

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 38

From Luke 17 through Luke 19:27, Jesus gave a series of instructions to His disciples. Interspersed with these instructions are events that occurred at various times during His life and ministry. When He finished with these instructions, the Lord entered the week of His passion and sufferings.

The Peril of Offenses

Luke 17:1 NKJV Then He said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!”

The Greek word σκάνδαλον, (skandalon) - means the trigger of a trap, a snare, anything to cause another to stumble or fall; a stumbling block, rock or obstacle that causes another to sin; offense.

The various translations broaden this meaning.

- TPT — betrayals
- NIV — things that cause people to sin
- NLT — temptations
- NASB95 — stumbling blocks

Jesus was referring to what a person says or does that may cause another to sin or be hurt.

Luke 17:1 AMP AND [Jesus] said to His disciples, temptations (snares, traps set to entice to sin) are sure to come, but woe to him by or through whom they come!

Luke 17:2 NKJV 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 is saying more than what we think of when we say “they were offended.” They were offended means their feelings were hurt. He is talking about putting a stumbling block in another’s way to cause them to sin, trip and fall. Offenses remove trust and entices one to abandon what they should trust and obey. To “offend” means to cause someone to withdraw from Christ and become entangled in sin. It is important for every believer to purposefully live in such a way as to not entice others to sin or to be a stumbling block that would cause them to withdraw from fellowship with God and other believers.

Forgiveness

Luke 17:3–4 NKJV 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.”

After Jesus just said don't be an "offense" to others, He spoke about not holding on to grudges. We are to be on our guard and look out for one another. Jesus gave a formula for dealing with those who have sinned against us.

"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."

The word rebuke does not mean respond toward them with the same attitude. This kind of rebuke is restorative in nature.

Galatians 6:1 NKJV Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

James 5:19-20 NKJV Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Pay close attention to what Jesus said.

Luke 17:3 NKJV *"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."*

There are two actions that should be taken after a person is confronted about their sin. First, repentance is the feeling of regret or remorse about what was done and changing one's mind or direction for better.

Repentance is the personal amending of one's way and abhorrence of past sins. It is both action toward God and toward others. Godward repentance is an internal spiritual reorientation toward God which also involves outward action. Repentance is therefore genuine sorrow for one's sin, complete reversal of one's actions, and turning away from sin and toward God. When a person truly repents, they will hate what they have done and will change their behavior. True repentance is a change of one's attitude toward sin and rebellion against God's authority, not just regretting specific offenses. Second, it is the action believers take to forgive them.

Ephesians 4:32 NKJV And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

We should forgive others in the same way that God in Christ forgave us. The work of Christ removes the guilt of sin or the sinner's liability to eternal wrath. As a result, the sinner is forever freed from the guilt and penalty of sin. Jesus addressed how often we should forgive.

Luke 17:4 NKJV 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.”

When we practice forgiveness it not only impacts the person who has sinned against us, it changes the heart and attitude of the one who forgives. Complete forgiveness brings release and relief from the offense and hurt.

Faith

Luke 17:5–6 NKJV 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.

They wanted Jesus to increase their faith, but the LORD indicated even the smallest amount of real faith could do amazingly miraculous things. The least amount of authentic faith can accomplish whatever is needed to remove the difficulties that occur. Faith is powerful because God has unlimited power. Real faith involves deep certainty about what you hope for, even when you cannot see it. Real faith rests on God’s character and promises rather than circumstantial probability. Real (authentic) faith is so powerful that the smallest amount of it can remove mountains. The LORD expects believers to have real faith. Without faith, no one can please God. Approaching God requires both believing He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.

Profitable servants

Remember that the Lord was teaching His disciples.

Luke 17:7 NKJV 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’?

Luke 17:8 NKJV 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’?

Luke 17:9 NKJV Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

Jesus is showing the master—servant relationship. In Luke 6:46, Jesus said: “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” The Lord is showing the proper attitude toward God. Everyone who has made Jesus the Lord of their lives should have this attitude. The servant attitude does not consider that they are worthy of thanks or praise for doing their duty. When we walk in obedience, we have only done what

God expected. Even if we do everything required and more, we have not surpassed our duty.

Luke 17:10 NKJV 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.’

Our service to God requires faithfulness, gratitude and humility. Every believer should be busy doing something for the LORD and His kingdom.

Discourse on the Second Coming

The Pharisees following Jesus asked Him about the coming of the kingdom of God. Without denying the completion of the kingdom at the end of time, Jesus acknowledged the spiritual reality that the kingdom is available to everyone who receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Luke 17:20–21 NKJV Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

What does it mean, “the kingdom of God does not come with observation?” Many people are occupied with wanting to know what events indicate the end is near. Jesus replied that the coming of the kingdom would not be with advanced signs so that people would say, “See, it is coming.” There is no basis for predicting the date of God’s coming kingdom, it could happen any time. Then He said, the rule of God is inside the individual.

Luke 17:21 AMP ...the kingdom of God is within you [in your hearts] and among you [surrounding you].

NLT — “already among you”

NASB — “in your midst”

Jesus presented two realities about the kingdom of God that they missed.

First, the end time coming kingdom of God will come without specific signs.

Second, the kingdom of God is present in your hearts and within your grasp. The reality of the kingdom in your hearts must not be missed. Since Jesus was speaking to Pharisees, it is likely that He was telling them that the kingdom of God was already working in the midst of His hearers and was within their grasp if they believed.

After saying this, Jesus turned His attention to the future and the

coming of the Son of Man.

Mark 13:32 NKJV But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Matthew 24:36 NKJV But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

According to this statement, we should live as though the LORD was returning any moment.

Matthew 24:44 NKJV Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Luke 12:40 NKJV Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Although no one knows the day or hour of the Lord's return, He revealed some things that must happen.

Luke 17:22-23 NIV84 Then He said to His disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them.

This statement appears to be two fold.

First, days are coming when they will long for His continued presence with them. Second, in times of weariness, believers will long for the day of Christ's appearing, (second coming). He urged His disciples to not follow after false teachers with deceitful claims. The second coming of the Son of Man will be open and clear to all and not done in secret.

Luke 17:24 AMP For like the lightning, that flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so will the Son of Man be in His [own] day.

The day of the Lord will come instantly and without warning.

Luke 17:25 NLT But first the Son of Man must suffer terribly and be rejected by this generation.

Before the Lord will come in power, He must be rejected, suffer and die.

After speaking of His death, Jesus gave some signs of the end times by referring to previous judgments.

Luke 17:26–27 NKJV And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:28–30 NKJV Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and

destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

Jesus indicated that as it was in both of those times of God's judgment, sinful lifestyles will continue. The judgment and wrath of God came rapidly and unexpectedly. Jesus demonstrates this in the next paragraph.

Luke 17:31–32 ESV On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.

The reference to Lot's wife is a warning against being entangled with the world.

Luke 17:33 ESV Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

Whoever attempts to save his life by caring only for their physical safety and well being and not for their soul, will lose it. We must remain vigilant in being ready for His coming.

Luke 17:34–36 ESV I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left." Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."

When the Lord returns, there will be a definite and obvious separation. Jesus says three things about His second coming:

1. He is sure to come.
2. No one can predict when he will come.
3. Christians should not be plunged into despair by delay in his coming.

What should we do if we have caused someone to stumble?

What does Jesus mean by "one be taken and the other left?"

How can I increase my faith?

What is real faith?