

Where is The Faith?

Harmony M.B.C., July 13, 2008 (Morning)

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Luk 18:1-8 And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

The Lord always had a habit of using parables and illustrations of various sorts to teach us pointed lessons about spiritual things. Here in our text verses we see Him using such a parable to focus on something we would be familiar with in order to teach us a truth that our human brain might tend to otherwise miss.

In human affairs, we quickly learn that at times persistence may bring success when nothing else will. We also learn that humans tend to be only as dedicated and fervent in pursuing something as their level of desire to get it is. If our hearts truly feel the need to have something, we may go the extra mile to get it. We will return again and again with our mouths filled with arguments to gain our goal. We have the capacity to tire even the most patient with our persistence when we are really fired up to get something. We also have the kind of persistence and boldness about trying to get something that gives us the courage and even audacity to approach men that we know are hard as stone. The Lord was keenly aware of this and He uses it to stir up the minds of His disciples about asking and seeking.

This judge in our text in no way represents God. We should not look at this parable as symbolizing Christians in their situations approaching a God who has not regard for anything. Jesus is only setting up this illustration to show us that if a helpless widow woman will persist with a cold and unresponsive judge until she gets what she wants, we should be much more ready to approach the Heavenly Father who invites us.

I. The first thing we notice about this teaching of our Lord is that there is a **connection between** the object lesson regarding **the ordeal** of the abused woman **and the persistence** of “the faith” upon the earth

A. Notice in verse 1, two things are highlighted that men are to do (pray and not to faint)

- Look at the context that Jesus sets this admonition in: The unjust judge ignores the woman; she keeps on and on against all odds
 - > The woman’s success is about her persistence in the face of what must appear to her as failure
 - > Our text verse (8) is about this kind of persistence

- > From the human perspective, God sometimes waits long to answer
- > From God's perspective He sometimes waits long to answer (though He bears long with them)
- Notice that both things must work in synchrony
 - > lightning and thunder are synchronous natural phenomena; thunder follows lightning
 - > When we pray we don't faint; when we faint we don't pray

II. Secondly, the spiritual lesson of Christ here should **stand as a warning** about the danger of degradation of "the faith" over time.

- The faith that keeps people persistent and calling upon God is the faith of interest here
 - > It is made up of trust in God AND a body of beliefs that reinforces and grows that trust
- His question suggests that jeopardy to this faith may increase with the passing of history
How could this happen?
 - > The proliferation of a multitude of differing "Christian" religions has sufficiently corrupted the body of beliefs resulting in the failure of millions of professing believers to continue in them.
 - See John 4:22-24: prayer is part of this kind of worship (Gr. Proskuneo = bow down; bow down before; worship)
 - two principles taught here:
 - 1) some people worship something they call the Lord; but they don't even know who the Lord is
 - 2) Those who worship God must worship Him in Spirit and Truth
- See what some current statistics on prayers by people across the world reveal?
 - > A recent survey on prayer: Several denominations and Baptists were surveyed: <http://www.teal.org.uk/ep/onour.htm>
 - Results:
 - Only 48% saw prayer as vital to their Christian life and faith
 - The body of belief for the Christian teaches:
 - ! that prayer is vital to all believers
 - ! That believers should be constant, frequent, persistent in prayer in order to increase and strengthen faith
 - ! Active trust in the Lord demands going to Him for our help
 - 86% of these believe they have experienced prayer being answered
 - ! This experience should not only strengthen the ones who pray but should provoke the non-prayers to do so
 - Only 35% claimed to spend an hour or more each week in prayer
 - ! In essence this is 35 of 100 people
 - 75% would like to spend more time in prayer
 - ! What might be the reason why we do not? Fainting faith?

III. Thirdly, this profound statement by our divine Teacher should **inspire every believer to protect and nurture “the faith”** at all costs.

- Things about the faith once delivered to the saints are slipping away in the so-called Christian community (2Tim 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;)
- Churches and believers are forgetting the fundamental principles of the bible (Christ’s warning and advice to the church at Sardis was about this very thing: Rev 3:3 “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast...”)
- Some churches are intentionally dropping certain foundation beliefs because they are not popular
- In all this dropping of fundamental truths, the persona of Jesus Christ the Righteous is changing.
- With this change, the true Christ disappears from the Christian scene and is replaced by a false christ. When this happens, there is no worship in spirit and truth. Without these there is no true trust in the true Christ and no true body of belief to guide those who are supposed to be following the way of true faith.

“When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”

Read poem.

Finding Faith

A Poem in Response to Luke 18:8

Oh Lord, earth's times of trouble press
And rob the earth of peacefulness
Both waves and men of hate do roar,
And threaten lives on every shore.

Sin's breakers dash men's calm to bits,
And shards of fear destroy men's wits.
The human ship is foundering fast,
And threatens to be sunk at last.

In these sad times we know it's true,
That hearts of saints are tempted, too.
They feel the power of the force of doubt,
And find their faith is beat about.

Tis this great trial that purges out the dross,
And shines the silver in God's host.
But times like these will try men's souls,
To prove the faith our Lord bestows.

But if we faint, our faith grows weak,
And to this fault our Lord doth speak.
For when He comes to earth again,
Will He find faith that makes us win?

Or will we miss the promise of His word,
And will our voices go unheard?
No prayers of faith to heaven ascend,
To bring the blessings down again.

But, if you but vow to our great King,
That you will stand by faith and bring,
To Him the honor that is His due,
Then when He comes, He'll find faith in you.

Robert P. Myers, 2008