

**The Gospel According to Luke**  
Luke 17:1-10  
Reading: Matthew 18:5-9 & 15-20

Sermon #70  
March 1, 2020

## **The Marks Of A Disciple**

**Key Thought:** Disciples of Christ live by faith and are not to be an offense causing others to sin, and when a believe is sinned against they are to rebuke, seek reconciliation and forgive the offender.

It was in these days of Jesus' ministry He was gaining more and more true followers. There were always some who followed Jesus so they could see signs and wonders and others because they felt He was going to be the answer to their prayers concerning the overthrow of Rome. However, more people were becoming real followers, they were coming to know that Jesus is the long-promised Messiah. Many were from the lower social classes and the poor who the Pharisees never had a concern for. They moved from the empty religion of Judaism and began to understand salvation by lineage and works was futile. They were beginning to understand God desires a relationship given by his grace, based on faith and from faith kingdom works flow. These new converts were young or new or little ones in their faith, they had begun take in the nourishing milk of the gospel and over time they would grow to eat spiritual meat of scripture. Jesus begins to teach His disciples how to care for the souls of new believers.

We, my beloved, are not disciples who walked with Jesus, but we are disciples of Jesus by the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit that indwells us and the faith God gives. So, we also need to pay close attention to Jesus' words that instruct us how to care for the souls of those God sends into our lives and to Canyon Bible. Jesus tells His disciples how to care for the new brother or sister and we, as His church, must pay close attention and do likewise.

Prepare to hear God's Word from Matthew's Gospel Account which reflects our passage in Luke. Please stand as Garth reads Matthew 18:5-9 & 15-20.

Jesus now gives us warnings - as His disciples and we must pay close attention to what He says in order to joyfully be obedient to His Words. Let us pray for spiritual wisdom.

Pray

### **Models Integrity** (Luke 17:1-2)

Luke follows the parable of the rich man and Lazarus with Jesus' teaching here. Reading a verse 1, "*And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! <sup>2</sup> It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.'*" In these verses, we are not told specifically what offense or sin is that is being referred to. However, in context, it is suggestive to the flow of the text that Jesus is thinking about the sin of indifference or the sin of not caring for those in need, just as the rich man neglected Lazarus. However, at the same time Jesus intentionally leaves the temptation open in order to take in any sin or offense.

Here is what Jesus is saying: A mature believer must never be the cause of a less mature believer's sin. This goes against our 21<sup>st</sup> century self-centered concept of Christianity. Scripture teaches that we are held accountable for our behavior toward others. If I am in some way the cause of another Christian's sin, their guilt will also be my guilt. Jesus is clear, "*It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.*" Now when Jesus says, "*little ones*" he is referring to those who are younger or immature in their faith. These are those who are less experienced and

perhaps less discerning in the realm of Christianity. This refers to new converts or anyone whose understanding of scripture is shallow and needs to grow roots. The first thing for us who are more mature is to remember a time when we were learning the basics. It is absolutely horrible when people come to Christ and they are taught false teachings and doctrine by corrupt churches and those who call themselves “Christian”. Jesus says these false people should be drown in the sea. So, my beloved, listen up and pay attention – you and I are responsible for discipling the true and right spiritual growth of those here in our church and those God places in our lives. I believe that one way we might lay-up treasures in heaven is by discipling others with the truth of God’s Word. When one is the cause of others to sin and to believe in false doctrine, then we will suffer loss, maybe loss as deep being cast into the sea. Jesus is so adamant about this that He says it would be better to suffer a violent death than to be a part of or cause of someone else’ sin.

The Apostle Paul is a very good example of our Lord’s command here in Luke. Listen to what Paul has written in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the believers in Corinth as Brother Patrick reads, 1 Corinthians, chapter 8 from verse 8 to 13.

This passage is exactly what Jesus is speaking to here in Luke, bottom-line: **“It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.”** In Paul’s writing the bottom-line is: **“Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”** (1 Corinthians 8:12) The early church was focused on the scriptures as Acts 2:42 tells us, **“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”** People were being filled with the Word of God and being saved from paganism, Judaism, false idols and false gods. For example, many were convinced by false rituals, traditions and teachings that meat sacrificed to a false god was special and had to be set apart for that god and any other use or to have anything to do with

idol meat would bring condemnation. Paul is saying do not be fooled, those false gods and idols are just chunks of wood or stone and they mean nothing and have no power. So, eating meat sacrificed to gods and idols does not gain one special blessings or curses. But Paul is sensitive to others and instructs that true disciples of Christ must be careful with the souls of young believers. If, because of past experiences in false religions, it is offensive to eat that which has been sacrificed to gods and idols of wood and stone then he will not eat. We need to be sensitive to the backgrounds people are freed from when they come to Christ so we can gently help them see truth. Paul says, someday, as they mature in the Word and understand God better, they might be able to sit down and eat together, but for now, out of concern for new believers' spiritual welfare he will not eat meat sacrificed to idols. This is one example of how Paul shows maturity and kindness to these little ones, these new believers, these young in the faith believers.

