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The Parable of the Unjust Judge
Luke 18:1-8

Message by Pastor Eric Chang

Today we continue our exposition in the Word of God in Lk 18:1-8. This parable, which the Lord Jesus taught, is known as the Parable of the Unrighteous Judge, the Unjust Judge. We need to ask: What is the message that the Lord Jesus wants to convey to us in this parable? Let us read Lk 18:1-8:

And he (Jesus) told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He (Jesus) said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.' For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son

of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

What is the Lord Jesus saying to us in this parable? The crucial line of the parable is: Will he find faith when he comes? Do not let the chapter beginning cause you to miss the connection with the previous chapter. What was the Lord Jesus saying just in the previous chapter? He was speaking about the coming again of the Son of man! And this parable is still on the same theme. That is why the last verse, v8, says, "... *when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" Now this is very important!

One point becomes very obvious as you read it: the persistence of this widow. She kept coming to this judge, pestering him and giving him no peace until he gave her the justice that belonged to her. This point is very clear. We have already expounded in the past the Parable of the Friend at Midnight, in Lk 11:5-8, there we have seen the importance of perseverance or persistence in the Christian life. In that parable, the friend kept knocking on the neighbor's door until he got the loaf of bread that he wanted to give to his friend. Is this then another parable simply repeating the importance of perseverance? Now certainly the importance of perseverance is being emphasized here, but is this just a repeat of the theme of that parable? No, there are some important differences. It is these important differences that we are particularly concerned about. So, I shall not repeat the theme about perseverance, but look rather at that aspect of the Lord's teaching here which does not come out in the other parable in Lk 11:5-8. What then is the theme of this parable? What is the point that the Lord Jesus wants to bring out to us? Let us take this verse by verse since there are only eight verses.

We Ought Always to Pray and Not Lose Heart

The Lord Jesus "*told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.*" This is the important point about this parable, which is given to us right at the introduction that you do not give up under pressure, in the face of difficulties. Do not say, "There's no point carrying on anymore. I quit! I'm finished with it!"

Being in the pastoral work, I know of people, who, having been in the Christian life for some time broke down under pressure. They give up. They stop praying. "It is no use praying; God doesn't answer my prayer!" "I give up! There is no use being a Christian anymore." If you do not pray, of course, you have cut the lifeline with God. Then that is the end! The word translated here "lose heart" in the RSV means, literally, 'to become tired', 'to become weary', 'to be exhausted'. We know there are people who become so exhausted under pressure, they just cannot carry on anymore; it is too much for them!

I remember one point in my Christian life where I nearly collapsed under the strain. I could not go on! I remember that time very well. I had been three years a Christian in China, in Shanghai, under the Communists. Three years of hunger! Three years of never having any breakfast, sometimes having lunch, and oftentimes not having any supper. My meal consisted of one pancake, which I made myself because the cheapest thing I could buy was a bag of flour. You do not need a lot of fuel to make a pancake. Rice can take you 25 minutes to boil, but a pancake is fried in something like 2 minutes. I mixed the flour with water, and if I could afford it, I put a little bit of sugar inside there. So, I needed only to buy flour and peanut oil which we had in Shanghai. So, you put in the oil, mix the flour with water, pour the mixture into the pan, fry the pancake and that was my meal! I guess the malnutrition plus the constant pressure of life – the Communists kept questioning me about why I was a Christian; why I went to church – the constant pressure of life, not knowing what the future held, began to tell on me. I was cut off from my parents. I was alone, that is, on the human level; though never alone as far as God was with me.

I remember the day – after three years of this, I was exhausted, I was very thin and very tired – I knelt down on my concrete floor in that room where I was living, which was freezing cold in winter, and I said, “Lord, I am exhausted! I am tired! I am weary! Lord, I can’t go on anymore. Have pity upon your weak servant! I am willing to do whatever you want me to do. I am willing to stay in China.” I did not suffer as much as some of the pastors had to suffer. I was a very young Christian. I had experienced God’s mercy over those three years, but even the miracles that I had experienced were not going to balance out anymore that physical exhaustion, that emotional weakening, that loneliness that many people do experience.

God understands us! God knows our problems. Many times I had prayed. Many times I had tried to leave China, but they would not let me go. Twice I applied; twice my application was turned down. What was the point of applying anymore? There was no point in applying anymore. I had no contact with my parents. I had no money. I had no future. I had nothing. Except God! So, I really understand the meaning of this parable, having experienced it, where you have prayed and the very things you have prayed for do not seem to be answered at that particular time. You wait and wait. And three years is a long time for a young man, especially when your stomach is hungry and you do not seem to have any kind of future to look forward to. My health was poor through malnutrition. They had found a spot in my left lung. My whole condition was deplorable.

