharisee took his sins home with him. Jesus said that any person that exalts himself will be humbled. That meant that all those who exalt themselves continue to face eternal judgment. In contrast, Jesus said that any person who humbles himself will be exalted. God said that those who humble themselves will be raised to a place of honor by God.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others what Jesus taught about prayer. God will hear and answer the prayers of those who accept the payment of Jesus for their sins and come to the Father with humility. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the attitude that God desires.