

So Watch Yourselfs - Part 2

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter number 17, we will continue here. Last time at the beginning of the passage, very heavy or an intense admonishment given to us, which is offenses are going to come into this world to the little ones.

It's often applied to small children, which are little ones, young in the faith, very easy to be influenced, but not just little children, young believers, unbelieving people. Offenses are going to come in this world, but woe unto us, God's people, if the offenses are coming from us.

That our lifestyle would not represent the gospel. We would not walk worthy of a life that says that it understands the gospel. The Pharisees were certainly bringing offenses to people.

They didn't want to share the Bible teaching with certain people if they thought they were an outcast. They didn't want to be associated with them in so many ways. Primarily, and not recognizing that Jesus was the Messiah, they're causing an offense.

Their hypocrisy, their perversion of Scripture, their disdain for other people, they caused people to be offended by the work of Christ. And in so doing, they were heaping stumbling blocks in front of people that were moving in the direction of Christ.

[1 : 11] And woe unto us if we lived a life that would make the gospel confusing. If we would live a life that would say that was contrary to a proper, that would hurt people's understanding of what the gospel is, what Christianity is.

And it says one of the main areas that we're going to be challenged in this, verse 3, is that if your brother trespass against thee, rebuke him. And if he'll repent, forgive him. And this area of calling each other to holiness and this area of giving forgiveness is an area in which we are going to be watched tremendously by the world.

Will we be different as the world? Will we live just like the world? Will we call what they call good, good? Or will we call what they call evil, good? The questions that they'll be watching us.

And so we don't lead people into sin, but we lead them out of it. And this starts with lovingly rebuking. The principles given in Luke, the process in Matthew, and then he calls us to forgive one another, which we said is equal to moving mountains, which is equal to taking a tree whose roots would be deep into the ground and moving it up.

It's not often that we would pray and say, God, I need to move a mountain. Then maybe if you're on a road trip and you have to drive through a mountain, but if that prayer doesn't come often up to us, but what is something that needs to be moved in our hearts?

[2 : 27] Father, I just can't forgive. And if you don't do this work inside of me, I will not be able to do it. So we said it is faith-based devotion. It is coming to a point where you recognize that you're not to live out in obedience, but it's Christ that now lives in you that you're going to be able to do it.

And the disciples responded the way that we would in verse number five. Lord, increase our faith. We don't want to be an offense to anybody. We want to live this life where we're living out the gospel and forgiving people, but that is just more than we can do.

You're going to have to increase our faith. So Jesus does this in two ways here. He's going to speak to them. He's going to speak truth to them. So even the way that he responds, he shows us that faith comes by hearing, which is what Romans 10, 17 says.

So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Well, we know that to be true concerning our salvation. You did not know that you were a sinner, that you needed Jesus Christ, and that you could not merit your salvation until the word of God came to you.

And then as a response to the word of God, you're able to act in obedience and live out in faith. It's true here. When we say, God, increase my faith, he's going to do that by his word, because faith comes by hearing.

[3 : 44] Faith comes by obedience to his word. Jesus tells them two things. Jesus tells them the crucial issue in doing the impossible is not in the quantity of your faith, but in the power of God.

So he takes that mustard seed, and he says, if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you would be able to do this thing, to pluck up this tree in the story, and Matthew, move a mountain.

And so the disciples come to a place where they would say, why can we not fill in the blank? Why can we not cast out devils? Why can we not move a mountain? Why cannot we forgive whatever it is?

And in our life as well, we get to a place where there's a blank to fill in. Why can I not do this thing? And Paul here is emphasizing, or Luke here is emphasizing, this faith-enabled, faith-dependent discipleship and devotion.

I remind you that faith is not abstract. We put our faith in the promises of God. Faith is not adrenaline. Faith is not warm feelings. Faith is not vibing, as high school teenagers taught me that term.

[4 : 53] I said, what is it in the Ecclesiastes that said that I have communed with my heart? I said, how would you say that? And one of them said, I'm just not vibing well today, all right? I'm not sure. I won't tell you who said that, all right?

And I said, no vaping or vibing, all right? None of that. We don't need any of that. We need communing with our heart. And so when we consider these things, where do we, we're placing our faith in something.

We're not just trying to get just a boost of excitement and adrenaline like you would do. I played basketball in high school. I think I'll tell you all that quite often, right? Because you wouldn't believe it otherwise. And we just have that basketball music that plays before the game because you're trying to get something built up inside of you so you can jump higher.

