

Always to Pray and Faint Not

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Date: 16 October 2022

- [0 : 00] Will I please join me back in Luke chapter number 18? Even so come Lord Jesus. When the last statements in our Bible, in the last scriptures at the end of Revelation, we see that. That expression, even so come Lord Jesus, ought to be something that is upon our lips. It ought to be upon our hearts at all times. It should be the great desire of our heart.
- A couple weeks ago we had Brother Ashley last week, but before that, and looking at Luke 17, I was really working in my heart to know that that ought to be the mindset, that ought to be the worldview of a Christian is looking and desiring his return.
- I created a playlist on Spotify of songs that helped remind me about Jesus returning. So this week I listened to Jesus is Coming Soon by the Oak Ridge Boys, and I listened to different songs that were throughout.
- If you would have come in my office, you would have said, I know what he's studying, I know what he's thinking about. We said back when we were at the campfire, the council of the campfire that many of us men had not long ago, on a men's retreat, the conversation came to talking about Jesus coming back and how little it's spoken about.
- [1 : 15] And the conclusion that we came to, the treaty that we all signed on that day, is that Jesus coming back isn't just something that should show up when I preach from Luke chapter number 17 or 18, but it should show up in conversations in our foyer.
- It should come in conversations with our kids. It should be happening all the time. It should be something that we are mindful of and something that we are wanting. We're wanting him to come and take the church out.
- The tribulation will come and then we will lead us to the day that his kingdom will be here on this earth. It ought to be the great desire of our hearts. So Luke chapter number 18 is a call to prayer, but more specifically, it's not just a call to any type of prayer.
- It is a prayer of surely come Lord Jesus, come quickly. It is a prayer that we would speak, that we would want to see him to come. We want him to come and set things in order, believing that we cannot live our life as God has intended without a proper understanding and appreciation for the Lord's return.
- We will not have the right mind set. We will not have the right worldview, the right understanding of life, if we do not desire his kingdom to come.
- [2 : 30] So verse number one, it says, And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint. We ought to be praying and looking for the Lord's return.
- You know, we should never skip an ought by the words of Jesus. If Jesus says ought, we should pay attention. If I was going to make a dad joke here, I would say we're getting an ought it by Jesus, okay?
- We're getting an ought it by Jesus. He is saying, this is something that should be part of your life. Don't you know that Jesus knows what is best for his disciples?
- As he is preparing them and as he is training them, he is telling them, this is what you ought to be praying. This is what you ought to be doing. This is the next step you should be taking.

As you follow me, when I am gone, this should be part of your life. This should be part of the church's life, that they would be praying for my return. He knows what is best for us.

[3 : 30] He knows what is best for you. He knows what is best for me. And I pray that when Jesus says we ought to do something, every one of us that profess that he is Jesus Christ, the Lord, would say that is a step.

That is going to be something that I'm going to integrate, that I'm going to make part of my life. So we ought to pray. But what manner ought we to pray? Verse 7, And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

Before the service, I was talking about the use of this building throughout the week and how it gets used in many different ways. But I have a friend in Lawrenceville, and when they built the new building, some of the people, the older people in their church, said that they remember a time where the church was always left open.

So that if you ever wanted to come to church to pray, you would have the ability to do that. You wouldn't have to find somebody to open the door, but the church would always be open for prayer. I know that's a challenge in the time in which we live in, that there was a time gone by where people would have respected a church building more so, and maybe that would have been done.

And so they built a prayer room on the side of their building that was available for you to come and pray at all times. But even with that being said, this description, and shall God not avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him.

[4 : 54] Do you think that's a very good description of a church today in America? I'm sure that you're aware of this, but there are Christian martyrs that are crying out to the Lord today, that in the world that we live in, there are brothers and sisters in Christ that are crying out today, that will die a martyr's death today.

There are people that as we sit here, enjoying all the wonderful things of Christian fellowship, they're laying face down. They would like to be in a church building, but they're not able to move.

