

# Luke 17

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## Lesson Content:

Avoid Tempting Others  
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A Woman to Remember

In the previous chapter, Jesus focused on the moral responsibility a man has toward his fellow man in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. This theme continues now in a discussion with His disciples.

## AVOIDING TEMPTING OTHERS

**(17:1.) One day Jesus said to His disciples, "There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting!"**

- **Jesus** shows that we do not live in isolation. That which I think, believe and do influences what others think, believe and do — especially young disciples. I cannot “do as I please.” When someone causes a believer to stumble, they themselves face serious punishment. Some **temptations** come by words of others while other come by action of others.
- The Scottish **William Barclay** illustrates this way: “ Every one must be given his first invitation to sin, his first push along the wrong way. Kennedy Williamson tells of an old man who was dying. Something was obviously worrying him. He told them at

last what it was. "When I was a lad," he said, "I often played on a wide common. Near its centre two roads met and crossed, and, standing at the cross-roads, was an old rickety sign-post. I remember one day twisting it round in its socket, thus altering the arms and making them point in the wrong direction; and I've been wondering ever since how many travellers I sent on the wrong road."

God will not hold the man guiltless, who, on the road of life, sends a younger or a weaker brother on the wrong way."

**(2.) It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin.**



- **A millstone** was a stone wheel with a hole cut in the middle. If having one of these around our neck was not fatal, being **thrown into the sea** with it attached would be the end!
- Heaven sees causing another person to stumble as ultra serious.

**(3.) So watch yourselves! "If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. (4.) Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive."**

- Disciples need to be continually on guard. They are to **rebuke sins** they see in fellow believers.
- When the sin is against us, then **forgive** him. Do this **seven times** a day if he repents **seven times**. We are not to use our maturity to look down on another believer. One of the most difficult tasks for most Christians is to **forgive** those who wrong us.

- How often and how much must I **forgive**? Jesus said, "**Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive.**" The Lord is not urging that we limit forgiveness to an exact mathematical formula. It is His way of teaching that **forgiveness** has no limits! As God is boundless in His **forgiveness** of a man who repeatedly asks, so in human relations **forgiveness** is to be measured by the divine standard. It is to be boundless! He who will not **forgive** others need not expect God's **forgiveness**.

## **A REQUEST FOR GREATER FAITH**

**(5.) The apostles said to the Lord, "Show us how to increase our faith." (6) The Lord answered, "If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'May you be uprooted and thrown into the sea,' and it would obey you!**

- This formula was very difficult for the **apostles**. They asked for added **faith** so they could do this.
- They needed to improve the quality of their own **faith** and they were doing exactly the right thing to improve it. They were being disciplined by Jesus.
- The group was standing beside a mulberry tree and it had an extensive root system.

**(7.) "When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, 'Come in and eat with me'? (8) No, he says, 'Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later.'**

- The role reversal of a master waiting on a **servant** was unlikely. Rather we expect the master to tell the **servant** to prepare dinner and serve the master, then he is free to **eat later**.

**(9.) And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. (10) In the same way, when you obey Me you should say, 'We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.'"**

- The **servant** would not receive a special reward or award for doing what was expected of him. Disciples are in that same position before God. We can never think that God owes us anything because we are doing our duty to Him.
- **Paul Butler** shows why this story is here: "We must constantly remind ourselves that whatever God cares to give us is up to Him. There is nothing coming to us of good which we deserve! We can take no credit for our world, our wisdom, our opportunities. We are indebted to Him for everything."

### **THE LEPER WHO RETURNED**

**(11.) As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, He reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. (12) As He entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, (13) crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"**

- Luke is intrigued with reporting the final trip to **Jerusalem**. Remember that Luke the gentile is an outsider.
- **Ten lepers** stood at a **distance** as prescribed by the Law of Moses. They had to avoid the rest of society and live outside of town.

