SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Luke

Chapter Eighteen, Verses 1–43

Who Receives the Kingdom? — a widow who would not quit, a sinner who would not look up, a ruler who walked away, and a beggar who would not be quiet

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Jesus tells two parables about prayer — a widow wearing down an unjust judge, a tax collector beating his breast — then welcomes babies, loses a rich ruler, foretells His death for the third time, and stops on the Jericho road for a blind man crying for mercy. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Luke 18:1–43

pray · humble · receive · follow

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from a widow's plea to a blind man's sight

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"The things that are impossible with people are possible with God." — Luke 18:27

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Luke 18:1–43

Who Receives the Kingdom? — the kingdom comes to the persistent, the humble, the childlike and the needy — and the King goes up to Jerusalem to die

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Luke 18 in 5 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · LUKE 18:13

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"

† Before the Passage

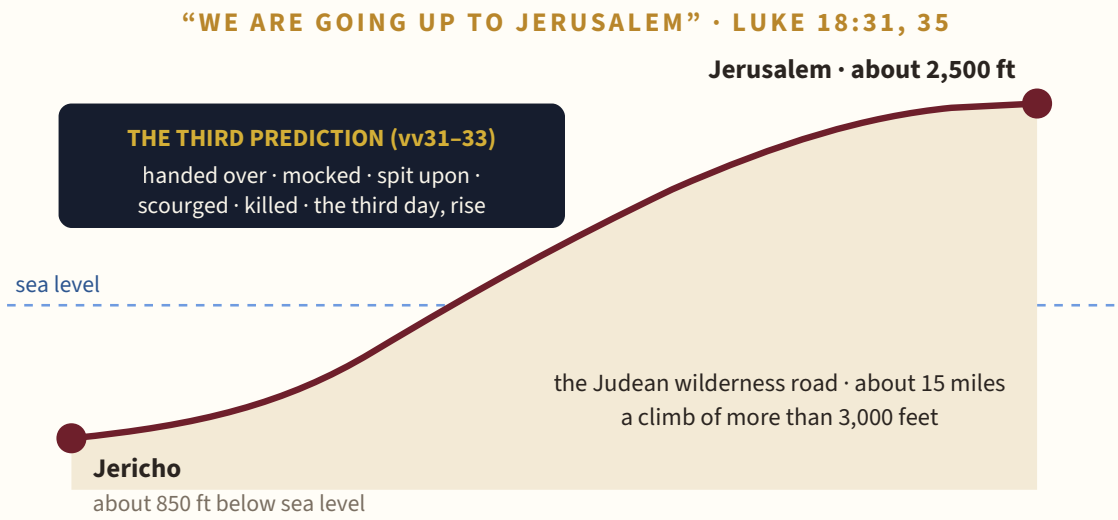
Luke 18 follows straight on from chapter 17. Jesus has just warned His disciples that the Son of Man will be revealed suddenly, as in the days of Noah and Lot (17:26–37). Now He tells them "a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" (18:1), and He ends it with the same horizon: "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (v8). Sproul ties the two together: the call to keep praying comes after the warnings of judgment.

Verses 1–14 hold two parables found only in Luke — the widow and the judge, the Pharisee and the tax collector. From verse 15 Luke rejoins the order of Matthew and Mark: the children (Mark 10:13–16), the rich ruler (Mark 10:17–31), the third prediction of the cross (Mark 10:32–34) and the blind man at Jericho (Mark 10:46–52, where he is named Bartimaeus). The common thread is the question in verse 26: "Then who can be saved?"

The social world matters. A widow in Israel had no husband to speak for her, and the Law told judges to guard her cause. Pharisees were the most respected religious men of the day; tax collectors bought the right to collect Rome's taxes and were despised as collaborators (Sproul). Small children were not thought important enough to trouble a rabbi. A "ruler" was a man of standing — wealthy, young (Matthew 19:20), and religious. Luke sets the respected and the despised side by side and lets the reader see who goes home justified.