In this condition, I came before God. This was not the first time I had prayed, but I remember that that particular morning when I prayed, I was particularly weak and exhausted. I felt I had come to the point where I might “lose heart”,

as the word here says, that I might just give up. That particular day, when I knelt down and prayed, God wonderfully answered me. He knows how far we can go before we break; provided that we are determined, insofar as it is possible within us to be faithful to the end, he will do his part. He is the living God.

I have shared with you that on that occasion how the voice of the Lord spoke to me, knowing that I was near to the breaking point, he said, “Eric, I will take you out of China.” The voice of the Lord spoke clearly; it was as clearly as you hear my voice speaking to you now. It was no imagination. I was wide awake; I was not asleep. In fact, I was so surprised to hear the voice; I turned around to look if somebody had stealthily crept into my room without my knowing it. No, there was no one in my bare room. My room was very bare: a concrete floor with next to no furniture. There was nowhere for anyone to hide. This was the first time God spoke to me, but it was not the last time that God was going to speak to me. From that time on, he lifted me and assured me that I was not alone. From that moment on, I knew that I was leaving China. The Lord had told me so. Two months later, I was out of the country. The evidence of it is that you see me here. God is the living God!

Do Not Give Up! God Knows How Much We Can Endure

What touches me about this parable is the Lord Jesus’ concern for his disciples. Long before the time of testing came, he spoke to his disciples to prepare them. (The “them” in v1 are the disciples, of course; that we read in the previous chapter, in v22. Chapter 18 is the continuation of his talk to his disciples.) Thus here he is speaking to Christians, not to non-Christians. “You are going to have a very hard time. As you take up your cross and follow me, there will come a time when you pray and you do not get answers. But do not lose heart.”

I had to wait three years. Three years is a long time in a young man’s life to wait. I was barely twenty at the time. But Jesus told his disciples this, “When that time comes, when you do not receive the answer, don’t give up. Hold on! Be steadfast! God will let you go so far, he will allow you to be tested to such a point, but he will not let you get to the breaking point. He knows how much you can take. Here the Lord Jesus is not speaking about God’s part; the parable concerns our part – stick it out to the end!

I am particularly concerned about those who have gone back and those who are preparing to go back to Hong Kong. They may face peculiar pressures from the world – pressures from within and from without. Perhaps, you came to the Lord here while in Canada and when you return to Hong Kong, you find that your parents do not understand you. Your parents may say, “What is this nonsense about becoming a Christian and getting all fanatical and foolish about this? A little religion is okay for everybody, but too much religion is no good

for anyone. Everything should be done in moderation.” And so, you find that your parents may not understand you. Your brothers and sisters may not understand you. The society may not understand you. Thus, the pressure builds up and it becomes hard to take. I am extremely concerned for those who have gone back to Hong Kong. I have received news from them and I know they are having a hard time. It is not nice to go home and find that nobody understands you, as if you are speaking a language [which] they do not know what you are talking about. Your family may say, “Who cares about God? We only need money! Money is the only god we need. Who needs to talk about God? Be practical! Be realistic! When does God give you any food to eat?”

Well, God gives you food to eat, but they do not know that, of course. For three years God sustained me – not on chicken nor turkey nor duck nor “叉烧” [chā shāo, Chinese BBQ pork] nor anything like that, but pancakes as my food. I have shared with some of you how wonderfully God provided for me miraculously. He sees to it that our need is met. If it were not for the fact that God allowed my health also to suffer, I would not be here today. The Communists would never have let me out of China. God had to allow me to go so far that my health also was, in part, broken, yet if not for that, the Communists would never have let me out of China.

It is sometimes painful as parents who must allow certain things to happen to their child, that the child must suffer certain things in order to be able to gain certain benefits. I think that that is what God had to let me endure. He, in his love for me, had to see me getting thinner and thinner, until I had this spot in the lung, some infection in the lung; until the time the Communists were convinced, “It’s no use keeping this guy in China. He’s so weak; he’s just going to be a burden to us. We’ll just let him go!” So, God may have to allow us to suffer these things because he sees the overall plan is for our good.