**"Those who suffer from a serious skin disease must tear their clothing and leave their hair uncombed. They must cover their mouth and call out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as the serious disease lasts, they will be ceremonially unclean. They must live in isolation in their place outside the camp. (Leviticus 13:45-46 NLT)**

- They yelled to **Jesus** asking for **mercy**. They must have believed that Jesus could heal their disease.

- **Owen Crouch** says: “Leprosy was the AIDS of Biblical times. It was slow but sure death. It meant segregation from family, friends and ostracism from and by society. It assured a slow permanent total abandonment of hope.”
- **William Barclay** astutely observes: “We know that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans; yet in this band there was at least one Samaritan. Here is an example of a great law of life. A common misfortune had broken down the racial and national barriers. In the common tragedy of their leprosy they had forgotten they were Jews and Samaritans and remembered only they were men in need. If flood surges over a piece of country and the wild animals congregate for safety on some little bit of higher ground, you will find standing peacefully together animals who are natural enemies and who at any other time would do their best to kill each other. Surely one of the things which should draw all men together is their common need of God.”

**(14.) He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.**

- **Priests** were the health inspectors of Israel. Jesus sent them to the **priest** because it might get the priest's attention that a miracle had happened—10 strong. Also, the healed could be approved to re-enter society.
- The lepers had to begin the trip to the **priests** uncleaned because Dr. Luke says **as they went, they were cleansed**. They were either sent to **priests** who lived locally or they were sent to the Temple in Jerusalem and the **priest** at the Temple on Mt. Gerizim. We favor the idea of local **priests**.

**(15.) One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" (16) He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking Him for what He had done. This man was a Samaritan.**

- While on the way, one **saw** that he had been **healed** and **came back** to thank **Jesus** and glorify God. The Gentile Dr. Luke points out that **this man was a Samaritan**.
- The Jews looked down on **Samaritans** as we have seen at other points in Luke.

**(17.) Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? (18) Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" (19) And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you. "**

- Our Lord brought attention to the thankfulness of the **foreigner** when compared with the **nine** Jewish lepers.
- This healed man expressed his **faith** by returning to say "Thank you."
- The nine could have:
  - Been anxious to return to their families and former lives.
  - Been thoughtless about their great debt to the Lord.
  - Been procrastinators who intended to tell Jesus "thank you" some day.

## **WHEN WILL THE KINGDOM COME?**

**(20.) One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the Kingdom of God come?" Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God can't be detected by visible signs. (21) You won't be able to say, 'Here it is!' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of God is already among you. "**

- The hostile **Pharisees** asked Jesus when the **Kingdom of God was coming**. They looked for a physical **kingdom** that would enable them to throw off the yoke of the Romans. God's **kingdom** will not have an army, a capital or other trappings of power or even take up space.

- **The Kingdom of God is already among you.** It was not *in* the Pharisees as some think. The doors were not open for the repenting public just yet, but the rulers in the **kingdom** were being prepared as Jesus spoke. The King Himself was among them.

**(22.) Then He said to His disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see the day when the Son of Man returns, but you won't see it.**

- This phase of opening the kingdom with Jesus present would leave the **disciples** with pleasant memories and they would **long to see when the Son of Man returns.**

**(23.) People will tell you, 'Look, there is the Son of Man,' or 'Here he is,' but don't go out and follow them. (24.) For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so it will be on the day when the Son of Man comes.**

- When Jesus returns again, it will not be quietly. There will be **light like lightning**. It will not be secret or hidden. This language seems to rule out applying these events to the destruction of Jerusalem. While it was a great local event, the description of it being like **lightning flashing** across the **sky** is so much greater than the destruction of one sinful city.

**(25.) But first the Son of Man must suffer terribly and be rejected by this generation.**

- Before this Day of the Lord, **the Son of Man must suffer terribly**. This was clearly pointing to His crucifixion. This was said so His followers would not give up when they saw Jesus **suffering**.

