

A Meditation

Luke 18 (Please read the whole chapter)

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The blessed results of meditation should be a clearer view of the preciousness and glory of Christ. Such is one's true desire in writing this short paper. The chapter is conveniently divided into definite sections, each of which may be briefly considered.

Verses 1 to 8 speak of *man's need of help*. Luke speaks several times of "widows," as a doctor he was probably aware of their needs and often lack of resources. Doubtless the chapter has a primary reference to Israel as a nation, but its moral significance contains a voice to us all. Good indeed to realise our need as before God; better still to know, through God given faith, that resources to meet our every need are to be found in God; and best of all to appreciate the blessed fact that, although faith may be tested, God will supply those needs not only in response to our asking but in His gracious activity of love to "His elect", fully meeting every adverse circumstance from His bounteous resources, thereby a fresh and increased sense of His goodness and grace filling hearts satisfied by His free-giving love. Verse 8 would suggest the desire in the heart of Christ that faith may be found amongst His earthly people in a coming day; shall not that same principle of faith in God Himself be increasingly found in His people today?

Verses 9 to 14 and 15 to 17. Man's need of adjustment in his thoughts of God. The Pharisee did not completely rule God out of his life, but his self-esteem blinded his vision, and he thus had no true appreciation of the God whom he partially and formally owned. He was not near to God, for whilst God "looketh upon the lowly . . . the proud He knoweth *afar off*" (Psalm 138). His good works and the evidence of his fasting (cf. Matthew 6: 8) were observable to men but had no place in the sight of God. Beloved brethren does not this raise a challenge in each of our hearts? Would not our approach to God and our service to His people and to men be marked by an increase of sincerity and moral elevation if we ever remembered that whilst "man looketh upon the outward appearance . . . the Lord looketh upon the heart" (1 Samuel 16: 7). The publican appears to have recognised that man's place as a sinner is "afar off" from God, and taking that place he has an appreciation, in some measure at least, that God's character is that of "shewing mercy." The work of reconciliation, the basis upon which those "far off" could be "made nigh" was not yet completed, but the publican's admission of distance from God and his appreciation too of the only source of mercy were pleasing in the sight of God, the Lord Jesus confirming the whole incident so blessedly in the immensely searching and precious words "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Never were such words more needed in every sphere than today! We all need still further adjustment as to our knowledge of God and the sphere in which His rights are acknowledged-the kingdom of God. If the previous incident illustrates the way in which our *state* as sinners is met, in the mercy of God we also see the necessity for a right *attitude* of heart in relation to the character of God. In the coming day of God's earthly kingdom the spirit of a "little child" holds in check every feature of undisciplined power and destruction (Isaiah 11). This same tender and affectionate attitude of mind has ability to subdue opposing elements both from "within" and "without" with resultant praise to God (Psalm 8). In the enjoyment of God's grace and energised by "the working of His power" Paul is happy to take the place of "less than the least of all saints" and is thus enabled to "Announce . . . the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3). If in our movements in the sphere of God's interests there

is to be praise to Himself and increased enjoyment of the riches of Christ in the hearts of His saints, then this place of contented humility is essential. Brethren, is it possible that assembly difficulties could continue to exist if this spirit marked us all in reality?

Verses 18-30 would shew the snare of possessions and their danger of preventing full committal to the Lord's desires. Not necessarily evil in themselves, the snare lies in wrong priorities! Demas did not forsake Paul as drawn to the "present *evil* world," but to the world itself. What losses are thus incurred, and what true gains are forfeited! (verses 29-30).

Outward profession, self exaltation; worldly possessions; is there a way of deliverance from them all? Yes, indeed! as verses 31-34 indicate. Beloved, let us contemplate in humility the rejection, sufferings and death of our precious Lord. Thus would our gaze be removed from the features of a world which treated Him so, and our eyes opened to see the abundance of mercy, unmerited grace and love, resting in His glorious Person-the Son of David, God's beloved One! Blessed indeed to follow such a One-the heart filled with praise and God's glory secured.

How fittingly the incident of Zacchaeus follows! The desire to see Jesus "Who He is," a clearer vision not only of His work but of His Person, too. Zacchaeus' name means "pure" and the pure in heart see God. Space does not permit of further reference to this but we would echo the desire of Rebekah-"Who is he who comes to meet us?." The expectations of Zacchaeus were more than met as salvation entered his house in the Person of Jesus. By the grace of God we are amongst those whose earnest desire is to see Jesus-who He is. We are "awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ who gave Himself, that He might redeem us from lawlessness, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2. N. Tr.).

Our "great Saviour." Yes, from sins, from mere profession, from pride and from the allurements of the world itself.

May we have a deepened desire to see and to follow our precious Lord, whose death and victory has freed us from the sphere of man's vaunted greatness and brought us to the blessed God Himself.