We Experience the Living God in Times of Hardship

I have had some of the most wonderful spiritual experiences in China. The most wonderful spiritual experiences are experienced, not when you are enjoying a time of plenty or when you are having an easy life. It is precisely when you are experiencing hardship, difficulty and pressure, that is precisely the time of the greatest spiritual blessings! Therefore, I say to those returning to Hong Kong: Do not be discouraged; the challenges and the problems which that situation will bring will be an opportunity for you to experience God, that he is a living God!

I say to everyone, honestly and frankly, “If God is not the living God, forget it! Don’t waste your time with religion!” Have I not said that many times before? If God is not the living God, forget it! Who needs religion? I am not teaching religion. I do not preach religion! I preach the living God! I believe in him, I

follow him, because I have experienced him. I know he is true! If I were to go out into the world today, I would earn many times more than what I earn as a pastor. But I am not interested in that. I am interested in God, the living God!

The Glory of This World Passes Away

The day will come when your money does not count anymore. Those of us who came out of China have seen that happen so many times. When the Communists came, the big businessmen of Shanghai lost everything! Everything gone! My father's investment in a factory – everything was gone! Finished! The car was gone. The house was gone. Everything was gone! The riches of this world go quickly, but God abides forever!

The glory of this world passes away. Many of the great politicians I knew of are nothing today. My father himself held a high position. Those were the days when I went in and out of Nanjing with guards saluting me, standing to attention, even though I rode past them on a bicycle. Every guard stood to attention to salute. Why? It is because of who my father was. But that glory passed away before my very eyes. Everything vanished! Gone! The glory of this world is nothing; exactly as that great king of Israel, Solomon, says in Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities."

Giving up What You Cannot Keep to Gain What You Cannot Lose

Why live for that which fades away! That is not wisdom! To live for that which is eternal – that is wisdom! "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." Remember those wonderful words. To give your life to gain what you cannot keep, that is foolishness! To give up your life to gain what you cannot lose, that is wisdom! But there is nothing in this world you will not lose. You came into this world naked and penniless. You will go out of this world naked and penniless. There is nothing you will keep! Remember John Sung, who could have been professor of Chemistry in Nanjing, how he was asked why he had given up his wonderful career in chemistry in order to preach the Gospel. The answer he gave was: "I gave up what I cannot keep to gain what I cannot lose." That is wisdom!

But, in the gaining that which you cannot lose, in being a Christian, is no easy thing. I never preach the Gospel on false pretenses. I never tell you that as a Christian you will have peace and joy and an easy time, nor that God will cause your pockets to overflow with money. I do not preach that sort of Christianity! No, no! I tell you honestly: to follow the path of righteousness in a world of sin is bound to be difficult! To follow the path of humility in a world that is arrogant is bound to be difficult! To follow the path of truth in a world of falsehood is bound to be difficult! Therefore, to be a true Christian in a world such as this

is certainly difficult. Now, you cannot have been a real Christian for very long if you have not experienced difficulties. So much pressure is brought to bear upon you that many times you are going to feel that you just cannot go on.

The Pressure Was Immense When I Determined to Preach the Gospel

When I became a Christian and when I determined to follow Christ to preach the Gospel, oh, the pressure was immense! My mother was against me. My father was against me. Everybody was against me! And you know, being the only son, being the only child – my parents put all their hope on me! “He is going to become the great politician, to succeed where father did not. Or perhaps he will become a great scientist.”

I trust under God that I could have succeeded in those areas, too. But I asked myself, “What is the point? What shall I achieve with it?” I had great military ambition. But I asked myself, “What happened to Alexander the Great?” He died as a young man and his dream collapsed. What happened to Caesar? He was killed, murdered by his own friend. What happened to Napoleon? He died while exiled on an island. What happened to all the great men? It is not that I am afraid to die on an island like Napoleon, or that I fear I may be stabbed by a friend like Brutus. I am not afraid to die like Alexander the Great! But the question simply is this: What have you accomplished? What was it all for? Pointless! Of no enduring value!

But of course, my parents did not see it that way, at least, because they did not know God in the way that, by God’s grace, I had come to know him. And so the pressure came on. My father said, “Okay, you want to serve God? I’m going to cut you off. I am not going to pay for your studies.” No more money! Pressure built on! He thought that if he cut off my financial supply, I could not go to study, I could not go to university, then I would buckle under. Little did he know that I had three years in China come to really know the living God. And I knew that the living God would see me through. So I did not give up. I proceeded with my studies.

