

Luke 17:1-19

Verses 1-2: Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

--Jesus continues to instruct His disciples. I think Jesus' warning here fits into the context in relation to the false teachings of the Pharisees (which He had warned about often) and the things that men esteem that can ultimately send people to hell.

--Jesus warns that in this present life **offenses should come**.

--The Greek word for **offenses** is *skandalon*, which refers to the bait or lure in a trap, or any impediment meant to cause others to stumble or fall. So any sin that tempts or trips.

--**Woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better. . .**

--The millstone referred to here was a large one typically pulled by a donkey, in contrast with a smaller handheld type referred to in **17:35**.

--**One of these little ones. . .** is a term Jesus uses for actual children (**Mt. 10:42; 18:10; Lk. 9:48**) as well as adult disciples (**Mt. 11:11; Lk. 12:32**). In this context, it refers to the disciples, particularly those less mature in the faith.

--How can He give such a stern warning? Because it would be better for us to die than lead others to hell!

--If Jesus cares so seriously about how our sin affects others, so should we! No one sins alone. Jesus knew His disciples needed this warning personally, and also needed to know that He takes all offenses seriously and will deal with them seriously!

--We can be a stumbling-block when live unworthy of our profession as did David with Bathsheba (**2 Sam. 12:14**), the nation of Israel (**Rom. 2:24**), the Corinthian church (**1 Cor. 5:1**), etc. (**Mt. 13:41; 16:23; Rom. 14:13; 16:17**). People need to make their own choices to follow Jesus irrespective of others, but we don't want our lives to be the justification for their excuses!

1 Corinthians 10:32: Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,

--The cross will be an offense to people (**Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:8**), but my sinful life should not.

1 John 2:10: He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

--No one should actively lay out bait for others, knowingly tempting them into sin. It is one thing to be the excuse as a stumbling block. It is another thing altogether to be the active cause. Men are tempted but devils tempt!

--Whether that is actively toward sin. *Think of how many have led others into sin through sex, drugs, alcohol, etc.*

--Or through false teaching like the Pharisees (**Rom. 16:17; Rev. 2:14**).

Luke 11:52: "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

--The Word of God has very stern warnings for false teachers (**Gal. 1:6-9; James 3:1**)!

Verses 3-4: "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

--**(3) Take heed to yourselves.** . . is the capstone and transition of the first teaching. We should watch our lives and our doctrine carefully. But do we only need to take heed to ourselves? Do we have responsibility toward those around us? Yes, we do!

--Now Jesus teaches His disciples how to respond to the offenses around them, particularly offenses from other disciples!

--**If your brother sins against you.** . . Now, before we get into rebuking, lets make sure we know what *sins* we are rebuking. We *are not* called to rebuke people who simply disagree with us, or refuse to give us our way, or refuse to live how we think they should.

--When someone sins against us, we are commanded by Jesus as His disciples to rebuke that sin. I should be able to name the sin. What sin am I rebuking?

--To **rebuke** means *to admonish or charge sharply*. It is to declare that something is wrong and should be set right. A godly rebuke is an act of love to God and others.

Leviticus 19:17: You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

--We should care enough about God's glory and reputation to rebuke sin. And we should care enough about our brothers and sisters in Christ, that if we see them stumbling others or tempting others, that we say something about it.

--What does this process look like? **Matthew 18:15-17!**

--Need more examples? Think about how Jesus corrected people privately (Peter), publicly (Peter, Pharisees, Judas, Temple, dinner tables, etc.), and reread the epistles like Galatians, 1 Corinthians, James or 1 Peter and see how the Holy Spirit led them to correct others!

--Do we care enough about people to intervene? If we obeyed this simple command, there would be a whole lot less gossip, rudeness, selfishness, manipulation, lying, and other irritable sins that get ignored or passed over.

--Also, there would be much less bitterness, angst, irritability, and posturing. All these spiritual weeds grow as we leave issues unaddressed. *This sanctifying process is part of why God has established the community of the Church.*

--Why don't we rebuke others?

- 1) We were ignorant of this command, or simply immature in Christ.
- 2) We fear people's disapproval more than we desire God's approval.

3) We, too, are in sin and therefore lack confidence in standing for truth.

--Jesus knows this command is good for us and good for others. It is what they need and what we need. Bless God if you have people in your life who love you enough to speak up.

Proverbs 27:5-6: *Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

--(4) ***If he repents, forgive him. . . you shall forgive him.***

--Forgiveness is simple when rebukes are not meant to lash or wound. The entire aim is the acknowledgment of the truth for the deliverance of the individual (**2 Tim. 2:24-26**).

--Jesus' emphasis here is that genuine repentance should *always* receive genuine forgiveness. If that is what God does for us. We need to extend the same to others.

--Refused forgiveness is just another form of refused repentance. The Scriptures warn that both attitudes are reflective of someone who has never truly known God's love or forgiveness themselves.

1 John 4:20-21: *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this is the commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

--Disciples need to be ready to give rebuke and forgiveness as well as receive rebuke and forgiveness.

*Davis (Luke, Vol. 2, pg. 58): *"Our problem with Jesus' word here is that we are often too spineless to rebuke and too resentful to forgive. Jesus requires of us both courage to rebuke and compassion to forgive. The Christian life, as usual, demands both guts and goodness."**

--What if someone doesn't repent?

1) Publicly, the answer is simple. There is a process to deal with their sin in **Mt. 18**.

2) Personally, the answer is tougher. It is possible to live with a *forgiving heart* toward someone who refuses our forgiveness. Isn't that what Jesus Christ did with those who nailed Him to the cross? Isn't that what the martyrs through the centuries have done with their enemies? Isn't that what we can do with a bad parent, friend, or co-worker?

