

“DO I HAVE TO FORGIVE HIM AGAIN?”

Luke 17:1-10

Perhaps no harder counsel is given in God's Word than that found in the first few verses of Luke 17.

—no counsel so important for our own sanity and well-being.

How do WE respond when someone deliberately sets out to harm us?

When they decide they are going to get us one way or another,
and there is nothing we can do about it?

How do we react when the offender is another member of God's family?

That's when it hurts us the worst, isn't it?

We don't mind it so much when the attack comes from the world.

We expect attacks from them.

But when the attack comes from within the family—from among God's people—that's a bit harder to take!

Jesus leaves Pharisees behind and turns back to His disciples.

Jesus' instructions are intended to prepare his followers for what's about to happen—His rejection and departure.

In Luke 17, our Lord concludes His instruction to the disciples about rejection, by speaking directly about forgiveness.

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING FORGIVENESS

Summary: Though offenses undoubtedly will come,
and God will punish the offender,
Jesus' followers ought to:

- * see these events from God's perspective,
- * forgive the offender,
- * and assume the attitude of servants,
who expect no special treatment,
but just do what their Master tells them to do.

PERSONAL INSTRUCTION FOR JESUS' DISCIPLES 17:1-19:27

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING FORGIVENESS 17:1-10

How should they deal with rejection, of Him and of themselves?

How should they deal with offense and mistreatment?

One reality the early church faces: mistreatment on account of their faith.

In James much of the abuse they face comes from other believers —many of whom are trying to escape persecution themselves.

Some of these sold out their brothers and sisters in Christ,
or refused to assist them in their time of affliction,
in order to escape greater affliction themselves.

How should Jesus' followers respond to such offenses?

JESUS INTRODUCES THE PROBLEM 17:1-4

Temptations and offenses will come 17:1a *Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, . . .”*

It's inevitable that some will come along and cause us to fall.
Such people will cause us to trip and fall.

We can count on it! It will happen! It's inevitable.

God WILL take care of the offenders in His own way and time. 17:1b-2

"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. 2 It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."

Reference to "little ones" may refer to new believers, or to His followers who are present with Him there.

It may be a term of endearment like John uses in his letters: *"Dear ones," "beloved," "Little children, . . ."*

We don't have to worry about the unjust treatment.

God repays justly.

"Vengeance is MINE, I will repay!" says the Lord. [Jr. highers]

It would be better for the offender to have a heavy rock tied around his neck and be thrown into the sea.

God will handle such a person,

and he/she will regret the act that trips us up.

But the point is just that: GOD will handle it!

We can relax and leave it with Him.

That's the point our Lord is making:

"But YOU, watch out for yourself!"

We should watch out for ourselves, lest WE fall. 17:3a

"So watch yourselves."

That's what the warning is about.

Some will seek to trip us up by their mistreatment.

We have to watch our step

so we don't fall over the rock they set in our path.

How do we fall over the rock?

By refusing to care about them.

By not correcting them, and by not forgiving them.

We should watch out for one another and seek to restore those who go astray. 17:3b *"If your brother sins, rebuke him,"*

However great the offense may be, when an offender repents, we should forgive him. 17:3c-4

"and if he repents, forgive him. 4 If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

"That's stupid!" But that's exactly what our Lord says we should do.

At the close of a Bible conference, a young woman came forward to talk to the preacher.

She said, "Do you remember the girl who gave a testimony tonight, saying that she and her friend had not been on speaking terms for 6 weeks? Well, I'm the one she was talking about. I want to be fully surrendered to the Lord, but I don't think it's fair for God to expect me to make the first move. After all, she's the one to blame."

The man of God replied, "Let's sit down and talk about it, but first let's pray. Will you start? There was an awkward silence. Finally the preacher said, "If you don't know what to say, just repeat the prayer our Lord gave to His disciples."

The young woman began, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." Suddenly there was silence again.

"What's the matter?" said the minister. When the girl did not reply, he asked, "Can't you put your heart into the next line that asks the Lord to forgive you even as you forgive those who have sinned against you?"

With these words, the Holy Spirit brought conviction to the young woman. Finishing the prayer, she went out to find the girl who had wronged her and to restore their fellowship.

In context of Jesus' rejection, offenses will surely come;

God will severely punish the offender.

Jesus' followers should see from God's perspective.

We should leave the vengeance with Him.

Our role is to attempt to correct, and forgive,
when the other person repents,

EVEN IF they turn around and do it 6 more times the same day!

The repetition is *their* problem. Forgiveness is ours!

THE DISCIPLES REACT TO JESUS' SOLUTION 17:5

"The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

"This is going to take a lot more faith than we possess!!"

"Increase our faith!"

JESUS RESPONDS TO THEIR INCREDULOUS REACTION 17:6-10

They cry out for more faith to be able to live this way.

Jesus answers: It's not the quantity of our faith that makes the difference.

The old Brylcreem ad says it all: *"A little dab will do you!"*

A little bit of faith goes a long way!

Just a tad will accomplish far more than is at stake here. 17:6

"He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

When we believe God enough to do what He says,

Then, when we speak to tree, we expect *and get* results.

It doesn't take a lot of faith—just faith. Period!

Believe God and do what He says,

whether it makes sense or not!

The real issue is “Have you accepted a servant’s attitude? 17:7-10” *“Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? 8 Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? 9 Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? 10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”*

Do we see ourselves as the servant, or as a privileged guest?

Do we sometimes think we deserve special treatment?

Does God owe it to us to give us everything we think we deserve?

Do we have to get our rights?

If we take a servant attitude,

we’ll recognize that we’re unworthy of what we receive,

and we’ll be grateful for the privilege of serving. 17:7-8

“Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? 8 Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’?”

A servant comes in from a hard day’s work in the field,

NOT to be served by his master and appreciated,

But to serve his master.

Only after the master is done eating and drinking

can the servant expect to receive anything!

Even then he doesn’t expect to be thanked.

He’s just doing his job. 17:9 *“Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?”*

That’s what OUR attitude ought to be.

When it’s all done, we don’t expect to be praised,

because we’ve just done what we’re told. 17:10 *“So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”*

When we’ve done *EVERYTHING* God says to do,
we’re still unworthy.

We’ve just done what we’re told.

We ought to learn to forgive the offender

and assume the attitude of servants

who expect no preferential treatment,

but simply dedicate ourselves to do faithfully

whatever our Master commands us.

* Forgiving and serving attitude

- * Forgive those who offend us
- * Adopt the attitude of servants
 - No expectation of preferential treatment
 - Just do what you're told.

FIVE PRACTICAL LESSONS:

1. Be careful about your own actions and attitudes.

Mind your own business! 17:3 *So watch yourselves.*

- * Be sure YOU'RE not the offender yourself.
- * Be sure YOU forgive those who offend you.

WE do what God wants US to do, whether others follow or not!

2. Correct those who are out of line and who offend others—who cause others to fall. 17:3

So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him."

3. Forgive such a one yourself. 17:3-4 "and if he repents, forgive him. 4 If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

4. Trust God to give you the strength and ability to do this.

17:5-6 *The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*

5. Accept a servant attitude. 17:7-10