

Luke 17:1 ¶ Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!

Luke 17:2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

This chapter opens with a stark statement from Jesus—offences, temptations and snares to cause people to sin, will come. You cannot experience life without experiencing the temptation to sin. BUT—Jesus says that grief and sorrow will come to those that do the tempting and try to trap people into sinning. He says that it would be better to have a millstone (a very large stone used for crushing grain) hanged around his/her neck and thrown into the sea to drown rather than suffer the consequences of tempting one of these “little ones” to sin. I do not think that Jesus is talking specifically about children. After looking at the Greek, I believe He is talking about those who were most vulnerable to spiritual deceit, those considered the least educated and least discerning.

Luke 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

Luke 17:4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Sometimes I have difficulty following the connecting flow of Luke’s record. Jesus is talking to His disciples. I think He is saying that in light of the prevalence of temptation, be ready to rebuke one who sins against you and willingly forgive him if he repents of his sin. In fact, if he sins against you seven times in one day and repents of his sin to you each time, you are to forgive him.

I do not think that Jesus is saying there is a limit to the number of times you should forgive one who sins against you. Numbers in scripture have significant meanings, and seven is recognized as the number of completion and fullness. I think that Jesus is saying that you should completely forgive anyone who truly repents of sin against you no matter how many times that may be. Jesus presented the same truth a little differently as recorded in Matthew.

Matthew 18:21–22 “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”

Joe Focht made an interesting connection with Jesus’ answer to Daniel’s prophecy of 70 weeks (70 x 7). He thinks that Jesus meant we were to keep on forgiving people until the kingdom is established. I see no reason to disagree.

There is another important truth connected to our forgiveness that Luke doesn’t make record of here. God’s forgiveness of our sins is directly related to our forgiveness of those who sin against us.

Matthew 6:14–15 “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Luke 17:5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

Luke 17:6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Verse 5 includes a prayer I have uttered many times, "Lord, Increase my faith." I think the apostles were admitting that they needed God's help in being able to live according to the Lord's expectations.

I know that the Lord was seeking to encourage the apostles with His answer, but I am afraid that I have struggled in light of how small my faith has proven to be in light of His answer. He is saying that it only takes a tiny bit of faith to accomplish things that seem to be impossible. Along with the prayer from verse 5 I have also often asked the Lord to give me that mustard seed of faith. Although I haven't done impossible things, the Lord has always given me the faith to endure through the tough times. Instead of focusing on expecting God to do great things through me, I have learned to focus on God's faithfulness knowing that if He wants to use me to accomplish great things, He will.

A great observation by David Guzik: "The roots of the mulberry (sycamine) tree were thought to be extraordinarily strong; it was thought that this tree could stay rooted for six hundred years. You may have unforgiveness and bitterness that is deeply rooted within you; it may be like one of those trees that sends down deep, strong roots. But through faith, Jesus can rip those roots clean out; it can be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea.

Luke 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

Luke 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

Luke 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

Luke 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Again, the flow of Luke's record is not obvious to me. Jesus follows the teaching on faith with a teaching on the expectations of a servant. He sets up a scenario in which a servant has been working out in the field and comes in at meal time. He then tells the disciples to picture themselves as the master ready to eat. Would you be considerate of the needs of the servant or would you expect him to prepare your meal and serve you before tending to his own needs? Do you thank a servant for doing what he is told to do? The answer to both questions is understood to be "No."

Jesus then applies the teaching to the apostles. They are servants of God and are expected to do as He commands. Even when you do what He commands you to do, you have only done what was expected—nothing more. You’ve done nothing worthy of special recognition.

Maybe the connection is in light of the command to forgive. Though it may seem like a very hard thing to do in light of our selfish, sinful nature, Jesus is saying that it is what He expects of His servants. When we succeed in obeying His command, it is not worthy of special recognition. It doesn’t benefit God, but it does benefit us in light of Matthew 6:14-15 quoted above.

Luke 17:11 ¶ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

Luke 17:12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

Luke 17:13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

Luke 17:14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

Luke 17:15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

Luke 17:16 And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Luke 17:17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?

Luke 17:18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

Luke 17:19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

At this point Luke moves on to another time and place. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem by way of the bordering area of Samaria and Galilee. As He entered one village, He encountered ten lepers; they kept their distance from Him as required by the law.

Leviticus 13:45–46 “And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.”