The chapter ends near Jericho, the last town before the climb to Jerusalem. The road rises more than three thousand feet through the Judean wilderness in about fifteen miles. Jesus has said, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem" (v31), and Luke 19 will bring Him to Zacchaeus in Jericho and then to the Mount of Olives. The blind beggar calls Him "Son of David" — the royal title — just as the King approaches His city.

FIGURE · THE ROAD UP TO JERUSALEM



Elevations approximate · profile schematic, not to scale

Jesus foretells the cross on the way up; the blind man waits at the bottom of the climb, at Jericho.

I
MOVEMENT

LUKE 18:1–8

Pray and Do Not Lose Heart

A widow who kept coming, a judge who gave in, and a God who will not delay long

[1] *Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,*
[2] *saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.* [3] *"There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'* [4] *"For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,* [5] *yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me*

out.’” 6 And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 “I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

LUKE 18:1–8

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

GENESIS 18:25

ἐγκακέω

ENKAKEŌ · “LOSE HEART” · G1573

To give in to evil, to grow weary, to lose courage — *en* plus *kakos*, bad. Outside this verse it is Paul’s word: “we do not lose heart” (2 Corinthians 4:1, 16), “Let us not lose heart in doing good” (Galatians 6:9). Jesus names the danger before He tells the story. The opposite of praying is not silence; it is quitting.

ὑπωπιάζω

HYPŌPIAZŌ · “WEAR ME OUT” · G5299

A boxer’s word: to strike under the eye, to beat black and blue. Guzik cites Pate: “Although the word hypopiaze literally means ‘to give a black eye’”; here it is used figuratively of a nuisance that wears a man down. Its only other New Testament use is Paul’s “I discipline my body” (1 Corinthians 9:27). The judge is half joking and half afraid: this widow will wear me out.

ἐκδίκησις

EKDIKĒSIS · “JUSTICE” · G1557

The noun behind “bring about justice” in verses 7–8; the verb *ekdikeō* (G1556) is the widow’s plea, “Give me legal protection” (v3), and the judge’s answer (v5). The KJV says “avenge.” It means to see that right is done — a verdict in her favor against her opponent. God’s elect are not asking for revenge but for vindication.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik admits what the parable assumes: “Sometimes it does seem to us that God is reluctant to answer our prayers.” But the point is contrast, not comparison — God is not like the judge. Why the delays, then? “Yet the delays in prayer are not needed to change God, but to change us.” He notes the vivid verb in verse 5 — Pate: “Although the word hypopiaze literally means ‘to give a black eye’” — and he quotes Spurgeon against prayer that gives up too soon: “Too many prayers are like boy’s runaway knocks, given, and then the giver is away before the door can be opened.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul’s “The Unjust Judge” (7 December 2014) sets the parable right after the warnings of judgment in chapter 17. The widow is helpless — “The poor woman in the parable had no power or authority in ancient culture” — and the judge brushes her off: “Go away, lady. You’re bothering me.” Jesus’ argument is the one He often uses: “It was not a mere contrast, but rather the formula Jesus used frequently in His parables: “How much more.”” With Genesis 18:25 Sproul insists, “He has never made an unjust verdict in His eternal existence.” He rebukes thin praying — “Most of our prayers have not gone much beyond the infantile level” — and asks, “If Jesus came tonight, would He find faith in your house?”

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Importunate Widow" (21 February 1869) widens "at all times" to the whole of life: "Prayer should sanctify everything," and "There are no canonical hours in the Christian's day or week" — though set times keep the habit alive. The judge was hard and the widow friendless, so the argument runs from worst to best: "God will be more easily moved than this unjust judge, only be you as importunate as this widow was." What wins is not skill: "It is not eloquence, it is not merit, that wins with God, it is nothing but importunity." "Black may be the hand, but if it can but lift the knocker, the gate will open." "Never give up prayer."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry begins with the privilege: "It is our privilege and honour that we may pray," and the duty: "We must pray, and never grow weary of praying." He is candid about the judge — "It is sad that a man should know so much amiss of himself, and be in no care to amend it." And he is candid about the saints: "God's own elect meet with a great deal of trouble and opposition in this world." Yet Jesus "assures them that God will at length be gracious to them." Henry ends where Jesus does, with the searching question: "Now, when he comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

