

# The Christian Arsenal

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## LUKE 18:1-30

Today we're going to see Jesus teach through two different parables and we're also going to see Jesus teach through two different actual incidents from His life.

### **Verses 1-8...**

This parable is about **a widow and a judge**. Luke says more about widows than all of the other gospel writers combined. Maybe Luke grew up in a home where his mother was a widow...we don't know...but for some reason Luke tells us a lot about widows.

God had instructed His people to care for the widows, but widows still had a hard time just making ends meet and just putting food on the table. Many of them were destitute. Many of them didn't have real standing in the community.

In this passage we just read, we also find a judge. He was not a good man, in fact, **verse 2** says that he had no regard for God and he had no regard for man.

In those days, the judge didn't have a courtroom. He moved from community to community, from place to place, to administer justice. The problem was that they hardly ever really administered justice. Many of them were corrupt and many could be bribed.

So, the cases they really wanted to hear were cases where folks had money. But, this widow didn't have any money. What chance did she have to even get her case heard by this important but ungodly judge?

She had three obstacles to overcome...

- 1) she, being a woman, had little standing before the law...
- 2) she, being a widow, had no husband to stand with her..
- 3) she, being poor, could not pay a bribe even if she wanted to...

While He was on the Cross, Jesus commended His mother to John so that she wouldn't have to face the same thing this poor woman had to face...

In many of the parables Jesus told, He taught by **comparison**...but we need to understand that in this parable Jesus is not teaching by comparison...He is teaching by **contrast**. He is not comparing **us** to the woman and He is not comparing the **judge** to His heavenly Father.

### **And there are several reasons we know this...**

**Number one**...this woman was a stranger to this judge. This judge didn't know her...and she didn't know him. She knew **what** he was, but she didn't know **who** he was. You and I are not strangers to God. We're His blood-bought children. He knows us by name and He knows us by nature and in spite of all that we've done, He still loves us.

**Number two**...this widow didn't have access to this judge. However, you and I have access to God on the basis of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We may not have access to President Bush or Governor Bredesen, but we have access to God.

**Number three**...this woman didn't have an advocate. She didn't have someone to stand alongside her and plead her case. But, we have an Advocate with the Father, the Lord Jesus

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Christ, Himself. He is our Advocate! We are never without Him when we come before God. I love that song, "This One's With Me."

I believe it's a beautiful picture of Jesus taking you and me by the hand and personally leading us into the presence of Almighty God.

**Think about the judge...**he was annoyed with the woman. God isn't annoyed when we come to Him. He delights in spending time with us. He says, "Come on in...how long can you stay? Tell Me what's going on in your life...tell Me your hurts and burdens and deep desires."

This judge didn't want to be bothered by this woman's troubles, but God tells us to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us. God is **for** us, not **against** us.

This judge cared nothing about God...he was irreverent. And he cared nothing about people. But God so loved folks that He gave His only begotten Son that the ones who would believe in Him wouldn't die and go to hell, but would live with Him in heaven forever.

So, I believe we see for those reasons and others that we don't have the time to mention that **we are being taught in this parable by contrast, not by comparison.**

**There are several things Jesus is teaching us in this parable...**

He is teaching us **the necessity** of prayer. **Verse 1** tells us we are to pray at all times. And I believe that means that our attitude must always be an attitude of prayer.

When someone hurts us or makes us angry or disappoints us, I believe we should just utter a prayer before we respond.

When life looks dark and gloomy and the cloud over your head is about to rain on you, I believe Jesus is saying we ought to pray instead of giving up.

Secondly. I believe Jesus is teaching us **the reason** we are to pray and the reason is that we shouldn't lose heart. The **KJV** says we are to pray and not faint. What happens when a person faints? Well, he may or may not realize what's happening, but he certainly can't control what's happening. He just goes down, doesn't he?

Listen, we can feel out of control and we can even feel like we're going down for the third time, but if we will just pray and share our burden with Jesus and pour our heart out to the Lord He will lift us up. He may not remove the burden right then, but we can rest assured He has heard and He is able to answer and He delights in answering!