Faith isn't that, right? Faith is placing it in a promise that God has given. Faith is looking to God's promises and then acting upon it. At our men's retreat this weekend, looked at a promise out of Lamentation 327.

I began to read this checkbook of faith by Charles Spurgeon, one each day. On September 11th, the promise was of Lamentation 327, that it is good for a young man to carry a heavy yoke.

[5 : 59] It says it is good that life is hard because it helps us see that God is good, right? That's a promise. That's a promise that is given. That's something that you can depend on. So a friend sent me this week in their devotion.

It's a good definition of faith. Acts 27, 25. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it is told me.

That's what faith is. I believe God. Even though my ship is wrecked, I will believe that God is good. And he announces this in his life. A statement of faith.

David Burkhart sung it right now. It's a statement of faith. God is good. He can sing it on a nice, good Sunday. When he's back from Australia and things are going good, he'll be able to sing it on the hardest of days because he believes that the promises of God.

So that was the first one that we looked at, is that our faith is going to be found in the object of it and not in an amount of it. But the second thing that Jesus tells them in the response to, Lord, you must increase our faith, is this.

[7 : 04] When we have done all that you are commanded to do, you are still dependent on God's grace. When you've done all that you're commanded to do, you're still dependent on God's grace.

I'm going to read you that story again. It's about four verses long. It's kind of confusing for us at times. There's some reasons that it's confusing for us because we're trying to figure out how do we relate with God.

Are we friend? Are we servant? Are we son? And then the Pharisees. And Jesus is going to show the Pharisees here that even in their understanding, even in their worldview, their belief of how they engage with God would be wrong.

We're not looking at a person under bondage or slavery as we would know it, but a servant who would have received housing and food. This relationship was not typically lifelong. When we look at these parables and the stories of Christ, we need to remember to take ourselves to the original hearers.

What are they hearing when they're told this story about a person working all day and then taking care of the meal? This was an afternoon meal that would happen daily. This was agreed upon terms, that this meal would be taken care of by the servants for the master before that they were going to eat.

[8 : 14] It would be part of their job description. They knew that's what was going to have. But Jesus is not describing the way in between God and His children, but the way that the Pharisees think about it.

And He's explaining how it's even illogical even with their worldview. Verse number 7. But which of you having a servant plowing or feeding cattle will say unto him, By and by, when he has come from the field, go and sit down to meet?

And would not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink.

How many of you, as he's saying here, would tell that you had a servant would come in and say, Let me serve this meal for you instead of the other way around.

He's speaking here to them. Does he think that the servant, because he did the things that were commanded of him, I throw not. So likewise ye, when you shall have done all those things which were commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, for we have done that which was our duty to do.

[9 : 18] Let me give you a summary of this in five words. God is never our debtor. We will never put God into our debt.

And at the end of the day, when we've done all that we're commanded to do, He does not owe us anything. We do not merit His favor by our good performance in this world.

We will never be able to leverage our good activity and performance to demand anything of Him. They viewed obedience as something that gave them leverage over God.

We will never work our way out of the debt to a place where God is in our debt. It says it like this in Romans 11, 35. Or who hath given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again.

What are you going to give back to God? What are you able to demand of Him? At no point are the scales lopsided. You know, in a marriage, that creates a problem, right?

[10 : 17] When you're always keeping track, and you'll say, Well, she's done this much work. I've done this much. Now you owe me something. And that kind of relationship never works. Stephen and I were playing Risk the other day, and I don't know who won, but it was at Thatcher.

That's all we know for sure. And when we were playing, the kids, the little ones, were so well behaved. And, but we said, Let's write Stephanie and my wife and his wife Stephanie. Let's just tell them how hard it's been to watch the kids while they were gone.

And Carson's looking at me like, Why would you say that? I mean, we're doing good. And I'm like, You don't understand, right? What we got to do is we got to convince them, I've been working really hard so that when they come back, I have a chance to go hang out in the garage and do nothing because I need you to know that I've been working really hard.

And it was kind of funny, but that's how we think about it, right? We're always trying to let the other person know, You're now indebted to me because I've done this work for you. That's not a proper way to have a relationship, right?

You can even see in a marriage or among one another why that would be a problem. That is not how we relate with our God. He is good and He does all things well. So this is a great encouragement to us.

