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Prayerful persistence: Luke 18:1–8 through the lens of resilience

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The parable of the widow and the unjust judge is unique to Luke. It forms part of three other parables shedding light on the coming of the Son of Man. It also bears striking resemblances with the parable of the friend at midnight, but unlike the friend of midnight, persistence is a focal point for interpreting the parable. There is an intersection between the parable of the unjust judge and resilience theory. Resilience may be understood as the ability to have positive, better-than-expected outcomes in the face of adversity. The widow persists and manages to persuade the judge to aid her plight. Accordingly, this article explored the intersections between resilience theory and the parable of the unjust judge as an interpretive aid.

Contribution: This article explored a multidisciplinary approach to Luke 18:1–8. Resilience theory was incorporated with exegesis, thereby offering another hermeneutical lens to the text that enriches our understanding.

Keywords: Resilience theory; prayer; Gospel of Luke; adversity; better-than-expected outcomes.

Introduction

Stories have the power to persuade, explain and impart knowledge. Jesus often uses parables when teaching his disciples and the parable of the unjust judge is no exception. The purpose of the parable is to teach the disciples to always pray and not lose heart.[1] The author of Luke adds the parable of the unjust judge as part of three parables shedding light on the Son of Man. The parable is unique to Luke[2] and bears thematic correspondence with Luke 11:5–8. Unlike the importance of ἀναδεία ['shamelessness'] in Luke 11:8, persistence is key in Luke 18:1–8. The widow is relentless in her pursuit of pleading with the judge to help her case.

The notion of persistent prayer would have been foreign to some of the originally intended hearers. Jewish doctrine stipulates that a man ought not to weary God with incessant prayer (Plummer 1896:411). Rabbis typically encouraged disciples to limit their prayers to three times a day (Edwards 2015:497). The content of the prayer is not discussed in the parable, but it becomes clear that prayer encompasses all of life's experiences, such as: calls for justice that go unheard (Lk 18:3), delayed answers (Lk 18:4,7) and people who cry day and night (Lk 18:7) (Edwards 2015:497), but also the assurance that God does vindicate the elect. It is in the rhythm of praying, in the repetition that confronts all of life's experiences, that the exhortation to always pray should be seen (Edwards 2015:497).

Accordingly, the question arises whether, within this parable of persistence, resilience could be interpreted in the intersection of adversity as well as the rhythm of repeating. There is a close connection between stories and resilience. Stories play an integral part in teaching resilience. Considering a community waiting on the Son of Man, the skill of resilience seems important. Of course, this is no attempt at catachresis by forcing uninvited opinions onto the text. It goes without saying that 'resilience', as currently understood, was not a topic of discussion in the 1st century CE. Rather, this article attempts to view the text from a historical approach, mindful that what the author had intended and the way we read the text are not the same. The lens of resilience is applied in an experimental manner to determine whether a text that originally has nothing to do with the modern concept of resilience could contribute to a modern view of resilience from a biblical point of view. Can the Lukan parable have meaning in a modern discourse that eventually

1.The parable is also an allegory of the social setting of the Lukan church (Hedrick 1994:187). This reflects a community that is in distress, and yet the author of Luke is using the parable to instruct the community on how to act in response to being persecuted.

2.It has been suggested that the parable derives from a parable source in which Luke 18:1–8 was parallel with Luke 11:5–8 (Nolland 1993:865).

trickles into a church context? Accordingly, this article would like to explore whether this parable could be interpreted through the lens of resilience. The article will define resilience, give an overview of the parameters of Luke 18:1–8 (including exegesis) and explore the intersection between Luke 18:1–8 and resilience, which will be followed by a conclusion.