Another thing this teaches is that prayer is **a privilege**. It never ceases to be an overwhelmingly incredible thing to me that God hears me when I pray. Prayer is a privilege that is given to us out of the amazing grace and infinite love of our heavenly Father.

**Verse 7** talks about the fact that sometimes the answers to our prayers are delayed. How many of you have been praying for something for a very, very long time and you are impatient to see an answer? Why does God sometimes delay the answers to our prayers?

I believe that many times God is seeking to grow us as we wait for the answer to our prayer.

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I also believe that God is delaying the answer to our prayers because He's being patient with someone else. Sometimes our prayers don't concern just ourselves, but they concern other people, and we need to understand that He is seeking to work in the lives of those other people in ways we don't know about.

For instance, My husband and I have prayed for a long time about a situation in a little church in Louisiana where the preacher has gone out in left field theologically and we've wondered why God doesn't just remove him from that pulpit. Maybe God is seeking to patiently work in the life of that man to bring him to repentance! See, we just see that he needs to be removed, but God sees that he needs to repent!

We talked about some contrasts between the woman and the believer and the judge and our heavenly Father, but I believe the greatest contrast is one we didn't mention...and that is that the woman came to a **court of law**, but God's children come to a **throne of grace**...and Jesus asks in **verse 8** a question that doesn't even seem to fit...

**"...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"**

That's a good question, isn't it? If He were to come back today, would He find faith in your home?...in your family?...in your heart and soul and life? We saw last week that we don't need much to start with, that our **little faith** will grow if we'll just submit it to the Father's will.

So, this parable is teaching us by contrast that unlike the poor widow who had to beg this unjust judge, we can know that our Father **wants** to hear our prayers and **will answer** our prayers in His timing and in His way...

## **Verses 9-14...**

What a familiar old parable is this!

Two men went into the temple to pray.

The Pharisee, prayed to himself. He informed all who would listen how righteous and good and obedient he was. He trusted in his own goodness. The Jews were required to fast only once a week, but he fasted twice a week! He thanked God he wasn't like other men...swindlers, unjust, adulterers, tax-gatherers.

Do you think God was impressed with this man's prayer?

Then, there was the tax-gatherer, the man this Pharisee was glad he wasn't... but should have been.

The tax-gatherer in humility, not even wanting to lift his eyes to heaven, beat upon his breast and acknowledged **who he was...he was a sinner**. He acknowledged **what he needed...he needed mercy**.

And Jesus said it was the publican, the tax-gatherer, who left the temple that day justified. **The Pharisee's pride condemned him. The publican's humble faith saved him.**

David said God doesn't delight in sacrifices as much as He delights in a broken spirit. David said God isn't pleased with burnt offerings as much as He is pleased with a contrite heart.

A broken and contrite heart God will in no way despise. And God had regard for this publican's broken spirit and had no regard for this Pharisee's **"righteous lifestyle."**

## **Verses 15-17...**

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Jesus wants folks to come to Him as little children. I believe more than anything this means we're to come trusting.

We said a few weeks ago that little children don't even understand the virgin birth...and they can still be saved. And we said the virgin birth is a stumbling block to many adults because since they don't understand it they don't believe it.

Listen, if we have to understand all the things of God to believe we will never be saved! I came to understand many years ago that I will never understand the deep things of God. I don't fret over that.

That doesn't stop me from trying to understand...but I believe God's Word when I understand it and I believe God's Word when I don't! Little children just believe...and we should too.

## **Verses 18-19...**

This is the story of a young man who seemingly had it all! But, just because a person has it all going for him doesn't mean he can automatically be accepted in the kingdom of God. Jesus deals with each person individually and truthfully.

This young man asked Jesus, "What shall I do to obtain eternal life?" Let's see how Jesus dealt with this young man... Jesus knew this young man had a problem and He addressed His problem and let's see how He did it.

### **1) Jesus emphasized the character of God.**

"Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

Jesus knew this young man looked upon himself as good. He thought he was a good man and he thought Jesus was a good man. He used the word "good" very loosely. And Jesus said there is not one good but God.