They're just crying out to God. And then there's some of you that in here, that you even come, and even though everything looks fine, even though you're not laying on the ground, in your spirit, in your heart, you're crying out to God, and you're saying, God, there's something in this world that it's just not right, that I'll never be able to set right.

And we cry out to him. On the platform here Sunday night, Miss Ashley spoke about how her son wanted for the Lord to take him home.

He would wake up every day in pain, and he would even say that God, he would sign and say that God is stubborn. Some of you might not be comfortable with that. That idea that a person would want to see the Lord that much may be something that just didn't seem right with you.

[6 : 12] But we should be more concerned when we love the things of the world than the idea that the coming of Jesus would sound like a deliverance. It would sound more like a disruption to us.

We've loved this world too much. We don't look for his coming. That's one reason that maybe our prayers aren't offered often for his return, but another one may be we just become hopeless, that we're in despair.

We have fainted. We're losing heart. Verse 22 says, And he said unto the disciples, The day will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you shall not see it.

That's what it said in chapter number 17. There's a day that will come where you desire to see the Son of Man. This is an expression to see Jesus. And there will also be Christians who live in such a way, if the Lord would return, there would be like a small child asking if they could have just another hour of playing before it is bedtime.

There's just something going on. That's your thought, right? Lord, I don't really want you to come back until I can get this thing done. That's just demonstrating that we have loved the things of the world beyond what we should do.

[7 : 22] Any of your children do that? Just five more minutes. Just ten more minutes. They just love being awake more than they want to go to bed. And as parents, we say the opposite, right? Can we go to bed now? You would love the bedtime of your children.

So Jesus tells a story designed to encourage them to continue in prayer and not lose heart because that is a real possibility. We could really get to a place where we just become so discouraged that we just lose hope and despair.

But it is helpful in our Christian life and our walk to know that we can cry out to him and to ask for his return. It's been said by some, thankfully nobody in this room, and I pray nobody ever in this room, that would say that teaching kids that Jesus could return at any moment is damaging to them.

That it isn't healthy for them mentally to live with this unknown that Jesus would come back. And I would expect, if the Lord tarries, that that kind of speech that I'm giving right now would be considered hate speech.

That it would be considered traumatizing the children that we speak about it. In the world in which we live in, I am so grateful that I get to tell my children that Jesus will come someday and set everything right.

[8 : 38] I do not know how to teach them how to walk through a world in which I did not believe that there is Jesus who will come and make everything right. I don't think that it's harmful. I think it's the most wonderful thing in all of the world.

It's something that I hope my grandkids hear about. I hope that nobody in my family ever walks through this world and doesn't understand that one day Jesus will return and set all things right.

Verse number 2 said, "...saying there was a city, a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man." So there's going to be a contrast given here between a lousy judge and a loving Jesus.

So when it says that there is a judge and he doesn't fear God and he doesn't fear man, the original hearers would say, okay, whoever is going into that courtroom, they're going to be in trouble.

This is a bad start to the story. If you have a judge and he not only doesn't fear God, he doesn't even fear man. This is the setup. I don't want to know who goes before the judge.

[9 : 36] Then we're going to learn that a widow, somebody that was vulnerable, somebody that didn't have an advocate, someone who was often mistreated, somebody without influence or resources is going to walk into that courtroom.

And so what a setup here. An unloving judge who doesn't fear God and then a vulnerable widow in our story. But then as we read, so as the story goes that Jesus gives, the woman comes and she pleads for him to avenge her, to avenge her family.

But the judge has no interest in doing that. He doesn't care about right and wrong. He doesn't care about the family. He just wants her to leave. In verse 5 it says, Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

This persistence of this woman avails in this story. There's few things like the persistence of a woman. And all the men said amen, right?

It was on Thursday night. Dylan and Greg were looking for something back before the service and they just couldn't find it. And I said, I'm going to find this thing, okay? And I went back there and in a few minutes I found the thing they were looking for and it was right near where they had been looking.

[10 : 53] And Greg says, Trent out-mommed us, all right? Which means that, you know, that a mom just says, I'm going to find this thing and then I find it. Where I just kind of walk around like, I can't find it.