Defining resilience

It goes without saying that resilience is a modern paradigm that is not found in biblical times. Resilience is a notoriously difficult term to define. Often it is described as the ability to bounce back (Southwick et al. 2014:2). Among the plethora of definitions of resilience, one common denominator is that of resilience as an outcome. In the past decades, resilience theory has become popular in academic thought and practice to the extent that some have pointed out that it is merely a fad (Grove 2018:4). Resilience theory originally developed in the fields of psychology and ecology (Bradtmöller, Grimm & Riel-Salvatore 2017:1). It stems from investigating the impact of adverse life experiences on people (Van Breda 2018:2). Resilience suggests that change, disruption and vulnerability are potentially beneficial conditions in a chaotic world with change and disruption which cannot be prevented (Grove 2018:6). It has been established that the relationship between vulnerability and negative outcomes is not universally the same, as some recover, even thrive, and others do not.[3] Some appear to achieve higher levels of adaptation than they had before the encounter with adversity (Van Breda 2018:2). Accordingly, why do some people rise to the occasion and others do not when exposed to the same stress (Van Breda 2018:3)? Resilience thinking transforms the relationship between truth and control, in the sense that 'truth' means things we can know and not know about the world, while 'control' implies strategic interventions in the world designed to shape possible outcomes (Grove 2018:4). Van Breda (2018:5) offers the definition that resilience can be understood as better-than-expected outcomes in the face of adversity.

What is more, there are different pathways to resilience, as there is a distinction between chronic and acute adversity (Van Breda 2018:5). The former indicates adversity that extends over a period and may have a pervasive impact on a person's life, and the latter refers to adversity that has a relatively brief duration of limited impact on a person's life. In acute adversity, one tends to understand resilience as 'bouncing back', whereas in response to chronic adversity, 'emergent resilience' describes the process of functioning over an extended period (Van Breda 2018:5). Of course, Van Breda (2018:6) cautions against unnuanced approaches dividing persons as either resilient or not resilient. Rather, the range of outcomes extending from more negative to more positive should be interpreted. A good outcome is also dependent upon the context and situation. Resilience reconfigures thought and practice on human–environmental relations around a will to design (Grove 2018:4).

3.Key examples of researchers whose work in resilience began with the work on vulnerability include Emmy Werner and Smith (1982), Michael Rutter and Madge (1976) and Norman Garmezy (1971); see Van Breda (2018:2).

Resilience focuses on identifying and improving conditions that enable systemic adaptions following disturbances, whether adaptation is a matter of 'bouncing back; to a previous state or 'bouncing forward' to a new and potentially improved configuration, (Grove 2018:6). Accordingly, a working definition of resilience for this article may be understood as the ability to adapt and adjust to adverse circumstances with better-than-expected outcomes.

Setting the parameters of the parable

The frame

The parable presents a problem for interpreters, as the structure enlists debate. It seems that there are two parables prevalent in Luke 18:1–8, that is, Parable 1, Luke 18:2–5, as well as Parable 2, Luke 18:1, 6–8.[4] Both parables stem from Lukan material (L), Luke 18:2–5 as well as Luke 18:1, 6–8.[5] The formula ἔλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν (Lk 18:1) is typical of Luke (Fitzmyer 2008:1176). Curkpatrick (2002:109) points out that the frame (Lk 18:1, 6–8) has altered the focus of the parable from the widow to the judge in a *minori ad maius* analogy to God. Also, it is possible that the parable may have never been about prayer but could have been concerned with justice, which fits well into the theme of Luke (Curkpatrick 2002:108).

The narrative interlocks with the taking up of the word ἐκδίκησις from 18:3c, 5a in 18:7a, 8b as well as with the help of the semantic field of time seen in πάντοτε (18:1b), ἐπὶ χρόνον (18:4a), ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός (18:7a) and ἐν τάχει (18:8b) (Wolter 2017:314).

Luke 18:1–8

The audience intended is probably the disciples, as the use of the dative plural αὐτοῖς (18:1a) indicates. The phrase πρὸς τό with the infinitive δεῖν denotes 'with reference to' (Blass, Debrunnner & Funk 1961:§402.5),[6] designating the purpose of the parable to always pray and to not lose heart.[7] The verb ἐγκακέω is peculiar to the koine Greek and occurs rarely (Spicq & Ernest 1994:398).[8] Its etymology implies 'conduct oneself badly' (Spicq & Ernest 1994:398). Diggle et al. (2021a:415) lists the verb ἐγκακέω to mean 'culpably fail' or 'to give up'. Bauer Danker Aland Gingrich (2000:272) again highlights ἐγκακέω to mean 'to lose one's motivation in continuing a desirable pattern of conduct or activity' or 'to give up', as is the case in Luke 18:1. The negative particle (μή) with the infinitive of ἐγκακέω, of course, renders the meaning to express the wish to never culpably fail or to give up.

4.I am employing Curkpatricks' (2002:108) language of two parables, although I am aware of the alternative view that Luke 18:2–5 is the realistic narration of the parable and Luke 18:1, 6–8 is Luke's allegorisation of the parable.

