

Importunate Widow & Friend

Widow and Unjust Judge

*'And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'*¹

First, then, consider our Lord's design in this parable—men ought always to pray and not to faint. Second, in enforcing this precept, our Lord gives us a parable in which there are two actors, the characteristics of the two actors being such as to add strength to His precept. In the first verse of the parable there is a judge. Now here is the great advantage to us in prayer. Beloved, if this poor woman prevailed with a judge whose office is stern, unbending, untender, how much more ought you and I to be instant in prayer, and hopeful of success when we have to supplicate a Father [who loves us]! The third and last point—the power which, according to this parable, triumphed. This power was not the woman's eloquence, "I pray you avenge me of my adversary." These words are very few. They have the merit of being very expressive, but he who would study oratory will not gather many lessons from them. "I pray you avenge me of my adversary." Just eight words. You observe there is no plea, there is nothing about her widowhood, nothing urged about her children, nothing said about the wickedness of her adversary, nothing concerning the judgment of God upon unjust judges, nor about the wrath of God upon unjust men who devour widows' houses—nothing of the kind. "I pray you avenge me of my adversary." Her success, therefore, did not depend upon her power in rhetoric, and we learn from this that the prevalence of a [person] or of a Church with God does not rest upon the elocution of its words, or upon the eloquence of its language!²

'And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.' For the 'elect,' however, there is no dubiety. Nothing hangs in the balance. From the outset they are assured of God's intervention on their behalf, and that right swiftly. But then, at the last, comes a sad commentary on the state of mankind in the latter days. Paul terms these the

¹ Luke 18:1-8

² Spurgeon, Charles Haddon, *Sermon No. 856* (with added comment and clarification in square brackets)

*'perilous times,'*³ then goes on to give a description of the debased nature of mankind then extant. And Christ was compelled to raise the question: *'Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'*⁴ In the latter days, true faith on earth will be at an absolute premium.

Friend at Midnight

*'And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is a friend; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.'*⁵

'This is the accommodation of the parable; to these words are premised, in the Vulgate Latin version [in the last verse] the following, *'if he continue knocking'*: though mere friendship will not influence and engage him to rise from his bed, at such an unseasonable time, and fulfil the request of his friend; as he asks for, or more, if necessary: the design of this parable, is the same with that of the widow and the unjust judge,⁶ in which is to show the force of importunity, where friendship, as here, and the fear of God, and regard of men, which were wanting there, have no influence; and so to encourage to constancy and perseverance in prayer, with earnestness; taking no denial at the hand of God, but still continuing to make pressing instances.'⁷

³ II Tim 3:1f.

⁴ Luke 18:7,8; don't 'nag' God? cp. Luke 18:7, *'And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them.'* Prayer should be continuing, heartfelt, and fervent. The widow had come up against an unjust judge *'which feared not God, neither regarded man,'* who would not grant her relief from her adversary, but who was worn down, eventually, by her continual pleading. God, Who is by no means an unjust judge—rather, the antithesis—does listen to His 'elect,' and then acts speedily.

⁵ Luke 11:8

⁶ cp. Luke 18:1-6

⁷ Gill, John, *Gill's Commentary*, Luke 11:5-8 (with added comment and clarification in square brackets)\0