

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Have Ye Not Read?

Question: Explain Luke 18:7-8. In what matters will God avenge His elect on earth?

Reply: The parable of the unrighteous judge, as set forth in Luke 18:1-8, deserves a careful study. The purpose of the parable is given by Jesus at the outset: "to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint" (v. 1). "There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man" (v. 2). He was irreverent and heartless. A widow came to him to avenge her of her adversary. This godless and hardened judge was not disposed to grant the request of this importunate widow, but finally he avenged her "lest she wear me out by her continual coming" (v. 5). He did not give her justice because it was right, but because he did not want to be bothered by her. The lesson is obvious. If this judge, who was without feeling, was willing to grant the request of the widow, how much more would the righteous and compassionate judge avenge His elect (His children) who cry to Him day and night? The force of the parable is the contrast between the unrighteous judge and the righteous judge.

The widow who came to the judge wanted to be avenged of her adversary. This was her opponent, one who no doubt oppressed her. Literally, the Greek word *anddikos* translated "adversary," means "an opponent in a suit at law." She was asking to be avenged or vindicated. She was wanting judgment from mistreatment.

The "elect" are those who are children of God as a result of their obedience to the gospel (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; etc.). Our question relates to those matters of which God will avenge His elect on earth. In a more general sense than an adversary in a lawsuit, our adversaries are those who persecute us "for righteousness sake" (Matthew 5:10). The matters, therefore, on which God will avenge His elect are the wrongs done them by their enemies.

When the fifth seal was opened in the book of Revelation, John wrote: "I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy

and true dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:9-10). John saw "souls" beneath the altar - those who had given up their lives for Christ, and they are asking for vengeance. They asked, "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" When would they be avenged?

Some of the psalms are imprecatory in nature [invoking evil or curses – GFS], and are referred to as such, because the psalmist invoked vengeance upon his enemies. In the 58th psalm, verses 10 and 11, David declares: "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked; So that men shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Another example of an imprecatory psalm is the 59th, verses 11-13. Here David says in regard to his enemies, "Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield. For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, Let them even be taken in their pride, And for cursing and lying which they speak. Consume them in wrath, consume them, so they be no more: And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob." Petitions to God for the defeat of the wicked are thus to be found in both the Old and New Testaments.

Two things should be considered. First, vengeance belongs to God, not man. This is with respect to those who wrong us personally. Capital punishment for crime is not considered here. Paul wrote: "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place to the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). This passage, taken from Deuteronomy 32:35, teaches that we are not to take matters in our own hands. Even when crimes are committed against the State, men are not to take the law into their own hands. In Romans 13, Paul states that civil government is "a minister of God, an avenger of wrath to him that doeth evil" (v. 4). So, the punishment of the evil doer is God's prerogative. Second, God will avenge His elect in His own time. When the wicked apparently prosper and the evil doer seems to be succeeding it is not easy to be patient; and, like the souls beneath the altar in Revelation 6:9-10, we cry out: "How long . . . dost thou not judge and avenge. . . ?"

God said that He would avenge His elect "speedily" (Luke 18:8). To us, and those in the Bible who asked for vengeance, it seems slow. But we need to understand that God delays His punishments because He is longsuffering and wishes to save as many as possible (2 Peter 3:9). Also, we must remember that what seems long to us in time is short to God. It is "speedy" to Him because He does not count time as man does. "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." We can be assured that God will avenge His "elect" when He is ready. And, when it is the proper time He will move quickly.

- Hoyt H. Houchen, via *Guardian of Truth*, 09/03/1987

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## A Hilarious Giver

The Lord is not a pauper nor is He a beggar. Paul argued in Athens that God who made the heavens and earth is not worshipped with the hands of men as though he needed anything (cf. Acts 17:24, 25). All things belong to God by right of creation. He owns all things because He has made all things. And yet this same Lord has freely given life, and breath and all things. Every good and perfect gift is from above (cf. James 1:17).

When a man returns a portion of God's abundant blessings, he should remember that the Lord is not in need. And because of this fact, not every gift is accepted with Him. The Scriptures point out: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give: not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7). The man who fails to give cheerfully fails to give at all. The Lord simply will not accept his offering.

But what does it mean to give cheerfully? Several things are involved. Man must not give haphazardly but rather he must purpose in his heart. The giving must not be done out of a sense of reluctance or compulsion. Giving must be done cheerfully or not at all.

"Cheerful" is from the Greek *hilaros* which "signifies that readiness of mind, that joyousness which is prompt to do anything; hence cheerful" (W.E. Vine, Vol. 1, p. 184). It is from the Greek *hilaros* that we get our English word, "hilarious" (to be hilarious is to be overcome with joy and mirth). This is what the Scriptures mean when they speak of a "cheerful giver." Barclay, in his version, renders: "God loves a man who enjoys giving" (2 Corinthians 9: 7). This is exactly the idea! When a man gives cheerfully he looks forward to giving with great anticipation. He enjoys giving - it is an occasion of great hilarity (he is overcome with joy and mirth). But are we cheerful (hilarious) givers? Think about it before next Lord's Day ... our souls depend upon it.

- James Sanders, via *Truth Magazine*, 10/21/1971

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## Does Forgiving Mean Forgetting?

All who desire to become Christians must conform "to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Maintaining discipleship is accomplished through *transformation* (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18), and such takes time. Notice Paul's admonition to the Colossian Christians:

"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing

with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." (Colossians 3:12-14).

Human memory is one of the characteristics reminding us of God's great wisdom and creative power. Man has the wonderful ability to recall good as well as bad. With most of us, painful experiences of the past wherein we have been hurt by someone may never be forgotten, even after we have genuinely forgiven the offenders. When Paul was tried before Caesar's court he remembered brethren who had deserted him. Indicating the forgiveness he gave them, he wrote, "may it not be counted against them." (2 Timothy 4:16b). This is similar to the words of Stephen upon being stoned to death by his brethren who refused to hear the Lord: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60). What forgiveness is recorded in the divine record!

Is your genuine forgiveness of a person for his wrongs against you dependent on whether or not you remember the hurtful experience? No. Some people have excellent ability to remember. The important spiritual factor is HOW the injury is remembered. If you remember the deed but no longer hold it against the offender, then you can be confident that it has been forgiven. However, when you continue to remember it and still hold it against the person who did the wrong, then it has not been forgiven.

Hurtful offences toward us by others are not easily forgotten. However, if our Lord forgave and taught us to do likewise, there is no other option for us. We must forgive!

- Gary Smalley

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\* "Don't give up! Moses was once a basket case!"

\* "We invite you to come into our worship assembly where you will meet Christians whose past was as dark as your present!"

\* "Choose you this day whom you will serve (Joshua 24:15)! Deciding not to choose is still making a choice!"

\* "Confession of sin is less an admission of weakness and more a sign of strength!" (See 1 John 1:8-9.)

\* "A wise sea-captain once said, "Be careful who you let onto your ship! Some people will sink the whole ship just because they can't be the captain!"

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# ***What Must I Do To Be Saved?***

## **HEAR THE GOSPEL**

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

## **BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST**

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

## **REPENT OF PAST SINS**

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

## **CONFESS CHRIST**

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

## **BE BAPTIZED**

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

## **LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE**

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)