

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 106 – April 16th – Luke 18:1-17

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Luke

Geldenhuy, Norval	<i>Commentary on the Gospel of Luke</i> , Marshall Morgan and Scott, London, 1950
Marshall, I Howard	<i>The Gospel of Luke</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Paternoster, Exeter, 1978
Morris, Leon	<i>Luke</i> (Tyndale NT Commentaries), IVP, London 1974

Luke 18:1-8

Cf. 11:5-8 for a parable with a similar theme. Here the encouragement is to persist in prayer until the parousia.

Verse 1

Ἐλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν,

αὐτοῖς the disciples

δει impersonal verb it is necessary, must, should, ought

πρὸς το + infinitive expressing purpose is found only here in Lk (cf. Acts 3:19).

παντοτε always

Continued rather than continuous.

προσευχομαι pray

ἐγκακεω become discouraged, tire of

Verse 2

λέγων· Κριτὴς τις ἦν ἐν τινὶ πόλει τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρέπόμενος.

κριτης, ου m judge

πολις, εως f city, town

φοβεομαι fear, be afraid of, reverence

I.e. he does not take the judgment of God seriously.

ἐντρέπω make ashamed; pass respect

Verse 3

χήρα δὲ ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσα· Ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου.

χηρα, ας f widow

I.e. a typically needy and helpless person.

ἐκεινος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that, he, she, it

ἤρχετο the imperfect expressing continual/repeated action.

ἐκδικοω help (someone) get justice, avenge, punish

For use of the verb meaning 'to produce justice for someone'. Cf. Rom 12:19 – here meaning securing the rights of the wronged person (e.g. gaining compensation).

ἀντιδικος, οι m opponent at law, enemy

Verse 4

καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐπὶ χρόνον, μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ· Εἰ καὶ τὸν θεὸν οὐ φοβοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον ἐντρέπομαι,

ἤθελεν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s θελω wish, will

χρονος, ου m time, period of time; ἐπι χρονον for a (long) time

ἐαυτος, ἐαυτη, ἐαυτον reflexive pronoun, himself, herself, itself

Verse 5

διὰ γε τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον τὴν χήραν ταύτην ἐκδικήσω αὐτήν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζη με.

γε enclitic particle adding emphasis to the word with which it is associated

παρεχω act & midd cause, bring about, do

κοπος work, hard work π. κοπον trouble or bother (someone)

τελος, ους n end, conclusion,

termination; εἰς τέλος ἐρχομονη

literally, 'coming till the end' i.e. 'coming for ever', or 'finally'

ὑπωπιαζω wear out (somebody)

A metaphor drawn from boxing and meaning literally 'to strike under the eye', 'to give a black eye', cf. 1 Cor 9:27. Derrett argues the meaning here is 'to give a black face', i.e. 'to shame'.

Verse 6

εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος· Ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει·

ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας cf. 16:8 for this Hebraism – literally 'judge of injustice'

Verse 7

ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν βοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς;

ὁ δε θεος the argument relies on contrast. If an unjust judge who cares nothing for this widow will eventually answer her request, how much more will God, who loves and cares for his children, be quick to answer their cry?

ἐκδικησις, εως f retribution, rendering of justice, punishment
ἐκλεκτος, η, ον chosen
βοαω call, cry out, shout
νυξ, νυκτος f night
μακροθυμew be patient, wait patiently;
μακροθυμει ἐπ αὐτοῖς be slow to help them

There is some difference of opinion concerning the meaning of these words. μακροθυμew means to show patience or longsuffering and is often used of God's patience towards us or his slowness to judge. Some view it as having this meaning here (see AV), referring it to God's longsuffering towards his enemies – he does not quickly come in judgement against them, but come he will. The opposite case is taken by the NIV and many commentators who understand μακροθυμει ἐπ αὐτοῖς to mean 'be slow to help them', 'keep putting them off', and understand it as a question demanding the answer 'No' – e.g. the NIV "Will he keep putting them off". This second interpretation seems a better fit with the verse that follows.