You know, my father never ceased to regret what he did. In spite of his cutting off my financial supply, I still graduated from Bible College. I still graduated from the Faculty of Divinity. I still graduated from university. It is because God saw me through the whole thing! But my father then regretted it because now he realized that I never owed my education to him. He had lost the chance of making me indebted to him for my education. God saw me through! My father could never understand how it was possible for me to have graduated from university without him giving me any money. He did not understand that God is the living God!

My mother, on the other hand, began to be filled with amazement. She had

been very hard against the Gospel, having seen the false Christianity that is so prevalent in Europe, but when I graduated, she said to me, “I don’t know about this God that you speak of. You always say that God will do this and God will do that. Now I have seen with my own eyes that your God is true. Your God is real! I can’t deny it. I have seen it in your life.” Then she knelt down with me and committed her life to God. That was the biggest moment of my life. Every time when it comes to Mother’s Day, I think of my mother. I think of that wonderful day when my mother knelt down with me, with the tears streaming down her face, committing her life to God. She was so hard against the Gospel, so rejecting of the Gospel! She was a powerful intellect, a great thinker and she had all kinds of intellectual objections. But when she saw the truth of the matter, in the face of that evidence, she said, “Your God is real. There is no question about it.” But right up to then, before that glorious day, what pressure I received! What pressure! How many times in the days in the Bible Institute I felt I was going to break down. How many times when studying in London, I felt, “I am not going to make it.” But God saw me through!

How do we survive? By persevering, holding on to the end! There were times when I would grit my teeth in the face of the immense pressure, “Even if I were to die here, penniless in a gutter, in England, this country where I know nobody, I shall be faithful to my God. I shall not swerve to the left or to the right, if it’s the last thing I do.” Sheer determination! The determination to be faithful to the end! “When the Son of man comes, will he find faithfulness?” The word ‘faith’ and ‘faithfulness’ are identical here. Will he find faithfulness? Or will we have lost heart by then? Will we have given up in the face of pressure?

The Picture of the Judge and the Widow

After this introduction, let us move on quickly to the second verse where we are told of a judge, “*in a certain city there was a judge....*” What was this judge like? Well, this judge was not afraid of God and he did not care about man. We say in Chinese: “天不怕，地不怕” [tiān búpà, dì búpà, He is not afraid of heaven! He is not afraid of earth!] Oh, he is really something. At least in his own eyes, he is something! He is his own god. He worships himself. He does not worship heaven: he does not care about man. He only cares about himself! Oh, marvelous guy! He thinks the world of himself, obviously. Imagine a judge of this kind.

Now what kind of a person behaves like this: a person who is utterly self-centered, who is utterly egocentric? You can see the character of this judge. He cared about neither truth nor justice. He had neither compassion nor any concern even for the law that he is supposed to administer. Under the law, the Jewish law, the widow takes precedence over everybody else. The law is designed to defend the defenseless. But this judge has neither regard for law nor has he

even so much as compassion. He cares about nobody but himself. “His god is his own belly,” as Paul says to the Philippians. [Phil 3:19] There are these people whose only god is their belly. What a god to worship! No wonder the belly gets bigger and bigger as time goes on. Presumably they think their god is getting bigger. So, they worship their belly. Their god is their belly. This is the kind of judge you have in a city. Where would you get truth and justice if you had a judge like this?

Then there is this widow, in v3. Now the widow in the Bible is the picture of a person who is weak, defenseless and poor. In the Bible, the widow is always the symbol of a person who is utterly without financial resources because she has no husband, she has no income. And she is without protection because there is no man to stand up for her. In Ps 68:5, God is spoken of as the protector of the widows. The widow has no protection. There is nobody to stand up for her.

So, we have the picture of the widow and the judge – the poor defenseless woman, and this self-centered, arrogant, conceited judge who cares about nothing and no one but himself. What does the Lord Jesus want to bring out from this picture? I think there are many things. In the OT days, the judge was God’s representative in Israel, among the people of Israel. Remember that this parable takes place in the context of the Jewish life, among the people of God. This widow is a member of the people of God, an Israelite. This judge is a member of the people of God, an Israelite. The judge is supposed to be God’s representative in Israel.

