

Luke 17:1-6 – Basic Christian Life

Introduction

1. Jesus has challenged the Pharisees openly and boldly
2. Jesus speaks to the disciples about the basics of Christianity: Sin, Faith, Righteousness, Repentance, and Forgiveness
3. Christians are a new creation in Christ Jesus, saved, and thereby acquire obligations and responsibilities as part of the Community of Faith
4. Salvation is not bound up in a private religion – our Faith is public, covenantal, and corporate
5. Christians are enabled by the indwelling Spirit to be conformed to the image of Christ to love the Truth of God and walk in it

Main Idea: Scandalous stumbling blocks that cause unbelieving people to doubt or drift away from faith in Jesus Christ is preordained by God to prove genuineness of faith and promote the purity of the church. Christians are those who watch themselves to avoid being a stumbling block, gently rebuke sinners, repent of sin, forgive the repentant, and place their faith in Christ who enables them to obey His commands.

Necessary, Scandalous Stumbling Blocks (Luke 17:1-3a)

1. Christians belong to a covenant community and fulfill obligations commanded of them as part of Christ's body
2. Jesus commands FOUR Responsibilities from the Christian
3. Responsibility #1: Pay attention to yourselves!
4. Temptations to sin (*skandalia* – literally stumbling blocks) will arise in this world and in the church
5. The world is full of snares and they are certain
6. What is a stumbling block? NOT just sinning – otherwise we would all be stumbling blocks
 - a. Open rebellion that causes people to question the genuineness of the Christian Faith (Ex: David with Bathsheba, Hypocrites who are religious – **see Romans 2:24**)
 - b. The goal of the Christian is to live life for Christ so people might see good fruit & thereby be convinced (**1 Corinthians 10:31-33**)
7. Stumbling blocks are in the world & the church to lure unbelieving, but professing Christians away from Christ
 - a. This is part of the decrees of God; they are necessary (**Matt 18:7**)
 - b. The purpose is to see who is genuinely a believer (**1 Cor 11:19**)
 - c. The Lord purges the Church of professing religious persons to purify the Church of Christ (Ex: Covid-19, False Doctrine, immoral and scandalous behavior from religious leaders, the Pharisees)
 - d. The Pharisees stood in the way of people seeking the Kingdom of God (**Matthew 23:13**)
 - e. Jesus says these stumbling blocks are necessary and certain
8. People who wander from the faith did not lose their faith, but only prove they never were saved to begin with (**1 John 2:18-19**)
9. True believers persevere in the Faith, devoted to Christ

Personal Responsibility to Repent (Luke 17:1b-2)

1. *Woe to the one...* Woes are serious judgments from God on the one who causes the stumbling block or other heinous sins (**Matt 11:21, 18:7**)
 - a. Ex: Judas Iscariot is an example of woe where God preordained His betrayal, and yet was still responsible for the betrayal (**Luke 22:22**)
 - b. Scandalous factions, stumbling blocks, and temptations of offense are ordained by God, yet the one who does them is still responsible
 - c. Jesus says: Watch Yourselves!
2. It is better to die by drowning with a millstone around the neck than be a stumbling block and incur God's woeful judgment
 - a. Millstones – large stones for grinding grain; the Romans used them as punishment for guilty criminals, throwing them into the sea
 - i. Jesus tells us only the end result, the fruit of salvation
3. The little ones that are tempted to sin are children and any believer in Christ as Lord and Savior (**Matthew 18:1-6, Mark 9:40-42**)
 - a. All Christians are God's little ones
4. How do we escape the woes of God? Acknowledge your sin, confess your sin, repent of your sin, mortify your sin, and believe in Jesus who shed His lifeblood for your sins

Rebuke Sinful Behavior (Luke 17:3b)

1. Responsibility to deal with sins is not merely on the individualistic level, but rather a corporate responsibility
 - a. We are not to live together in suspicious ways, but confront glaring sins in our fellow brothers' lives in order to restore them
2. What the rebuke looks like:
 - a. Introspection: Take your speck out first (**Matthew 7:1-5**)
 - b. Be gentle in your confrontation (**Galatians 6:1-3a**)
 - c. Bear the other persons burden of sin – win them (**Matthew 18:15**)
3. Taking pleasure in confronting those who sin disqualifies you from confronting them; we confront to lovingly restore them to fellowship
4. Confrontation of sinful behaviors preserves the purity of the Church
5. Responsibility #2: The Christian who has offended repents

Forgive the Repentant (Luke 17:3c-4)

1. Responsibility #3: Christians Forgive!
2. When the offender repents, the offended forgives; forgiven Christians forgive even if they are offended 7X in a day & asked for forgiveness
3. Forgiveness is bearing the brunt of the pain by letting the offender off the hook – it is the Gospel, for this is what Jesus did for us on the Cross

Pray for Faith (Luke 17:5-6)

1. Responsibility #4: Pray for faith – a good prayer, but also one that lacks understanding
2. It is humanly impossible to do what the Lord has commanded in this passage; the enablement of the Spirit assists believers to obey
3. Faith is a gift from God (**Ephesians 2:8**)
4. Jesus' gentle rebuke: It is not the strength of your little faith to obey, but the object of your little faith that enables you to obey