**(26.) "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. (27) In those days, the people enjoyed banquets**

**and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all.**

- Jesus endorsed the Genesis story of **Noah** as being real and not folklore copied from pagan nations. Since Jesus accepted the **Noah** history, His followers must also.
- When Jesus comes again, life will be normal with normal social activity until the end comes and destroys those who have not made Him their Lord.

**(28.) "And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business--eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building-- (29.) until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.**

- A second illustration is the time of **Lot**. It was business and social life as normal until God **rained fire and burning sulfur** of the residents of **Sodom**.
- Jesus endorsed this Genesis record as being true and reliable, down to the small details.
- The point in both historical illustrations is that God's actions will be sudden and unexpected. No precise signs are given to indicate the approach of the second coming like were revealed concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.

**(30.) Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (31) On that day a person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. A person out in the field must not return home.**

- **R. C. Foster** says these verses are a figurative way of warning not to rely in earthly goods or attempting to cling to them in the time of the second coming.
- Mr. Foster's view is strengthened by the next sentence of Jesus:



## A WOMAN TO REMEMBER

### (32.) Remember what happened to Lot's wife!

- Let's remember the woman:

**At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!" When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful. When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered, "Run for your lives! And don't look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"**

Genesis 19:15-17 NLT

**But Lot's wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.**

Genesis 19:26 NLT

- The non-canonical *Book of Jasher* 19:52 says Lot's wife was named Ado ( or Edith ). This woman tried to look back to her earthly goods (vs. 31) and lost her own life.

### (33.) If you cling to your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it.

- When Jesus comes again, He will confess as His people the ones who were willing to **lose** their **lives** for Him.

**(34.) That night two people will be asleep in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. (35) Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. " (36) [Two men will be working in the field; one will be taken, the other left.]**

- Day and night always exist on the earth at any given point of time. For some, Christ will come in the night hours while for others on the earth He will come during the working hours.
- Not all people working with the early texts believe that Luke wrote verse 36, but that it was added later. That's why it's in brackets. This reminds us of the carefulness of textual critics. No great truth is lost if we reject verse 36 from the Luke account.

**(37.) "Where will this happen, Lord?" the disciples asked. Jesus replied, "Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near."**

- The word for **vultures** has been translated as eagles, but eagles do not fly in flocks as **vultures** do.
- While Jesus does not answer the question of **where** directly, He leaves the idea that when the situation is right, then you will be able to see.
- **Paul Butler** describes the end of time on earth: "When the King comes back there will be no doubt by anyone as to the true essence of His kingdom. It will be revealed in a flash of brilliance like the lightning lightens the sky. In the meantime, the kingdom does exist in the world. The Spirit of Christ is ruling in that kingdom as He rules in the hearts and lives of men and women. But the world goes blindly on in its way of materialism unable to see the kingdom because it is spiritual. Some will try to say, "Lo, there!" or, "Lo, here!" or, "He will be here when you see this sign or that sign. . . ." but do not go running off after them. But keep your spiritual guard up. God does not operate according to man's concepts or man's time-tables.

Christ never really stated times or seasons for His return. As a matter of fact, He stated that He would return when the world's society was functioning normally! The ultimate, final

manifestation of His kingdom will not be preceded by any abnormal, extra-ordinary “signs” pointing to a definite time. It will be just like the days preceding the flood in Noah’s time. There were no extra-ordinary signs that God was going to destroy the world before the flood. The only warning was the promise of God through the preaching of Noah.

In Noah’s day life went on its normal path. People married, built, ate and drank. Suddenly the end came. Business as usual—and without a signal, the end was there. So will the coming of the Son of man be. “The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Mt. 24:44). “Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, but the Father only” (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 10:32-33). If men cannot see the signs of His kingdom while it is here in the world, and surrender to it, ‘they would not surrender to it in faith and obedience should spectacular signs be given to precede its final manifestation.”