I do not want to get side tracked here but one thing we who love the Doctrines of Grace must be concerned about is overwhelming young believers with the Doctrine of Election.

*Irresistible grace is a doctrine which teaches that the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom He has determined to save and, in God's timing, overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the gospel bringing them to faith in Christ. In the broad sense **Doctrine of Election** refers to the fact that God chooses to do everything that He does in whatever way He best sees fit. When He acts, He does so only because He willfully and independently chooses to act. According to His own nature, predetermined plan, and good pleasure, He decides to do whatever He desires, without pressure or constraint from any outside influence and whatever he does is good and right.*

I believe that the Doctrines of Grace and Election are biblical and I adhere to them. However, Paul speaks of milk of the Word and meat of the Word, and the Doctrine of Grace is the beginning, it is milk and Election is meat. Sometimes, a young believer is not quite ready to hear and embrace the Doctrine of Election yet. So, we treat them with love and kindness and help them mature. Someday they will be ready. Until then we must not try to force feed a babe in Christ who is growing on good wholesome milk, the flavorful steak of scripture that must be chewed on to extract its meaning and this takes spiritual teeth. If one is not ready to digest it and it might be harmful to their growth. If we help them along, like Paul and his willingness to refrain for a time, we may be able to sit down in the future and enjoy a steak together. Remember when you were a young believer trying to take in a completely new world view found in the Bible and Christ, at times it was overwhelming. Our actions and words can be helpful or hurtful and we must pay attention to them. This is why we must be constantly seeking spiritual wisdom from God's Word and the Holy Spirit to always seek what is best for those God has placed in our lives.

### **Rebukes Sin** (Luke 17:3-4)

Here is an important concept in the life of the local church and applies to Canyon Bible. Reading at verse 3, **“Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,<sup>4</sup> and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”** Most of the time we just hear about forgiveness as if that is all there is. Notice with me the elements that must be in position if forgiveness is to take place:

**First**, the offended Christian rebukes the offending Christian who has sinned against him or her. We care for the soul of the sinning brother or sister as we explain to them that their behavior is unacceptable and sinful. To NOT rebuke is the way of

the coward. This is not an easy process for anyone. However, Christ teaches that you care for the sinning brother or sister as you rebuke them. We have the responsibility to bring sin to the attention of others as we lovingly and gently rebuke them. Oh, how many church feuds and arguments and splits would have been avoided if the members would have obeyed Scripture and loved each other enough to correct each other.

**Second**, comes the offender's repentance. You have shown them their sin and a true Christian who has surrendered their life to Christ will repent. You do the hard work of rebuking because this is our responsibility as it is to follow with encouraging their repentance. If after a time the offender does not repent then they probably have shown their Christianity is not real. A believer will repent. Non-believers will not.

This is big in the life of the local church. We do not sweep things under the rug and pretend they do not exist, nor do we punish the offender. Either of these wrong approaches often results in bitterness and resentment and eventually leads to relationships being torn apart. We are to correct with a desire for repentance and reconciliation.

**Third**, after the rebuke and repentance, then we forgive. This is genuine forgiveness. This is the forgiveness that creates a better relationship than before. This is sweet forgiveness. This is the type of forgiveness God grants to us when he saves us and when we repent of our sins before Him. The closest thing I can relate this too is when my wife has forgiven me because she loves me and the result of rebuke, repentance and forgiveness is our relationship has grown stronger and deeper.

Until these steps occur, true forgiveness is not possible. Someone who refuses to hold people accountable for their sin is not a loving person but a selfish coward. They might pretend to forgive, but down deep their soul is being spoiled by bitterness toward their offender. As the root of bitterness grows it destroys. My

beloved we are to <sup>14</sup>“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble...” (Hebrews 12:14-15) The writer of Hebrews was referring to what God inspired Moses to write, “Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, <sup>19</sup> one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.’ ... <sup>20</sup> The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.” (Deuteronomy 29:18-20) These folks do not rebuke in a gentle way that leads to repentance and they do not forgive which leads to reconciliation and a stronger relationship. They pretend to forgive by sweeping it under the rug and in time the hurt may lessen, but they have not forgotten or forgiven. They lack faith in God, in His Word and in the believers of Jesus as the Christ.

True forgiveness is impossible without first rebuking the one who sinned. This is true with God. We are not forgiven until we are rebuked by God in His Word or His Spirit or by a fellow believer that results the realization of our sin and this realization allows repentance to take place. If God has forgiven us then we should extend that same forgiveness to others who repent.

