

# Saving Faith Truly Seeks Salvation

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, welcome everyone. Good to see you again. Would you open your Bibles with me to page, what is it, 877. We're looking at Luke's Gospel, Chapter 18. And let's just begin with prayer, shall we?

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we have opportunity in the middle of a busy week to turn aside and to give this time to meditating upon your Word.

We thank you that your Word is light and life. That in these words that you have revealed to us from heaven and not kept hidden, you have shown us the way everlasting through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So we pray now that you would open our eyes and open our hearts, that we might see and hear and understand wonderful things from this your Word.

And lead us, we pray, in the way of Jesus. For we ask it in his name. Amen. So are you really prepared for the coming glory of Jesus?

[ 1 : 17 ] That's the question that we're thinking about. You remember last week we began with that question that I read to you, that Jerry Lee Lewis once asked to Elvis Presley.

Do you remember? He said to Elvis, Elvis, if you die, do you think you're going to heaven or hell? He went on to say that you worry. You worry when you breathe your last breath.

Where are you going to go? Or I suppose to put it another way, can you be saved? Can you know that you will be saved? Can you be prepared, therefore, for the coming glory of the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns?

Well, the answer, of course, of the Bible to that question is yes and yes. We can know. Look at what Jesus says here in chapter 17.

Look back to chapter 17, verse 19. You see the leper that Jesus healed along with the other ten. And the one who came back.

[ 2 : 19 ] And not only was his leprosy healed, but if you look there, do you see? He fell at Jesus' feet. He worshipped Jesus. And Jesus said to him, literally, your faith has saved you. Not just healed you, but saved you.

He got something far more than all those other nine got. They all got bodily healing. But this man got assurance of exactly that thing that Jerry Lewis was looking for.

But, of course, the faith that saves is much more than just some kind of vague belief about Jesus and that he might somehow be the answer to all of our problems in life.

All of the ten lepers had that answer, but only one of them really had true faith according to Jesus. And many talked about the kingdom of God to Jesus.

And we've seen that in his gospel. But as we said last week, Jesus' words in verse 20, right to the end of chapter 17 that we looked at last week, many did not perceive, many didn't see what his kingdom was really all about.

[ 3 : 25 ] And so they just would not be prepared for the day when he returned as the king in glory. They would not be prepared on the day when at last Jesus reveals himself openly to this whole world and comes to reign.

So the faith that saves, you remember we were looking at this last time, the faith that saves is the faith that really sees now the truth about Jesus Christ, who he really is.

Even when it does not look like he is a king in glory. And it doesn't seem that he is full of power and might and ruling this entire universe.

But the faith that is true faith sees and heeds God's warnings. As you remember the people of Noah's day and the people of Lot's day didn't heed those warnings.

We're taken by surprise and we're not ready. But real faith truly understands what Jesus' salvation is really talking about. And so it's willing, as verse 33 of chapter 17 says, do you look again?

[ 4 : 32 ] It's willing to lose out on absolutely everything that seems so important in this life in order to keep that which is ultimately of the only importance.

and that is eternal life when Jesus comes. So real faith sees what salvation is really all about and grasps hold of it now in this life.

And that's what today's passage is about. You see, it's not just a matter of seeing with our eyes and with our minds and understanding the truth about Jesus' kingdom. All the way through Luke's gospel, Jesus tells us it's also a matter of doing the truth.

It's about hearing my words and doing them, says Jesus. Remember, Jesus is always saying that, isn't he? That's the person who builds his house upon the rock and not on the sand. That's the person whose faith will not be flattened on the day of judgment.

The person who hears my word and does them. Blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it, he says. Blessed are those who keep on doing it.

[ 5 : 41 ] Living out the reality of the gospel that he preaches. And that is real faith. Real faith, yes, it is perceptive. It grasps the ultimate realities of what Christ's kingdom is all about.

But real faith also is persistent. It perseveres. It doesn't give up hope in the face of perplexity, in the face of suffering, in the face of things not being in front of our eyes now as we think they ought to be according to what Jesus says.

