

Glorifying God

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[0 : 00] I'm going to go to chapter 17, verses 1 to 19. I'm not going to read through that, let's read the first.

Verse, so, and he said to his disciples, Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come.

Now Jesus at the beginning of the chapter gives instructions to his disciples, and there are a few very basic things that are there, if we were to summarize them, we could do so very briefly.

First thing he's really saying to them is be careful not to lead other people into sin. That's the first thing. Second thing is be quick to forgive.

Again, and again, and again. Third thing is to be earnest in your faith, remembering that faith in God is an amazing thing, and that God is able to do far and beyond anything that we could even begin to imagine.

[1 : 15] And the fourth thing is that when we have done maybe great things, or even triumphed in faith, that at the end of the day we are simply servants.

No more than that. Just servants. And in fact it says here, unworthy servants. We've got to remember actually our place before God.

So if we were to summarize the first ten verses, that's really what Jesus is saying. But to look at it in a little more detail. Temptation to sin. Temptation to sin.

Temptations to sin are sure to come. Now of course, every day we are tempted to sin, and we've made the point before that temptation does not equal sin. Because our Lord Jesus was tempted in every area, in all points, just like we are.

And yet he was free of sin. He never actually sinned. So it's very clear that temptation and sin are two separate entities. And yet, temptation leads to sin.

[2 : 20] It is very easy. And for us, who are sinners, the movement from temptation to actually giving in to sin can be very hard to distinguish.

At what point do we stop simply being tempted, and do we actually begin to sin? And these are sort of very fine points. But the fact of the matter is, there is a distinction.

And sometimes people who are bombarded by temptation feel that they are just sinking in sin, and yet they're not. They're resisting. So we've got to be clear on that. However, although it's bad when we're tempted and we give in to sin, there's something even worse.

And that is enticing other people into sin. It's actually worse, it would appear, for us, or for anybody, to lead somebody into sin, rather than just yield themselves to temptation.

This word temptation here is a stumbling block, or it can be translated stumbling block, or offense. And it's causing other people by what we say, or by what we do, or by what we don't say, or don't do.

[3 : 36] It's where we ourselves, by what we are doing, are encouraging people, have in some way drawn people away. And it's actually, the whole language round here would indicate that it's derailing a Christian.

We're not talking here necessarily about a little thing where, at one sense there's no little thing, but we're talking here, the idea is of where a Christian actually goes off the rails, where a Christian stops following the Lord, or where a Christian backslides through the influence, through the lifestyle, through the enticement from another Christian.

That this Christian has been responsible, in a way, or in a large way, for derailing this particular Christian.

And the Lord is saying, that is an incredibly serious thing. Where we see a believer starting, as it were, to go back, because of what somebody else has done.

And we need to take this warning to heart. Because, as we examine our own lives, and look at our lives, we have to say to ourselves, have I been responsible, for putting Christians off the road?

[5 : 05] Am I, have I been responsible, in any way, for Christians, not being what they ought to be? And it's actually a very solemn thing, as other Christians, look at their lives, and they say, if they are seeing glaring errors, glaring inconsistencies, if they are seeing a life, that is professing to follow the Lord, and yet in its day-to-day living, is most certainly not following the Lord, that can impact people's lives.

And we've got to say to ourselves, am I, responsible, in any way, for derailing, other people? And it's an incredibly challenging, and solemn thing.

And that's why, when we come to the word of God, word of God is like a spade, that keeps digging down, deeper and deeper, and unearthing, more and more. And so often, we say to ourselves, you know, as we live out our lives, we think things are alright, and then you dig down a wee bit more, and you think, oh man, I never realized this.

I never thought of things this way. And we begin to see, that our lives are filled, with so many things, that we never realized. Now, we could go even further with this, and say, is it possible, that by what we are, by what we do, by what we say, that we keep people, away from the gospel, that we discourage people, from following, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would hope, that nobody would say, that the world, outside, I'm going to say, well, if that's, if that's Christianity, I don't want, to be a Christian.

[6 : 48] However, I would exercise, a note of caution here, the Christian, must never take, their Christian, their Christianity, or their standards, from, from what the world expects, because the world's, expectations, of what a Christian should be, are often, far removed, from what God's word, would have.

And, let's be clear on this, because sometimes, sometimes the world, will have very, different standards, for the Christian, to what, to what, Christ has.

And remember, the world, couldn't stand, Jesus. They couldn't, well, many in the world, couldn't wait, to get rid of it. So, we've got to be clear, on this, that, we must never, take our standards, from what the world, is saying.

But, we don't want, God, ever, to level, the accusation, against us, that by, what we were, and what we did, that we were, responsible, for leading, people astray.

