

So Watch Yourselfs - Part 1

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[0 : 00] Join me back again in Luke chapter number 17. In the words of one of my favorite shows as a kid, we have a long way to go and a short time to get there. And we have a lot to cover in Luke chapter number 17.

I love that song. I don't think I've ever heard that before. But that standing in the gospel, the not walking alone, could not be a more fitting song this morning as we go into this passage.

Because it speaks about living out the gospel together. How do we walk together in the gospel? That's something you should think about. Is my life not only declaring the gospel in word, but also in deed and the way that I am living out my life?

I love that so very much. And so we're seeing a contrast between the classic, manifestly obvious bad conduct of the Pharisees. Their attitudes, their thoughts towards God, their love for money, their disdain for other people.

It's just on every page we're just seeing it and we're seeing Jesus confront them. And I remind you that Jesus came for sinners. Publicans, those that said, I have nothing to do with religion, he came for them.

[1 : 08] Those that try to take religion and make it a game that they could win and take it over as Pharisees did, he's also coming for them. And he's confronting both people because Jesus came to seek and to save that is lost.

He came to seek and save that family member of yours that you never know if they're going to make it to the family reunion because they're living life in such a rebellious manner. And the good ones who are caught up in some kind of false religion, Jesus loves those people.

And so we see the contrast between the life that he's calling on us as his disciples to live with them. Verse number one, he said to the disciples, But it is impossible, but the offenses will come.

I know the wording may be hard to follow, but once you hear it, you know exactly what he's saying. It is going to happen. It is going to happen that offenses are going to come into people's lives.

There's going to be challenge. There's going to be temptation in people's lives that come to you and they come to me. And we know that. We know that they're going to happen.

[2 : 10] We know there's going to be temptations in this life. There's going to be people that try to lead us astray from the truth. There's going to be negative influences in our lives. But the next statement is so strong.

Woe is a word that is not used lightly in our Bible, but it says, But woe unto him through whom they come. Offenses are going to come, disciples, but woe unto you if they come through you.

Don't let these offenses come through you. Don't lead my sheep. Don't lead the sheep that I'm entrusting into your care. Don't lead the little ones whose faith I've given you to cultivate.

Don't lead them into temptation by your teaching and your behavior. Woe unto you, disciples. I am giving you a very important work and you do not need to be bringing these offenses to the people.

Clearly Jesus has in mind the Pharisees that by the teaching and the lives they lead. They're leading little ones astray. They're claiming to be godly while in fact we see that they are lovers of money.

[3 : 14] And people that are lovers of money are simply just peoples that are lovers of self. That is what the value of being the lovers of money is. They wanted to protect themselves. It was them above God.

Them above anybody else. We know from Matthew 18, a parallel passage of this, that little ones aren't just our young puggles and sparkies and cubbies.

That's what we call them around here. Those aren't just the little ones. But young people can be, they are little ones, but it's young believers. And I am so grateful that in our church that we have young believers.

Over the last few weeks, Austin, Hayden, Kinsley, teenagers, a couple of them 20 years old, have come to know Christ. Austin working, trying to make his, now as a new believer, trying to make it so he can be off on Sundays and working through that.

Some of you as new believers knew what that was like and that's where he's at. But he'll be here tonight with friends and family to see him be baptized. He's a little one, alright? It's not an insult.

[4 : 16] He's a little one. Don't offend him. Don't bring an offense to him. Have I heard how the Pharisees caused stumbling? Verse 22. Then Jesus answered and said unto them, Go your way and tell John, this is Luke 7, 22.

Go your way and tell John what things you have seen and heard, how that the blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

See, the Pharisees were constantly trying to, they were trying to provide stumbling for people. They were creating offenses. The message that Jesus is not the Messiah, constantly saying things like, this is not, what power does he do these things from?

This isn't the Messiah. They're hypocrisy. The way they would hold some rules so high, but then they would break other rules. Their perversion of scripture, the twisted to do whatever they wanted.

Their disdain for people. They didn't even want to, they wouldn't want to touch a leper, see a leper. No willingness to teach those people. No love for the publicans. They just had a real disdain for people.

