

Perth Bible Class – October to December

Study 4 – Widow and the Unjust Judge - Supplication

Reading Luke 18 v 1 – 8

This incident is unique to Luke's gospel as are the widows in ch 2 – Anna ch 4 – widow of Sarepta ch 7 – widow of Nain. Only the final study of the widow casting into the treasury in ch 21 is covered in Mark 12. This reinforces again the lesson that Luke takes particular interest in widows, the poor and the outcast. Possibly because he himself was a gentile and had not come from the nation of Israel. Also like three of the other widows her name is not given again reminding us that we are unimportant in the things of God and should never try to draw glory and honour to ourselves. This widow is the only one to feature in a parable the others were all actual records of specific incidents.

Setting in the chapter – The events recorded in this chapter are records of the closing public ministry of the Lord Jesus. As early as ch 9 v 51 He gave indication that the journey was to lead to Jerusalem but here in ch 18 another milestone is reached v 31 “behold we go up to Jerusalem”. He will teach his own privately and will still work miracles in the area of Jericho – see end of ch 18 and opening of ch 19 but his teaching publicly is coming to an end. The section of the chapter to v 31 deals with two parables and two incidents. The two parables are both on prayer but to different audiences. The “them” in v 1 would appear to be his disciples as it is to them he speaks in ch 17 v 22 while the audience for the second parable is “certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous” v 9 – the Pharisees who had also been in the company from when the section opened in ch 17 v 20. The two incidents refer to the bringing of the children to Jesus v 15 – 17 and the rich young ruler v 18 – 30.

Setting in the book – The close of the public ministry of the Lord Jesus. The beginning of the final journey to Jerusalem. His suffering was imminent – see v 32 and 33. Disciples were to be left on earth and so he needs to fit them for such experiences. Hence the main point of the parable is clearly stated “men ought always to pray and not to faint” v 1. We do not need to try to make application in any other way than that stated. In days of difficulty and darkness of doubt and care how good it is to accept the teaching of the word of God that if I am to be preserved it is only through the power of prayer.

Context to the disciples – the days were to be dark and difficult. Reference is made in ch 17 to “days of Noe” v 26 and “days of Lot” v28. Both men were living in end times. The flood was about to come with devastating affects on the world and judgment was about to fall on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is also clear that the passage not only looks back but forward to “the day when the Son of man is revealed” v 30. This is the time of the manifestation of the Lord Jesus when he will return to earth at the end of the period of great tribulation to set up his kingdom on earth. These days are like no other period in time in the history of man and those who are faithful to God will only be preserved by prayer. So whether the trials of old testament servants or disciples facing the Lord's departure from earth or present day Christians living for God at the end of the day of salvation or future day followers the lesson is “men ought always to pray and not to faint”.

CHARACTERS – Unjust Judge can in no way be compared to God. The very title of one who is unjust is marked to the character of absolute holiness and righteousness as would be applicable to God. God could never be said to move only to prevent further asking by His people. As God is sovereign and all knowing he will move in his own time and ever to bring to pass His own eternal plan. The whole section has far more to do with contrasting this unjust judge with how God will move for His own. The unjust judge is slow to respond to the woman whereas God will move “speedily” v 8. The unjust judge cared not for God or man yet our God loved and gave His son for those who come to Him.

The widow is to be commended for her persistence and there is a great lesson for us in this but still on the theme of contrasts she had no resources of her own yet we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings” Eph 1 v 3. She had no relationship with the judge yet we are “children of God” Gal 3 v 26. She made her request in isolation yet we have the privilege of collective prayer and also the prayer support of believers who are aware of any difficulty we may have. She was at a distance from the judge we hear the instruction “draw near” Heb 10 v 22. She had to make her own approach we have an “advocate with the Father” 1 John 2 v 1. She received no encouragement to come to the judge we are told “ask and it shall be given you” Matt 7 v 7. This woman could only come to the judge when he made himself available we learn through the exercise of Paul who was “night and day praying” 1 Thess 3 v 10 that our God is not bound by time and can hear prayer whenever saints petition Him.

The Persistence of the widow. We must take account that being persistent in prayer is Both commendable and a characteristic found in others in scripture e.g.

1 Sam 1 v 9 – 17 Hannah “continued (multiplied) praying” v 12

1 Kings 17 v 19 -23 Elijah “three times and cried unto the Lord” v 21

Nehemiah ch 1 v 4 – 11 “certain days and fasted and prayed” v 4

Daniel ch 6 v 10 – 11 “three times a day” v 10

Matt 26 v 36 – 46 Lord Jesus in garden of Gethsemane “prayed” v 39 “prayed” v 42 “prayed the third time” v 44

Acts 12 v 5 Peter in prison “prayer was made without ceasing”

11 Cor 12 v 7 -8 Paul regarding the thorn in the flesh “I besought the Lord thrice”

Practical points for prayer

Who to – “our father which art in heaven” Matt 6 v 9

When – “night and day” 1 Thess 3 v 10

What – “all men”, “kings and for all that are in authority”, “lead a quiet and peaceable life” 1 Tim 2 v 1

How – “ask in prayer believing” Matt 21 v 22

What may hinder – “if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear” Psa 66 v 18

“the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” Jas 5 v 16

“ye have not because ye ask not” James 4 v 2

“ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your own lusts” James 4 v 3.