II
MOVEMENT

LUKE 18:9–14

God, Be Merciful to Me, the Sinner

Two men went up to pray; only one went home justified

9 *And He also told this parable to some people who* ⚠ *trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed*
others with contempt: 10 *"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*
11 *"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: '*⚠ *God, I thank You that I am not like other people:*
swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 *'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'*
13 *"But the tax collector,* ◷ *standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but*
was beating his breast, saying, '▤ *God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'* 14 *"I tell you, this man* ⚠ *went to his house*
justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but ☆ *he who humbles himself*
will be exalted."

LUKE 18:9–14

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

PSALM 51:17

FIGURE · TWO PARABLES ABOUT PRAYER

TWO PARABLES ABOUT PRAYER · LUKE 18:1–14

THE WIDOW AND THE JUDGE · vv1–8	THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR · vv9–14
THE JUDGE did not fear God or respect man; gives in only to be left alone (vv2–5)	**THE PHARISEE** stood and prayed “to himself”; “I” five times in two verses (vv11–12)
GOD brings about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night (v7)	**THE TAX COLLECTOR** far off, eyes down, beating his breast: “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” (v13)
If an unjust judge yields, how much more God.	*The one who asked for mercy went home justified.*

Pray and do not lose heart (v1) · pray as a sinner, not as a saint (v13) — both prayers ask God for mercy

Read each column top to bottom: the first parable argues from the lesser to the greater; the second shows which prayer God hears.

ἱλάσκομαι

HILASKOMAI · “BE MERCIFUL” · G2433

Not the ordinary word for mercy (*eleeō*, used by the blind man in vv38–39) but the temple word: to be propitiated, to have one’s wrath turned away by an atoning sacrifice. Its only other New Testament use is Hebrews 2:17, where Christ makes “propitiation for the sins of the people.” Guzik: “The ancient Greek word translated be merciful is hilaskomai; it is actually the word for an atoning sacrifice.” The tax collector prays at the hour of sacrifice for the sacrifice to count for him. He also says “the sinner” — with the article — as if there were no other.

δικαιόω

DIKAIOŌ · “JUSTIFY” · G1344

To declare righteous, to acquit — a courtroom verdict, not a moral improvement. Verse 9 describes men who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” (*dikaioi*); verse 14 says the other man went home “justified” (*dedikaiōmenos*, a finished state). Luke has already shown the Pharisees as “those who justify yourselves in the sight of men” (16:15). Paul will build Romans 4:5 on this ground: God “justifies the ungodly.” Sproul: “Faith is the sole instrument by which we grab hold of Christ, and His justice is transferred to us.”

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears the Pharisee's prayer for what it was — "God, I thank You that I am not like other men" — a list of comparisons with God left out. The tax collector stood far off and asked for atonement: "The ancient Greek word translated be merciful is hilaskomai; it is actually the word for an atoning sacrifice." On "the sinner" Guzik quotes Spurgeon: "If there was not another sinner in the world, he was one." And he quotes Morris on the Pharisee: "His trouble was not that he was not far enough along the road, but that he was on the wrong road altogether." The justification is immediate and unearned.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "The Pharisee and the Tax Collector" (21 December 2014) calls it one of the most important parables Jesus told, because it decides eternal destinies. Evangelism visits taught him how many people trust their own record. The Pharisee was respected and zealous, but "The Pharisee was Pelagian," and "They pretended to be righteous." The tax collector "had nothing in his hand to bring" — "He brought absolutely nothing to the table except his sin." That is *sola fide* and *sola gratia*: "Faith is the sole instrument by which we grab hold of Christ, and His justice is transferred to us." And: "sinful people do not rush into the presence of the holy; they flee from the presence of the holy."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "A Sermon for the Worst Man on Earth" (20 February 1887) starts from the publican's honesty: "Only to a sinner can God be merciful." "Salvation means not the reward of the righteous, but the cleansing of the unrighteous." He warns against making a merit of conviction — "a sense of sin gives no man a right to grace" — or of prayer: "Do not plead your prayers; you might as well plead your sins." The way in is the same for all: "Come as you are, as a sinner, and as nothing else." "The best rubrics of worship are those which are written on broken hearts."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry says Jesus aimed the parable at a particular sickness — "He designed it for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." The tax collector beat his breast as mourners did, and he pleaded mercy alone: "He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God, that, and that only, he relies upon." Henry puts his prayer in his mouth: "Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy, mercy." And the verdict follows: "The proud Pharisee goes away, rejected of God," while the publican goes home accepted.