[5 : 22] They caused people to be offended by the work of Christ. The Pharisees were heaping upon stumbling blocks in front of everybody they could who was moving in the direction of Christ.

You've spoken to people. Why do unbelieving people sometimes say they don't want to come here to church? Because they will say, because those people are hypocrites. And we say, well, there's always room for more.

All right? Now we say, we say, you know, there's hypocrites at Walmart. You're still there. There's a, there's hypocrites at other people. But that's not the answer. The answer is no, we, we're not a group of people of hypocrites. The things you're saying, it's not, that God forbid that that is true about God's people.

That what you're saying, maybe that's what you're saying. Maybe that was your experience. But no, we aren't imperfect people, but we want to submit ourselves to God's word. We would not want to be that type of stumbling block that is in front of people.

That's what's being confronted here. They're going to come, but woe that they come from us. But woe if they would come from us. It's a warning to all of us. Paul speaking to Timothy, in 1 Timothy chapter number four, verse 16, he says this, take heed unto thyself.

[6 : 32] Watch yourselves. Beware. Woe unto you. And unto the doctrine. Take heed to yourself and into the doctrine and continue in them. For in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

Yes, take care of your doctrine, but also yourself. That is the living out of that doctrine in your life. Apostle Paul, when he said, you have known my doctrine and you've known my manner of life.

People know our manner of life. There's offenses that can come through false doctrine. There can also be offenses that come from the not living out who God has called us to be as his people.

James, half-brother of Jesus, in James 3.1 says, my brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. When you're in a place of spiritual leadership, in your place of where people would know that you represent the cause of Christ, there's a way in which there's a greater condemnation for you.

Sunday school teacher, certainly. Water worker, certainly. If you're just simply the neighbor that everybody knows that you're Christian, there's a greater responsibility to you. From the time that you've knocked on the door, introduced yourself, and you said, we are a Christian family, you have now brought yourself to a place of responsibility for them.

[7 : 48] Have you ever thought that what you choose to do and what you choose to say could actually lead people astray? Could actually lead people astray eternally?

Woe unto us if the offenses come from his disciples. Such a serious matter. I think you already know it's such a serious matter. Woe, I've said that.

We talked about it and you think about it, but just to make sure that there's no doubt, verse number two, if it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, then they that should offend one of these little ones.

Alex, I'm not sure if I put that in there, but I may have a picture of a millstone in the back of the day. If not, I'll just describe it to you. A large rock, if you will.

I hope you have it because I don't have words right now for this, okay? Super heavy. It's a thing. I'm trying not to say it. It's super used for grinding in the grain that's there. And Alex, look at it and then come up here and describe it if you would, all right?

[8 : 55] And in a circular, about this big around, you're just not picking it up, all right? There's going to be multiple people needed. And so the millstone used in grinding there, sometimes I believe there's a wooden thing that would come out of it.

An animal would be needed to walk around and grinding it. I think of making sogram molasses. That's what, in a little country fair when I was growing up, there was a mule that was walking in a circle and it was grinding corn stalk.

And those of you that know anything about what I'm saying, I've lost you because you're like, he's not telling the truth right now. I know. A huge millstone, multiple people to move it, super heavy. That's the object that I want you to think about for a moment.

Then I want you to think about what's being said. Who is saying it? Jesus is speaking about a millstone. Jesus is thinking about it being better that a millstone would be put around somebody's neck and cast into the sea.

If I didn't read it for myself in God's word, I would not believe you that it was being said. We make a big deal about little ones around here. We make a big deal about discipleship for new believers, kids programs, WANA, Children's Church, many volunteers, background checks, training, and time designated each week, always sharing some next step for people to get involved and helping kids and new believers know, love, and serve Jesus.

[10 : 15] But I've never explained the program that is offered for those who want to keep the little ones from knowing from the truth about God. And as I said, this doesn't just apply to children. This is all new believers.

It would be better that we never came into their lives than if we were going to offend somebody and make the gospel confusing. There's just a seriousness about that. Pay attention to what you're doing in your life.