### **Forgives** (Luke 17:5-6)

In Luke’s Gospel, faith is especially seen as living out life in faithfulness or a faith that is directly linked to obedient behavior. Take in Christ’s words in verses 5 and 6, “The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, ‘If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, “Be uprooted and planted in the sea,” and it would obey you.’” The disciples are asking

Jesus to make them faithful followers. They know that if they are going to obey His command to forgive, like God does - then they need spiritual help and power. This type of forgiveness does not come naturally to anybody. We find ourselves in a dilemma, for Jesus commands us to do something that we are incapable of doing without the Holy Spirit's divine assistance and enablement. Jesus wants His followers to understand that if they possess true faith, even if that faith seems small - amazing things can be accomplished if that faith is a living and working faith. Faithfulness to Christ's commands will produce amazing results. So, it is not so much the amount of faith ... Jesus' disciples plead, "[Increase our faith!](#)" Why do the disciples ask Jesus for more faith? What does faith have to do with forgiveness? It is a faith that the disciples and you and me already possess, a faith that you have by the power, grace and mercy of God. By His Word and His Spirit, you are working out God given faith in your life. The idea is that we must put our faith to work and make it the primary operating system for our lives. We do not necessarily need more of the same, we need to use what we already have until it becomes who we are.

Our faith is vital to the process of forgiveness that Jesus lays out before us. Look with me at how it is to work. First, it can be a hard and even at times a scary act to rebuke someone. In many ways it is easier to not say anything. But God is not concerned with our ease and comfort so much as our growth and the growth of others. When we speak to someone about their sin, they grow and we grow. Both become closer to the Lord and to each other through this process laid out in God's Word. This process begins with faith, as that faith is put into action. I must believe that God's Word is true and that what God says about sin and the human condition is true. I must also rely by faith on God giving me the right words to say and to even set up the right divine appointment and all the other details and then – I must have faith to act.

As God brings forth the conviction, the offender then repents and we must forgive. Forgiveness takes faith as well. I forgive by faith not counting the wrongs



done to me as something to hold over the person. I release the other person from any debts they owe me and free them to either treat me as Christ would or to repeat the offense again. To trust God and His sovereignty in any matter takes faith. To forgive biblically is to make yourself vulnerable to the other person. So, faith comes in as we do not seek revenge but trust that whatever happens in the end, God will right all wrongs. Putting our faith into action shows we trust in the care and sovereignty of God ultimately and trust people secondarily. People fail but God never does.

### **Acts With Love and Humility** (Luke 17:7-10)

It is always a matter of the heart. We finish with verses 7 to 10, “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? <sup>8</sup> Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? <sup>9</sup> Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? <sup>10</sup> So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’ ” If we do what we do out of duty this is a work and is not how biblical rebuking, repentance and forgiveness is to work. There must be love and grace as the foundation for why we do what we do.

My beloved, I say, as Paul said in his closing of his letter to the church in Corinth, “Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. ... <sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:11-14)

## Application

When everything goes right, the rebuke leads to repentance and that leads to forgiveness and reconciliation. But what happens when these steps break down? What happens when the offender refuses to repent? Is the Christian still obligated to forgive? Let us go to God's Word, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled ..." (Hebrews 12:14-15) We forgive because it releases the offender and releases us and the offender no longer owns a piece of our heart where a root of bitterness can grow. In addition, the process can be moved along toward repentance when a church practices biblical church discipline.

When a believer sins against a believer and they find themselves at a stale mate. It is the role of the church to begin carrying out what the Bible tells us in other places. Church discipline is the next step as laid out in Matthew 18. The offended party confronts the offender one on one to seek restoration. If the offender repents, the process stops. If the offender does not repent then the offended party takes a witness or two and confronts again. If there is still no repentance then the sin is made public within the church and if there is still no repentance then the process of excommunication is the result. However, reconciliation is always the goal. If there is repentance at any stage then the process stops and the offended party must forgive, but even if there is no repentance the offended believer forgives to be released and so they may move on with a heart lived in focus upon Christ.

So, a healthy church that practices church discipline will be a great help in keeping the process moving toward repentance and forgiveness. This process of rebuking, repenting, and forgiving is extremely loving and kind. We live in a day when this seems unloving. However, to tolerate sin in our personal relationships and

in the life of the church is one of the most unloving things we can do. Likewise, parents who do not discipline their children do not love their children. Discipline toward godliness is loving and will result in God blessing your relationships and your church.

The question is, “Do we trust God?” If so, we seek God’s grace as we practice biblical principles in our relationships. We practice what God says and then we are amazed at the relationships being made stronger than they ever were before.

We love God more because He has forgiven us by his grace and this deepens the relationship and love between God and us. The same can be true with those in our lives; through the trials, the conviction of our sins, by loving rebuke, repentance and forgiveness our relationships will deepen and our amazement and love of God will deepen. My beloved, love others and care for their souls and encourage their repentance.

We are to help each other and not to be stumbling blocks to others by sinning against them or causing them to sin. When we are sinned against, we are not to be roadblocks to their repentance but help them repent by confronting and rebuking for the good of their soul and the glory of God.

May Canyon Bible be a community that lovingly rebukes, repents, forgives and reconciles because of our love and faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. As the writer of Hebrews said, as a church may we <sup>15</sup>“[See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God.](#)” (Hebrews 12:15) Amen and Amen!