--Can I live with a forgiving heart toward a sinning brother or sister in Christ until heaven? Yes, I can. Yes, I should. But that doesn't mean forgiveness has to devolve into foolishness.

Forgiveness doesn't look like allowing an unrepentant drunkard to drive around my family; an unrelenting gossip to know my personal thoughts; or an underhanded thief to hold my wallet.

--Unrepentant sin will affect *shared* relationships (as it does with God and the church!), but it does not have to affect the forgiving nature of my *personal* heart.

--Is the unrepentant person getting away with it? No! Look at Jesus' warning here!

Proverbs 28:13: *He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*

Verses 5-6: And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

--(5) **And the apostles.** . . they all agreed on something! This teaching of Jesus Christ made them *feel* their spiritual lack. Yet it was a good request to lay before the Object of their faith, just as it still is for us! I lay my Amen and Amen alongside them.

--Faith is not a static thing in the Christian life. We are not only called to *have faith*. We are called to go from *faith to faith*, to *walk by faith*, and to *live by faith*.

--Faith is spoken of as **little** (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; Lk. 12:28) and **great** (Mt. 8:10; 15:28; Lk. 7:9). It is also spoken of as **weak** (Rom. 4:19; 14:1) and **strong** (Rom. 4:20). Like our physical health, the spiritual health of our faith can grow and mature or weaken and atrophy.

--(6) Jesus gives the illustration of what the genuine life in even the smallest seed of faith can accomplish.

--To uproot something and cast it into the sea or to flatten it was descriptive of dealing with an insurmountable problem. We see similar sayings in: **Zech 4:7: Who are you O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!**; **Mk. 11:23: whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,'**; **1 Cor. 13:2: though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, etc.**

--Just think of how powerfully God used small faith throughout the Scripture: *Moses, Gideon, Esther, the disciples, etc.*

Verses 7-10: And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."

--How does this little parable fit into the context? After encouraging their faith, which can accomplish great things, Jesus warns His disciples about spiritual pride.

--Jesus' story makes a simple point. Servants don't ever put their master under obligation by their service. When they finish their work and see to their master's needs, they have only done their duty.

--Even great acts of faith are simple steps of duty: Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc.

--In like manner, our obedience to God does not earn us some type of spiritual merit He is obligated to respond to. If we begin to feel that way, we will soon become just like the religious leaders of Jesus' day and the older brother of **Luke 15**.

--Remember, this was instruction for the disciples. It checks our attitude toward Him, not His attitude toward us. He is a Master more richly gracious and giving than we can imagine (**Mt. 10:40-42; Heb. 6:10**).

Verses 11-13: Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

--Jesus is traveling toward Jerusalem along the border between Samaria and Galilee when His path crosses a group of ten lepers. They stood *afar off* in accordance with the law as described in **Leviticus 13**.

--Leprosy (our modern-day Hansen's disease) was a physical, social, and spiritual death sentence.

--Somehow, somewhere, they had heard about Jesus Christ, and they cried out to Him for mercy. There wasn't another person on earth they could turn to for the mercy they sought.

Verses 14-16: So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

--**(14)** Jesus responds with a simple command. **Go, show yourselves to the priests.** He puts before them a step of faith and obedience. Go to the priests as if you were already clean.

--**So it was that as they went, they were cleansed.** Imagine this scene! What a wonderful joy must have emerged as they went on their way. *Think of the before & after photos of this crew!*

--We come to know the Person and power of God as we do His will (**Jn. 7:17**). We don't need to have all the details. We just need to obey the things He clearly tells us. He will take care of the rest.

John 13:17: If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

--The miracle of a cleansed leper was a testimony to the priests and the one who was cleansed as they sacrificed according to the law (**Lev. 14**).

--**(15-16)** One man, in the middle of the most blessed moment of his life, realizes there is a Person on the other side of the power. A Giver on the other side of the gift.

--The nine were excited about healing. They were excited by new prospects in life. They were excited about reintegration with family and friends. They were so excited by what they had received that they ignored who they had received it from. *Just like a babe with its mother's milk is too immature to see the person beyond the provision.*

--**with a loud voice glorified God.** . . He had been loud in prayer—now he is loud in praise. Too often, we employ prayer as a means of securing grace and gifts while ignoring prayer as a means of expressing glory and gratitude.

--**And he was a Samaritan.** The least likely to return to Christ with gratitude. *Certainly, he becomes a forerunner of the Gentile nations coming to Christ for healing and praising Him.*

Verses 17-19: So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

--(17-18) Jesus notices the lack of gratitude. Giving thanks is giving God glory, and we should not rob God of His glory.

--We sanctify God’s blessings through thanksgiving.

1 Timothy 4:3-5: and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

--The nine were content to have the gifts of God without a relationship to God. They assumed all was well in the spiritual because they were blessed in the physical. Unfortunately, they thought wrong (Just as it was wrong to think God was against them if there was physical sickness). *What if they were healed but never came to know Jesus as Savior?*

John 6:26: Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”

--Are we too busy, too blessed, to return to God and give Him the glory due His name? We tend to be such poor returners!

--**except this foreigner.** . . if a Samaritan could see clearly enough to return in praise and faith, the Jews, who should have known and recognized their Messiah, had no excuse.

--Of course, neither do we.

1 Thessalonians 5:18: In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

--(19) **Your faith has made you well.** . . is a saying used of the woman who was a sinner (Lk. 7:50); the woman with the blood flow (Lk. 8:48); here, and of blind Bartimaeus (Lk. 18:42). Jesus is blessing the man for the faith he displayed in His Person.

--There is a difference between mercy and faith.

--The nine left, rejoicing in the mercy of Jesus. The Samaritan turned from the priests to Jesus, seeing and believing something about Him, not just His mercy.