And she's like, well, it's not going to be outside. It's not going to be where you're at. Like, what are you doing? Like, I don't know. When I look for things, I just kind of think, if I walk around saying I'm looking for it, then it's going to show up. But that persistence, that diligence that this woman demonstrates, that she says, when that judge saw her, this woman ain't going away.

She's going to continue showing up persistently and I have to do something about it. So here's what the judge is saying in summary about the persistent woman.

You know, even though I don't fear God and I don't respect people, even though I don't fear God and I don't respect people, this woman is driving me crazy. And just to get her out of my hair and so she doesn't wear me out because she's troubling me, I'm going to give her justice because I don't want to see her again.

That is the nature of that judge. So what is the moral of the story? If it ended at verse number six, we might be left debating about what Jesus meant. He says, And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

[12 : 05] If the story ended without any commentary about Jesus, maybe the application I would give you today is I would call all of you to the altar and I would say we are not leaving until Jesus comes back.

That our persistence is going to force his hand. But thankfully Jesus doesn't stop here in the story and you're not left to my speculation. He's going to explain to us what he wanted to learn in the story that he gave.

Jesus tells you how this story helps believers who feel hopeless not to lose heart and to keep on praying. So Jesus is going to give you three reasons not that you should not lose heart.

He's going to give you three reasons you should not faint. And I would encourage you, write them down or underline them in the Bible on our church website, visionbaptist.com forward slash outlines.

The outlines are there in case you missed one and you'd like to go back and look at it and follow it. Not because they're my words, but when Jesus, our creator, our Lord and King, has said I'm going to give you some information here on how the world works, you ought to pay attention, okay?

[13 : 12] And that's what makes preaching and teaching the Bible different than anything else that we do or a TED Talk because I speak with authority. Not my authority, but the authority of God's word, which is this is how you ought to live your life.

Case closed is Jesus' words. So first of all, I want you to see here is that our God is not like the unjust, unloving judge. Our God is not like this unjust, unloving judge.

And every one of us ought to say amen to that. What do you expect from God? Verse 7, And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

A question is asked about what we believe about our expectations of God that act on our behalf. What do you expect out of God? This is the way that he would see you.

See, the problem is that when we're in great despair, we question God's intentions and goodwill towards us. But God is more ready to answer your prayer than you are to ask it.

[14 : 17] God is more ready to answer your prayer than you are to ask it. He is not a lousy judge. He is a loving Savior who wants to hear you.

Our God is good beyond the comprehension of good. Take a moment. Take all your mental energy that you have. Take that little ounce of caffeine you got in the coffee. Take everything available.

Stop thinking about everything that you can. Minimize every window for a moment, okay? I know we have a lot of IT people here. We're trying to get everybody on board. Parent, mom, stop making that shopping list, all right?

It will wait for you here in a moment. Take all your mental energy and think about what you believe the definition of good is. And you're at an elementary level on the goodness of God.

None of us in here. If I was to start the day and tag, and then somebody else, when I got tired, came up here and began to speak, and then somebody else became up here, we would not ever come close to exhausting how good our God is.

[15 : 19] We're having a contrast here between a lousy judge who only cares about himself, who doesn't care about this woman, who only does things in that manner, but we have a God who loves us. Most of the world has been given a wrong understanding of the goodness of God.

They may have this as a slide, but I'm going to read it to you slowly, something that I read this week by an unbelieving person, a poet, a naturalist named Diane Ackerman. She says this concerning life.

I don't want to come to the end of my life and find that I just live the length of it. I want to live the width of it as well. Isn't that powerful?

It really is. I mean, she's expressing something. She doesn't have a framework, a Christian framework in which to express it, but she's saying what so many people really want. I don't want to just get to the length of my life, but I want to get to the width of it.

If I could speak to that woman today, I would like to share with her that she will never come to the width of her life without knowing the breadth, the length, and the depth, and the height of God's love for her.

[16 : 25] Ephesians 3, 18 and 19, may be able to comprehend with all saints that is the breadth, the length, the depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all fullness of God.