### **Jesus isn't saying He's not good...Jesus is saying He is God!**

If Jesus is not God, Jesus is not good! We have a choice...either Jesus is God or Jesus is not good, because He himself said so!

This young man didn't even hear what Jesus just said. It may be that had he really heard what Jesus was saying the rest of the conversation may not have even taken place, or it certainly would have gone much differently. If he had accepted Jesus as God, he would not have been so impressed with his own goodness!

Now, this young man **was** good outwardly! He was eager. **Mark** tells us he came running. He was enthusiastic. He was humble. **Mark** tells us he came and knelt. He had position. He had possessions. Yet, he is kneeling before a Galilean peasant.

He is also *courageous*. He didn't come to Jesus **by night** like Nicodemus did. He came to Jesus **in broad daylight** where everybody could see him.

He was also *discerning*. He called Jesus "Good Teacher" or "Good Master."

He was also *spiritually minded*. He didn't come and ask for health or more wealth. He came and asked about eternal life.

Outwardly, he **was** clean! He had kept all the commandments from his youth up. You could have trusted this man. He would have been a good neighbor. He would have been a good business associate.

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He was also *ambitious*...he had reached the top of the ladder at an early age. Why, **Time Magazine** would have probably had him on their cover as "the man of the year."

But, Jesus turned the focus **away** from this young man and **to** the character of God! Jesus was telling this young man that as good as he thought he was and as great as he looked on the outside,

1) there was no one good but God...

2) the inside of a person is more important than the outside...

See, nobody is going to "behave himself into the kingdom of heaven." Neither the Pharisee we have just seen nor this young man was going to be "good enough" for the kingdom of heaven.

Why? Because only saved sinners enter the kingdom of heaven. It's only when we see the holiness of God that we can see that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

Jesus said He didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance!

Your goodness cannot save you. This man, all of his life had believed that it could! But, Jesus brought this man into an awareness of the character of God! "Only God is good."

## 2) Jesus emphasized the commandments of God.

**Verses 20 and 21...**

This man had a **distorted** idea of the character of God and therefore, he had a **diminished** idea of the commandments of God.

Why did Jesus bring up the commandments? Because Jesus is showing this young man that he cannot be saved by keeping the commandments.

Listen as I read

**Galatians 2:16:** "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."

Is that plain enough? You are not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. Yet, the Law is an essential part of salvation.

Why did God give the Law if the Law doesn't save you? The Law of God gets you ready to be saved. It was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ!

**Romans 3:20** tells us that by the law is the knowledge of sin. The law is given that we might know that we're sinners. What is sin? John tells us in

**1 John** that sin is the transgression of the Law. That's what sin is! God **gives** His law...you **break** that Law and **that's** sin!

See, the Law demands holiness! And you and I are not holy! The Law demands perfection! And you and I are not perfect! The Bible tells us if we break one of the commandments, we're guilty of breaking them all!

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And we're going to see in a moment that the young man indeed had broken the Law.

And the cross of Jesus Christ means absolutely nothing to a lost person until he understands that on the Cross Jesus was satisfying the righteous demands of the Law!

Not only did Jesus emphasize the **character** of God and the **commandments** of God to this young man, but

### 3) Jesus emphasized the commitment to God...

The Bible says the Law is spiritual. This young man had only **outwardly** kept the Law...but he hadn't kept it **inwardly**.

The Law said adultery is not permitted. But, Jesus said anyone who looks upon someone with lust is committing adultery in his heart.

The Law says we shouldn't kill...but Jesus said if we're angry with our brother we're guilty of murder.

Here was a young man who said, "Oh, I've **not** done that and that and I **have** done that and that..." but he was at the same time eaten up with a sin. It was the sin of **idolatry**. He had another god in his life and it was the god of gold...it was the god of material possessions.

#### Verse 22...

"...sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Now, why did Jesus ask him to do this? He may not ask you and me to do that...so why did He ask this young man to do it? That's not a requirement today...to make ourselves penniless to be saved.

#### Verse 23-24...

What is a man's god? Whatever he trusts in...that's his god. Mark tells us this young man wasn't only rich but he trusted in his riches...**Mark 10:24**...