Verse 8

λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν ἐν τάχει. πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἄρα εὐρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;

ταχος, ους n speed, quickness; ἐν τ. speedily, quickly, without delay
πλην but, yet, nevertheless, however
ἀρα then, therefore

A shift in focus.

εὐρήσει fut. εὐρισκω
πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief, the Christian faith
γη, γης f earth

"The question as a whole presupposes a time of tribulation for the disciples in which they may be tempted to give up faith because their prayers are not answered; it is meant as an exhortation to take seriously the lesson of the parable that God will certainly act to vindicate them." Marshall

Verses 9-14

Marshall suggests that 18:9-19:10 deals with the question of who will be found faithful when the Son of man comes, i.e. the nature of faith. The section begins with the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

Tom Wright says that the passage is concerned with those whom God will vindicate, "His vindicated elect (18:8, 14) ... would be a group one might not have expected: not the official or self-appointed guardians of Israel's national life, but those who cry out to their god [sic] for vindication, without presuming to claim that they have kept the whole Torah and so are automatically within 'Israel'." *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p.366.

Verse 9

Εἶπεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τινὰς τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι εἰσὶν δίκαιοι καὶ ἐξουθενούντας τοὺς λοιποὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην·

τινας Pronoun, m & f acc pl τις
πεποιθότας Verb, perf act ptc, m acc pl πειθω
persuade; perf act & pass have confidence, be confident
ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun, himself, herself, itself

Marshall says that if the meaning of πεποιθότας ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς is that they 'trusted in themselves' rather than in God then ὅτι "must be translated 'because', giving the reason for their self-confidence, rather than 'that', stating the content of their self-confidence."

δικαιος, α, ον righteous, just
ἐξουθενew despise, treat with contempt
λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other

The context is key to understanding the story. The focus is upon self-righteousness. The parable then goes on to show that the self-righteous have a view both of themselves and of others which is quite different from God's view.

Manson comments that the parable is addressed to those who "had the kind of faith in themselves and their own powers that weaker vessels are content to have in God, and that the ground of this confidence was their own achievements in piety and morality."

Verse 10

Ἄνθρωποι δύο ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν προσεύξασθαι, ὁ εἷς Φαρισαῖος καὶ ὁ ἕτερος τελώνης.

Both men were people with insecurities.

δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two
ἀναβαινω go up, come up
ιερον, ου n temple, temple precincts

προσευχομαι pray

In his book on parables of Jesus (*Tales Jesus Told*), Stephen Wright comments, "This is the only one of Jesus' stories to be set in the Temple. Immediately the imposing building – still under construction in Jesus' day, following the destruction of its two predecessors – rises in the mind's eye of his hearers. This was the sacred centre of a sacred city, which was itself the sacred centre of a sacred land. It was the focus for every Jew's devotion... The Scriptures had stressed the holiness of God's 'courts' and for the need for those who drew near to God there to possess 'clean hands and a pure heart' (see especially Psalms 15 and 24). It would be of instant interest to Jesus' hearers, therefore, to hear about a Pharisee and a customs officer both going to the Temple to pray."

εἰς, μίαν, ἐν γεν ἑνός, μίας, ἑνός one

Stephen Wright comments, "The Pharisees were a group who laid great stress on the observance of the law in every particular; who, indeed, were guardians of a tradition of interpretation of the law which sought to make it applicable for contemporary times, and therefore went into a good deal more detail than the law itself. They genuinely believed that this was the way God wanted his people to live at a time when their ancestral customs, and to some extent their very identity, were under threat. They believed that this path of detailed law-observance – not the paths of political activism, or violent rebellion, or mere acquiescence in the status quo – was the way to be true Jews in the current situation and the way to hasten the coming of God's kingdom. Their insistence on this way no doubt made them unpopular with some, but certainly earned them respect, even among those who felt they could never aspire to such levels of devotion. It would therefore be no surprise to see a Pharisee dutifully entering the Temple gates to go and pray; and it would have been taken for granted that his prayer would be acceptable to God."

