

Sermon Text: Luke 17:1-10 Dealing with Sin by Faith as Christ's Servants

As a servant of Christ, you can deal with sin by faith with humility.

1) You must walk carefully lest you cause others to stumble (17:1-3a).

- a) Whenever we think of dealing with sin, we must start with our own lives.
- b) "Temptations to sin (lit. stumble) are sure to come"—Expect temptations to come your way.
- c) "woe to the one through whom they come"—You can cause people to stumble by your teaching and your example.
- d) "It would be better if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea"—Better to die and never be heard from again than to lead people away from Christ.
- e) "than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin (stumble)."—"Little ones" refers to the immature, whether children or new disciples of Jesus.
- f) **Application:** "Pay attention to yourselves!"

2) You must correct and forgive each other with patience (17:3b-4).

- a) We must also deal with the sins of our brothers.
- b) "Rebuke him"—Principles for rebuking/correcting a brother (Philip Ryken):
 - i) courageously, not timidly (2 Sam. 12:7; James 5:19-20)
 - ii) gently, not judgmentally (Gal. 6:1 "a spirit of gentleness")
 - iii) humbly, not proudly (Luke 6:41-42)
 - iv) affectionately, not harshly (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 4:15-16)
 - v) prayerfully, not impulsively (Gal. 6:1 "Spiritual")
- c) "If he repents, forgive him"—Forgiveness is a relational transaction, not a one-way street.
 - i) Repentance involves condemning one's own sin with holy hatred and turning from that sin "with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience" (Shorter Catechism Question 87).
 - ii) The one who forgives takes on the debt of the brother who sinned, rather than exacting payment from him.
 - iii) What if the offender does not repent?
 - (1) You must love him (Luke 6:27-36).
 - (2) You must be willing and eager to forgive.
 - (3) You cannot forgive in any objective sense, because you cannot take on his debt if he is determined to hold onto it and increase it.
 - iv) What if he is a repeat offender? V. 4 "And if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."
 - (1) Jesus is not encouraging sinners to abuse grace.
 - (2) Jesus demands us to show the same grace to others that He has shown to us.
- d) **Application:**
 - i) You must live an exemplary life (point 1 above) without becoming self-righteous and judgmental.
 - ii) You must forgive your brother who sins against you.
 - iii) You must show patience with sinners.

3) You can deal with sin by faith (17:5-6).

- a) "Increase our faith!"
 - i) The disciples already possess faith as a gift from God.
 - ii) They pray out of sense of absolute dependence on God as they contemplate the demands of the Kingdom of God.
 - iii) They underestimate the power of faith when it is rightly placed in God.
- b) "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed"
 - i) This is a first class condition, which assumes the reality of what is stated.
 - ii) Mustard seeds are proverbially tiny (cf. Luke 13:19).
- c) "you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."
 - i) The mulberry tree had proverbially strong roots.
 - ii) God's sanctifying grace is so powerful that the tiniest faith can prevail against the greatest temptation and sin. What God requires of us He also grants to us.
- d) **Application:**
 - i) Believe the word of God for your sanctification (Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:16; 1 Peter 1:14-19).
 - ii) Trust God's plan for the body of Christ. You can promote the peace and purity of the church by speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15-16).
 - iii) Trust God for the strength to forgive.

4) You can deal with sin with humility (17:7-10).

- a) "Does he thank the servant?"—This is not a polite word of "thanks," but an obligation of reward for service above and beyond the call of duty.
- b) "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are all unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (v. 10). There is no such thing as supererogatory works.
- c) God does reward our "faith working through love." But the reward is not a wage earned, but a gracious reward to crown His own work in you (Hebrews 6:10; 10:32-35).
- d) **Application:**
 - i) Beware of the Pagan practice of manipulating the "gods" with ritual or moral performance (Rom. 11:35).
 - ii) Beware of pride and self-righteousness when you observe your growth in love and faith.
 - iii) Beware of pride that produces unforgiveness.
 - iv) Beware of seeking the praise of men.
 - v) Praise God for His sanctifying grace. Praise Him for crowning Christ's redeeming work in you with gracious rewards.
 - vi) Praise Jesus Christ for being a loving Master who stoops to serve His servants.

Doxology: "To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."—Revelation 1:5b-6