[11 : 28] This is an encouragement to me and you as we're talking about some loved ones that we have that we're praying for that we want to share the gospel with because it means that God is free to bless us before we get our act together as He is before.

The story follows in this about ten lepers, and I enjoyed so much listening to the sermon and the services on Sunday as I was driving back from Indiana and hearing Greg preach on the ten lepers, how Jesus came to them and they cried out for mercy.

And they didn't merit the healing. God just did it. He just blessed them. He chose to give healing to them. This week, as I shared with you on Thursday, that I was on the phone with one of our missionaries in Turkey.

And then last weekend, I was with a pastor that was, the church had 35 mostly older people going into COVID. What I heard from both of them was something that I really envied or something that I found, oh, I should say better, it provoked something inside of me.

I saw both men at a place of the simple desperation, which is if God doesn't work, nothing is going to happen. See, that's important in faith. It's important for you to realize that you need faith because all the good things you've done has not demanded anything from Him.

[12 : 47] And if anything is going to happen in this world, it's going to happen by Him working through us. We should trust God for greater things, great things in our little faith and not be paralyzed by what is left to be done in our lives and in our church.

Speaking to these people, he said, you would understand this. You have a contract with a person, a person that is a bondservant, a person that's in your house. They're supposed to work during the day, and at the end of the day, they don't come into you and say, because I've done all these things, now you're obligated to serve me.

And same for you. Our faith ought to be increased because we realize that you can't demand things of God just because you're so busy working in some area. That is not the economy of this world.

That is not how things work. God extends His grace to us, and we never merited it. And just like you weren't deserving of salvation, neither will anybody else we share the gospel with.

So why is this difficult for us? Why is it so difficult for us to consider that that is true? The Bible says a lot about the connection between obedience and blessing. One of the great things of the Old Testament and the New Testament is the way of blessings is a way of obedience.

[13 : 55] But we often confuse cause and effect. In the earliest chapters of the Bible, with Adam and Eve, in Genesis 1, 26, God says you're going to have dominion over the fish and the seas and the fowls of the air.

Adam had done nothing to that point to earn or merit God's blessing. God simply in His kindness and generosity gave this blessing. The blessing was a command, and the command was a blessing.

That they were one into the same. The command was a blessing, the blessing was a command. Remember a few weeks ago, I made an announcement. And I said, come to church early on Sunday before the missions conference, and we will have Krispy Kreme donuts.

The command, come to church early. The blessing, eat the donuts. All right? The command and the blessing were all together in one sentence. And this gets distorted in the book of Job, right?

Job's friend says, you must have been sinful. That's why you're not being blessed. You are disobedient. Now God has handed it to you. The disciples, why is this man blind? His family has done something.

[14 : 56] The attitude of the older brother in the story. Father, I have worked for you all these years. You have never once killed the fatted calf. You've never given me a party. That is the distorted view that we have.

Seen in the lives when we are angry and not getting what we think we deserve or being treated unfairly. Have you seen that in your life? Have you ever got to that place of this violation of your justice system, that bitterness where you say, but God, I've been serving you so well.

God, I have been doing everything that I'm supposed to be doing, but now things are not working the way that they're supposed to be working. That whole category that we're thinking about, it seems kind of off topic, you say, but that's what Jesus is addressing when he talks to us about increasing our faith.

He addresses a misconception, a myth, a lie, I should say, of Satan in regards to how God works in this world. Some other confusion.

We're told that we're the sons and friends and not servants. Galatians 4, 7. Wherefore, there are no more servant but a son, and if a son, then the heir of God through Christ. John 15, 15.

[16 : 05] Henceforth, I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not that what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father have made known unto you.

So the disciples now are being considered, they should consider themselves as an unworthy servant. And you say, what gives here? We must view this in regards to the Pharisees' wrong theology.

As I said, Jesus is not describing the way in which it is between God and his children, but the way that the Pharisees think of it, and he's explaining how it's illogical with their world view.

Jesus is making a point here that our attitude matters. That was played out with Cain and Abel. It's going to be played out with the Pharisees and the tax collectors when they go pray before God.

So are we a son or are we a friend? An answer, or an unworthy servant, an answer biblically is yes. We are those things. That's how we should view ourselves. We should have the attitude of a person that says, in all that we've been doing, at the end of the day, Romans 12, 1, this is just our reasonable service.