Pay attention to it. I was listening to a pastor this week preach from this passage, and he remembered the first time that he was preaching and he saw somebody take out a pen and write in the margin of their Bible what was being said.

And he said he felt like he just wanted to stop because he realized that what I was saying was being a commentary upon Scripture and this is a heavy matter. Those of us that take the Word and teach people, this is a heavy matter.

Those of us that have influence on new believers and one another, this is a heavy, heavy matter. So pay attention to what you're doing. Take heed to yourselves.

[11 : 17] If disciples were looking after one another's souls, pay attention to one another's soul. Now it's going to give us two very difficult areas.

Yes, there could be the teaching that would be wrong. When you handle the Word of God, rightly divide the Word of God because our carelessness and teaching, it can lead people astray.

That's what we've seen and that's what we know. That's happened. You've talked to people that have been led astray by false teaching. But the two things that are going to be mentioned here when it talks about a conduct in the life of the disciples that if they don't get it right, it's going to make the gospel confusing.

If they don't get these two things right, it is going to lead the little ones astray are two things that are very difficult. And we know that from experience, but we also are going to see it by the response of the disciples to what it says.

Two very difficult areas here. Verse number three, Take heed to yourselves if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him.

[12 : 18] Being willing to lovingly rebuke and forgive often is a way in which that the disciples, if we do incorrectly, could cause an offense to new believers.

So take heed. If your brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, if you repent, forgive him. In Luke, we're given the principle, and in Matthew, we are given the process. If your brother sins, rebuke him.

In Matthew, we see, if your brother or sister sins, you go to him or her. If he or she repents, you gain a brother, you gain a sister. It's over. If they do not repent, you take the two or three with you so that you can confront the sin again and confirm their response.

If that doesn't cause repentance, you tell the church, and the whole church calls that person back to repentance. But what we don't do is we don't sit back and watch some sinner go off into a pattern of sin without caring.

Our responsibility in calling people to repentance is a way in which new believers and little ones watch our lives, and if we don't do it correctly, it can become an offense to them.

[13 : 28] This kind of sin is the kind of sin that reaches a level where it's regular, where it's a pattern, where it becomes a direction as seen in Matthew 18. And from your heart there will be forgiveness, but there will need to be restoration and reconciliation that is only possible through repentance.

So we ask God for discernment as we live out our Christian lives one to another, as we walk in the gospel as the song has been said. There's a whole multitude of sins that love will cover.

1 Peter 4, 8, And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sin. There are just some things that are done that you just forgive, you cover them.

Covering another's transgression is the essence of forgiveness. But then there's also times in the Bible where a person has fallen into sin. It may not be a pattern, but as Galatians 6, 1 says, Brother, if a man be overtaken in a fault, not seeing a pattern, not seeing a direction, but we're seeing somebody overtaken in a fault.

We've been there. We've been overtaken in a sin. I don't know. I wasn't expecting that to happen. I gave occasion to the enemy. I put myself in the wrong place.

[14 : 42] I humbly confess I need accountability. I've been overtaken. And those that are spiritual work to restore them in a spirit of meekness and considering thyself lest you also be tempted.

But then there's some patterns and sins of directional sins, sinful choices that must be dealt with openly with rebuke. Two areas where they say that are going to be watched.

The rebuke of one another, helping each other fight against sin, fight for joy in life, and then the second one here is in the area of forgiveness. Take heed, verse 3, through yourselves as a brother trespass against thee and rebuke thee, and if he repent, forgive him.

Admittedly, this is very difficult. And I know that from experience, but I also know because of verse number 5. The disciples that have been coming along with Jesus, after this teaching that he gives to them, don't be an offense.

Here's two areas that you need to really watch after. What is the disciples' response to Jesus, the apostles here? They say, increase our faith. Father, God, we need help.

[15 : 46] What you've just asked of us is something that is going to be beyond our natural means of doing. You did not ask us something that I could just simply do. You've asked more of me than I'm able to accomplish on my own.

The disciples knew where the real issue of Christian obedience is found. It is in faith. By trusting God, you can do these things and he can do these things in and through you.