ἄλλος, ἄ, ὄν other, another, different
τελωνῆς, ὄν m tax collector

See note on τελωνῆς at 3:12. "In the general estimation they stood on a level with robbers; they possessed no civil rights; and were shunned by all respectable persons." Jeremias. Linnemann says that the tax-collector, "not only collaborated with the Roman occupational powers, who oppressed the people of God, and continually hindered in fulfilment of its religious duties, but he belonged to a profession that as a whole was regarded as being no better or worse than swindlers."

Stephen Wright comments, "He is allowed in the Temple, apparently. But eyebrows would be raised at his praying, and questions would start to be asked about whether the Owner of the Temple would really welcome this particular guest."
But it is worth asking why this man was a tax-collector. He may have been so reduced to poverty that he turned to a hated form of employment at the hands of the Romans simply to provide for himself and his family. He may have been troubled by this betrayal of his people.

Kenneth Bailey (*Through Peasant Eyes*) comments, "The Pharisee is mentioned first, then the tax collector... But when it comes times to *go down*, the tax collector will be in the lead."

Bailey suggests that the prayer spoken of here would have been public worship rather than private devotions. "This service was the sacrifice of a lamb (for the sins of the people) at dawn. A second similar sacrifice was held at three in the afternoon... The time of incense was especially appropriate as a time as a time of personal prayer because by this time in the service the sacrifice of the lamb had covered the sins of Israel and thus the way to God was open... The incense arose before God's face and the faithful offered their separate petitions to Him."

Verse 11

ὁ Φαρισαῖος σταθεῖς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ταῦτα προσήχετο· Ὁ θεός, εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι οὐκ εἰμι ὡσπερ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἄρπαγες, ἄδικοι, μοιχοί, ἢ καὶ ὡς οὗτος ὁ τελώνης·

σταθεῖς 2nd aor. pass. ptc ἵστημι in 2 aor
stand, stand firm

Marshall follows Klostermann and Jeremias in suggesting that πρὸς ἑαυτὸν should be taken with σταθεῖς meaning 'taking his stand' or 'he took up a prominent position...'. Julicher interprets πρὸς ἑαυτὸν to mean he prayed inaudibly 'in the heart, or in an undertone not intelligible to bystanders, as the Jewish rule was. The NIV, less charitably, translates it as he prayed 'about himself'.

Bailey, having suggested that the context is public worship, suggests that the Pharisee set himself a little apart from the crowd – "In a gesture of religious superiority he stands apart from the other worshipers." There is thus both a parallelism and contrast between the positioning of the Pharisee and that of the tax collector who stands 'afar off'.

προσηχετο imperf προσευχομαι
εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks

ὡσπερ as, even as

Cf. the language of Psalm 17:1-5 which is not far removed from that of the Pharisee. Stephen Wright comments, "As we have seen, the Jewish people were in difficult straits. The Pharisaic response was one genuine, though in Jesus' eyes largely misguided, response to the situation. Keeping a strong hold on the sense of God's calling of a special people, and strictly observing the law as a way of marking out their identity and hastening the coming of God's kingdom, would have seemed one logical development from their ancient traditions. Nor should we overlook the fact that the Pharisee *thanks God* that he is not like other people: he recognises fundamentally that the 'holiness' of Israel is God's gift." Nevertheless, his view of God is of a God who is exclusive in his concern for a special people rather than a God who seeks the lost.

ἀρπαξ, αἰσῶν grasping, greedy
ἀδίκος, οὐν evil, sinful, unjust

Here means 'swindler, cheat' (1 Cor 6:9).

μοιχος, οὐν m adulterer
ἢ οἱ, ἢ καὶ or even

The Pharisee shifts the focus from the general to the particular: the tax collector is a prime example of the qualities he has been describing.