They cried out for Him to show mercy on them (for healing is implied). Jesus answered them by telling them to go and present themselves to the priests. The point is made that as they set out to do as He told them, they were cleansed of their disease and made whole. Only one of them turned back to fall at the Lord’s feet glorifying God and thanking Him for healing him; that man was a Samaritan. Jesus asks questions that are only stating the obvious—Did I not heal ten? Where are the other nine?

The fact that Jesus identified the Samaritan as “this stranger” implies that the other nine were Jews. The Jews were known as God’s chosen people, yet they did not seem to feel the need to thank God for their miracle of healing. This “stranger,” however, did.

Jesus then tells the Samaritan to go on his way (to the priests as previously instructed) and that his faith has made him whole. Personally, I think that the wholeness this time was in reference to spiritual wholeness. Though the others had been made whole physically, they evidenced no recognition of or gratitude to the One through whom their healing had come. They had believed Jesus could heal them because of His reputation as a healer. It does not seem, however, that they considered His power and authority to come from God and/or were thankful enough to glorify God.

Luke 17:20 ¶ And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

I guess the thought that Jesus has the authority and power of God is the connection to this next section. At one point the Pharisees asked Him when the kingdom of God would come. Jesus told them that they would not be able to see it to begin with because it has its being in the people who submit to God as Lord and Savior.

Luke 17:22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see *it*.

Luke 17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*.

Luke 17:24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

Jesus then turns to His disciples to elaborate on His answer to the Pharisees. He is basically telling them that the earthly kingdom will not be established soon. In fact, the days are coming when they will be wishing to see Him again and cannot. He also tells them that they can expect false teachers who will hope to take advantage of their desire to see Him (their Messiah) and will claim to have special knowledge of where He is and the ability to take them to Him. Jesus says not to believe them. He declares that His coming will be just as sudden and recognizable as the lightning that flashes in the heavens.

Luke 17:25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Luke 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

Luke 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all.

Luke 17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Jesus goes on to tell the disciples that He must first suffer many things, including the rejection of the Jewish people as their Messiah. He then goes on to explain that His appearance to them will come at a time that is comparable to the days of Noah when the flood came and the days of Lot when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. In both instances those who experienced judgment were totally wicked, but they were living “normal” lives. They were eating, drinking, marrying, doing business with one another, planting and building. Suddenly, judgment came. Point is made that as soon as God had ensured that the men of faith were in places of safety, judgment fell and all the wicked were destroyed. Jesus declares that His return will happen in the same way.

It is this comparison to ongoing “normal” lifestyles that tells me that Jesus is talking about His coming to take believers home to His father as described in John and the coming judgment of the wrath of God prophesied throughout scripture that will follow. It can't be referencing His final coming in judgment to establish His kingdom and destroy Antichrist since that will be at a time when life is anything but normal.

John 14:1–3 “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Zephaniah 1:14–17 “The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.”

Revelation 6:15–17 “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

Luke 17:31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

Luke 17:32 Remember Lot's wife.

Luke 17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Jesus now gives a specific instruction. When that day comes, you are to flee. Don't turn back to take anything with you. Trust in God's provision is the implication. Then He reminds them to "Remember Lot's wife." She wasn't happy about leaving Sodom and looked back with longing to all she was leaving behind in spite of God's command not to do so. Her judgment was immediate; she became a statue of salt.

Those who are intent upon hanging on to the things of this life will end up losing it all. Those, however, who are willing to forfeit the things of this life in obedience to God will end up gaining everlasting life.

Luke 17:34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

Luke 17:35 Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Luke 17:36 Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Still in the context of recognizing His return, Jesus declares that it will be marked by a time in which two men will be sleeping in a bed and one is taken away and the other left behind; two women will be grinding grain and one is taken away and one left behind. In other words, all of a sudden people will seem to disappear while others will be left behind for judgment. Considering the preceding context, those taken away would be compared to Noah and Lot, while those left behind to experience judgment would be the wicked who had rejected God's authority over their lives.

Sadly, the examples Jesus uses seem to describe people who are family, yet who will be separated when He removes believers to safety and judgment falls on unbelievers.

Luke 17:37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

JFB had a good comment on this verse: "As birds of prey scent out the carrion, so wherever is found a mass of incurable moral and spiritual corruption, there will be seen alighting the ministers of divine judgment...."