5.Freed (1987:38) argues on account of the vocabulary and style that the parable is Lukan. It is unique to Luke, and as Wolter (2017:315) points out, there is no way of knowing where the parable comes from.

6.The same formula is seen in Luke 18:9 and 19:11.

7.The πρὸς τό with the infinitive δεῖν occurs only in the NT in Luke (Wolter 2017:315).

8.The only other occurrence of the verb ἐγκακέω is in the *Corpus Paulinium*, where the verb is always used, as is the case here, with a negation (see also 2 Cor 4:1; Gl 6:9; Eph 3:13; 2 Thess 3:13; also 2 Clem 2:2). The verb is not found in the LXX but present in later Greek translations of the OT and in the NT (Spicq & Ernest 1994:398).

Nolland (1993:867) correctly points out that the phrases πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι and μὴ ἐγκακεῖν mutually qualify one another, rendering the interpretation of 'always to keep on praying' and not 'pray without ceasing'.[9]

The parable moves over to the second parable in Luke 18:2–5. The judge is portrayed along the typical schema of Hellenistic ethics, especially taking up the widespread motif[10] seen in Plutarch, *Moralia* 179c–d, that is, that human conduct is characterised by two kinds of virtuous behaviour, namely in relation to God and to other humans (Wolter 2017:316). The judge has neither respect for God nor for his fellow humans. The plight of the widow demanding justice seems to be in vain, considering the unjust judge. The widow is the epitome of fragility, in the position of being under the auspices of the powerful in her society. It appears that she has no children (Bovon 2013:533). She has no one to defend her nor the money to even bribe the unrighteous magistrate (Plummer 1896:412). Her situation is so dire that she cannot even be corrupt. The parataxis 'she used to come to him' (καὶ ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν) indicates the widow's continuous going to the judge. The imperfect of ἔρχομαι also points to the widow's persistence. The widow seeks justice against her adversary. She asks for her rights through saying (λέγουσα) and demanding that justice be done to her, as the aorist imperative of ἐκδικέω signals (ἐκδίκησόν με). The verb ἐκδικέω indicates 'to exact vengeance for' or 'procure justice for' (Diggle et al. 2021a:444). This is especially significant against the backdrop of honour and shame. Apart from being a call for vengeance, it could also be an appeal for restorative justice, which is more likely, as ἀντίδικος indicates. We do not know much about the legal adversary (ἀντίδικος) the widow faces nor what the extent of the problem is. It is only clear that the adversary is in the wrong and abusing the rights of the widow (Bovon 2013:533).

For a while (ἐπὶ χρόνον [18:4a]), the judge is not bothered by the widow's plight. However, the punctiliar aorist (εἶπεν) follows a time of inactivity (μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα [18:4b]) with a soliloquy that follows (Bovon 2013:534).[11] It is repeated that the judge does not fear God and has no respect for anyone, as already seen in Luke 18:2, with the negative correlatives creating a kind of parallelism (Blass et al. 1961:§445.4) The difference is a shift in perspective, moving from what is described by the narrator to what the judge now thinks about himself.

The preposition διά indicates the reason for the judge's sudden self-reflection. The emphatic particle γέ 'at least' underscores the action of the widow. She is described as one who keeps bothering the judge, as the idiom παρέχειν μοι κόπον 'to be a bother to' indicates (Nolland 1993:868). Accordingly, the judge will grant her justice, as seen in the future indicative of ἐκδικέω. The judge is not helping on account of a bad conscience or empathy, but rather because of the mere need to no longer be bothered. The purpose sentence (ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με) contains the preposition εἰς along with τέλος, denoting 'in order that she may not gradually' (Blass et al. 1961:§207.3). The situation is bizarre. Either the author of Luke intended the idea of the judge fearing to receive a black eye in jest, or there is something else going on. The verb ὑπωπιάζω means to 'hit under the eye' or in the figurative sense 'wear out, browbeat' (Diggle et al. 2021b:1444). There exists a debate about which meaning applies, literally or figuratively, the latter being the most opted-for choice (see e.g. Bovon 2013:534; Edwards 2015:499; Fitzmyer 2008:1179; Marshall 1978:673).[12] If ὑπωπιάζω is understood from the perspective of implying shame, it creates another link with Luke 11:5–8 (Nolland 1993:868). Moreover, it is more likely that the widow could harm the honour of the judge rather than really pose any physical threat, but it cannot be ruled out completely. The relentless repetitiveness of the widow wears the judge out. Again, the encounter does not shed a positive light on the judge. There is no indication of any empathy or will to do his job, but rather the need to merely end the constant haranguing of the widow for selfish reasons.