Starting next Sunday night and the Sunday nights to come, I have no doubt there's going to come people in here for a group share that understand the length of life, but they haven't understand the width that's available.

Their lives have become very small where all they can think about is how the length of life had been over for a loved one, and they have a faulty view of who God is. They see him as a lousy judge.

They see him as somebody who's impersonal and uncaring, and they can be introduced to the breadth, the length, and the depth, and the height of God's love, which is seen first and foremost at Calvary and at the cross.

If you want to know if he cares about you, just turn to the cross and look at it. For you math nerds in there, do any of you identify as a math nerd in here? Can I see your hands in here?

[17 : 27] Some of you should have your hands up. All right, thank you, Luther. Thank you for being honest, all right? Some of you pointed at somebody, okay? A math nerd in here. Just to kind of help you remember, there's a Pythagorean theorem, one of the few things I remember because it's so much fun, which tells you if you know two sides of a triangle, you can help figure out what the third one is.

You're never going to know the width and the enjoyment of your life if you don't know the depth of God's love. Life is never going to make sense for you if you have a wrong view. So before we move forward, I want you to see God is not the lousy judge of the story.

He is unlike that judge. Believer, do not believe God's waiting to vindicate and for his son's return is a sign of apathy. Don't believe his not coming things. He does not care.

Verse seven, And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night, though he bear along with them. Though he bear along with them. God is bearing along with us.

God is patient. 2 Peter 3.15 And an account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. It's salvation. Even as our beloved brother Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you.

[18 : 35] He goes on to tell us in that same chapter what he is waiting for. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

T.W. Mason tells a story that comes from old rabbis, and this is the story. There was a king who was a very compassionate king. He wanted to rule his people with compassion, so he determined that his army would be stationed many miles from the city.

And when he was asked by the wise men of the city why he would station his army many miles from the city, because they would be so far removed from civil disobedience that would get away with things, and they wouldn't be able to get there in time, he said this, according to the rabbis, that on any occasion of such rebellion in the city, it would take a long time to bring the soldiers here, and this will be time for the rebels to come to their senses.

You see, God keeps his wrath at a distance in order for Israel to have time to repent, and not just Israel, but Gentiles as well. We say, God, we want you to come back, but if you're going to be longsuffering towards us, towards us rebel people, until you come back, I'm going to keep telling people, he's coming and he's coming soon.

In his longsuffering, we have our ministry of reconciliation. In his longsuffering, we are given another opportunity. I shared with you the personal story, how I regretted not telling my childhood pastor how grateful I was, what he taught me about the Lord's return, how he taught me as a teenager to be looking for it, how he taught me that I should expect it in my lifetime, that I ought to see the Lord's return, and how it ought to make up, it ought to affect every one of my decisions.

[20 : 24] Well, I regret not showing my appreciation to him, but I'm so thankful that he was not a loved one that I never spoke to about the Lord's return. That would come with a great sorrow and great regret, that there's people who don't have that information that you and I have.

And as we could argue it at length and different details, there's many people who don't know just the simple truth, is that he is coming back, and that there's a kingdom that is coming, and that we ought to make sure that the whole world knows this.

We continue here. So that's great news. Our loving Savior is not like the lousy judge. But that's not all. All right? Who's that guy in the infomercials? There's more. All right?

There's more to this story. The second thing I want you to know here is we are not like the widow. You are not like the widow. Verse 7, And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night, his own elect.

I do not want you to miss the richness and the wonder of this verse due to the fear of the confusion on the word elect. It is a wonderful word for us believers found all throughout Scripture.

[21 : 31] It refers to us in the making of the church in Ephesians 1, 4, and 5, And then now in verse number 7, it tells us how this is possible.

There's many things that I could tell you about that.

I would love to talk to you about. A study of the parable of the wedding that Jesus gives in Matthew 22 will help give understanding. But let me put it simply here because I'm wanting you to help appreciate this wonder.