I should read you Psalm 82 because it reflects this parable – the parable seems to be taken from this psalm. Ps 82:1-5 reads like this: “*God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment....*” Now I expounded all this when we were studying Genesis. You remember, the Lord Jesus quotes words of this kind: “*I said, Ye are gods*” [e.g. Jn. 10:34-KJV], i.e., the word is addressed to judges. The judges were described as gods because they exercised the divine power of justice in the nation. Notice this word: “*How long*” in Ps 82:2. “*How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?*” This is exactly what this judge is doing. “*How long will you judge unjustly...?*” He is an unjust judge. Remember? V3 reads: “*Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.*” Who are the destitute? The widows were exceedingly poor, the emblem of poverty. V4: “*Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked*”, which is precisely what the judge should do and which this judge is not doing. This whole psalm then, as I say, is the background for this parable.

Pressures From Within the Church

Now when we speak of the pressures, what pressures are we talking about that the Christian have to endure? What kind of pressures do we have to endure? What causes a Christian to come to the point when he is so tired, so weak, that he might break down? Well, problems from two areas will come. One is from outside the church. One is from inside the church.

From outside the church come the persecutions of the world. Remember in Matthew Chapter 10, where the Lord Jesus says, “I send you out as sheep among wolves into the world.” [v16] You are as sheep among wolves. Like this widow, you are poor, you are defenseless. Where will you find justice for your cause in this world? Which judge will stand to your defense? So, under that situation, the Christian living under the stress of the hostility of the world, the opposition of the world, is one source of what grinds him down and weakens him. But there is the other source, unfortunately: the problems that come to him from inside the church. This, I think, is particularly the stress of this parable here! I say this because the Lord Jesus chooses the picture of the unjust judge in Israel.

One of the reasons why Israel went into exile, the prophets tell us, is because the judges of Israel became corrupted and took bribes. They did not defend the defenseless. They did not stand up for the widows. They did not care for the orphans and the fatherless. And God’s anger was brought against Israel for this. You find this in almost every one of the prophets, as they spoke out against the judges in Israel. The judges, as I have just said, are the representatives of God in Israel. They were to administer the divine justice, according to the Law of God! The leaders of Israel became corrupted. I think particularly of Ezekiel Chapter 34. The whole chapter is a denunciation of the leaders of Israel, where it says, “You shepherds of Israel, who should have fed the sheep of Israel, you only feed your own bellies. You feed yourselves. You only care about yourselves”, like this judge.

As I look at this Parable of the Unjust Judge, the Lord Jesus seems to use the picture of the judge quite deliberately. If he wanted to represent the world as giving a hard time to the Christians, the judge would hardly be a symbol of the world, for the judge was God’s appointed minister of justice in the nation of Israel. No, rather, perhaps the worst persecution that a Christian can experience – the worst opposition – is the carelessness of the leaders of the church to their own people. The judges who should be doing God’s work, in God’s church, too often are not doing it; they are simply doing their own thing. Unfortunately, there are too many pastors, as I have said before and I say again, who seem to be pastors for worldly motives, not spiritual motives, who are more concerned about maintaining the status quo, of standing in favor with headquarters, of being accepted by other pastors of like mind, so that they can keep their job, so that they can maintain their position. I am not saying that all pastors are like

that and the Lord Jesus is not saying that all judges are like that in Israel. There were good judges in Israel, too. But it is the bad judges that cause the people to suffer. It is the bad pastors who cause the churches to suffer.

The Unjust Judge – The Leaders Who Care Not for the Sheep

Do you not see how amazingly God foresaw that what happened in Israel was going to happen in the church? We see it exactly here in v8: “... *when the Son of man comes, will he find faith...?*” Will he find faith in church upon the earth? Well, if faith is not in the church, where do you expect to find it? In the world? Of course, it has to be in the church! Will he find faith? You see, the Lord Jesus foresaw this. In fact, we find in the epistle to Timothy the prophecy: “The Spirit expressly says that in the last days, the churches will be full of false teachers.” [1 Tim 4:1] There will be preachers and pastors who come into the church just to feed their own stomach, to look after their own interest. Not all pastors are like that, let me say it again. There are some very good pastors, but there are also some very bad pastors! Those are the ones who will make God’s people suffer.

Now, it is easier to endure suffering from the non-Christian; it is much harder to endure suffering from Christians. I say this again to those returning to Hong Kong: stand fast! You may meet opposition from those who – instead of caring for the church and ministering the Word of God – care only for their own personal interests, who are more concerned with popularity and therefore suppress the truth rather than upholding the truth. Stand fast!

A Lesson of Persistence

But there is also a lesson which comes out of this parable. It is that: persist with such people! What shall we do if we come against a pastor like this who is in the church just because he wants a good salary and because he cannot get any other job? He is going to take his pastorate as his ‘飯碗’ [fàn wǎn, bowl of rice] , that is, his job security. What shall we do? What should you do if in Hong Kong you were to go to a church and run into pastors like this?