The first parable is resumed in Luke 18:6–8. In Luke 18:1, the imperfect of λέγω was used, indicating that some time would be used to tell the parable, whereas the aorist (εἶπεν) is used in Luke 18:6, signalling a shorter duration. The Lord (ὁ κύριος) as the subject is introduced, emphasising the authority communicated in the aorist imperative of ἀκούω (Bovon 2013:535). What needs to be listened to is elaborated on (δέ) in Luke 18:7 with a typical *a minori ad maius* argument. The οὐ μή with the aorist subjunctive is the most definite form of negation regarding the future (Blass et al. 1961:§365.4). If the unjust judge would heed the plight of the widow, it is undeniable that the Lord will give justice to his elect who call to him day and night (οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ τῶνβοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός (Lk 18:7a–b). The mention of night and day is also important, as the author also refers to a widow who prays day and night at the temple in Luke 2:37 (Marshall 1978:674). In contrast to the night and day through which God's elect persevere, the answer from God will be swift. God's elect will be vindicated, especially considering the eschatological context. The phrase ποιεῖν ἐκδίκησιν + genitive means 'to vindicate', in the sense of punishing offenders (Marshall 1978:673; Wolter 2017:319).[13] If the judge helped the woman, who is a stranger to him, then imagine what would happen between God and his elect. The particle καί in Luke 18:7c functions as an adversative particle, rendering the phrase καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς 'despite his patience over them' (Moule 1953:178). The phrase is better understood in light of Sir 35:19. The final clause should be interpreted as a resultant statement, not a question (Nolland 1993:870).

9.The use of 'pray without ceasing' occurs in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

10.See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates romanae* 10.10.7; see also *Antiquitates romanae* 12.13.2 and Lysias, *Orationes* 12.9; Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 3.209; Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 1.72; 10.83; Wisdom of Solomon 2.10; 6.7); Joseph and Aseneth 28.7.

11.It is possible that both classical phrases ἐπὶ χρόνον and μετὰ ταῦτα are Lukan (cf. Ac 7:7; 13:20; 15:16) (Nolland 1993:868).

12.The figurative meaning is especially substantiated with Aristotle, *Ars rhet.* 3.11, 15 § 1413a.20; Plutarch, *Mor.* 921F; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* 6.89.

13.See Testament of Reuben 6.6; Testament of Leviticus 2.2; Testament of Joseph 20.1; cf. 1 Maccabees 2.67; 9.42.

The expression ποιεῖν ἐκδίκησιν + genitive is employed again in Luke 18:8. It becomes clear to the disciples that God, unlike the judge, will deliver ἐν τάχει (18:8b) 'within a short time'. The phrase ἐν τάχει is used in an adverbial manner denoting 'shortly' (Moule 1953:78). There is a movement from ἐπὶ χρόνον 'for a while' (18:4a) to ἐν τάχει 'suddenly' or 'unexpectedly', highlighting that it is not fear but hope as the rhetorical main emotion (Wolter 2017:318). The question in Luke 18:8b, 'when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth'? (πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) introduces Luke's purpose of the parable concerning the need to pray and never give up (Fitzmyer 2008:1176).[14] It forms the paraenetic frame of the parable, together with Luke 18:1,8. The delayed Parousia incurs the question of whether faith would not simmer down as time passes (Bovon 2013:537). Two things become clear. Firstly, eschatological judgement relates to the action of the Son of Man. Secondly, prayer is inextricably linked with faith. Prayer is practised within faith communities and reveals the uncertain future, of which the wait until the Second Coming is the only constant (Bovon 2013:537). The Son of Man is a messianic title expressing Jesus' earthly mission, which involves Jesus's suffering and death, but also a heavenly glory to be followed by eschatological vindication (Elwell & Beitzel 1988:1983). The placement of the title in Luke 18:8b links it with vindication and a judge who will search for faith on Earth (Nickelsburg 1992:145).