III
MOVEMENT

LUKE 18:15–17

Receive the Kingdom Like a Child

Babies brought for a touch, disciples who rebuke, and a Lord who calls them

> 15 *And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.* 16 *But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.* 17 *"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."*
>
> LUKE 18:15–17

βρέφος

BREPHOS · "BABY, INFANT" · G1025

Luke alone uses the word here; Matthew and Mark say "children" (*paidia*). *Brephos* is the unborn John who leaped in Elizabeth's womb (1:41, 44), the newborn Jesus in the manger (2:12, 16), and the newborn babes of 1 Peter 2:2. These are infants in arms, who can bring nothing and do nothing. Henry: "They brought to him infants, very young, not able to go, sucking children, as some think." Jesus then calls them *paidia* (v16) and makes them the pattern for every adult.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik draws a picture of Jesus from the children themselves: "Jesus was not a mean, sour man because children don't love mean, sour people." The disciples thought the babies a distraction; Jesus thought them a lesson. He quotes Spurgeon — "He did not baptize them, but he did bless them" — and states the point plainly: "Children receive the blessing of Jesus without trying to make themselves worthy of it, or pretending they don't need it." That is how anyone enters the kingdom.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me" (4 January 2015) sets the passage beside the parable before it: "Jesus said that man went to his house justified." Then he makes a careful distinction: "Dear friends, there is a huge difference between a childlike faith and a childish faith." Childlike faith simply trusts its Father; childish faith never grows up. "The biggest problem we have in our lives is that we do not believe what God says," and "The only being that exists who deserves implicit trust is God." We do not trust the church that way — only Him.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 17 as "Receiving the Kingdom of God as a Little Child" (20 October 1878). He answers the disciples' unspoken thought that children are too small to matter, and he warns adults: "Despise not children for trifling when the whole world is given to folly." The door is the same for all: "We enter the kingdom by receiving, and therefore children can enter," and "There is no other way of your entering into the kingdom of God but by the door which admits a child." Even "The most gigantic minds in the world are the most childlike." He comforts grieving parents: "Millions of infant souls compose the family above."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is moved by the scene: "One gracious touch of Christ's will make our children happy." He notes that the disciples' rebuke was overruled — "Many whom the disciples rebuke the Master invites." Henry, a Presbyterian, also draws from the passage that "If the parents be members of the visible church, the children are so too," a point Baptists like Spurgeon read differently. All our teachers agree on the main thing: the kingdom must be received with a child's humble dependence.

IV
MOVEMENT

LUKE 18:18–30

One Thing You Still Lack

A rich ruler, a camel and a needle, and the God who does the impossible

18 *A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* 19 *And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? △ No one is good except God alone.* 20 *"You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"* 21 *And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."* 22 *When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "⚠ One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."* 23 *But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for ⚠ he was extremely rich.* 24 *And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the ↻ kingdom of God!* 25 *"For it is easier for ◷ a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the ↻ kingdom of God."* 26 *They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"* 27 *But He said, "The things that are impossible with people △ are possible with God."* 28 *Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You."* 29 *And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the ↻ kingdom of God,* 30 *who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, ☆ eternal life."*

LUKE 18:18–30

FIGURE · THE RULER AND THE BEGGAR

TWO MEN ASK JESUS A QUESTION · LUKE 18:18–43

	THE RICH RULER	THE BLIND BEGGAR
CAME AS	"Good Teacher" — a ruler (v18)	a blind beggar by the road (v35)
ASKED	"what shall I do …?" (v18)	"have mercy on me!" (vv38–39)
HAD	"extremely rich" (v23)	nothing — he was begging (v35)
JESUS SAID	"One thing you still lack" (v22)	"What do you want Me to do?" (v41)
WENT AWAY	"very sad" (v23)	seeing, "glorifying God" (v43)
AND THEN	keeps his wealth	"began following Him" (v43)

"The things that are impossible with people are possible with God" (v27) — and the poor man shows it.