One thing you can do is do what the widow does: persist! Keep on persisting, demanding that he implements the Word of God. Now what does this widow do? She is persisting with this judge, and saying, “You haven’t given me justice according to the law of God in Israel! Fulfill the Word of God! I insist that you fulfill the Word of God. Please fulfill it!” The lesson seems to be that if this judge does not fulfill the Word of God because he cares about justice, he will fulfill the Word of God because he is tired of being worn out by her persistence. I think there is a lesson there.

Let me give you an illustration of this. Before I came out of China, I was approached by the Russian Christians that I met in Shanghai – a wonderful group of people. They were Russian Baptists. China really wanted them to just get out and go because they were not Chinese; they were Russians and they could not speak Chinese, that is, they were really not integrated into the society. On top of that, they were Christians. They were devout Christians. Before I left China, these dear Russian brothers and sisters said to me, “When you go to Hong Kong, will you please remind our Baptist church that we still exist? We are struggling to survive here in China. We are starving here. Will you please remind them to remember us here?” I said, “I will certainly do that.”

Thus, when I got to Hong Kong, true to my word, I gave the Baptist Federation no peace until they did something about these Russian Christians in Shanghai. It was very opportune that the President of the World Baptist Federation happened to be in Hong Kong at the time. I gave him no peace whatsoever. Day after day, I pursued this man. He must have thought that the impertinence of this young fellow is just unbearable. I phoned him at his hotel. Whenever I heard that he was speaking at some meeting, I pursued him to the meeting place and got hold of him after the meeting, until he knew me very, very well! Every time he saw me, he said, “Oh, yes. Okay, okay, the Russian Christians in Shanghai!” I said, “Right! Do something about it! They are starving there!”

Every day for them is a matter of survival, whether they will survive another day. In fact, when I visited them with the elder of our church, the best food they could offer to me was a bowl of soup and a slice of bread. They themselves only ate the bread, without the soup. For us, as honored guests, we had a bowl of soup to go with the bread. Such was their poverty!

So, I was determined to give the President of the World Baptist Federation not one moment of peace until something was done for them. I am glad to say that they were all able to leave China shortly afterwards. China did not want to keep them, so the only thing necessary was the financial aid to see these several hundred people out of China. So, I, perhaps like this widow, was very impertinent. For this great Christian leader there, I gave no peace; I pestered him day and night.

The Strategy of the Elect in the End Times

In v5, the word that is translated as ‘wear out’ in “she will wear me out” in the Greek literally means, “She will give me a black eye.” The Greek word is ‘hupōpiaō’ [ὑποπιᾶζω, to strike under the eye], which is also used by Paul in 1 Cor. 9:27, “I give myself a black eye.” That means he punished himself; he disciplined himself. Here, the judge was so concerned that this woman with her pestering would give him a black eye. Not literally, of course, but in the meta-

phorical sense. “She will just wear me out. She is going to give me a hard time. She is going to keep pestering me and buffeting me. So, okay, even though I do not fear God and I do not care for man, I do care for myself. I had better give her what she wants, before she wears me out; I’ll give her what she wants so I can be rid of her.”

As it turns out, this might be a good strategy indeed. Since there are some preachers and pastors who do not seem to care too much about either God or man, but since they do care about themselves, this strategy might work. We might be able to give them such a hard time and so exhaust them that they may relent, “Okay, okay. Let’s get on with doing God’s Word. Otherwise, we’ll never have peace from these people here.” That might be a good strategy. In fact, that may be the only strategy in the end times! When the church becomes more and more corrupt internally, what will happen to the elect?

Now, very important to bear in mind is the fact that the widow here represents not one person but the church. It represents the elect. Therefore, you read in v7, “...will not God vindicate his elect...?” So, the widow represents ‘the elect’. ‘The elect’ is always a term for God’s faithful people in the church. This, I find, is exceedingly beautiful. The church is pictured as a widow: alone, yet not alone, because God is with her; poor, and yet not poor because of having spiritual resources from God; defenseless and not defenseless, though defenseless in the world, yet defended by God himself. The picture of the church is the picture of a widow. “Blessed are the poor... for they shall inherit the kingdom.” [Mt. 5:3] The true church is always pictured as the poor, the widow.