Because the judge was talking to a widow that he had no heart for, right? But we are talking to Jesus as saying, I have a heart for you. You are my elect. You are my beloved. You are my children.

The simple example I like to give is that before my son started in the band in sixth grade, we received the letter from the band teacher. And the band teacher said, at our Christmas or at our winter concert, the kids are going to be playing at this high level.

[22 : 41] This is all that the kids are going to do. Well, what was amazing about it was he didn't even know who was going to be in the band yet. Nobody had even signed up to be in the band yet.

And he was telling what they were predestined to become because his confidence was not in those children, but his confidence was in his ability to perform.

That we are now found in Christ. That we have put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. And now we are his own. All that has been promised to us has been promised to us in Christ.

And that's such a wonderful thing. That's why in Christ is the most common description of us as believers in the Bible, that we are found in him. And so we have a different relationship.

We are now found in Christ. We are now part of that church. We're now part of that group in which he has made promises to. And they were going to be kept by him.

[23 : 38] So unlike the unjust judge, our judge loves us and is personally involved. He loves us and he is personally involved. Which brings me to the third truth.

The last truth, which is this. Jesus will come and set everything right. Jesus will come and set everything right. Verse 8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall we find faith on the earth. When will he avenge? The answer there is speedily. He will do it in a speedy fashion.

So people question over the last 2,000 years. So let me allow the Apostle Paul's words by inspiration in 2 Peter 3, 8 be your answer to, is it really speedily?

This is what he says. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

[24 : 35] We cannot accuse God of not being truthful. He will come in due season. The last verse of number 17 that we looked at, it says when everything is in place, it says that the eagles, the birds, the vultures, they will circle, they will show up when the time and things are placed.

And we also said that there's nothing that we are waiting on, the preeminent return of Christ. It will find the unbelieving person like a thief in the night, but us believing people, we look to the clouds.

We look for it all the time. We know that it's coming. It should not be taking us by surprise. We would say, I thought this was coming, right? If we had time to say anything in the moment, all right?

But we are so waiting for that return. So secondly, not when will it come, but how will it come? The Son of Man cometh. Jesus is equating the full answer of these people's cries for justice in the midst of their hopelessness and despair with his coming.

Everybody is fighting for justice these days, but they don't realize that justice will only come when the real judge shows up. So if you want to pray for justice in this world, you pray, surely Lord Jesus, come quickly, because that's when this world will find it.

[25 : 47] And so the Lord may not come when you want him, but he will always be on time. And he is saying to us, I will take care of everything. No prayer will go unanswered.

There will be no ultimate hopelessness for my people. However hard your situation is now, I'm coming to set everything right. And then Jesus ends with a question. It's the same question that we should end with today.

So we have seen three wonderful answers to our despair, which is one, our God is not like the unjust, unloving judge. He has a personal relationship. He cares with us.

He cares about us. And we are not like the widow. We are not helpless without resources. We are God's children. He has died for us. We have been sealed into the day of redemption to the Holy Spirit.

He has laid claim to our lives. We know him and that Jesus will set everything in order when he comes. So here's the question that Jesus asked after telling us what he's going to teach, giving that story.

[26 : 48] Then verse number eight. And I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on earth? Shall he find faith on earth?

So Jesus isn't asking, when he will return, will he find any believing people on earth? That's not what he's believing. He knows that there's Christians and that we see from that, even though broad is the way and narrow is the way, we know that there'll be Christians when the Lord returns.

There's many things we don't know about his return. We don't know if America will still be a country. We don't know what will be in place. We don't know how bad things will be. We don't know if we will be in caves.

We don't know any of the things that will be going on. But one thing we do know is that there will be people that have put their faith and trust in Jesus that'll be waiting for his return. But another thing that he's not asking is, will there be a reason for people to lose hope in his return?

And there's not a reason that people should ever lose hope in his return. That's not what he's saying. What Jesus is asking is, when he returns, will he find us praying and waiting for his return?

[27 : 55] I don't have this in my notes, but I just thought about, remember when Jesus asked the disciples to pray and he goes and he leaves them and he comes back and he says, could you not watch and pray with me for this time?

