

Friday, November 4, 2022 • Read Luke 17:1–10

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom is Jesus speaking (v1)? What does He say is impossible? Upon whom does He pronounce woe? What would be better than causing a little one to stumble (v2)? What does He say to do to themselves (v3)? What should they do if a brother sins against them? And what if the response to this rebuke is repentance? How many times might this happen in a day (v4)? And if he returns saying "I repent"? What do the apostles ask for, from Whom, when they hear this instruction (v5)? What size faith does the Lord talk about in response (v6)? With that much faith, what could they tell to do what, and be obeyed? What might one of their servants be doing before coming in from the field (v7)? What wouldn't he say to this servant? What does Jesus say that they would say instead (v8)? When could the servant think of himself? What wouldn't they do to the servant (v9)? How much of what we are commanded should we do (v10)? What should we say when we have done this? Why—what have we done, when we have obeyed all his commands?

What challenges does remaining sin pose to relationships among believers? Luke 17:1–10 looks forward to the p.m. sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these ten verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **remaining sin means that believers' relationships take vigilance, forgiveness, faith, and humility**

In this section, the Lord turns from warning the Pharisees that they are missing out on the kingdom altogether (16:14–31) to instructing His disciples around some of the hazards of kingdom living. For believers, we're reminded that even after God has done that saving work of bringing us to faith in Christ, there is a long way to go as we grow in grace.

We must take heed to our brothers' soul, v1–2. "Offenses" and "offend" here translate a word that refers to when someone falls into sin, or error, or even rejects the Christianity to which they once claimed to hold. Jesus knows that, since this will inevitably happen, we might think that lets us off the hook a little bit if it was our hypocrisy or sin or loose doctrine that became the occasion by which someone else did so. But that's a great mistake. Even if it was bound to happen, and even though they are to blame for their own stumbling (and will pay for it themselves), this doesn't reduce our responsibility.

Being the occasion for someone else falling into sin and error is worse than being dragged down headfirst, through more water than we can easily picture, with our helpless feet pointing toward the surface, because a several thousand pound stone keeps pulling, pulling, pulling on our neck so that struggling chokes us more, until all struggling ultimately fails and the water fills our lungs as we suffocate on the way down, buried alive in a watery grave.

A little graphic for a warm fuzzy devotional? Sure. But Jesus meant to be graphic, and wrestling with the Word of our holy God often isn't warm and fuzzy. We should be scared to death of helping people stumble. And Jesus sets the example, not willing to cause us to stumble by soft-peddling how dreadful such sin is

Therefore, we must take heed to our own soul, v3–6. "Take heed to yourselves," Jesus says at the beginning of v3. And we need the reminder, because we rarely obey the command, "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him." It's a rebuke that seeks the fruit of repentance rather than the moment of confrontation through which it comes, but while a few perverted hearts enjoy the confrontation, many more are willing to deny their brother the opportunity to repent, rather than go through the discomfort of confronting.

It's important that we learn to enjoy the sweetness of reconciliation, because we might have to eat that cookie seven times in a day (v4). If we're just going through the motions, the bitterness of counting how many times we have had to do something will leave an increasingly bad taste in our mouths. The disciples immediately confirm the anticipated difficulty, asking for the increased faith that they will need to obey such instruction (v5). Rather than suggest that it's not as hard as it seems, Jesus proceeds to underline just how impossible it is to do what He is commanding—and that the faith that He is working in them is sufficient to the task (v6)!

And we mustn't be impressed with ourselves for either one, v7–10. Because God grants us to do the impossible by His grace, our remaining sin puts us in danger of being self-impressed. God indeed will reward us for the good works that His grace produces in us, and Jesus even says that He will serve us in the kingdom (cf. Luke 12:37)! But this just underlines the astonishing generosity and grace of our Master.

If we allow ourselves to feel like we deserve God's notice or gratitude, we will only hinder ourselves from amazement at His grace. Jesus says to neutralize such wrongheaded spiritual pride or self-satisfaction by remembering that God gains nothing from us; the best that we ever do is only what was already our duty.