God Will Vindicate the Elect

Thus, here, we come then to v7&8 “*And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?*”, the last section of this passage. The last verse is telling us that God will defend the elect, those who cry to him day and night. God will speedily vindicate his church. God cares about his church. This parable is a promise. It is a promise that if you stay firm to the end, God will certainly take up your cause. You will not be disappointed. He may let us come right up to the limits of our endurance. In fact, be prepared, stand firm because he will let us come to the limits of our endurance.

There are times when you and I, brothers and sisters, will come to that point. I have come to that point many times. When physically exhausted, mentally worn out, spiritually depleted, we cry out to the Lord, “Lord, I can’t go on! I can’t!” When anybody breaks down, let me tell you, I have all the sympathy for that person. We must never judge or condemn such a person. Some just could not make it; they broke down. But God still cares. God cares for us so much.

He says, “I will vindicate you. I will take up your cause.” There is this reasoning in this parable. It is the reasoning that follows very much the pattern of Matthew Chapter 7: “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to you!” [v11] The reasoning is the same here. If the unjust judge can be pestered into giving justice, how much more will the Just Judge give justice readily and gladly?

This is truly a beautiful parable. But the closing verse is this – in spite of such a promise as God’s encouragement, that he will stand with you and vindicate you to the end – will you be able to stand? The answer lies with you, not with God! God will never fail. The question is: Will you fail? And the fearful answer is that some will fail. In Matthew Chapter 24, the Lord Jesus warned his disciples that in the last days, many will depart from the faith. You cannot go away from Montreal unless you have been in Montreal. You cannot depart from the faith unless you have been in the faith. Many will be led away from the faith, and the Lord Jesus warned that the love of many will grow cold because of the surrounding wickedness! [Mt 24:11, 12]

Are You Weary Because of Giving?

What will cause us to break? Let us then summarize the points. Maybe you have been doing good. The same Greek word as we find in v1, ‘to become weary’ or ‘tired’, is used in 2 Thess 3:13, where it reads like this: “*Brethren, do not be weary*” – that is the same word, ‘weary’, ‘lose heart’ – “*in well-doing.*” There are some people who have done so much good. You keep on giving and giving of yourself, maybe financially, of your time, of your energy. You keep giving, giving, and giving. Do you realize that sometimes you just give so much that you really become tired of giving because your own supply is exhausted?

I once received some inheritance, i.e., insurance money. I gave, gave and gave, until I had nothing left. And I began to get resentful. I serve the Lord and I lose – and all my money as well – in the process. “Lord, there must be a limit to what one can give. It’s enough! Must I endure poverty as well as exhaustion, as well as all these other things?” We become weary in well-doing. But then I became ashamed of myself. Can we ever give too much? Can we ever give too much when he has given his all to us? But there are times when we do become resentful. We give, and we give, and we give, until we are exhausted of our supply and people do not necessarily seem to be all that grateful. People do not necessarily seem to be all that appreciative. Well, do we give because we want people to appreciate? Or do we give rather that nobody knows that we give? We give rather that God may see, not that man may see. So, do not become weary in well-doing.

If We Do Not Become Weary, We Will Reap in Due Time

Gal 6:9 has the same Greek word ‘weary’ that we have in Lk 18:1. There it says the same thing, “Do not be weary in well-doing, but we shall reap in due time, if we do not lose heart.” If we do not lose heart, we shall reap! You see, the great pity is that you sowed but you did not reap. That is a tragedy! You sowed! You put all your seed into the ground, you gave everything, and then you did not reap!

Not yet, you see. It takes time for a harvest to come out of what you sow today. You cannot hope to reap tomorrow. You may have to wait a whole six months before you can reap. And if you plant fruit trees, you might have to wait years before you can reap anything from those fruit trees. Thus, Paul is saying in Gal 6:9, “Do not lose heart! It takes time before the harvest comes.” And that waiting period when you have put all your seed in the ground and you have got no more seed left – and you are waiting month after month – is a long wait. But do not lose heart – you shall reap in due time.

And what exactly do you reap? You reap eternal life! That is something very important! “... *he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap*” – what? – “*reap eternal life.*” [Gal 6:8] Eternal life is going to be reaped, if you have due patience to wait for it. So, I plead with those who have to leave us soon to return to Hong Kong, and indeed for all of us, stand fast!

There is yet one last point to conclude on, regarding v8. “When the Son of man comes, will he find faith upon the earth?” This is the question I have been asking from the beginning. The question is not with God; the question is with you: Will you hold on to the end? Will you continue to the end? I beg of you, stand fast to the end! Continue steadfast to the end in order that you may reap eternal life.