[17 : 08] God, you're not indebted to us. We have not done one ounce above what should be expected of us based upon your goodness. In our lives. So Jesus has some important things that he wants you to learn about your attitude towards God.

What we think about God and what we think about God's blessings. And the first one, which I've said, is this. Obedience is not leverage to demand a certain response from God.

If you really want to understand faith, if you really want to increase in your faith, disciples, as Jesus is speaking to them, Vision Baptist Church, if we really want to grow in our faith, if we want to know how do we do this in difficult thing of forgiveness and all the things that have been told of us in the early part of the chapter, you're going to have to recognize that obedience does not leverage demand a certain response from God.

Let me put it like this. It's as if Jesus is saying, look, Pharisees, your own theology of God and of blessings, it doesn't work. Take, for instance, a farmer and a servant. When the servant does what he's supposed to do, it doesn't give him leverage over his master.

He's just done what he's supposed to do. It doesn't give him merit. It doesn't change his position in relationship to him. He's just done his job. So, in your own theology to the Pharisees, how you relate to God doesn't even work in common life.

[18 : 25] You think that you do certain things that puts God in debt. You think that God is so stingy that he needs you to put him in your debt. You think that you can do stuff that's good enough that puts him in your debt.

Neither of these things are true. He is not stingy. He's generous. And you're not as obedient as you think you are. But your obedience in any case cannot act as leverage against him.

It's not a means to an end in order to put a stingy God in a corner where he's got to pull out his wallet and give you \$5. That's not how obedience works. You've completely misunderstood the role of obedience in the life of God's call his children to live.

faith. That's how so many people view living the Christian life. And that's why Jesus had to speak to the disciples to say if we're going to talk about faith we're going to have to talk about what you even understand about the relationship that we would have and those that were listening.

And how many of you would recognize here that you have viewed God in this manner that he is a small town farmer. He has this one servant and that in doing stuff that he'll be obligated.

[19 : 32] We do not merit the grace of God has shown to us. You scratch my back and I'll scratch your back. God if you'll do this for me then I will do this for you.

Or I'll stop doing this if you'll stop doing this for me. Or if I'll do this then you'll give me a blessing. Or surely if I do this I will earn your reward. God is not stingy.

God is the one who kills the fatted calf. God is abundantly gracious to us. He demonstrates it in the life of those ten lepers. He walks up to them they cry for mercy and he brings it to all ten of them.

He brings healing to them. And God did not line up the ten lepers and say okay let's have a competition. Alright the fastest five of you are going to be healed today. Alright let's see who it's going to be.

Well let me look at you. After I heal you which ones of you are going to be most profitable for me? What can you bring to the table? I only have so many people they can follow along with me. What do you bring to the table?

[20 : 31] And they all made their case and after making their case they said okay I'm going to pick five of you. No God was gracious he came to them. They didn't earn anything. They were not deserving of anything and he demonstrated his love to them.

Gratitude expressed to God who did this in their life what no man could do. The lepers had nothing to offer God. And after Jesus brings healing in their life the leper gives the only thing that he had of any value to God it was praise.

God you've been good. I didn't deserve that. I didn't deserve to have my sight back but the one leper turns around and demonstrates the contrast of the attitude that the others would have.

I didn't deserve that. I didn't make you do that. You did that in your goodness and I will worship you. Which leads us to in taking heed to ourselves and our checking of our attitude today is that we ought to serve God in humility with gratitude.

So likewise ye verse 10 when you shall have done all these things which you are commanded you say we are unprofitable servants we have done that which was our duty to do.

[21 : 40] I was something that many of you weren't as a teenager. I was a prideful teenager. Right? Any of you did anybody relate with me in here today? I really was. And you would think that the more that I made decisions inside of the church to serve God the less I would deal with pride but it was the opposite because the more time that I made decisions that separated me from the other teenagers the more that I thought God would have to bring blessings into my life.

God I don't go and do what those other kids do on the weekend. God I don't do these things. I should get to basically ride out my life. I should tell you I'm willing to sign up God and since I'm willing to sign up let me outline for you what it is that I'm willing to do now.

Welcome to the show. Right? That's what I would have thought. I really dealt with that. I didn't know that I dealt with this but one day in reading a book called The Calvary Road by a guy named Roy Hesham I read this section that talked about five marks of a bondservant.

What it was like to be a bondservant and it said that a bondservant it's really humbling it says a mission that in doing and bearing what we have in the ways of meekness and humility we have not done one stitch more than it was our duty to do.