How have you been caring for others' souls? And for your own? How do you respond to doing your duty?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for taking upon Yourself the punishment for all of our offenses. Thank You for forgiving us, and for enabling us to forgive others. Give us to serve You in our relationships, and in every other way. For, it is our duty as Your servants, for the honor of Your Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP197 "Christian Unity" or TPH408 "For All the Saints"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Luke 17 verses 1 through 10. These are God's words 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, 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 and the apostle 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. And which of you having a servant plowing or tending sheep, We'll 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 to lie of eaten and drunk, and afterward, you will eat and drink. Does he think that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?

I think not So likewise 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 So far? The reading of Gods inspired and, and they're into art, It is the Lord who takes care of his people.

It is the Lord holds them back from sin, delivers them from sin. Gives them repentance, gives them, peace between one. Another all good gifts come from the Lord. But he has given us the privilege, the owner of being his servants, and how he takes care of us of one another in the church.

And therefore especially of one another in the family We in this room together in this household are appointed by Providence to be on earth, God's greatest instruments or God's most frequently used. Most commonly used instruments in one another's lives. So we have very good reason, both as Christians thinking about the congregation and then especially as family members thinking about one another, to pay a good attention to these 10 verses.

Now He reminds us that we live in a fallen world in which there is much trial and much cause for stumbling the word in verse 1. And then the word in verse 2 offenses. And offend is really a word for stumbling and causing to stumble. And so we see the first way that we are to serve the Lord.

And one another's lives is that we would not cause our brother or our sister to stumble that we would not become the occasion for him. Stumbling and the Lord takes us very seriously. You hear that in the language woe to him and then in the statement, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

If you went around in your life under constant, danger of having a millstone tied around your neck and being thrown into the sea, you would definitely be watching out for the millstones. And yet it is worse to cause our brother or sister to stumble to become the occasion for our brother or sister sinning.

This is one of the reasons why is we read in the Proverbs the Lord hates. The one who stirs up strife among the brethren. So it's very important for you. I had not to spend your life. Looking out for your own interests, making sure everyone gets what's coming to them.

And and recognize as it, you should get what's coming to you in a negative fashion for them, in a positive fashion for you. But that you would spend your life serving. The Lord, who has appointed you to this, as we'll see. By the time we get to the end of our passage.

So that's the first thing. The first way we serve one, another second way we serve one. Another is if we see our brother sinning or stumbling, we rebuke him. This has to, of course occur in a climate or a culture of peace in the home because the third one is if he repents forgive him and you say ah that means if he proves by action that he's getting better at it and is not it's not sending against me like this anymore and the text does not leave us that option because if he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, I repent yourself, forgive him.

So definitely this does not leave for the relinquishing of bitterness and the restoring of relationship, which is different. Then restoring privileges or letting out of punishment but definitely, you are not allowed to harbor. Bitterness or or express hardness of heart or keep relational. Hostility because you have to forgive him.

If he says, I repent seven times in a day so you can't make the relinquishing of bitterness or the restoration of civility dependent upon them showing that they really meant it. There are people who talk like that because they're confusing different aspects of forgiveness, The Lord doesn't leave us that option.

So, this is a relational culture between us and our brothers. And if we're thinking, especially about the church in our home, in our household, in which there is the friendship and the affection, and the kindness that almost can't get interrupted unless you have someone who is so hostile. And so, so stiff.

Necked that they refuse? Even to say that they repent. But that's the culture of course in which servant duty number two. The rebuking is going to work the best because when you receive a rebuke that comes not in hostility, but in the thoughtfulness of a brother or sister, who has, is spending a big part of their emotional mental life thinking about, not causing you to sin, and then they see you in a sin anyway.

Even though they were not the one who gave you occasion for it, and I said, no, no, no, you're sinning. Please don't do that to yourself. Don't do that before God and you hear the rebuke in that case, isn't it? Much easier if you know that they love you and you know that they're watching out for you and not attacking you, not condemning you isn't it much easier to receive that rebuke.

And so there's the the four duties to not cause our brother to stumble to be watching out for becoming the occasion of our brother's sin and then duty number two, rebuking duty. Number three forgiving and duty. Number four, which is probably the hardest one persistence and forgiving. And I think that apostles the disciples know that this is the hardest one, because notice the beginning of verse 5, and the Apostles said to the Lord, increase our faith.