This should always be our request when we're faced with the command of Christ we do not think is impossible. We ought to say, Father, increase our faith. Father, increase our faith recognizing that it's not in ourselves.

It is a faith, it is a grace-enabled devotion to him. Luke 17, 6, increase our faith in Jesus' response to them.

If you have had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto the sycamine tree, be plucked up by the root and that will be planted in the sea and it should obey you. A tree with a very deep root structure.

[16 : 47] Have you ever tried to pull the shrubs up from your house or something like that and you thought, this isn't a very big tree and you realize there's more tree underneath the ground than there is above the ground and you're like, how do I get this?

Well, this is a tree that is known for being very much connected to the ground that it would be, you could take it and pluck it up and cast it into the sea with the faith of a mustard seed that is given to them.

It's a strong statement. Increase our faith and he says, with the faith of the grain of a mustard seed, you can do all that I would ever ask of you to do and then more.

We often hear this, faith that moves a mountain. It comes from that parallel passage of Matthew, instead of a tree, we're talking about a mountain. But here's the problem, I don't literally need to move a mountain very often, all right?

That is not what I'm trying to do. I need faith to move a mountain. Maybe I've been traveling before and wish the mountain was out of the way. But what is it that is a mountain? What is so big in yourselves that you would not be able to move without the work of God in your life?

[17 : 51] Forgiveness. Forgiveness in our lives are as mountains that cannot be moved unless he does those in our lives. But you will be in life, be faced with the need to forgive people and that seems impossible.

Without doubt, a lack of faith will cause us to be unable to do what God has called us to do. That's what he tells the disciples in Matthew 17, 20. They say, Why can't we do this? Why can't we cast out the demons in your name?

Why can't we do this? And he said unto them, Because of your unbelief. We must ask at times what the disciples ask. Why could we not fill in the blank? Why can we not fill in the blank?

For them, it was cast out demons and in this passage, it is offer forgiveness. Why can I not do what God has called me to do in a certain area? Fill in the blank?

And the answer is, I need faith in him. Father, increase my faith. Give me faith. It is faith that you need in order to receive God's grace and power to do these things.

[18 : 52] Let's think about before you came to know Christ, your understanding. For by grace are you saved through faith and not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

We see it and we love it. I could not save myself. I am going to be saved by faith. It is a gift from God, the grace that has been extended to me. Paul is emphasizing here that in the sanctification of our lives, the walking in the gospel, that raised the walk in newness of life, it is also going to require faith as well.

Nothing shall be impossible unto you. Obviously, this is in regards to living out what God has called you to do. But if I've called you to do it, with the faith of a grain of mustard seed, you can do it.

Faith can cause you to walk on water if Jesus calls on you to walk on water. If Jesus doesn't call on you to walk on water, I would recommend using the bridge. All right? But when Jesus calls on you to walk on water, then all it requires is faith to do it.

Faith will allow you to do all the things that God has called for you to do. If He wants you to move a mountain, the faith of a grain of mustard seed would move that mountain. If He's called on us to rebuke and to forgive among God's people, disciples, then we can do that.

[20 : 13] It's a matter of faith. And there's the encouragement by Jesus. The crucial issue is accomplishing great things is not the quantity of our faith, but is the power of God. It's why the size of the faith didn't matter because it's about the object that is given to them.

For time, I wish we could get to verses 7 through 10 because he's going to tell a story about how a man works with his master and at the end of the day, he doesn't say, you've done so much, he's done just his reasonable service because it isn't like we preload our work and then God says, you've done enough work, you've put in enough, and now you're going to get good things that happen to you.

God is saying, I came to you when you were a sinner lost without anything to offer me and I saved you. And so we see here that when we come to Him, we offer nothing still to this day to Him.

Jonathan knew this in the Bible. 1 Samuel 14, 6. There's a story, Jonathan, his armor bearer, he gets in a situation where we're between a rock and a hard place, he's got an enemy on one side, he had brought himself to that, he climbs up and he says, for there is no restraint unto the Lord to say by many or by few.