Read across: the man with everything walks away sad; the man with nothing goes away seeing and follows Jesus.

ἀγαθός

AGATHOS · "GOOD" · G18

Good in the full sense — good in nature, not merely kind. The ruler used it as a polite title, "Good Teacher" (v18). Guzik: "Jesus, and everyone else, recognized that Good Teacher was a unique title." Jesus' reply, "No one is good except God alone" (v19), is not a denial of His own goodness but a question the ruler had to answer: if only God is good, who do you think I am? It also undoes the ruler's confidence that he has kept the law (v21). Sproul: "He does not grade us on a curve."

βελόνη

BELONĒ · "NEEDLE" · G956 (UNDER βέλος)

Matthew and Mark use *rhaphis*, a sewing needle; Luke, the physician (Colossians 4:14), uses *belonē*, a word medical writers used for a surgical needle — its only New Testament use (Strong's files it under *belos*, "dart," G956, the word it comes from). The "eye" is *trēma* (G5169), a hole or perforation. There is no gate called "the eye of the needle"; Barclay (in Guzik): "Quite often the rabbis talked of an elephant trying to get through the eye of a needle." Morris: "They miss the point that Jesus is using a humourous illustration." The point is impossibility — "possible with God" (v27).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that "Good Teacher" was a title not given to other rabbis, and that Jesus' question pressed the ruler to think about who He was. The ruler's list of keeping the commandments skipped the first table of the law; his riches were his god, and Jesus put His finger there. "Very sorrowful and very rich is a tragic combination, yet common enough in those who make an idol out of riches." On the camel he follows Barclay and Morris: a humorous picture of the impossible. But God can save the rich, and whatever is given up for the kingdom is repaid many times.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "The Rich Young Ruler" (1 February 2015) observes that the man had youth, wealth and power and was still restless: "He did not come asking to be healed of a certain malady." Jesus held him to God's standard — "God does not lower the bar of judgment to accommodate us," "He does not grade us on a curve." "Sell all" tested the first commandment, not a universal rule of poverty, and the man failed it: "The rich young ruler kept his money and lost the kingdom." "It was the worst transaction he ever made." Then the hope: "It is impossible to work your way into heaven, but what is impossible with us is possible with God." "God's grace does for us what we cannot possibly do for ourselves."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the title "Good Master" as a test of faith: "Those who come to Christ as their Master must believe him to have not only a divine mission, but a divine goodness." He grieves over the ruler — "Christ took notice of the reluctancy and regret with which the rich man broke off from him," and "Many that are loth to leave Christ, yet do leave him." "Riches are a great hindrance to many in the way to heaven." The camel is "a proverbial expression, that denotes the thing to be extremely difficult." To Peter he gives both a warning — "There is an aptness in us to speak too much of what we have left" — and a promise: "it shall without fail be abundantly made up to us."

V
MOVEMENT

LUKE 18:31–43

Son of David, Have Mercy on Me

The third prediction of the cross, hidden from the Twelve, and a blind man who would not be quiet

31 *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which*
are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 *"For He will be handed over to*
the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 *and after they have scourged Him, they will kill*
Him; and the third day He will rise again." 34 *But the disciples understood none of these things, and the*
meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said. 35 *As*
Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 36 *Now hearing a crowd going by,*
he began to inquire what this was. 37 *They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.* 38 *And he called out,*
saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 *Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be*
quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 *And Jesus stopped and*
commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, 41 *"What do you want Me*
to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" 42 *And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight;*
your faith has made you well." 43 *Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying*
God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

LUKE 18:31–43

"Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped."

ISAIAH 35:5

"But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed."

