

Pray and Don't Lose Heart **Luke 18:1-8**

As we saw last week, we live in this period of the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the Kingdom. And from v1 and v8, Jesus clearly sees that some things about living in this tension could make disciples lose heart and give up.

Losing Heart and Keeping Faith: What sort of things to do with living in this tension of the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the kingdom, could cause you to throw in the towel and quit the race?

Last week we saw that just getting absorbed by everyday life can cause our hearts to grow cold to Jesus. But in this parable Jesus' emphasis is different. Here it's not when everything is going well, but when things are not going well; and that can be a real cause for discouragement and losing heart. Some examples: when you want God to intervene, but it's not happening; when you face troubles or hardships; when you're praying for some outcome but it doesn't happen; when life, family, career don't go the way you want. All these things can cause us to lose heart.

But they can also cause prayer to dry up, and that can lead to a downward spiral because prayer is the means God has given us to connect and grow and receive His power in our lives.

So recognizing the danger, Jesus tells this parable, so we ought always to pray and not lose heart.

The Widow and the Judge: The judge has the kind of reputation no one should have. Neither God's law nor public opinion mean anything to him. The widow is weak and powerless. She has no one to plead her cause, and she has an adversary. And this woman is a picture of the first disciples and of you and me. We too have an adversary – either the circumstances of life that would cause us to lose heart, or satan who wants to devour us.

She came to the judge for justice, but he wouldn't listen. But she kept on coming until he did. She had one weapon, persistence, and she used it.

But the first point of the parable is that whilst we are like the widow – seemingly powerless, God is not like the judge. God loves us, cares for us and is for us. And if the unrighteous judge responds, don't you think God will too? Jesus asks. He will defend His chosen ones. In the end, our ability to finish the race does not depend on us, but on Him. And He hears when we pray. We may have to wait for the answer, but He still hears. But to be heard, you've got to pray.

Pray and Pray Again: Jesus closes the parable by asking, 'when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?' When Jesus comes He will be looking for those who have been looking for Him. He will be looking for those who have kept walking by faith, even when all the circumstances have been against them. And the way to do that is to be determined in prayer. Jesus is looking for followers who know God is their only hope and help. And it is that keeping on coming back that will keep you looking to Him and will mean you won't lose heart. You will cross the finish line.

And unlike Lot's wife, you won't be looking back when Jesus returns or you die; you'll be looking up, to the Coming King who vindicates you.