Verse 12

νηστεύω δις τοῦ σαββάτου, ἀποδεκατῶ πάντα ὅσα κτῶμαι.

νηστευω fast, go without food
δις twice
σαββατον, οὐν n (often in pl) the seventh day, Sabbath, week

This is an expression of the piety of the Pharisee. "The Law laid on every Jew one fast a year as a day of repentance, but the Pharisee fasted not only on the Day of Atonement but on Mondays and Thursdays. As Linnemann comments, 'To do this he has to give up not only food but also drink completely from sunrise to sunset, which in the heat of the East is a great act of self-denial.' The fasting was not simply a self-centred work of merit, but was regarded as an act of intercession or even vicarious atonement for the sins of his people." Thistelton.

ἀποδεκατω give a tenth, tithe
ὅσος, ἢ, οὐν correlative pronoun, as much as, how much
κταομαι acquire, gain

"Suggests that the Pharisee went beyond the letter of the law in paying tithes on what he had bought, although the producer would already have paid the requisite tithes." Marshall. "This extra voluntary tithe would have involved considerable economic sacrifice... Jesus' hearers would not have interpreted the Pharisee's prayer as one of arrogance or hypocrisy, but as a genuine prayer of thankfulness that God had given him the opportunity and inclination to carry out this practical piety." Thiselton. But compare Lk 11:42. Not all could have afforded to tithe like this. The Pharisees showed contempt for the poor who could not afford such 'devotion' (cf. also v. 9a). In showing such contempt it was the Pharisees, rather than the poor, who were failing to live in a manner pleasing to God.

Verse 13

ὁ δὲ τελώνης μακρόθεν ἑστῶς οὐκ ἤθελεν οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπάραι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ἀλλ' ἔτυπτε τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ λέγων· Ὁ θεός, ἰλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ.

μακροθεν adv far off, at a distance, from a distance

Probably far off from the Most Holy Place rather than far off from the Pharisee. Perhaps in the outer court of the temple. "In the view of Jesus' audience this is the only place where he naturally belongs." Thiselton. Bailey thinks that the stress is on him "standing some distance away from the assembled worshipers."

ἑστῶς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s ἰστημι 2 aor, pf & pluperf stand, stop
ἤθελεν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s θελω wish, will

Here in the sense 'dare' (cf. 18:4).

οὐδε not even (rather than the more frequent οὐδε ... οὐδε neither ... nor)

ἐπαιραι aor infin ἐπαιρειω raise, lift up
τυπτω beat, strike, wound, injure
στηθος, οὐς n chest, breast

"This was a sign of deep mourning, used only at times of bereavement or anguish." Stephen Wright.

ἰλάσθητί Verb, aor pass imperat, 2 s ἰλασκομαι deal mercifully with; pass be merciful, have mercy

The primary meaning of the verb is 'to be propitiated' (Heb 2:17, see Leon Morris *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*) and hence its secondary meaning 'to show mercy (to the sinner)'.

ἁμαρτωλος, οὐν sinful, sinner

"He takes on to himself the name that others, like the Pharisee, fastened on him, 'sinner', acknowledging its accuracy... [His prayer is], 'God, let this atonement be *for me*, a sinner'." Stephen Wright.

Bailey similarly comments, "The tax collector is not offering a generalised prayer for God's mercy. He specifically yearns for the benefits of an atonement." He continues, "On reading Dalman [*Sacred Sites and Ways*] and Edersheim [*The Temple its Ministry and Services at the Time of Jesus Christ*] one can almost smell the pungent incense, hear the loud clash of cymbals, and see the great cloud of dense smoke rising from the burnt offering. The tax collector is there. He stands afar off, anxious not to be seen, sensing his unworthiness to stand with the participants. In brokenness he longs to be part of it all. He yearns that he might stand with 'the righteous.' In deep remorse he strikes his chest and cries out in repentance and hope, 'O God! Let it be for me! Make atonement for me, a sinner!' There in the temple this humble man, aware of his own sin and unworthiness, with no merit of his own to commend him, longs that the great dramatic atonement sacrifice might apply to him. The last stanza tells us that indeed it does."