ISAIAH 53:5

τελέω

TELEŌ · "ACCOMPLISHED" · G5055

To bring to its end, to finish, to fulfill. "All things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished" (v31). It is the verb behind Jesus' cry from the cross in John 19:30, "It is finished" (*tetelestai*), and Luke uses it again at the Supper: "this which is written must be fulfilled in Me" (22:37). The cross is not an accident on the road; it is the prophets' script carried to its last line. Henry: "Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer."

βοάω · κράζω

BOAŌ · KRAZŌ · "CALLED OUT · KEPT CRYING OUT" · G994, G2896

Luke changes verbs. In verse 38 the blind man "called out" (*eboēsen*, from *boaō*), a loud shout for help. When he is told to be quiet, "he kept crying out all the more" (*ekrazen*, imperfect of *krazō*), a raw, repeated cry. Guzik quotes Barclay on the second word: "The instinctive cry of ungovernable emotion, a scream, an almost animal cry." The crowd tried to silence him; it only made him louder.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the passion prediction "was not a surprise to the disciples," yet "They could not see or understand the truth until God opened their eyes." Then a blind man sees what they cannot. "Instead of giving up because he could not seek Jesus by sight, he sought Jesus the way that he could – by hearing." On the old and new cities of Jericho he suggests, "The miracle happened in-between these two cities of Jericho, leaving one and entering the other," which reconciles Luke with Mark. And the heart of it: "Nothing could stop Him on His journey to Jerusalem; yet He stood still to answer a persistent plea for mercy."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "The Blind Man" (15 February 2015, Luke 18:31–43) says, "This text begins ominously," with the cross plainly foretold and hidden from the Twelve. He explains Jericho — "New Testament Jericho is built adjacent to Old Testament Jericho" — and identifies the man with Mark's Bartimaeus. "The only hope he had to receive his sight was rested in Jesus of Nazareth." Then Jesus' question: "Why would Jesus take the time to ask him what he wanted?" Sproul presses beyond sight to salvation: "A felt need may be a real need, but it may not be your deepest need." And when Jesus spoke, "Instantly, the darkness vanished."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Soul's Crisis" takes verse 37 — "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by" — as a word of hope and of urgency. He urges the seeker to do what the blind man did: listen, ask, cry, and trust. "I believe attentive hearers are the most likely people to get the blessing." Prayer is the mark of life: "There are no praying souls in hell." But the hour does not wait: "He is not stopping, he is passing by, for he is going on towards the walls of Jericho to pass through its gates." "I am persuaded that this is an hour of crisis to many here."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes that the disciples clung to the hopeful parts of prophecy — "They are only for the smooth things" — so the suffering was "a mystery, it was a riddle to them." Yet "This makes the offence of the cross to cease, and puts an honour upon it": it was written. At Jericho, "Christ came not only to bring light to a dark world," but to open blind eyes, and He is kinder than His followers — "Christ has more tenderness and compassion for distressed supplicants than any of his followers have." The lesson for prayer: "Those who would speed in prayer must be importunate in prayer."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The Judge of all the earth, the broken heart, the Servant who was scourged

> *"Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"*
>
> GENESIS 18:25

> *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."*
>
> PSALM 51:17

> *"He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."*
>
> ISAIAH 53:3

> *"He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed."*
>
> LUKE 1:52–53

