



Luke 20:1-18: The Breaking Point of Surrender

Opening Discussion: In this study, we will talk about choosing surrender with God over his necessary breaking to rebuild. Let's start with a set-up question: what does it take to "break" a bad habit? What must be surrendered in order to break a bad habit. What is necessary besides surrender?

- [1] One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up [2] and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." [3] He answered them, "I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, [4] was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?" [5] And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' [6] But if we say, 'From man,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." [7] So they answered that they did not know where it came from. [8] And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."
- The religious leaders wanted to know the name of the Rabbi who had sanctioned Jesus' right to teach. These were the licensing and education credentials of that day.¹
 - This was shrewd! Jesus was teaching from the authority given to him by the Heavenly Father, but if he claimed this authority, which he had the right to do, he would have been instantly accused of blasphemy.
- Jesus' answer was also very shrewd.
 - He took time to think.
 - He knew to ask the right questions.
 - He knew the scriptures well enough to use them wisely.
- Principles of answering loaded statements and questions with wisdom.
 - **Don't underestimate the power of the pause and prayer.**

¹ Philip G. Ryken, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Luke Vol. 2* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R. 2009), 347

- Proverbs 15:28 [28] The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. (ESV)
- When God gives you nothing to say, it's best to say nothing.
- Proverbs 17:27–28 [27] Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. [28] Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent. (ESV)

Discussion Question: is there an example of practicing this type of wisdom in conflict in your own life? How did it help? Do you have an example of the opposite way of handling conflict in your life?

- I have applied some application to this event in the scriptures, but the point of Luke telling us about this moment was not to create a pattern for handling conflict. Luke's point in telling us about this moment was to show us the heart of a legalistic leader: legalistic leaders have an authority issue.
- **Legalism doesn't want to be challenged so it questions the credentials and credibility of anyone who opposes them.**
- Jesus responded by telling the religious leaders and everyone listening what happens when we challenge God's authority by being unyielding and unteachable.
- This was a harsh grace to the religious leaders in an effort to help them not to miss the moment! Their Messiah was here, but they were too concerned with their own positions of authority to recognize him.

Discussion Question: In your own estimation, why do you think Jesus taught a parable to address the bad attitude of the religious leaders?

- [9] And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. [10] When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. [11] And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. [12] And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. [13] Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect

him.’ [14] But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ [15] And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? [16] He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!”

- In those days, these tenant farmers would have to pay anywhere between 25–50% of the profits back to the owner at the appointed time.²
- There are two views about what Jesus was insinuating in this passage:
 - View # 1: God would replace Israel with the church. This doesn’t match what Paul states in Romans.
 - **Romans 11:21–23 [21] For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. [22] Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. [23] And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. (ESV)**
 - **Romans 11:25–27 [25] Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. [26] And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; [27] “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” (ESV)**
 - View # 2: God would replace the priestly ministry of Israel with the priestly ministry of the church and himself as the church’s high priest. This makes sense within the context of Jesus’ conversation with the religious leaders.
 - **Jeremiah 3:15 [15] “And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. (ESV)**
 - **Jeremiah 23:4 [4] I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD. (ESV)**

² <https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/jesus-authority-parable-tenants>

- **Ezekiel 34:23–24 [23] And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. [24] And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken. (ESV)**
- **John 10:10–14 [10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. [11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. [12] He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. [13] He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. [14] I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, (ESV)**
- Peter gave a charge to pastors to model this good shepherding as they lead the church! (1 Peter 5:2-4)
- You can see by the response of the priests that they knew exactly what Jesus was saying: “You guys are being replaced! You are going to be fired!” Their response? “Surely not!”

Discussion: Spend some time talking about the significance of Jesus replacing bad shepherds by being the good shepherd! How does this impact the church today?

- Jesus also gave another prophecy of his own death in this parable. He was literally telling the religious leaders to their faces the plan God had already put in place for them to seek to destroy him.
- Here is what we need to understand about these religious leaders: they were not surrendered in their hearts to Christ’s authority, and they were not going to allow their hearts to be swayed. It was going to take a breaking and crushing process in the lives of these men if they were going to have a relationship of salvation with the Messiah. Knowing this, Jesus spoke a hard and direct truth.
- **[17] But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written: “‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? (Psalm 118:22) [18] Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” (ESV)**
- Jesus was quoting and fulfilling scripture!

- **Psalm 118:22–23 [22] The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. [23] This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. (ESV)³**
- **1 Peter 2:6–8 [6] For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” [7] So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” [8] and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (ESV)**
- **When we test our own will against the cornerstone, we are either broken or crushed!**
 - **Being broken is difficult, but God’s promise is to put the pieces back together through redemption.**
 - **Psalm 51:16–17 [16] For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. [17] The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (ESV)**
 - **Being crushed places us under the weight of full judgment, from which we cannot recover.**
 - Illustration: parting out an old car vs crushing an old car.
 - Why would we obstinately choose the crushing when Jesus took the weight of our sin for us?!
 - **Isaiah 53:5 [5] But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (ESV)**
- The word “surrender” is a word we don’t use much anymore in the church.
 - We used to sing “I surrender all”, and we would sing after a service until nearly everyone had walked the isle to the stage and confessed something, even if out of duress to get the song to end. The idea was sort of abused in the church to create emotional moments of response.

³ Isaiah 8:11-15 echoes this Psalm.

- My son use to tell me to surrender with my hands up while he was holding a cap-gun, but then he would fire the gun in my direction anyway.
- The word “surrender” is not really used in the Bible, but that doesn’t mean it is a word we should avoid.
 - To surrender something means to release it or let it go. If you surrender to the authorities, you are giving up the fight or the chase.
 - James used the word “submit” when he stated: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7, ESV)
 - Paul used the word “present” when he stated: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1, ESV)
 - In a few weeks we will study the story of Jesus’ own surrender to the Father’s will in the garden of Gethsemane. “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42, ESV)

Discussion: spend some time talking about the nuanced difference between a spiritual crushing and a spiritual breaking. Why is a spiritual breaking always necessary in some way for believers to be fully surrendered? (Hint: consider Hebrews 12:1-11)

- **The Gospel is actually a doctrine that teaches surrender!** We let go of our own will and the sin that accompanies it. We give it to God, and in exchange God grants us the righteous standing earned by Jesus Christ!
 - **2 Corinthians 5:20–21 [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)**
- **Here is the daily practice of the Gospel: if you can surrender your entire human existence to God for salvation, you can also surrender your daily struggles, desires and anxieties to God**
 - **Struggle:** stop trying to solve all your own problems. Surrender that struggle to Christ and ask him to give you strength or direction.
 - **Desire:** that person, place, thing or idea is never going to fix your life completely and give you eternal hope. If it is sinful, it is holding you hostage from hope. If it

is a good thing that you have made a “god thing”, it is distracting you from true hope.

- Anxiety: anxiety is rooted in the belief that we can control outcomes. You are never really in control of your destiny or your circumstances. Let go of your desire for control and rest in the knowledge of God’s omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.

Application: What does surrender look like in your own life right now? What is God “breaking” in your life to help in the surrender process?