There is an element of possible failure to be seen in the text. Within the broader context of the Roman Empire in the 1st century CE, the amount of Jesus' followers would not have made a dent in the structure or ways of the Empire. This, of course, changes in later centuries, as seen, for example, with the conversion of Constantine. However, Luke implies that if the disciples do not learn to pray and persist in prayer, there is a possibility that there would be no faith for the Son of Man to find upon his return (Fitzmyer 2008:1177). The undeterred persistence in the faith, which is made visible through persevering prayer, is the lesson that the parable wants to impart (Wolter 2017:314). This idea of perseverance is particularly communicated in the image of God seen in Luke 18:7–8, as God will without a doubt and swiftly answer the plight of his elect.

The intersection between Luke 18 and resilience

The parable of the unjust judge should be interpreted in the light of its eschatological context. Early Christian communities expected the Second Coming of Christ to be soon. It did not, however, happen soon, which meant it became necessary to teach Christian communities how to think about the Second Coming of Christ. Life for these early Christian communities was not easy, as they lived as marginalised minorities in the Roman Empire. One should keep in mind that most people living in the Roman Empire lived within a system of inequality. There was no middle class, with estimations indicating 9 out of 10 people lived close to subsistence (Häkkinen 2016:1). This would have also been the situation of most of the listeners of the text. We know the author of Luke was specifically interested in the marginalised.[15] Within the context of a delayed Parousia of the Son of Man, why continue with a faith that ostracises and economically debilitates? The figure of the widow becomes an interpretative point for the original hearers to view themselves as people who have chosen to follow Jesus and expect to be vindicated.

It is possible to view the parable through the lens of resilience, as it contains some key elements associated with resilience. From the vantage point of the main figures in the parable, namely the judge and widow, the widow is vulnerable. We know from the honour–shame culture that widows were particularly in a dire economic situation. Of course, this refers to a core value in the ancient Mediterranean world which is inherited and needs to be maintained by both men and women (Plevnik 1993:96). Men embody honour and women the positive value of shame (Plevnik 1993:96). In the case of the widow, it is possible that her husband left her an inheritance, which the members of her family would have a right to, leaving the widow with nothing. There is no husband to uphold a protective shield, leaving her vulnerable to the whims of her family, which even includes the possibility of being sold into slavery (Mundenda & Van Eck 2021:4). She goes alone, which implies there is no children who can protect the widow. The content of her case or the wrong that has been done to her is not disclosed. But it is clear that whatever the case, the cards are stacked against the widow. The judge, who is supposed to be an example of justness and righteousness, and should provide the marginalised with vindication, is particularly lacking (Nolland 1993:867). The adversity is clear.

Resilience is the ability of individuals to adapt and respond positively to adverse conditions (Luthar, Cichetti & Becker 2000:543). 'Better-than-expected outcomes' highlights a few aspects. Firstly, context is important, and one should define resilience outcomes according to specific aspects. Secondly, there may be a range of outcomes of how a person responds when faced with adversity. Thirdly, resilience outcomes should be measured on a more continuous scale, rather than saying someone is either resilient or not resilient (Van Breda 2018:5–6). The widow does not stop in her efforts to have the unjust judge hear her plight. She encapsulates ἐγκακέω, which Spicq and Ernest (1994:398) describe as 'in the most desperate circumstances, they must continue to ask doggedly and intensely and never desist'. Amid difficulties, she does not let go and persists to have her circumstances change.

Resilience sets new pathways that slowly transform thought and practice in ways that often go unnoticed by conventional forms of analysis and reflection (Grove 2018:4). We know that the author of Luke had a keen interest in the weak, the

14.The inferential particle's accentuation is as follows in an interrogative clause: ἆρα ἄρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; (Moule 1953:164). The question is not a rhetorical question.

15.Although the gospel makes mention of Theophilus, who probably was a man of means, the gospel was circulated in various communities.

poor and particularly widows. Part of the Lukan author's plight for the good news is that it is subversive. The kingdom of God is different from the status quo. Resilience offers implicit or explicit judgements about how complex social and ecological relations should be organised (Grove 2018:7). Resilience processes take place in the individual but also within the individual in their environment. In this case, the widow is explicitly illustrated in this parable regarding the relationship with God to manage a context which is adverse. It would be a sweeping assumption to name the gospel of Luke resilient. Rather, the pathways of resilient thinking are being taught in the figure of the widow. The parable intrinsically provides a foothold for subversive action, which is a foothold for resilience (Grove 2018:7), especially considering persistent action that will bring an outcome, in this case, vindication.