Real faith perseveres even when God doesn't seem to be giving us the answers that we think he says he will give us in this world. And that's what this passage is all about.

Look at chapter 18, verses 1 to 8. Let's read it. He told them a parable to the effect that they should always pray and not lose heart. He said, in a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.

And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, give me justice against my adversary. For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I'll give her justice so that she'll not beat me down by her continual coming.

[ 6 : 57 ] And the Lord said, hear what the unrighteous judge says, and will not God give justice to his elect who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? You see, for the ungodly and for the faithless, Jesus' words about his coming in power and glory that we read last time, warn of a real looming disaster.

It will mean the devastation and the destruction of all Christ's enemies. That's what he says very plainly. But by contrast, for those who have real faith, who very often in this world are in fact those who are scorned, who are ill-treated, very often those who feel very weak, very vulnerable, for them it is a wonderful, wonderful word of comfort to know that Jesus is coming.

Because for them it will mean deliverance from every enemy. Not destruction. When Jesus comes, he is plain.

All evil is going to be punished. All wrongs are at last going to be put right totally, completely, properly, forever. Now that is real justice, isn't it?

[ 8 : 20 ] So often in our world, what we call justice is only really half justice. If somebody in your family is murdered and the police find and catch the murderer and that murderer is put on trial and given a sentence, even if he's given a life sentence, it's not full justice, is it?

It doesn't bring your loved one back. It hasn't undone the evil that has been done. How we long for absolute justice, for full justice, for all wrongs, not only to be punished, but to be put right again.

Now, many of Luke's first readers would have been people who were suffering, who were vulnerable, who were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

They were longing for relief. They were crying out, how long, oh Lord, how long until we're rescued, till we're delivered from these enemies, how long until what you've promised us will come?

That's the cry of the faithful all through history. You see that cry all the way through the Bible, through the Psalms, even right in the very last book of the Bible in Revelation. That's a cry, I suspect, that is being made in many parts of the world today, not least in Syria, among Christians who are dispossessed, who are refugees, and many of whom have been terribly persecuted for their faith.

[ 9 : 40 ] But I think it's a cry that in a much lesser way, many of us make a lot of the time, isn't it? So often we find ourselves asking, Lord, how long, how long, how long, how long until you bring to an end these dreadful struggles that I have in my life, these battles that I have with all manner of things, the struggles that are just common to us because we live in a fallen world under the curse, the struggles of ill health, of aging, the pain of death and bereavement, the hardship of work, the struggle, the work that is by the sweat of our brows.

How long, oh Lord, until that changes? How long until I'm free of the struggles inside because of the sin in my heart that still so drags me down even though I'm a follower of Jesus, even though I love the Lord and His law, yet every single day I'm kneeling in repentance because of another failing.

Every single day I'm so conscious of the battle against my own sin and against ultimately our adversary, the devil. How long, Lord, until we're saved finally and fully from all of that?

See, we're saved in hope. That's what the Apostle Paul tells us. And that means that even though God's Holy Spirit is within us and made us new, yet in these bodies, Paul says, we will groan all through our lives until Jesus comes.

The whole creation, he says, is groaning, longing for that final justice, for that redemption that will come only with the resurrection of our bodies, only on the day that Jesus remakes this whole world.

[ 11 : 33 ] Now, friends, if you are like me, don't you find that on some days those groans just become so great you just want to give up? And you just wonder, is the Lord ever going to do what he says?

Is he ever going to answer my prayers about these things? Jesus tells us to pray, thy kingdom come. The reign of Jesus, curse ended, death defeated.

It's what we sing, isn't it? He doesn't seem to answer. He seems to be so slow, so slow to answer our prayers.

Maybe you don't feel that. Perhaps it's just me that feels that, but I certainly feel that day after day. I'm sure you do. But you see, the apostle Peter says to us, no, it's not so.

God is not slow. Remember in 2 Peter 3? He's not slow to fulfill his promises. You count slowness. No, he's being patient towards you.

[ 12 : 34 ] Why that? Well, because he doesn't want people to perish. He wants people to come to repentance. He wants people to have faith that will prepare them for his coming.

