

Shall the Son of man find faith on earth?

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Bible Text: Luke 18:8

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The text for this evening is found in Luke 18 and I'd like to read the first eight verses of that chapter. Luke 18.

1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

Christ at this point in his ministry has actually begun the last slow journey from the borders of Galilee to the city of Jerusalem where he will be crucified and such were the times, not to mention the crisis which was before him and his disciples, that our Lord sees fit in this place to emphasize their need of prayer and this is the point of the parable which he tells them, that men ought always to pray and not to faint. The parable or story which he tells them has three characters in it: the first is the judge and the judge represents God but immediately we are struck not only with the similarity that as with a judge matters are brought before God that he might deal with them but there is a dissimilarity here because this particular judge in the story fears not God and regards not men. He's sometimes described as the unjust judge. And the second character is the widow and she is the one who comes with her complaint to the judge and comes with her heartfelt pleas for help and the widow represents God's people who are deprived so often of protection and support and love as she was, being a widow, and who are much oppressed and very needy as she was when she came to the judge. The third character is the adversary mentioned in verse 3 when she says to the judge, "Avenge me of mine adversary," and the adversary in the parable will represent Satan, of course, the great adversary and his human instruments, people he often uses to attack and to distress the

people of God, whoever seek to do them wrong. The point of the whole parable is that we need to pray and that if we do, prayer will be heard.

At the end of the parable, we are assured that God will avenge his elect and will avenge them speedily, that is, he will come in for them and he will vindicate his people, if not before, certainly at the end of time. And so that he will avenge them speedily leads Christ in thought to the great day which is the climax of history when evil will be overturned and God's people will be delivered from every ill. And with reference to that day, Christ says, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Will he find such faith as in this widow woman? Will he find the faith which is real and prayerful? The faith that sustains in all manner of trouble? It's a very personal question.

"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" I want to consider that question tonight. I'll do it under three headings. First of all, the Redeemer, "when the Son of man cometh." Secondly, the search, his search, "shall he find," what is implied he is looking for? And thirdly, our faith, "shall he find faith on the earth?" The Redeemer then, his search and our faith.

First of all the Redeemer. What does the text say of him? Well, it says this, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh." Now, Christ at this present time is out of sight at least physically. We do not see him. His speech is not audible. His body cannot be touched, felt in any way. He is, physically speaking, in heaven. But the Scriptures affirm that there is a time coming when that will no longer be the case, when the invisible Christ shall appear once again when we shall see him with our eyes, we shall hear his voice and we will know his immediate presence in a tangible way. As the Scripture put it in Hebrews 9:26-28, it says this, "he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." That means he shall re-appear. He appeared the first time when he came into this world to save us, he will appear the second time when he comes into this world to judge the children of men.

In Acts 1, we hear the angels say this, "this same Jesus shall come even as you did see him go," and on the Mount that day, they saw Christ in the body lifted up and beginning to move in an upward and heavenly direction until a cloud covered him from their sight and Scripture says, "He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God." Now, what was seen that day was the personal departing of Christ and the angel said, "This same Jesus shall come again in like manner," so what we are taught to anticipate is a personal returning of Christ.

That day he ascended visibly. They saw him go into heaven. But on the future day of which I speak, men shall see him coming visibly. He said himself he will come "in the clouds of heaven with power and with great glory," and in the book of Revelation it says that, "He cometh in the clouds and every eye shall see him." What a sight that will be when he is beheld in the clouds again, the clouds of glory above us in the heavenly region, coming with all the honor the Father can give him, with all the power that can be conferred upon him and with an angelic train which will fill the skies and our vision. He

will come with all his holy angels and they shall be his attendants on that auspicious day. Christ then will come and that is assumed in these words, "when the Son of man cometh."

Now, it is clearly most certain that Christ is to return. We have his own promise for this in the Gospels when we are told that Christ says, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels." More brief and concise are his words in John 14 when he says, "I will come again." So we have certainty impressed upon us by virtue of his own promise that he is coming back. It's like someone who departs from us, a friend perhaps, and is journeying into some far country, distant place, and they say to us as they leave us at the airport, "Don't distress yourself. I will come back." Christ said the same, "I will come back." It is certain that he will for he never once lied and he cannot lie for that is the one thing God cannot do, he cannot lie.

So it is certain but it is certain also because of the ordinance, I refer to the Lord's Supper. When that is observed according to the words of institution in 1 Corinthians 11, "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until he come." We meet around the Table of the Lord as Christians here will do tonight to remember the Lord Jesus Christ, to remember an absent Christ, and Paul says this feast of the Lord's Supper will only be meaningful and relevant while he's absent but it will be made redundant when Christ returns. So we keep the feast until he come so it's not only the word that confirms the certainty of his return but the sacrament too seals that promise.

Then thirdly we have from the beginning of time something else that makes this certain and that is the prayers of true believers. The prayers of true believers from the beginning of the Christian era have been after this sort, "even so come Lord Jesus." The prayer found in Revelation 22 and all the prayers of faithful men and women offered from the beginning of the Christian age must be answered and totally answered. They have prayed that he would come and he will come and will not tarry.