> *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*
>
> LUKE 19:10

> *"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,"*
>
> ROMANS 4:5

> *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul grounds the widow's parable in Abraham's question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" — "He has never made an unjust verdict in His eternal existence."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik brings his commentators and the Greek; Sproul preaches justification by faith alone from the tax collector and grace from the camel; Spurgeon pleads with sinners to come as they are and to pray without quitting; Henry gathers it all into counsel. They differ on the children — Henry sees infant church membership, Spurgeon only a blessing — and agree that the kingdom is received, not earned.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The widow and the judge	Delays change us, not God; no runaway knocks.	"How much more"; God never gives an unjust verdict; would He find faith?	No canonical hours; importunity, not eloquence, wins.	Our privilege to pray; never grow weary; God will be gracious.
II · The Pharisee and the tax collector	Hilaskomai — an atoning sacrifice; the wrong road altogether.	Pelagian Pharisee; nothing in his hand; faith alone grabs Christ.	Only to a sinner can God be merciful; come as you are.	Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy.
III · Like a child	Children loved Him; they receive without trying to be worthy.	Childlike, not childish; trust God implicitly — no one else.	We enter by receiving; the door that admits a child.	One gracious touch; whom disciples rebuke the Master invites.
IV · The rich ruler	Riches his idol; a humorous picture of the impossible.	No grading on a curve; kept his money, lost the kingdom.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Riches a great hindrance; what we leave is made up to us.
V · The cross and the blind man	Sought Jesus by hearing; He stood still for mercy.	A felt need may not be the deepest need; darkness vanished.	Jesus of Nazareth passes by — this is the hour.	It was written; Christ is kinder than His followers.

LUKE 18:1–43 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Prayer's enemy is quitting.** Jesus names the danger first — "not to lose heart" (*enkakeō*, v1). Spurgeon: "Never give up prayer." THE GREEK
- **God is not the judge; He is the "how much more."** Sproul: the parable runs from lesser to greater. Guzik: "the delays in prayer are not needed to change God, but to change us." SPROUL
- **Five "I"s and no request.** The Pharisee says "I" five times in two verses (vv11–12) and asks God for nothing. Morris (in Guzik): he "was on the wrong road altogether." THE TEXT
- **"Be merciful" means "be propitiated."** *Hilaskomai* (v13) is the atonement word; its only other use is Hebrews 2:17. The tax collector asked God to accept a sacrifice in his place. THE GREEK
- **Justified is a verdict, not a feeling.** He "went to his house justified" (v14). Sproul: "Faith is the sole instrument by which we grab hold of Christ." SPROUL
- **The kingdom is received, not achieved.** Spurgeon: "We enter the kingdom by receiving, and therefore children can enter." SPURGEON
- **The ruler kept his money and lost the kingdom.** Sproul's line. Jesus put His finger on the one god the man would not give up (v22). SPROUL

- **Impossible with people, possible with God.** A surgeon's needle (*belonē*) and a camel: no one squeezes in. Sproul: "God's grace does for us what we cannot possibly do for ourselves." THE GREEK
- **The Twelve could see and did not; the blind man could not see and did.** The cross "was hidden from them" (v34); the beggar called Jesus "Son of David" (v38). THE TEXT
- **He stood still.** Guzik: "Nothing could stop Him on His journey to Jerusalem; yet He stood still to answer a persistent plea for mercy." GUZIK

† Questions for the Table

1 **What have I stopped praying for because the answer was slow? What would it look like to go back to that prayer this week like the widow?**

The delays in prayer are not needed to change God, but to change us (Guzik).

18:1–8; Luke 11:9

2 **If I wrote down my honest prayer from last week, would it sound more like the Pharisee's or the tax collector's? Who do I compare myself to?**

He brought absolutely nothing to the table except his sin (Sproul).

18:9–13

3 **What do I bring to God as if it earns me something — my sobriety, my record, my religion? What would it mean to come "as a sinner, and as nothing else"?**

Come as you are (Spurgeon).

18:13–14; Rom 4:5

4 **What is the difference between childlike and childish faith in my life? Where do I need to grow up, and where do I need to become like a child again?**

A huge difference between a childlike faith and a childish faith (Sproul).

18:15–17

5 **What is the "one thing" Jesus might put His finger on in my life — the thing I would walk away sad rather than let go of?**

He kept his money and lost the kingdom (Sproul).

18:22–25

6 **If Jesus stopped in front of me and asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?" — what would I say? Is that my deepest need?**

A felt need may not be the deepest need (Sproul).

18:40–43

Luke 18 asks who can be saved, and answers with the people nobody would pick — a widow, a tax collector, a baby, a blind beggar — while a rich, religious ruler walks away sad. What is impossible with people is possible with God. Keep praying; come as a sinner; receive like a child; and when He stops for you, follow Him.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

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