Because, the Lord Jesus, says that, if we do that, it would be better, that a millstone, and that's one of these, great big flat stones, that you would find, in a mill, that were used, for grinding, massive big stones, that it would be better, that one of these stones, would be put around, the person, who had enticed, others into sin, and derailed, their following of Jesus, it would be better, if that was put, around their neck, and they were thrown, into the sea.

[8 : 22] And in light of that, Jesus says, in verse 3, pay attention, to yourselves. The language is, keep on, paying attention, to yourselves. Make sure, that your spiritual walk, is right.

It's no use, sort of, it's not enough, say on Sunday, as we sit in church, and we come under the word, and we may be challenged, by it, and say, oh, you know, this is a wee bit, of a wake up call, for me.

I've got to pay attention, here. And then we go away, and then on Tuesday, we've completely forgotten, Wednesday, completely forgotten, and we're just living, as we were before. Lord says, no, it's got to be a constant, paying attention to yourself, constantly looking, against the word, and say, right, is this, am I doing, what the Lord has said, or have I just forgotten it, and am I doing my own thing?

That's really what Jesus is saying, constantly, looking, at how, we are living, for the Lord Jesus. Then the second thing, Jesus teaches us, that the Christian, is somebody, who has to, exercise, a forgiving spirit.

by nature, when we're wronged, the natural inclination, when we are wronged, is revenge. I'm going to get even.

[9 : 35] And very often, when a person sets out, to get even, it means getting, not just even, but getting one more, back. A retaliation. Retaliation, is often worse, than what came first.

That's the way, it's a natural thing. Or so often, that people, if something happens, I'm going to get them back. There's this harboring, of, of, revenge, that's within the heart.

But Christ says, that's not the way, we are to react. If, our brother sins, rebuke him. In other words, and our, if a person, does something, that is really, contrary to God's word, then, we see what we're to do, and this is, this is holding, holding in mind, what has gone before.

I believe, the context shows us, that it's in the very area, of, derailing somebody, of enticing, of drawing people away, from following the Lord.

If somebody, does something, that is wrong, we are to rebuke. And I think this is very, very helpful, because, Jesus is saying, we're not to go behind, somebody's back, and bad mouth them.

[10 : 47] And go and tell, everybody, do you know, do you know, see what he did, see what she did, and go around everybody, and say, you know, he, she, is this, that. No, the Lord says, you go to the person, you go and deal with it, face to face, and you say to this person, look, what you have done, there, whether you have, whether the, what the person has done, is something that has really hurt you, and offended you.

Of course, we're keeping here, with what, with, that it is something, with regard, whether it is a breach of God's word, we're not talking here, about areas, where people can have different views, and things.

But I'll be quite clear on this, that are area and aspects, of God's word, and the word of God, tells us, there is such a thing, as liberty of conscience. What is, what one person, will feel, according to God's word, and in keeping with God's word, a certain sense of liberty, with other people, cannot.

There are different areas, and aspects. So we've got, we've got to tread carefully, in all these things. However, if this is something, that is definitely, directly against God's word, and has caused, this person, grief and hurt, you are to deal with it, by going to the person, and saying, look, see what you've done.

I haven't said, I haven't gone round, and started speaking, to other people, but I'm going to tell you, what you've done. And this is, this is wrong. And you tell them, what is wrong.

[12 : 18] Maybe the person, maybe the person, did it willfully, deliberately, maybe they did it, ignorantly. And you see the reaction. If the person, shows, and says, oh look, right, I'm sorry.

You say to the person, look, are you sorry, for what you did? And if they repent, and they say, look, I didn't realize, I'm sorry about that. Hold up their hands, and say, look, I'm sorry. You are to forgive.

There's no qualifications in it. You forgive. If they repent, you forgive. End of story. And in fact, the Lord goes on to say, that, this forgiveness, is ongoing.

Because, if the person repents, forgive. And if he sins against you, seven times in the day, and that really is, a figurative expression, for saying, that, as often, as often as repentance, as often as sin takes place, and then repentance is given, you are to forgive.

That's the way it works. And you know, this would make a huge difference, because so often, when something goes wrong, people stop speaking. It's like a cold war has broken out.

[13 : 35] People stop speaking. People keep apart. People start avoiding one another. And the Lord says, no, face up to it. Go and speak to the person.

And if the person says, look, I'm really sorry about this, you forgive. End of story. And you know, when you think about it, what a different world it would be.

Because so many people go around, harboring grudges, and resentment, over little things. And so there has to be this nature of forgiveness.