A fourth thing that makes it certain is that Christ Jesus must be vindicated. We read in Philippians 2 that, "he humbled himself," appeared in the form of a servant, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," the lowest point of his humiliation. Paul goes on to say that God intends to exalt him and to exalt him in the way, "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." That will be his vindication. That will be the removing of his shame. That will be the bestowing of his glory upon him, "when things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth all confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." And it's at the Second Coming that that vindication shall take place and it must happen for his sake.

Lastly, it is certain because he must deliver his tried and suffering people and he must bring them into their ultimate blessedness and into the kingdom which has been prepared for them from before the foundation of the world otherwise their salvation has no consolation and the promise of God that they will be brought to heaven has no fulfillment. We have been saved now from the guilt of sin and in some measure from the power of sin but we are to be saved from the very presence of sin to be taken to a place where sin has no entrance and can find no place. To that end, Christ will come and it is

prerogative to lead his people into regions of eternal happiness through the gates of the kingdom of heaven. He shall certainly come.

So we have reference in Scripture to Christ and the nature of his return and the certainty of that return whatever men say. We go further now and we say it obviously will be a glorious event but he shall perform on that day the most glorious of his works. He is not coming to no purpose. He is coming with fixed intent and at the end, the greatest works of Christ will take place. What are they? One of the first works he will perform when he descends to this earth is to bring about universal resurrection. He will display his power over death and the grave. The hour is coming, isn't it, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they shall come forth. The believing dead shall be raised first. The dead in Christ shall rise first. They have priority because of who they are, his people. But that resurrection of the just shall be followed by the resurrection of the unjust when all others shall be quickened in the grave and bodies that have long since decomposed will under the miraculous power of God be restored. As Adam's body was at the first made from the dust of the ground, their bodies all over the world shall be reformed and refashioned by the almighty power of God and the earth shall be broken, graves shall be smashed. The prey shall be taken from death and men shall rise. Christ shall bring that to pass.

A second great work that he will do following that great event will be the gathering together of his believing people. We can scarce take the sight in but you must look now upon graveyards that have been ransacked, cemeteries that have been broken up, graves which have been opened and the bodies contained therein have been taken and they live. Multitudes upon multitudes of resurrected men in a moment separated by the power of Christ as he sends forth his angels to gather together his elect and out of this mass of resurrected bodies, he will assemble unto himself the great company of believing men and believing women and they shall be gathered unto him. We shall meet the Lord in the air. "I beseech you by our gathering together unto him," Paul says. Tremendous work.

Then thirdly, judgment, one of the grandest of his works. He shall find a seat upon the judgment bench and according to Matthew 25, "And before him shall be gathered all nations," and he is the one appointed to judge the world, that is, to determine the destiny of each and every soul of man. Their state will be reviewed by him. Their lives will be recalled by him. And their eternal dwelling place will be fixed by him, by that man whom God hath appointed. The world shall be judged.

The fourth work on that day will be the purging of the world by fire which shall have begun at his return. But this world in all its sin and spoiled by all of the evil which has overtaken it will be purged and purified by the fire of God so that all its wickedness will be consumed and the world shall appear as gold that is refined and as silver that is refined, looking like a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and never will creation have appeared so grand, beautiful and impressive as at that day. I venture to say that the new heaven and the new earth will be better than the one which Adam saw for in all things it becomes Christ to have the preeminence, and that new

heaven and new earth is to be the place where God's people will dwell and so the habitation shall be made by Christ.

Then the last work of which I will make mention is: he shall reign. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." Christ on that day will commence his reign on the new earth and over the heavens above. How glorious it shall all be for what is yet to take place. History is moving to its climax which will not be like the snuffing out of a firework but will be the greatest display of glory this world has ever seen, surpassing that of creation, the end of the world as we know it.

The question, of course, which lies with us is this: are you ready for that day? It is coming. We don't know when precisely but it is coming. It will take the whole world by surprise. It is coming and when these things take place, how will it be with you? Are you prepared? Are you ready to meet the Judge? Do you have peace with God? Have your sins been forgiven? Do you have a title to heaven? These are the issues. The Son of man cometh, the Redeemer.

Secondly, his search. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find what he is obviously looking for? Now, the times immediately preceding his return are described in Scripture as perilous times yet for all that, there will be believers remaining on the earth. These will be praying like the widow in the parable and manifesting faith. When the Son of man cometh, shall he find that?

His search. When Christ appears, he will be looking for something. He will investigate in order to discover. Now, he is the Lord of knowledge. His knowledge, the Bible says, is excellent; it is infinite. It is because he has a divine nature so that he's omniscient; he knows everything. But of our Lord Jesus Christ more may be said, that he particularly knows the hearts of men and women. He showed that when he was here. We read at the end of John 2 that at the time of his miracles "many believed in him but he did not commit himself to them for he knew what was in man," and on this stupendous day, he will search for what is in man and as no other can, he will find it or not find it. But his search will not be in vain; he will authoritatively discover if the essential matter is in the hearts of men and women; he will authoritatively discover faith.

