

Jesus Encourages His Followers to Trust Him for Justice Luke 18:1-8

by David Servant

Jesus encourages His followers to trust Him for justice, even in the face of persecution, by reminding them that God's justice will eventually be seen, and that perseverance in prayer is key.

Scripture: Luke 18:8

Topics: "Persecution", "Prayer"

Description

David Servant preaches about the reality of persecution faced by Jesus' followers throughout history, ranging from mild to severe forms of mistreatment. He addresses the common question of why God allows His people to be persecuted, emphasizing reasons such as giving persecutors a chance to repent, testing the faith of believers, fostering spiritual growth, and preparing for eternal rewards. Jesus encourages persistence in prayer for justice, assuring that God, the perfectly just Father, will bring about justice for His people in His perfect timing.

Transcript

In many places around the world over the last two thousand years, Jesus' followers have been persecuted. Some persecution is not too difficult to take, such as when someone lies about you to hurt your reputation as a Christian. But sometimes persecution can be very harsh, for example, if you lost your job for following Christ, or were kicked out of your home, or perhaps were even tortured and martyred for your faith. Any Christian in that kind of a situation begins to question why his heavenly Father is allowing the people who are persecuting him to get away with it. It's not fair, and since God is fair, why doesn't He punish the evildoers and stop their persecution?

Because the world will grow even worse as the time of Jesus' return draws closer, persecution against Christians will increase, and thus more and more of God's people will be crying out to Him for justice "day and night" (Luke 18:7). We know, of course, that eventually God will act in justice against those who persecute His people, but it won't happen as soon as those who are being persecuted would like. They will be tempted to doubt God's justice, give up hope and quit praying. Some may even be tempted to quit following Jesus.

But Jesus wants all of His persecuted people to be encouraged, and that's why He told this story of the persistent widow. Because she didn't give up, but rather, kept persisting in her quest for justice, she got

what she wanted from a godless and uncaring judge. Jesus' point is this: If that widow got justice from a godless judge through her persistence, how much more will God's persistent people obtain justice from their perfectly just and caring heavenly Father? He will, as Jesus said, bring about justice for them quickly. Maybe not as quickly as they'd like, but quickly as far as God is concerned.

Q. Why do you suppose God allows His people to be persecuted for even a minute? Why doesn't He judge persecutors immediately?

A. There may be several reasons. First, He is merciful toward the persecutors and wants to give them time to repent and be saved. Once they die and go to hell, they will never have another chance. When the persecutors experience the love of the Christians they persecute, who return good for evil, they may very well come to their senses and receive Jesus.

Second, God can use persecution to test His people. Those whose faith in Jesus is fake are exposed when they are persecuted. They quit following Jesus. Perhaps that's why Jesus asked at the end of today's story, "But when I, the Son of Man, return, how many will I find who have faith?" (Luke 18:8).

Third, God can use persecution to help His children grow spiritually and become more like Jesus. Persecution gives us a chance to obey His command to love our enemies and develop the fruit of the Spirit. At the same time, we can prove our love for Him as we endure.

Finally, because God lives in a timeless realm, and because He knows all about the glorious eternity that we will experience, His perspective of persecution is different from ours. He will reward us in His kingdom for the persecution we experience now. When that time comes, we might wish that we had experienced more persecution on earth!

Q. Do Jesus' comments about persistence in prayer apply to every prayer we might pray?

A. No, they don't. We know they apply when we're praying for justice but not seeing immediate answers. However, when someone is praying for salvation, for example, he only needs to pray one time in faith and immediately receive what God has promised. This would be true for other things God has promised as well, such as the Holy Spirit (see Luke 11:13).

Application: If persecutors of Christians don't repent, you can be sure they will be punished fairly in hell when they die. Jesus even promised some persecuted Christians in the ancient city of Philadelphia that He would force their persecutors to bow down at their feet (see Revelation 3:9).

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