When Jesus comes and finds us, will he find us as a church? Let's just be real personal. Not every church, not everybody. Will he find this group of people that have organized themselves to be a church?

Whether it be us, our children, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren, or those that they reach, will they find us faint and heart and weary, discouraged and despair, or will they find us waiting and praying for his return and ready for it?

So Jesus is asking, when he returns, will he find us praying and waiting for his return? The reason why we do not despair in this world is not because of us. I have plenty of reasons for despair, but in him, as believers, we may wrestle with feelings of hopelessness, but there is no reality to our hopelessness.

As Christians, we're given rights to many things. There's one thing you have no right to. You have no right to hopelessness. You no longer get to make claims to hopelessness.

[29 : 07] We are not a people that can render our garment because we have a high priest. We're not people who do not have answers. We can never be a hopeless, despairing people because we know that he sits on his throne and that one day he will come and rule and reign and we wait for it.

The way to be ready for his coming is what? It is to trust and to obey. The no is coming. Trust and obey. Just like he told the disciples.

Disciples, this is what you ought to do so that you don't lose heart. You ought to be waiting for my return. You ought to be praying for it. You should be praying for the day that I will set things in order.

And disciples today, believers in Jesus Christ, I want to ask you, is that a walk that you're taking? Is that part of your life? And if not, I would like to challenge you to join me in saying this is going to be part of my life that I will watch and I will pray.

Let's pray together. Every head bowed, every eye closed, and Kristen will come and play the piano. I'm going to ask you to do something here in a moment. I'm going to ask you to stand with me and we'll sing, but I just want you to stand because I want you when you stand to realize that you're coming to a place of making a decision.

[30 : 20] If you're in here today and you're not a believer, today ought to be the day of salvation. You do not set the timeline. You do not set the table. He could return at any time and not find you as a person of faith.

And you need to make that decision. So would you please stand with me and continue to pray there in your seats, every head bowed, every eye closed. And as you're standing, let me first speak to you in here today.

If you do not know that your account has been settled, that you have been reconciled, that the death of Jesus Christ now has been placed upon your account, that you have been justified in him, with everything that I know, I'm going to ask you today to make that decision.

I want you to recognize it because there's a day that's coming where sitting through church and pretending to be ready is not going to be sufficient because when that day comes, he will know and you will know that the life that you have lived was one that was not yet prepared.

If that's you here today, nobody's looking around. The people in this room respect that too much. If you're in here today and that's you, as you raise your hand, not just acknowledging to me, but acknowledging to the God of heaven that you recognize that you are not prepared for that day.

[31 : 35] If you're in here today and that's you or you're watching online, you should cry out to God today. And you need to say, Father, I want you to prepare me for that day. I want your righteousness to be placed upon my account.

I want to follow Jesus. I'm repenting of my sins and I'm placing my faith and trust in you today. And that is the only way in which anybody will ever be prepared.

If that's what you're ready to do today, I would love to rejoice with you today. I'd love to get you some resources, some discipleship to tell you more about your walk with the Lord. Now, believer, I want to speak to you.

As this has worked in my heart, I pray that it would work in your heart as well. Shall we find faith on this earth? Remember, we ought to always pray and to not faint, not to lose heart.

Are you struggling with hopelessness and despair? Let me encourage you to come find a place and pray. Maybe you haven't prayed this prayer in some time because you've become entangled with the things of this world and you love creation over the Creator.

[32 : 38] And I would want you to be able to pray that prayer with a full heart. Would you find a place here at the altar and pray and just say, Father, it has been many years since I have prayed to you and prayed for your return, but today, I recognize that I have great hope in that and I pray that I want you to return, that there's nothing in this world, Lord, that I would love more than seeing you return.

Pray that every believer in here would take that step, that you would make that prayer right now and that would become part of the regular routine of your life because the things of this world are never going to make sense. There's so much room for discouragement and despair and bitterness if you're not mindful of the fact that there is a judge that is coming one day and he will set everything in order.

and there will allow you