You maybe we could handle one through three, but that fourth duty seems pretty big and the Lord immediately teaches them, the nature of faith. And the nature of faith is that it rests upon the power of God. If they thought that they had it in themselves to do duties, one through three.

But then, for duty number four, they needed God's help. They didn't understand faith at all. Faith does not find in itself, the ability for anything and so he says, 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 Why, because faith is a refusal of following my own agenda and believing and following God's truth.

Faith is a refusal of depending on my own power and instead depending upon God's power. Now has God commanded us has God instructed us to tell Mulberry trees to be uprooted and go be planted in the sea. No, That undoes the separation of the water from the land and the causing of the land to bring forth the vegetation from which the mulberry tree.

First, sprung, etc. But has God commanded you to live your life in a way that is concerned not to give occasion to your brother or sister to stumble or just in. Yes has God. Commanded you to rebuke your brother? In a gentle spirit, Galatians 6:1 style. That if you find your brother caught in an offense, you should restore him gently.

Yes. Has God commanded you that if he repents you should forgive him? Yes, as God. Commanded you that if and your brother comes seven times in a day saying, I repent that you should forgive him seven times. Yes. And so it is the power of God that is offered to you.

That is guaranteed to you for what God has commanded. And it doesn't matter how big the faith is, because faith is not a bigness God, is the bigness. And faith says, I don't have the resources. God has all the resources in him and truly he does. Now, when you look to God for the resources and you're able to do these things, you have to remember the nature of faith and not turn out and turn around and let your heart say I'm doing so well.

As a Christian look at me and then cause anybody to stumble today a rebuked. My siblings, 24 times. And I said, I forgive you with a smile 11 times or whatever it is and you feel puffed up. He says, no. All these things are things that you are commanded to do and even more, not only are you committed to do them, You're doing them and God's strength as well.

But all these things are things that you're commanded to do. You didn't profit God, anything. By what you did, You didn't add to him. He was the one who was actually adding to you, isn't he? He's the one who's giving you all those things. And so we should never be proud.

Um pride and boasting is this awful attitude that implies God should be thankful to us or that. God is us. It's the opposite of what we find in the gospel. Remember from the end of Romans 3 where it is not the law of works, but the law of faith that excludes boasting because it says God has done all for me in Christ, and therefore,

thankfulness and praise are what exclude boasting And so if we recognize that it's our duty anyway and that we don't add anything to God.

And then if we further recognize that God is the one who enabled us to do it and gave to us the joy, the blessing of doing that, which he has instructed in his own power, then we will not think of ourselves as having done works of super irrigation, where we're doing so much better.

Than what could be expected of us. We will think of ourselves as having done our duty will say, I am an unprofitable. We are unprofitable servants. We have done. What was our duty to do? And what an important duty would that we would practice it. Well with one another This is one that because of the nature of our sinfulness is actually easier to practice in the congregation at first than it is in our home.

Because we do it, we can do that sort of, in a fleshly manner, you know. Just let it all simmer below the surface and put on the smile and act, like we're doing it because it's in short stints and you get to escape from them have to a couple of hours.

But what, when we're in the home, we have to do it by faith because we can't even keep the veneer the surface. The the picture, the projection of doing it for because of how long, and how continuously we are in one another's presence. So that's one thing. If you find yourself always running and from the family interaction, perhaps what we need as to operate by faith and independence upon God, enjoy doing that, which is our duty contributing to the not causing one another to stumble culture contributing to the forgiving culture of the household and therefore, contributing to a culture in the household where Buicks can be given in a way that comes in the same brotherly love.

Which, of course, only God can do. But praise God, since he's commanded it. He will do it in us and for us as we look to him let's ask him to do that. Now, Our Father in heaven, how we thank you for this wonderful passage in which you have taught us.

The duty that we have before you, especially in our relationships with one another and the certainty that we have from you of your power, for our duty, help us O God to live. This joyous life of fellowship that is shaped by these instructions and grant that we would be thankful to you as you graciously work in us and give us.

We pray continual repenting since We have from our remaining sin, the continual sinning. We see things in Jesus name. Amen.