And when we think about it, I wonder how often, I wonder how many of us in here today, are holding grudges in our heart, against people. Maybe you're sitting here, and maybe there's somebody else in here.

I hope not. But that you're holding, a sense of resentment, against somebody in here, or somebody even in your own home, and family, or somebody at work, somebody in the neighborhood, somebody in the community, or against several people.

[14 : 39] And it's like a wee cancer. It's working away inside you. Rather than going to deal with it.

Let us also remember, how God deals with us. Imagine if God were to deal with us, as we deal with others.

Remember, right at the very heart of the Lord's Prayer. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Do we? We're asking the Lord to forgive us, in the very same way, as we forgive those who have wronged against us.

Now, when you think about it, if God is to take you at your word, are you forgiving people? Are you?

Or are you saying to the Lord, you can only, partially forgive me. You can only forgive me, Lord, now and again, because I can only forgive people, now and again.

[15 : 46] When we repent, there is forgiveness. And that's, the Lord is forgiving us, over and over and over and over again. Imagine if the Lord were to stop forgiving us.

What a state we would be in. So we see that this is what the Lord is saying. And then, following on from there, and probably in light of what the Lord is saying, because these are hard and difficult things, the Lord is saying, then all of a sudden, he says, or the disciples say, Lord, increase our faith.

And the thing that the Lord is highlighting here, although there is a talk here of great faith, it's really the presence of faith, is the key thing. Jesus says, elsewhere, faith can move mountains.

Here he says, in this particular place, that faith can take an uprooted tree, and get it planted into the sea. Really what Jesus is saying is, faith in God achieves great things.

Do we have that belief as we live out our days? Or do we have an element of uncertainty? Great faith doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to go around every day expecting to see miracles, demanding to see miracles.

[17 : 05] But great faith is such that we know that God can perform miracles, that God can do, and does do great things.

And as we live out our day, this is what the Lord is saying, live out your day, living in dependence upon this great God. It will often mean that your faith will be helped and challenged and developed in your day-to-day development and reaction and interaction with people.

It might mean learning to cope with people. It might mean facing disappointments. It might mean all these kind of things. It's living in a way where we accept what God brings into our lives, and yet at the same time being persuaded that God is able to change things, change us and change things.

Do we have that kind of belief? Or do we kind of just say, ah, well, it won't happen? Now, I know that we pray for things. Sometimes God answers. Sometimes he answers in the most mysterious and strange ways.

I'm sure everybody in here can think back to places and points in their life where they really prayed about something, and it's like the very reverse happened. Things don't make sense.

[18 : 26] But sometimes even when things don't make sense, we begin to see God working in another way, and we realize God has a completely different purpose, and in fact what he's doing in and through sometimes very difficult things and harrowing things, we begin to see that God has a purpose still for your life.

Just as we said to the young folk, the thoughts that I think towards you are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Even although for a while everything seems to be collapsing around you, yet God has a great plan, a great purpose in everything.

Do we have that kind of faith? Persuaded that God has a plan and a purpose for your life, and it's a great one. It's a good one. God's not finished with you or with me yet.

There's a lot more to do. There's many other things to bring into our lives. Do we have this? Are we persuaded of these things? And then, the last thing that Jesus says here, from verses 7 to 10, is really the importance of our obedience as a duty.

You see, Christians should acknowledge that God doesn't really owe us anything. That's one of the hard things to take on board.

[19 : 53] You know, we have a sense of believing God owes us lots of things. We've got this sort of, we're balancing things out, and we say, well, you know, if I do this and that, if I go to church, if I give this, if I do this, if I do that, if I do the next thing, then God will do this for me.

We have a kind of a bargaining spirit with God. I don't know how that is there, but it is there. I think it goes back to the whole idea of works, where somehow we believe that by what we do, God is going to give us.

My friend, God owes us nothing. Nothing. Because of who we are, because of our sin, we are deserving, that's what the word, we are deserving of God's wrath and curse.

That's what we're deserving. But God, in his grace and in his mercy, and in his goodness and his love, gives us so differently, and gives us so much.

Now, there are promises that we term conditional, that if we do a certain thing, God has promised that he will, in return, do something for us.

[21 : 10] That's a different thing. For instance, one of the simplest, most basic, and yet most wonderful promises, it says, Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast it.

That's what we would tell a conditional promise. Everybody who comes to the Lord, the Lord has promised, he will not turn away.

So you see, our part, of this conditional thing is, if we come to the Lord, then the Lord will do something for us. So there are many promises, in the word of God, that we term conditional.

But having said that, when we do, what the Lord requires of us to do, we, God doesn't owe us anything.