Verse 14

λέγω ὑμῖν, κατέβη οὗτος δεδικαιωμένος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ παρ' ἐκεῖνον· ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται.

κατέβη aor. καταβαινω come or go down
 δεδικαιωμένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s
 δικαιοω justify, acquit, declare & treat
 as righteous

The implication of the perfect is that the righteousness given here was lasting. "This is the only occurrence in the Gospels of this characteristically Pauline use (for ἰλασκομαι and δικαιοω cf. especially Rom 3:24f.), but the language is not based on Paul (cf. Ps 51:19...)." Marshall.

Stephen Wright comments, "'Justified' means that *his* prayer was heard and answered; *he* was the one accepted by and acceptable to God; *he* was the one who would truly participate in Israel's hope of God's kingdom."

παρ ἐκεῖνον rather than the other

For use of παρα to express comparison, see 13:2. Marshall follows Jeremias in saying that the meaning is exclusive rather than comparative, not 'rather than the former' but 'and not the former'.

ὑψωω exalt, lift up, raise

ταπεινωω humble, humiliate

Cf. 14:11.

Verses 9-14 – Postscript

Wink warns against failing to hear the message of the parable through uncritical familiarity: "Any *modern* reader at all familiar with the text knows that (1) 'Pharisees' are hypocrites, and (2) Jesus praises the publican. The unreflective tendency of every reader is to identify with the more positive figures in an account. Consequently, modern readers will almost invariably identify with the *publican*. By that inversion of identification, the paradox of the justification of the *ungodly* is lost... The story is then deformed into teaching cheap grace for rapacious toll collectors."

Stephen Wright concludes, "Both are sinners and, in the mercy of God, sin can be forgiven, as the sacrificial system of the Temple, however inadequately, expressed. But the Pharisees – or some of them at least – instead of letting the law shed light on all the ways in which they fell short of obedience had persuaded themselves (and others) that they were keeping it very satisfactorily. This Pharisee, though, could not persuade God. And God could not 'declare righteous' one who had declared *himself* righteous on his own terms." Bailey comments, "The original self-righteous audience is pressed to reconsider how righteousness is achieved. Jesus proclaims that righteousness is a gift of God made possible by means of the atoning sacrifice, which is received by those who, in humility, approach as sinners trusting in God's grace and not their own righteousness."

Verse 15

Προσέφερον δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ βρέφη ἵνα αὐτῶν ἅπτηται· ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμων αὐτοῖς.

Cf. Mk 10:13f.

προσφερω present, bring, bring before
 βρεφος, ους n baby, infant
 ἅπτω midd. take hold of, touch
 ἰδόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ὁραω
 see, observe

μαθητης, ου m disciple, pupil, follower
 ἐπιτιμαω command, order, rebuke

Verse 16

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς προσεκαλέσατο αὐτὰ λέγων·
 Ἄφετε τὰ παιδιά ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με καὶ μὴ
 κωλύετε αὐτά, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ
 βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

προσεκαλέσατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
 προσκαλεομαι call to oneself, summon,
 invite
 ἀφιημι allow, tolerate
 παιδιον, ου n child
 κωλυω hinder, prevent, forbid
 τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and
 adjective such, of such kind, similar,
 like

"The thought of humility is perhaps still present (cf. 9:46-48; Mt 18:4...), but more probably the basic thought is that of the sheer receptivity of children, especially infants, who cannot do anything to merit entry into the kingdom..." Marshall

Verse 17

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅς ἂν μὴ δέξηται τὴν
 βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς παιδίον, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ
 εἰς αὐτήν.

ὅς ἂν whoever
 δέξηται Verb, aor act subj, 3 s δεχομαι
 receive, accept

Marshall suggests that the meaning is 'receives *the message of the kingdom*'.

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in