

Luke 17

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Title: Understanding our responsibility as Christians!

One of the things I love about the Gospel is it's much more than Jesus dying for our sins and accepting the fact He is God! A lot of it is practical applications to my favorite question, "I'm saved, now what?" We're in the middle of a bunch of chapters where Jesus is working His way to Jerusalem, knowing that the "big scene" is coming soon. The text here continues practical lessons He wants us to apply as those who committed our lives to serving Him! As I like to joke Jesus doesn't say, "You're saved, have a nice life and I'll see you in heaven!" Instead, much of the Gospels and most of the New Testament teaches a bunch of things God desires we do to make a difference for Him. I'm "pounding the pulpit" on this as I am aware how easy to wander away from God to focus on our issues of the moment. A good reason to study the bible daily is to remind ourselves how God wants us to live, and that includes the stories here in this chapter. With that said let me briefly discuss these stories.

The last part of Chapter 16 tells (most likely a true story) of two people sent to hell. One was in what's called the "good part of hell" as nobody could be in heaven till the price for sin was paid and another is the suffering area. It must have made the disciples think, "I don't want to end up in the bad part, what's necessary for me to avoid that?" That leads to us to issues on being a good witness versus a bad one for Jesus that we saw in that Chapter 16 story. The first thing He talks about in Chapter 17 is what's going to happen to those who cause others to sin? I refer to the first two verses of Chapter 17 as the mob style killing! Jesus said it's better to be thrown in the sea tied to a heavy object to cause you to sink (the mob style dead body disposal method) than to cause an innocent person to sin!

Then of all things Jesus switches in Verse 3 to talk about forgiving. I suspect the disciples focused for a second on those who hurt them and thought, "Tying a heavy weight around them then dropping them in the sea" was a good idea! Therefore, Jesus switches to the importance of forgiveness. It's said we're never more God like than when we forgive those who hurt us. Not talking about letting that person go to hurt us more, but forgiveness is about letting go of the pain they caused! Jesus then mentions if that person asks for forgiveness seven times a day (sincerely) we're to forgive. It is not about keeping track of how many times they ask for forgiveness but to let go of our pain by forgiving them! I realize we're not perfect. The issue is about recognizing situations where Biblical knowledge applies! It's why daily Bible reading and asking God for wisdom is the best way to go through life. I also found that one must pray for the one who hurt us regularly (for me it was at least 30 days straight) before the pain declined!

That naturally led to the question of "How do we develop faith to be that forgiving?" The issue isn't to ponder how strong our faith is, the issue is trusting God to help us let go of pain. That's why Jesus used the illustration that if our faith was as small as the smallest seed (mustard) that was used for crops there in Israel then, our faith will be as strong as a big tree with deep roots. It doesn't mean we can command a big tree to top over if it is our will! A purpose of prayer is to align our will with God. Bible miracles are things that defy nature. Jesus is saying IF (big if), something is His will than defying nature then it is not an issue for nature to change to suit His will!

Since Jesus was talking about forgiveness, it leads to the question of who we thank and why! We want to be recognized for doing good deeds. Jesus is teaching if we do what God commands us to do; we're not entitled to a "Pat on the head". Jesus uses an illustration of a servant after a long day at work going

home to fix dinner for his master. It is the servant's job to do all they're required to do. Isn't it the goal of Christians to reach heaven and hear Jesus say, "Well done good and faithful servant!" I'd argue yes, but it shouldn't be our job to do what He commanded us to do in the first place. We should live as God calls us and if it is His will to give us "a pat on the head", great but until then, He calls us to live as His servants for Him and do His will.

By "chance", 10 lepers were walking by when Jesus finished His comments. If you don't know leprosy is a horrible disease in that part of the world. The Bible never says how to cure it, but when one thinks they have it, it's required to show the physical evidence to the priests. If they determine it is, or can be, the person who has or may have it, must isolate themselves so no one else gets it. Anyway, ten people who had it were walking within shouting distance of Jesus. They asked Jesus to help. Jesus did not say you're now cured, go away! He told them to go show themselves to the priests as the Bible requires. It then says the 10 started walking away, I assume they were disappointed they weren't cured on the spot. As they walked away, they were all instantly cured. Only one (a foreigner), went back to praise God at Jesus' feet! OK John, why all these details? Jesus wanted to show the type of gratitude of God requires of us. Only the foreigner went back to thank Jesus, the rest left the scene. Remember Jesus is teaching on being a good witness for God! Here were people who got a great miracle and only the foreigner did return to praise God. Jesus didn't say to him, "follow me" but just said his faith had made him well!

This leads to the final chapter story, involving a dialogue between some devoutly religious Jewish men who wanted to question Jesus about when the "kingdom" will come. Remember the Jewish thought of that day was the Messiah would come, overthrow the Roman Empire and the Messiah would rule from Israel. The religious leaders didn't want a Messiah who would pay for their sins, they want one to rule the world from Israel. This leads Jesus into a sermon about the future. To begin, realize it is more than about life when all Christians believe Jesus is God but also a bit of end time stuff:

Before I get into my theories on the specifics let's remember why Jesus is going there! The main topic is what Jesus expects of us as believers. Therefore, it is logical to talk about what's coming up as Jesus won't be on the scene much longer. The first thing Jesus discusses is the fact the kingdom isn't a thing that can be seen like an army approaching. It's what most believers know, people around us are saved, but there's no physical markings on a body to know who is saved!

The best description I've heard is there are two comings of the kingdom. The first is what we know that multitudes of people around the world believe Jesus is God and act accordingly. The second is physical which Christians call the end time events. Jesus compares it to life right before the flood and before the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. The basic idea is life went on as normal then the change came to life as we know it. When Jesus returns it won't be a secret event. In some way God will make it so the whole world will be aware of it at one time. Yes, there's the whole "Revelation thing" as Jesus will get more into that in a later chapter. One day life will change so we'll somehow experience a world ruled by Jesus. The price for sin must be paid first as all of us know.

Let me ask the question most people wonder: It's now been 2,000 years, why hasn't it happened yet? I'd like to remind us none of us would be saved if it occurred say, 100 years ago! The Old Testament has a few hundred predictions that tie to Jesus first coming and they all came true. The Bible contains twice as many predictions that which ties to His Second Coming. Point being if we can trust the Bible so far, I have zero doubt it will occur on His timing. The text also has a "rapture" hint in that when Jesus does return it means some will be taken on the spot and others left. The final question to Jesus was is where does this take place? He gave a cryptic answer about vultures (who eat corpses) will be eating bodies. His point is that it'll be a worldwide event, and dead bodies will be everywhere. So why does Jesus get

into all this? One reason is He was asked. The other is He is teaching don't worry about eternity, focus on what I called you to do, to be a witness for Me now in the world around you!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on the link for the detailed study. It's still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for everyone who reads this.