Therefore in a sense, he hadn't kept **any** of the commandments. What is the greatest commandment? Jesus said it was to love God with all your heart. Well, if a man has another god, is he loving God with all his heart? Of course not! See, he has an idol in his heart.

And so when Jesus mentions the commandments he is showing this young man that only **outwardly** had he kept the commandments. He was only **outwardly** committed to God because he had another god in his life!

By the way, theoretically speaking, there are three ways we can go to heaven.

Number one, **we can die before the age of accountability**. Little babies or young children who die before they really know they're sinners and need saving die and go to heaven. Do you understand that? Well, then that shows you're past the age of accountability.

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Number two...**we can keep the law.** This is theoretically speaking. We've already seen that keeping the law is an impossibility.

Number three...**we can accept by faith the grace of God and allow the blood of the Lord Jesus to wash away all our sins and satisfy a holy God.**

The last thing I want us to see about Jesus' conversation with this young man is that

### **3) Jesus emphasized the conversion to God...**

#### **Verse 23...**

It's not enough for us to see that we're guilty. There comes the time when a man must make a choice. This man had to choose between Jesus and his riches. This man had to forsake his old god to come to Jesus. See, you can't have two gods... "No man can serve two masters." You can't do it. I can't do it. No one can do it.

"Either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other...you cannot serve God and mammon." (Mammon – riches, wealth...)

This young man wanted it all! He'd been used to acquiring things and he wanted to simply tack Jesus Christ on to what he had acquired. He had everything else and since he had everything else, let's just get eternal life too!

This reminds us of Simon the sorcerer in the book of **Acts** when he came to Peter and John and wanted to pay them for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter and John rebuked Simon said and told him his heart wasn't right before God!

"I'll keep my **old god** and I'll get the **new God**. I just want it all!" But, Jesus said, "You can't have two gods. You'll have to forsake the old god. And you'll have to get your heart before God!"

**This man needed a conversion to God! What is a conversion to God? You know what the word convert means?**

It means **to turn**. It's basically the word for repentance...**a change of mind that leads to a change of conduct.**

There is no such thing as an unrepentant man going to heaven. And this young man became very sad when he heard these things because he wasn't willing to turn from his riches.

**Mark** tells us Jesus loved him! You might think Jesus was being hard on him...but **Jesus wasn't interested in making this man happy...He was interested in making him holy.**

Jesus wasn't telling him to give everything up and have nothing! Jesus was telling him how he could gain everything! Jesus said, "And you will have treasure..." Jesus wasn't this man's enemy. Jesus loved him. And He loved him so much that he wouldn't cut any corners.

There must be conversion and there must also be commitment. "And come take up the Cross and follow Me." That is commitment. That's the heads and tails of Christianity. Repentance and faith.

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Unless something happened that we don't know about, this young man died trying to hold onto his riches.

Riches cannot save us. Religion cannot save us. Repentance...turning away from our sins and by faith trusting in the grace of Christ...this is what saves us!

## **Verses 24-30...**

It's very difficult for one who has plenty of this world's riches to realize his need and to come to God as a poor, poverty-stricken sinner. Think about it...there are some, but only some of the world's wealthy people who are real Christians...

**But, the good news is that the things impossible with men are possible with God!**

Peter, bless his heart, says, "What about us? We've left it all to follow You."

And Jesus says something very interesting...He says, "**Oh, you'll receive much more than you've given up...**"

**Mark** tells us Jesus said the return would be a hundredfold.

We've heard it said and the older I get the truer I believe it is...  
that at the end of our life we're not going to say, "Oh I wish I'd made more money. I wish I'd been more successful in my business. I wish I hadn't spent so much time in prayer and in church and in the Word of God."

We're going to say, "Oh, how I wish I'd been more unselfish with my time and my talents and my money. I wish I had yielded myself more to the leading of the Holy Spirit. I wish my life had counted more for the kingdom of God."

May we learn from this lesson how we should pray and how we should come humbly before Jesus and how we should totally commit our lives to Jesus.