This pile of things that I'd been doing where I thought man these are really going to get cast in God's going to have to really give me everything that I ever asked for because look at all these things that I'm doing for Him and that moment when I looked at that and said I have not done one ounce above what is my reasonable service for God it really brought humility.

[23 : 20] When we've done everything that we've possibly done we've only done what we're supposed to do Romans 12 1 our reasonable service. So when we see God calls to His people who call us to holiness and provide forgiveness when others hurt we cry out like the disciples and say God you have to increase our faith the Christian life is harder than I imagined what you're asking me to do is it's just too much to handle and so we cry out just like the disciples and say Lord you must increase our faith and He does it with His word and what does His word say?

First of all His word says this isn't about the quantity of your faith this has to do faith put your faith in my promises trust me I will give you the promises and you need to live by them live in obedience if you will live in obedience to me then the mountains that need to move will be moved in their timing if you'll live in obedience to me that forgiveness that you need to give will be possible second thing that He told them has to do with our attitudes which is you need to understand that your good works are not meriting anything that you need to live by faith in me so the two crucial the crucial issue here and then the command and so what should our lives look like on the other side of this so we went through this and we said God increased my faith and He's given us these two lessons what would that look like lived out in our lives I think we find in verse number 15 in the story of the ten lepers is this and one of them when he saw that he was healed turned back and with a loud voice glorified God when one of them recognized not based on his own merit when he recognized that God had done in his life what no man could do when he recognized what God had done in his life he turns back and he glorifies

God and that's what would exemplify that man's life it's what should exemplify every one of our lives and so we'll never be able to pay the debt nor were we ever meant to we live our lives in eternity indebted to Him for His grace in our lives we bring nothing to the table that obligates Him to work on our behalf and it's with this understanding that we will worship Him and that we will live a life of faith asking Him to do through us what we can never do on our own let's pray together Heavenly Father I thank you that the disciples asked the question Lord that if I knew to ask that I would have but outside of your word Lord I don't know that I would have even known to ask you to increase my faith as I struggle through this life as I want to live the Christian life Father I thank you that it is not left to us in our own power that all the good works we do do not merit your blessings and all the good works we do Lord will never move the mountains but our faith in you Lord is what make things happen

Father I know that there's people in here today that are struggling they're struggling to live out their Christian faith with the temptations on every side and they just feel tired today Lord I pray that they would place their faith in your promises that what you said is true we also know that there's many like myself not just as a prideful teenager but as a prideful adult who doesn't believe that we need faith that I'm not desperate like that pastor in Indiana or that missionary in Turkey because I believe that all my good works are going to make what I want to happen in this world Lord I'm empty of that Lord I don't want to believe that lie I want to live a life of faith that asks you to do the impossible in this world with every head bowed every eye closed and Kristen plays the piano I'll finish praying here in a moment and then we'll sing but we just take a moment to reflect upon God's word Christian what do you think about that second truth you're struggling with faith and the way you know that you're struggling with faith is that you're not living upon the promises of God you're living a life that takes some of his promises but you're also living a life that makes your own rules for life and you're faced with the promises of God would you just trust that he knows best that he is good and if you're like me in here today and you would say my relationship hasn't been what it's been with the Lord because I have tried to place him in debt to me

I thought my good works were going to demand something from him would you let go of that lie that there is no leverage and there's no need for leverage you don't have to convince him to do right you don't have to convince him to be good he is good and we can trust in him and let our work be done as a work of expression to love not as a means to make him do what we would want him to do if you're in here today and you do not know Jesus Christ you've never put your faith and trust in him I would love nothing more than to share the word of God with you today as we sang I'll slip out I'll be in the foyer I'd encourage you to do the same take the word of God we'll find a place and we'll look at God's word if you're a believer in here don't stand up today and sing until you know your heart has come into a line with the truth of God's word heavenly father

[28 : 51] I pray that you'll help my brothers and sisters lord in this room today to trust you completely we recognize that you are good and we are so thankful father provide forgiveness to me lord I know you provide forgiveness to your people as we have a distorted view of our relationship with you thank you for your word thank you how it increases our faith help us lord to believe the impossible in this world for our lost loved ones help us believe the impossible for the things that you have placed in our heart and not looking to our own strength lord but looking to you to perform them through us in Jesus name I pray amen