The widow becomes a symbol of Christ's activity as healer and saviour. It is God who will take care of her. This leads us to another intersection, that is, justice. The focus in the parable is not on individual people but on the relationship between them (Wolter 2017:318). The widow is not able to defend herself. The judicial system is a structure that is open for exploitation (Nolland 1993:867). Resilience also encompasses a transfer of knowledge to solve specific problems in systems of complexity (Grove 2018:8). It signals an ethos that synthesises different forms of knowledge to solve immediate practical problems (Grove 2018:9). The parable teaches persistence: to continue to state the case of injustice. Additionally, the theme of vindication appears four times in this brief parable (Lk 18:3, 5, 7, 8), designating the seriousness of the cause and hence the earnestness of prayer (Edwards 2015:498).

The pattern is important for establishing a way of doing. Jesus exhorts the disciples not to lengthy prayer but to repeated prayer (Wolter 2017:315). Prayer is foundational to a faith community. In the Lukan context, a faith community cannot be separated from prayer. Moreover, it is particularly when under stress that not only persistent prayer, but also faith-inspired prayer is important (Fitzmyer 2008:1177). Persistent prayer becomes a mode of life. From the purview of resilience, it becomes a tool to not only overcome adverse conditions but also to bounce back from them in a better position.

Another intersection lies in the topic of time, which is also closely intertwined with the topic of justice or vindication. The theme of time forms a golden thread through the parable. The expectation is sketched between when someone should act and when someone is supposed to act. Considering the eschatological backdrop, this is particularly important for a community that is disappointed by an expectation that is not realised. Time is also perplexing, as the parable on the one hand communicates God's swift action and yet prepares the audience to continue in prayerful persistence, as there is a delayed Parousia. There is movement in the parable from ἐπὶ χρόνον 'for a while' (18:4a) to ἐν τάχει 'suddenly' or 'unexpectedly', underlining that it is hope, not fear, that drives the widow's action. It shifts the focus to the unthinkability that God would not answer and the knowledge that he can even do so suddenly (ἐν τάχει, 18:8b).

Conclusion

The parable forms part of three parables the Lukan author inserts explaining the coming of the Son of Man. Within the Lukan context, the parable teaches to continue to persist without losing heart. The figure of the widow becomes the culminating point for the original intended audience, as she educates the community to persist. The parable is not individualistically focussed on the cause of one woman; rather, reading the parable through the lens of resilience helps cast the focus on the relationships between the figures and the relationship with God.

Resilience theory has become increasingly popular in the last decades. Resilience defines the ability of people to deal with adversity better than others. Although resilience is a modern concept, it does provide a helpful lens to look at Luke 18:1–8. It emphasises patterns in the text underscoring what a community should be doing during times of adversity. These patterns form pathways of thinking about one's circumstances and as a collective whole. It becomes especially clear that the action taken by the widow sets an example for a community facing delayed Parousia. The vulnerable widow is in a position where no good outcome is expected, and yet, in her constant persistence, the unjust judge considers her plight. It is especially in a community sense that resilience can be particularly effective, helping a group as a collective to do better than expected.

The Lukan author is motivating the first hearers to persist in faith. The content of prayer is not discussed. Instead, it is the skill of persisting and continuing with prayer against all odds that is communicated. Looking at Luke 18:1–8 through the lens of resilience particularly sheds light on three aspects. The first is the need to continue with the plea for justice even in a situation in which the outcome seems dire and impossible. The image of God, sharply contrasted with the unjust judge, shows what believers can expect in a faith community. The second is a unique understanding of time. Time is not presented as static in the parable. God's relationship with the faith community is both bound and transcended by time. Resilience is created by communicating a different understanding of time. The third aspect is that the parable is subversive. It actively promotes pathways of being that are counter to the culture of the 1st century CE. Persistent prayer would not have been the norm of the day. Resilience specifically is relevant in this assertion, as the repetition highlights continuous action. Of course, the kingdom of God set a culture that is the opposite of what was seen in the Roman Empire, but resilience helps to illuminate that this subversion, persistent faith-filled prayer, is an ongoing event necessary for better-than-expected outcomes in adverse conditions.

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A.P. is the sole author of the research article.

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