When the Son of Man Comes, Will He Find Faith?

What I read here is very interesting. “When the Son of man comes, will he find faith?” immediately brings me back to Ex 32:1. Do you know what happened in Ex 32:1? It was this: Moses went up the mountain to God to receive the Commandments. He ascended on high. The whole multitude of the Israelites stood there and saw Moses going up into the mountain, disappearing into the clouds, and he was gone! They sat there waiting for Moses for 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days. “Hey, what has happened to Moses? He has gone up into the mountain to God! He must be gone because we don’t see him anymore!” 5 days, 6 days, 7 days, 8 days, 9 days. Do you know how long Moses was gone? 10 days? 20 days? What happened to Moses? And so, we read in Ex 32:1 the

Israelites all start saying, “As for this man, Moses, we don’t know what became of him.” “This guy went up to communicate with God; he went up there and maybe he is going to stay in heaven forever. He is never going to come back again. Maybe God is going to keep him there!”

Thus, it went on to 20 days, 30 days. Still no Moses! The people said, “Okay, well, I guess we have lost Moses. Moses has gone up to God. He is never going to come back again. So, what shall we do? Let us find something to worship. Let us make a golden calf and worship it!” And when Moses came back again 40 days later, what did he find? Did he find faith upon the earth? Do you see the question? Did he find faith? No! He found the people of God, all except for a handful, corrupted, worshipping the golden calf; they had started worshipping mammon.

You know the church has begun to worship money in many places. People who find themselves in church may wonder what church is all about, because it seems the church is a money-collecting organization. One offering plate comes by. Another one is coming by. What! Another one? You know, a friend of mine went to the States and she found that they took four offerings. Four offerings in one service! She was used to only one offering, found usually at the end, so by the fourth time, she had no more money left to put in the offering plate. What is this? Is the church beginning to worship the golden calf?!

Another friend of mine joined a radio broadcasting ministry in the Far East. He gave up after a few months, so I asked him why. He said, “I thought I was going to be in the broadcasting ministry, but all they wanted me to do was to go around collecting money! I haven’t studied the Word of God for all these years to come back to raising money!” Has the church become a money-collecting institution?!

I am sorry to say this. I love the church; it does not give me any joy to say these things, but it reminds me of these words, “When the Son of man comes, will he find faith?” Or will the church be worshipping the golden calf – collecting money, worshipping degrees, worshipping money, worshipping the worldly institutions – the golden calf of Egypt! We worship what the world worships! What did Egypt worship? Egypt worshipped the golden calf! What does the church worship? The church worships the same thing: the golden calf – degrees, high position, money. We are no different from the world. We worship the same thing! The church is corrupted from inside! No wonder this judge cares for neither God nor man. He has learned to worship his own belly!

What will our position be? “When the Son of man comes...” I have mentioned at the beginning of this message that the context has to do with the coming of the Son of man, the coming of Christ again! Jesus has gone! He has been gone

for 100 years, 200 years, 300 years, 1,000 years, 1,500 years! We, like the Israelites said of Moses, say, “Well, this man Jesus, he has gone up to be with God. We don’t know what has happened to him! Maybe he’ll never come again. We don’t know!” Those are exactly the words in 2 Pet 3:3-4. The scoffers will say, “Well, nothing has changed since the beginning. Jesus went up there to heaven. He is going to stay there forever! We are not going to see him again! So, let us get on with worshipping the golden calf!”

When the Son of man comes, will he find faith? Will we still be faithful? I beg of you, brothers and sisters, remember this: No matter what the pressures are, be faithful. This whole parable is about this: being faithful to the end, even under pressure! Let us pray especially for those who have to leave us to go back to Hong Kong. But let the prayer be also for all of us, who must face all kinds of pressures in the difficulty of living righteously in an unholy world, of living for the truth in a world where lying and falsehood is the order of the day. God grant us the grace we need, knowing that he will stand with us to the end!

End of message

This is an edited transcription of the message.

The editors accept full responsibility for arrangement and addition of Bible references.

*All Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version,
unless otherwise specified.*



EXPLANATION OF COVER

“... they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ”

Matthew 2:9,10 NASV

WISHING YOU A VERY, MERRY CHRISTMAS



's:

s:

The gift of love.

The gift of peace.

The gift of hope

The gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Savior.

May all these be yours at Christmas and
throughout the coming year.



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