So they meet that day with joy and not with horror. Because when he does come, that is the end. And as we've seen already in Luke's gospel, that is too late then for God's mercy.

It's final judgment day when Jesus comes. So Peter tells us that Jesus is merciful. He's patient. He's not slack.

He will answer. He will come and bring deliverance. He will bring absolute justice. So don't give up in your prayers. Real faith perseveres.

That's what Peter teaches us and that is exactly what Jesus is teaching here, isn't it? In this pictorial way, in this parable. If even an unjust, wicked judge will give justice to this widow's persistent cry for justice for all the wrong reasons, because as we might say in Glasgow, that woman's deigned my heathen.

[ 13 : 46 ] And if I don't answer her, she'll do my head and even more. But if even an unjust judge for all the wrong reasons will answer that widow's cry, how much more will a God who is just and who is perfect and who is kind and merciful, who is a loving father, how much more will he give justice to his elect people that he calls them, his chosen ones, the people he loves?

Jesus said something very like that back in Luke chapter 11. You probably remember. Remember he says, if even an earthly father, you fathers who are evil, who are sinful, if even you know how to give good gifts to your children, then how much more will our heavenly father, our perfect father in heaven give good gifts to his children.

You see, it may seem, as it seems to be in verse 7 here to us, it may seem that he is delaying long. But Jesus says, no, it's not like that.

He will answer. He'll answer speedily just as fast as his vast and patient mercy will allow him to answer and return to this world.

That's a word of great comfort, isn't it? That really is an encouragement not to give up, not to lose heart, not to lose faith in the promise of God.

[ 15 : 06 ] He is not slow to answer. So we're to keep praying, thy kingdom come. That's real faith.

It keeps persisting and persevering right to the end. He who endures to the end, said Jesus, will be saved. And we can endure to the end because we know that God is a perfect judge.

He will never let us down. But as Hebrews chapter 10 says, we need endurance so that when we've done the will of God, we may receive what is promised from God in whom we trust.

See, it's all about keeping our eyes on God's promised coming deliverance. Not on our past decisions or even our present performance.

It's about trusting God. That's real faith. It's a challenge though, isn't it? Because look at verse 8. Jesus says, but when he comes, will he actually find any faith like that on the earth?

[ 16 : 18 ] It's a challenge. But it's such a comfort. It is a spirit of faith and prayer because Jesus promises in verse 8, he will give justice to his elect.

And if we trust Jesus, if we trust his word, we can have rock solid assurance of our coming salvation. Even in the darkest days, even in the days of sorrow and bitter pain and grief and even great tragedy.

Real faith is persistent. It perseveres to the end because it trusts the Lord Jesus. It trusts that he doesn't lie to us.

He doesn't play with us. And he'll never let us down. We can have assurance. assurance. But on the other hand, we do need to be careful because assurance is not the same as arrogance.

There's a great difference between the assurance of persistent prayer that arises from righteous faith and the arrogance of presumptuous prayer that comes from something quite different from a self-righteous unbelief.

[ 17 : 34 ] The sort of thing that says, well, I know I'm saved because I went forward at a Billy Graham rally in the Kelvin Hall in 1955. So once saved, always saved. I can do what I like. God will have to stand right by me. No, no, no, says Jesus.

Look at verses 9 to 14. He gives a warning in case we should begin to think like that. In case we also begin to trust in ourselves that we're righteous and therefore God owes us one.

He told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. Two men went up to the temple to pray. One, a Pharisee, outwardly a very fine religious man, and the other a tax collector, outwardly the scum of the earth.

The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week.

I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift his eyes up to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

[ 18 : 44 ] I tell you, says Jesus, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

You see, the real faith which prepares us for the coming of Christ is not just persistent faith, but it is penitent faith. Humbly penitent, even as it persists and perseveres right to the very end.

And you see, we need to know that, don't we? Because when we cry out for justice to God, when perhaps we've been deeply wronged ourselves by other people, then that tends to make us feel rather righteous about ourselves.