A small amount of faith is sufficient because the focus is not on our faith but on its object. So Jonathan said, it doesn't matter if I've got five guys with me or if I have a hundred guys with me, if I'm going to win this war, it's going to be done by the power of God.

[21 : 31] And so the decision for Jonathan wasn't how many armor bearers he needed, the decision for Jonathan was, will I have faith that God is going to fight and win this battle for me?

Our faith makes a difference, not because it's so great but because God is so great. Faith is not abstract. We put our faith in the promises of God. Faith is not adrenaline, faith is not warm feelings, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is looking at God's promises and then acting upon it. When I thought about that, I thought, well then what was it for Jonathan? How did Jonathan get to a place where he's like, I'm going to climb up here, I'm going to be completely outnumbered and I'm going to act in faith that I'm going to win.

You know, all through the scripture, Leviticus 26, 8, and five of you shall chase a hundred and a hundred of you shall put thousands to flight and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. Jonathan was acting upon the promises of God in faith.

God had given him a promise that they would move forward in the battle and he lived it out. So Jonathan does that and that's it. But God has told you to forgive in Luke 17, which means that you can forgive and that I can forgive and I will believe in his words are true and that my emotions are not always correct.

[22 : 55] And so, which means I can forgive. I can move a mountain. I can have faith. He has made a promise. So how do you live out this Christian life? Is it complete dependence on him or is it complete devotion and discipline?

The answer is yes. It is a faith-dependent devotion. It doesn't justify you. It doesn't contribute to your justification, but it is the product and expression of God's work in you.

Philippians 2.12, Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in absence, work out your own salvation with fear and traveling.

Work out your own salvation. Walk out the gospel. You're not alone. That's what we were talking about. That's what we were singing about. It's that the gospel message, your salvation, is now going to be lived out.

Verse 13, For it is God which worketh in you both the will and the do of his good pleasure. You work it out as he does the work in you.

[23 : 55] And that's what he's doing. By faith, trusting the promises of God. So here we have Jesus telling the disciples, Don't make the gospel confusing.

Don't offend my little ones. Live in such a way where the gospel is clear and the way that it's taught and the way that it's being lived out. And a big way in which it's going to be hard to live this out has to do with inside of your relationship together of rebuking and forgiving one another.

The disciples said, as we would do, that's hard. What you ask of us, that is hard. Life together is hard. And he says, It's a matter of faith.

Will you simply believe the promises that I've given you and will you act upon them? Let's pray together. With every head bowed and every eye closed before I begin to pray.

So the disciples say here, How can we do this? You're telling us that we can lead people astray by our lives and by our lips and you're telling us to forgive in places that's hard.

[25 : 00] How can we do this? So you might be thinking right now, I just don't think I can forgive in the situation that I'm in. And Jesus is saying to you, Do you trust me?

Do you really want to do and be what God has called you to do? And B, ask me. Ask and it will be given to me, to you, if you will trust me.

Do you have a mountain that needs moving today? If so, claim the promises of God in your life and act in faith, trusting.

Some of you, I'd ask in here, as you reflect to the beginning portion of the scripture, could you take a moment, consider the question we first saw in the chapter.

Are you an offense to unbelievers and new believers? And if that's the case, we know what God says about that. Woe unto us. Allow God to search your heart and say, search my heart, O God, show me if there be any wicked way, if there be any offensive way to those who do not know the gospel.

[26 : 05] And let me know of it, Lord, and I will repent of it. If you, Lord, will make that aware and be loving enough that we would live together in a life of repentance and forgiveness.

Heavenly Father, as we come to you today, hearing what you have said to your disciples and receiving it as your word to us, as your disciples in this community and in the time in which we live, help us be a people that do not bring an offense to new believers.

Help us be a disciples, Lord, that by faith in you we'll live out this calling that you have given us to show the gospel in the way that we would call each other to repentance and then continually offer forgiveness to those that have.

With every head bowed, every eye closed, would you continue there praying if you would like to find your place here at the altar. Let's spend some time praying before I close us in a word of prayer.

there as we go. So good. Thank you. So■dr, Thank you.

[27 : 43] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.