



Everyone Who Exalts Himself Will Be Humbled

Luke 18

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Overview: This chapter in Luke's gospel contains two parables, two encounters, and two brief but important sayings. The parable of the persistent widow teaches us not to lose heart in praying, while the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector teaches us not to exalt ourselves when we pray. The encounter with the rich young ruler demonstrates the futility of placing God in our debt, while the encounter with the blind beggar indicates the reality of being indebted to God. The saying regarding kingdom recipients requires us to have a childlike posture, while the saying regarding the death of Christ requires supernatural revelation. Taken altogether, the events in this chapter underscore the importance of humility as a chief characteristic in the lives of all Christians.

01. Humility is a chief characteristic in the lives of all Christians because we know we cannot correct this fallen world on our own; we cannot comprehend the value of the cross on our own; and we cannot enter the kingdom of God on our own.

02. Humility is fostered in the lives of all Christians by praying without ceasing; serving without expecting; suffering without quitting; and asking without demanding.

03. Humility is demonstrated in the lives of all Christians by refusing to show favoritism; including rather than excluding; and giving God glory in all things.

1. Consider the examples of the widow wanting justice, the Pharisee bragging about his works, the rich man relying on his conduct, and the blind man begging for sight. In what ways do injustice, pride, denial, and disability point to a fallen world? How can you explain the nature of sin and the reality of a fallen world to your friends without leaving them in complete despair? What hope does Christianity offer in each of these situations?

2. In what ways is God not like the judge in the story of the persistent widow? What do these dissimilarities suggest about the reason why God delays answers to prayer? Put another way, since God can easily bring about justice, why does He require us to keep praying and believing even until the Lord returns?

3. Suppose we did not have the stories of the Pharisee or the rich ruler, along with the accompanying lessons. How would we interpret God's favor and/or the way of salvation? Wouldn't we conclude that good works merit God's favor? Since we have these stories, what is the appropriate way to understand how we are to approach God? How do these stories also serve as a warning against being impressed by those who are not impressive to God?

4. Take time to read the following passages and ask the Lord to identify ways in your life in which you can live humble before God and others: Deuteronomy 8:2-16; 1 Kings 21:29; 2 Chronicles 7:14; 2 Chronicles 34:27; Psalm 69:32; Psalm 147:6; Isaiah 2:11; Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 21:5; Philippians 2:8; and 1 Peter 5:5-6.

For Further Reading: Warren Wiersbe, *On Being a Servant of God* (Baker Books; revised 2007).