Yes, in his own mercy and grace, he will reward us. And glory is a reward. And our works will be rewarded.

[22 : 10] Because that has come from God's mercy and grace. But it's not according to our deserving. Because at the end of the day, we have only done, what was required of us.

And Jesus illustrates that with a servant. A servant comes in, he works in the field, and he tends his sheep. Then he comes in, and he prepares the supper, and he brings the food to the master.

That's it. He's just doing what was asked of him. And that's the same with our shells. So let us always remember that, that whatever we receive, comes from God's mercy and God's grace.

And then, and I think we also see here, we are unworthy servants. We have only done what was our duty. And I think I've said this before.

But you know, those who have done most for the Lord, often think they have done least. Often think they've done nothing. Sometimes, it's those who do least, that think they do most.

[23 : 10] But, there is a sense of unworthiness. We can't help it. Because the more that we are involved with the Lord, and the closer we live to the Lord, the more we realize how undeserving we are.

And yet, the wonder of glory is, that throughout an endless eternity, we will be filled with good things. The Lord's reward is beyond anything, that we can understand.

And that reward is tied in and up with Christ. He is the foundation of our reward. We mustn't lose, ever lose sight of that. And then finally, just in a word, we find that as Jesus is making his way to Jerusalem, he's met by ten lepers, the dreaded disease of the day.

And because of their leprosy, they stand at a distance from Christ. They stood afar off. They couldn't come close. Now there's no question, but that these men had heard about Jesus, else they wouldn't be calling to him, and crying to him for help.

And that's why it's so important, that people hear about Jesus. Remember what the word says, how will they believe, in him of whom they have not heard?

[24 : 24] Well, you can't believe in somebody, or something that you haven't heard about. So you see the importance of bringing people, to hear the word. Anyway, they cried.

And it's this heartfelt cry. What do they cry for? They cry for mercy. Jesus. That's the call. That's what they're calling. Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

You know, the Lord will never close his ear to such a cry. If you cry today for mercy, the Lord will hear you, and the Lord will answer.

He has never closed his ear, to anybody, who cries to him for mercy. And that's exactly what happened here, with these lepers. And there was this real need.

And you know, when we're in a real need, we really cry to the Lord. Sometimes when we go through, we go through the motions in prayer sometimes. Pure motions. We pray, maybe out of a sense of duty.

[25 : 25] And after we finish praying, we have no idea, about anything we prayed for. That's not real prayer. You know, you know when there's real prayer.

And you have a need. It's almost like a hunger, in your stomach. It's like annoying. It's there. There's an urgency. And you're doing battle. Lord, I need this.

This is life and death. This is real. Well, that's the way these men would pray. Lord, have mercy. They were crying aloud. And Jesus, begins to deal with them.

And when he saw them, he said to them, it's very simple. He said, go and show yourselves to the priests. It was quite an amazing command. Here's these ten men, filled with leprosy.

And Jesus said, right on your way, make your way to the priest. The reason that they would go to the priest, of course, is when a person was healed of leprosy, they had to go to the priest.

[26 : 20] And the priest would write out for them a certificate. And this certificate was, it was like a guarantee that the leprosy had been cleaned, or cleansed.

They had been healed. So they were being sent to the priest. And the priest's job would be to pronounce a person cleansed, healed. So there they were, they walked away, full of their leprosy, making their way to the priest.

Great faith. These men, the ten of them, turned round, and by faith, walked away. And the thing was, as they walked away, and made their way, they looked at themselves, and the leprosy was gone.

They were, their faith, they took Jesus at his word. Now, if these lepers had stood still, and said, well, Lord, there's no point in going to the priest, until you first heal us.

Cleanse us, and then we'll go to the priest. If they had stood there, they would still be lepers. It was in their obedience to the word, by their act of faith, that Jesus healed them, in taking that word.

[27 : 34] And so, that is why, we've got to, we've got to respond, to what God is saying. We've got to respond, to God's word. So often, we try to bring our own logic, and things to it, and say, oh, well, Lord, if we can do this, and that, the Lord says, this is it.

As we said earlier, come unto me, him that cometh to me, I won't cast, I'll know why he's cast out. You'll come, seek, and you'll find.

We've got to seek, take his command. Sometimes we're saying, well, Lord, just, if I can, if I can find first, then I'll start seeking you in earnest.

No, the Lord says, you seek me, and you'll find me. And as we're going, now we've looked at this, or just race through it, we've looked at this another time. Then one of them, in verse 15, when he saw that he was healed, he turned back, praising God, with a loud voice.

