

2015-16-43 Luke 17:1-10 What is a Christian to do? Pentecost 20 October 2, 2016

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God's grace and peace are yours only through our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life to save us! Amen. God's Word to increase our faith in Christ and our service to each other is written in Luke 17:1-10 These are Your words heavenly Father. Sanctify us through the promises of Your truth. Your Word is truth!

Dear Christian Friends,

I've often wondered as I read about Jesus' disciples if they ever asked, "What are we getting into by following Jesus?" He had impressed them by His miracle of catching 100's of fish and feeding 5,000. They saw Him heal so many and cast out demons among the poor. But, when they were among the important people in Jerusalem, Jesus did little. And His teaching resulted in large groups deserting Him and the leaders hating Him. What were they to do? Jesus didn't choose them to be soldiers. He didn't choose them to be administrators. He chose them to be saved and to humbly tell His message to the world. What a challenge for them! Have we ever wondered: what are we getting into? We're glad to be saved from hell to spend eternity with Christ in heaven. But what will happen to us from now until then? If someone saved our lives, would we react as if nothing happened? No. we'd want to show our thanks! God's saving us we ask:

What is a Christian to do?

First, Jesus tells us to stand against the power of sin. He warned about our own sins. *"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come."* (v.1) Jesus often cautioned about sinful pride or greed that could harm our own faith. In our lesson, His concern was that our lives as believers could tempt other Christians and harm their faith. Our words and actions are supposed to build up faith not harm it. We are to set examples for good not bad. If a child sees a parent stealing or if a Christian co-worker hears another Christian misusing Christ's name, their faith may be harmed or lost. Jesus said that it would be better to be out in the ocean and to have a large stone attached by a rope to the offender's neck and be drown rather than to face the judgment of God for harming another believer's faith.

But, our problem is that we all sin. We daily offend others. We injure the faith of people by what we say and do. God has every right to punish us. Paul wrote, *"Each of us will give an account of himself to God.... Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block... in your brother's way. (Romans 14:12-13)*

Jesus tells us as Christians that committing sin is serious. He calls us to turn from sin and look to Him. If we find that we are controlled by sin i.e. lying or jealousy: we are to confess that sin to God and trust that Jesus has removed its control over us. Our Savior never caused anyone to lose faith because He never sinned. He went to the cross not to offend people but to take the punishment of our offenses. Figuratively, Jesus let God attach the millstone of judgment to His neck and throw Him into a sea of death. What a sacrifice He made for us! We can't be perfect in this life, but we can live and speak in ways that reflect His value for us. When Christians see us sin, they also should see us repent and receive Christ's forgiveness.

Our love for Christ should not only keep us from deliberately hurting ourselves or others by sinning, it leads us to warn others of the danger of sin. Jesus said, *"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."* (v.3-4) How can we forgive someone who has sinned against us multiple times? Jesus didn't limit forgiveness to after 7 times. He said that even if it is 7 times in one day, we are to forgive people, as long as they are truly repent. We are not to hold a grudge against anyone. Picture each person's life as a picture that can be colored. Each day sin covers their picture completely. But, the next day the picture is clean. Jesus took away all sins. So it is with our forgiving others. When they repent and are

sorry we are to forgive them in Christ. But, if they continue to sin without repentance, we must warn them so that sin's control will not lead to their death and judgment. Peter preached to some of the Jews who had called Jesus' death after His trial. He said, *"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."* (Acts 3:19)

To the disciples, resisting sin and forgiving as Christ forgave them seemed impossible. They prayed as we should that **second, Jesus would increase our faith.** When the disciples asked for a stronger faith, Jesus replied, *"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."* (v.5-6) Why is it difficult for us to live by faith? We know what God wants us to do, but we often don't do it. We look inwardly rather than to Christ's strength.

How does He strengthen our faith? First, He teaches us that the size of our faith is not as important as the object of our faith. Faith has no power in itself, but when it is connected to Christ and His promises, we have the power of God! Jesus promised the disciples that with just a small amount of faith in Him, they would have power to root up a large tree and replant it in the ocean. Jesus didn't literally tell them to pick up the tree, but He was promising that by listening to Him, He would accomplish great things through them! As they later told people of Christ and His promises, they saw unbelieving hearts being uprooted and new hearts of faith replacing them in the lives of 100's of people. They saw the power God in the Gospel!

Second, Jesus told His disciples to view themselves in a humble way. When they would accomplish great things by faith, like when God answered their prayers or when they spoke of Christ and many people believed, He reminded them that these services were a part of their lives of thanks!. The disciples were like slaves. At Jesus' time, slaves were either debtors or captives or war. If these people didn't become slaves they would have died. So, the slaves were grateful to be able to serve and live! Jesus also bought us with His own blood to rescue us from something much worse than death, eternal suffering. God valued us so much and He gave His Son to now as His servants we have important work on earth to do for Him!

Our tasks will make an eternal difference for some people. We speak God's Word and through our prayers and support for gospel outreach, people are being saved from the power of the devil. We can't take any credit for this. Jesus said, *"When you have done everything you were told to do, you should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"* (v.10) No matter what great things we do for God, we are not earning His love by our actions. We have Christ's love by His grace and a place in heaven! We want to honor God and thank Him by helping others know His saving love.

So, don't worry like the disciples about what we're getting into as Christians. Since we are connected to Christ, the end will be great! God doesn't call us to do anything more than He gives us the strength to do by faith. As we call on His name in prayer we will be amazed at how He answers us for our forgiveness and so we can forgive others. So, what are we to do? Listen to God's promises in Christ, grow in faith, and live in His love. Amen.