

Title: FAITH ON EARTH? LUKE 18:1 – 8
(Chatham, NJ; 10/16/16, AM) [D – Exegesis]

Theme: Persistence in prayer is a behavior and necessary element of genuine faith.

Purpose: To teach us the lesson that we must pray and never give up.

Introduction:

1. Luke reveals the conclusion of the lesson up front.
2. This is clearly a didactic message; it teaches.
3. The parable doesn't prove the point; Jesus illustrates it.
4. We are called to assume a teachable spirit.
5. Although Luke tells us the main lesson, there are others.

I. The First Two Lessons

A. Always pray

1. Can we overstress this?
2. The early church was devoted to the prayers, Acts 2:42, and the disciples turned to prayer in times of great stress.
3. We must not forget as well that the Apostles defined their mission as devotion to the ministry of the Word and to prayer.
4. "The Christian on his knees sees more than the philosopher on his toes." (Doan, 191; also the following on 192)
5. "The history of the church's progress is the history of prayer."
6. "If prayer does not drive sin out of your life, sin will drive prayer out."
7. "If the world is ever again to get on its feet, the church will have to get on its knees."
8. "Daily prayer is the gymnasium of the soul."
9. Our "40 Days" is practice for the rest of your life.

B. Not Lose Heart

1. This links the previous discussion to this one.
2. The chapter division is misleading.
3. In 17:20 the Pharisees' question about the coming of the Kingdom suggests some anticipation: how much longer must we wait?
4. In 17:22 Jesus warns that those who long for his coming may have to wait a little longer.
5. Jesus goes on to describe a world carrying on with no thought for the Kingdom: eating, drinking, and marrying suggest that most are unaware of the danger about to come upon them.
6. With all that surrounding the disciple, Jesus recognizes our human weakness to lose heart.
7. That gives some context to the story he now tells.

II. Next Lessons: Widow's Character and God's

A. The Widow Persisted against the Odds

1. Psalm 5:1-3, David prays every morning
2. 25:1, he lifts up his soul
3. 26:1, he pleads for vindication
4. 27:2, when evildoers assault him
5. 28:1-2, more pleas to David's "rock"
6. This was a righteous man who plead for protection and vindication persistently
7. We also know that Daniel prayed three times a day despite the decree not to

8. The widow is up against two adversaries: we don't know the first who may be trying to cheat her of her husband's inheritance but we know the second, a system rigged against justice symbolized by the judge
9. He doesn't care about God or men
10. Despite the odds, she persisted
11. The hearers and the reader rejoice at the outcome

B. God's character versus the Judge

1. An argument from the lesser to the greater
2. If an unjust judge does this, how much more will a just God do better!
3. The lesson is to remember God's character
4. He hears the cries and pleas of those oppressed by the world
5. We can not only trust but expect that true justice will prevail

III. The Surprise Lesson: The Challenge of Faith, 8

- The problem that justice doesn't come "quickly" nags us
- It is this nagging doubt that prompts Jesus to ask, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"
- The lesson challenges us to evaluate whether we can persist like the widow
- It raises the question of our timing versus God's timing
- It challenges us to persist in spite of the odds that seem against us
- Remember Elisha's words in 2 Kings 6:15-17 when he was surrounded by what seemed like insurmountable forces (Read this)
- Quickly or not so quickly, we must persist in prayer

Conclusions:

1. Jesus offered prayers, Hebrew 5:7.
2. Be persistent in your prayer life!
3. Recognize that prayer is not always easy: our sinful impulses resist it (what the ancients called acedia or laziness)
4. Join us in the "Forty Days of Prayer."
5. Turn it into a lifetime marked by persistence, courage, and faith.
6. The Gospel is message of salvation and the hope of eternal life. Accept it today.