This man was consistent. Beforehand, he had been crying, Lord, have mercy on me. Heal me. He comes back, and I, you know, I would love to have been in the crowd, because here's this man, and he's praising, he's glorifying the Lord.

[28 : 46] He's praising God, with a loud voice. You can almost, hear the jubilation, the thanksgiving, the praise. Lord, thank you.

Do we have spirits of gratitude, and thankfulness? I hope that we do. Or do we spend our life, before the Lord, moaning and complaining?

Have you thanked the Lord today? Now, for some people, it might, today, may be harder, than for other people. because, it's very easy, when things are going well.

But you know, I've often found, this is a strange thing. Sometimes the people, that you would think, had least reason, to be full of thanksgiving, are often those, who are most, given to thanksgiving.

I have come across people, whose lives have been filled, with really difficult things. And yet, they have, the most incredible spirit, of thanksgiving.

[29 : 54] They're, they're always thanking the Lord. They're praising the Lord. And you say to yourself, it's amazing. Because sometimes, there are other people.

And of course, we are not a judge, we do not know, how people go on, in private. But, even when, their lives, seem to be going very well, it tends to be, down on things.

Never hear the spirit of praise. Loads of complaints. Loads of moans. Everything's wrong. There's no word, of how great God is.

What great things, he's doing. Strange thing. But the point is here, praise, and thanksgiving, thanksgiving, ought to be part, and partial of our lives, every single day.

Whoso, offereth praise, the word says, glorifieth me. That's the reason, we're here in this world, is to glorify God. Are you praising God? Because if you are, you're glorifying him.

[30 : 57] That's a great thing. We've said this before, if we don't praise God, if we don't praise God, we will become critical, we will become judgmental.

And ingratitude, and we looked at this, maybe a year or two ago, I remember looking at that, this particular passage, and this particular verse.

I'll just conclude with this. Ingratitude, being where we're ungrateful, and harboring a spirit, that is lacking in thanksgiving, is the beginning of a downward spiral, into a very serious place.

Remember that. Being ungrateful, and lacking in thanksgiving, before the Lord, is the beginning of a downward spiral, that will take us to a very serious place.

Romans 1, remember what it says there. When you read the end of Romans 1, you see people plunging, into all kinds of, gross, sin, immorality, wrong way of living, where life, just is going to downward spiral.

[32 : 05] How did it all begin? It began, with a spirit of ingratitude. Because, this is what it says, because, that when they knew God, they glorified him, not as God, neither were they thankful.

And because of that attitude, and that spirit, because they knew God, they didn't glorify him, and they weren't thankful to him.

Then, that's the beginning. Things went down, and down, and God says, right, I'm going to hand you over to yourselves. And that's what God did.

And then they began to worship the creator, the created, the creature, rather than the creator. And as God handed them over to themselves, more and more, because of their spirit of ingratitude, because they knew, remember originally, they knew God, they heard about God, but they chose not to glorify God, they chose not to give him thanks, and God said, right, on you go, you're on your own.

And it's down, and down, and down. And remember, we were looking at the rich man, and Lazarus, this is the very way, it's a very, remember how we were looking at hell, and that's a picture of what hell is, it's a downward spiral, where all the things, where we have rejected God, all these things, that we have chosen in this world.

[33 : 36] God says, I'll give you your fill of them. And God takes away all the good, and all these things, and he says, right, you wanted to follow the way of pride, well, you'll have your fill of pride.

You've been so envious of this, well, envy will consume you forever. All these things. It's a fearfully solemn thought.

If we reject God, we're rejecting the source of what is good, and right. And it begins, that's what we're seeing here, by not glorifying God, and not giving him thanks.

Well, may we seek then to have, this spirit of thanksgiving. May we seek to have this faith, that is highlighted here. May we seek to have the forgiving spirit.

May we seek to be careful, as we walk through this world. We need to be all challenged. I have to be challenged by it. You have to be challenged by it. This is God's word.

[34 : 44] May we be given the grace to live by it. Let's pray. Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, we pray to bless us. Help us to believe and to understand. Help us, Lord, to see that while the challenges of God's word can be great, and sometimes the fence that we see before us seems to be too high to climb over, yet we know that God's grace is sufficient.

May we have an eye upon the Lord as we walk through this life. May we not be shackled by a legalistic spirit, but may we likewise not live in such a way where we say, well, grace covers everything, and be utterly careless.

But may we seek to walk like Jesus walked, with our eye upon him, following him every day. Bless us then, and bless all our homes, all our families, all whom we love.

We commit them to thy care and keeping. Prosper us this week, Lord, and indeed prosper us all the days of our life, spiritually and temporally.

Do us good. Take away your sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll conclude singing in Psalm 146.