When Christ walked this earth, he knew the thoughts of men. More than once in the Gospels it says, "Jesus knowing their thoughts said unto them." He replied not to their words but to their thoughts. And those that witnessed these things were confronted with his deity. Now, on this great day when he comes in power and great glory, expressing and displaying far more wonders than he did in the time that he was here the first on earth, on that day he will be able to look into the deep recesses of men's hearts and he won't err and he won't mistake but he will ascertain whether there has been a work of grace in that soul and whether there is faith. That's what he's looking for. Peter said to him once, "Lord, thou knowest all things."

It will be shown on this day that he knows all things and he knows, upon inquiry he knows whether or not a man has been converted, whether or not a man is still unconverted. He will arrive at that conclusion and he will not err and he cannot be deceived. His search will not be fruitless. "The secrets of men," the Bible says, on this great day, "the secrets of men shall be made manifest and he shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness and before him all things shall be naked and open." So he will know. When you stand in that assembled throng, he is going to come to you and he's going to put you under examination and investigation. He's going to search you as you have never been searched. A minister may say to you, "My friend, have you believed on the Son of God?" You may say wrongly, "I have. I have. I have!" and the minister can't ascertain whether what you say is the truth or whether it is a deceit. Christ won't need to ask questions. He will subject you to the most thorough search you have ever endured and within seconds he shall declare it, "There is faith in this man. There is no faith in this man." That's what he's looking for, the presence or absence of faith.

When you read the Gospels, that's what he was concerned about when he was here. How many times he said words like this, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Thy faith hath made thee whole. I have not seen such faith. Woman, great is thy faith! Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." He was taken up with faith and what will the end of his search be as far as you are concerned? Will he smile upon you and say, "Faith! I find it!" or will his countenance fall and with grief he will say, "There is no faith here in the heart of this man." What will it be for you then, my friend? Take the latter. If he finds that there is no faith in you, what will that mean? That there is no salvation for you. "He that believeth shall be saved." There is no everlasting life for you. "He that believeth shall have everlasting life." If the search proves that faith is nowhere to be found, it will go ill with you. You can only look for punishment. You can only look for judgment. You can only look for the abandonment and the desolation and the darkness of hell itself. When the Son of man cometh, shall he find what he is looking for in you?

The Redeemer, his search and, finally, our faith. When the Son of man cometh and he makes inquiry, will he discover our faith? Now, in the Greek there is a definite article here, "shall he find," literally, "the faith upon the earth?" You see, there are several different kinds of faith. There is an historical faith where people believe what the Bible records to be true. There is a dogmatical faith when people believe the doctrines and truths of the Bible as worthy of credit. But will he find the faith? Saving faith? That is not taken up with history or doctrine only, it is taken up with Christ. It's the faith which receives Christ and rests upon Christ for salvation. That's what he's looking for and will he find it in you? Well, in a way you can answer my own question: prior to the discovery of that day, have you received the Son of God as your own personal Savior? Have you put all your confidence in what he has done in dying for sinners? Resting everything upon his work at Calvary? That is the faith. Do you have it?

Shall he find the faith on the earth? We may well ask why is it that he looks for the faith, this saving faith? It is because it is precious, scripture speaks of precious faith, and it is because faith alone makes the difference. The difference between glory and shame. The difference between light and darkness. The difference between heaven and hell. It is the

faith of which I speak that makes the difference. If man on that day is found without saving faith, he is damned. Do you believe in the Son of God? I assure you that you will never be asked a more solemn and more important question than that. Do you believe on the Son of God? If you do, your future is secured in the blessedness and happiness of heaven. If you do not, your future is among the weeping and the wailing in the cavernous regions of hell's abyss.

Sooner or later it's all going to be out. Let me put it to you like this as I close: sooner or later every person in this congregation tonight will know for sure that you are an unbeliever, indeed the whole assembled world will know that though you had the opportunity, though you heard the Gospel, though Christians spoke to you, though literature was passed onto you, though relatives prayed for you, you still refused Christ in unbelief and when the Son of man comes and he launches his inquiry, everyone will know that. You may have talked about religion, you may have defended yourself as a good person, you may have said, "I've always tried to do right," you may have deceived yourself that it will be acceptable in the end to God and that somehow you'll squeeze through the gate of the eternal city but everybody will know on that day that it avails you nothing, that you haven't got what is required, the one essential is not in you and that is you do not believe on the Son of God.

Now in this day, I am as the minister of God to you and I am saying there is time. There is time to hear the Gospel. There is time to feel the need for Christ. There is time to put your trust in the Son of man that you might be saved so that when the Son of man cometh, he will search and he will find in your heart the faith that saves and upon which discovery he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom which is prepared for you from the foundation of the world." With all my heart, I bid you to believe upon the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.