We feel that we're in the right and we feel that perhaps we're superior to those who have wronged us. Now, the thing is, often it may be so. If you're not a thief and a thief comes and robs you, well, relative to him, you very probably are a much better man or woman.

But the problem is, you see, that being a better man or woman than that sort of person may not be saying very much at all in God's eyes. and it might blind us to something far, far more important, which is that what really matters is God's measure of goodness and not our relative measure of goodness.

[ 20 : 04 ] And if we're blind to that matter, friends, we are in very, very great danger indeed because the sinner who's in the greatest danger from the anger of God is the one who doesn't repent because he doesn't think he needs to repent.

And that's what this parable is teaching us. Two men went to pray. Well, lots of people pray. Lots of people are very religious and devoted. Many people pray persistently. But you see, it's not just the motion of prayer according to Jesus.

It's the message of your prayer that reveals the truth about your heart before God. The Pharisee, no doubt, was a very good man. Verse 11, he was not an extortioner.

He wasn't unjust. He wasn't an adulterer. He wasn't a dishonest tax collector like this other man. Maybe he'd, in fact, been fleeced by that tax collector on many occasions. Maybe he was deeply resentful for it.

When he saw him there, it just kind of raised his ire. And he judged himself, you see, by looking down on the tax collector. And he trusted in himself that he was a lot more righteous than that man.

[ 21 : 13 ] Probably true. But look at verse 13. The tax man, by contrast, stood afar off at a distance like the lepers had from Jesus, remember.

And he couldn't look up at all, you see, because he was judging himself, not by the standards of other men, but by God's standards and knew that he fell woefully, woefully short. And so verse 13, you see, he's beating his breast and saying, I've got nothing to plead.

I have nothing in my hands to bring. Only my sin. Only that which must surely condemn me. So God, be merciful to me, a sinner. My only hope is in your mercy.

And Jesus said an astonishing thing. That was the man who went home that day justified. That was the man who went home assured of vindication, justification before God on the day of Christ's coming glory.

Not the other man. Both men were sinners. In fact, it was highly likely the tax collector was a far worse sinner than the Pharisee in moral terms that you and I would think.

[ 22 : 28 ] But the one was a proud man and trusted in himself and the other was a penitent man who threw himself totally on the mercy of God and trusted only in God's promise.

And so only he could be saved. Both of them needed forgiveness but only one of them could receive forgiveness because he knew he needed it and asked God for it. The proud hands and proud hearts cannot take hold of forgiveness.

Only penitent hands and penitent hearts that come empty to God. That's the simple truth. And so Jesus says again, you see in verse 14, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and that means for Jesus taken away and destroyed and separated forever from the presence of the king and from the perfection of his kingdom.

but the one who humbles himself penitently will be exalted. Will be saved on the day when Jesus appears in power and glory.

The real faith that prepares for the coming of Jesus must be penitent faith. not proud, not arrogant. Faith whose persistent prayer persevering to the end is God be merciful to me a sinner.

[ 23 : 57 ] God have mercy upon me. So here's the question Jesus puts to all of us today. When the son of man comes will he find that kind of faith here in this room?

faith that sees that perceives how great the issues are of salvation that it really is about the escape from everlasting separation from God into the everlasting glory of Christ.

Faith that sees that and therefore seeks it the only way it can be found through true penitent faith which is persistent perseveres right to the end longing for the coming of the kingdom of Christ and constantly praying Lord have mercy and grant that I should be one who has even a tiny tiny place in that glorious kingdom.

So are you prepared prepared? Are you prepared for the coming of Jesus? Well it's very simple isn't it?

Bow the knee humble your heart and keep doing that every single day trusting in the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you believe Jesus he says he will answer that prayer speedily.

[ 25 : 34 ] Well let's pray Heavenly Father your gospel turns our world upside down turns our human nature upside down and inside out everything that we strive for in terms of greatness you make us see is as of nothing compared with the greatest thing in all the world which can be had only by those who know that their hands are empty and their hearts are so needy how we praise you Lord for your great grace may we be people who seek your kingdom until it comes for Jesus sake Amen be unto you to you hear next to

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