

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### *Outline*

- A. Luke told about Jesus' instruction on the subject of forgiveness (1-10).
1. The duty of His disciples to forgive (1-4).
    - a) Occasions of stumbling are inevitable.
    - b) Warning to the disciples in view of this.
      - (1) Woe to him through whom they come.
      - (2) It would be better for him to have a millstone put around his neck and be cast into the sea than to cause one of the little ones (young in faith) to stumble.
    - c) What they were to do if a brother should sin.
      - (1) Watch themselves.
      - (2) Rebuke the brother who sins.
      - (3) Forgive the brother who repents.
    - (4) Forgive him even if it should happen seven times a day, if he says "I repent."
  2. The inference of His disciples that it was too much for them to obey such an order (5-10).
    - a) It is implied in their request for increased faith.
    - b) It is answered in Jesus' remarks:
      - (1) About "faith as a grain of mustard seed."
        - (a) He assumed that they had such faith.
        - (b) By exercising it, they could command the tree to be unrooted and planted in the sea and it would obey them.
      - (2) About the unprofitable servant.
        - (a) The servant who after working all day in the field came in and served his master was not thanked because he had done what he was commanded to do.
        - (b) In the same way, the disciples should treat the command to forgive; they were unprofitable servants; this was their duty.
- B. Luke told about the incident of healing the ten lepers (11-19).
1. The marvel of their being healed (11-14).
    - a) It happened on their way to Jerusalem in a village in the area between Samaria and Galilee.

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- b) The lepers from afar begged Jesus for mercy.
  - c) He told them to go and show themselves to the priests.
  - d) As they went they were cleansed.
2. There was one, a foreigner, who returned to thank the Lord for what He had done (15-19).
- a) When he saw that he was healed, he turned back and with a loud voice glorified God and fell at Jesus feet and thanked Him.
  - b) He was a Samaritan.
  - c) Jesus said, "The ten were cleansed, were they not? The nine, where are they? Were there none who returned to give glory to God except this stranger?"
  - d) Jesus said to him, "Arise, go your way; your faith has saved you," that is, from the plague of leprosy.
- C. He told about Jesus' lesson concerning the coming of the kingdom (20-37).
1. What He said to the Pharisees (20-21).
- a) The kingdom was not to come with observation; it could not be pointed to as being "here" or "there."
  - b) "The kingdom of God is within you."
2. What He said to His disciples (22-37).
- a) He warned about deceptive claims that would be made about His second coming (22-25).
    - (1) The warning was necessary for the disciples would desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man.
    - (2) They were not to follow those who would say, "Lo, here! Lo, there!"
    - (3) They were to remember that His coming would be as clear as lightning from heaven; there would be no need to follow false reports.
    - (4) He said that He must first suffer and be rejected by that generation.
  - b) He told of conditions that would prevail at the time of of His coming (26-37).
    - (1) It would be like the days of Noah when life went on normally until the day he entered the ark.
    - (2) It would be like the days of Lot when life went on normally until God rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed Sodom.

- (3) It would be too late to prepare—Remember Lot's wife.  
 (4) It would be a time of separation.  
 (5) It would be where the condition existed that merited it: they asked, Where, Lord?" He answered, "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

*The Duty to Forgive*

*Scripture*

17:1-10 And he said unto his disciples, It is impossible but that that occasions of stumbling should come; but woe unto him, through whom they come! 2 It were well for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, rather than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would obey you. 7 But who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; 8 and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9 Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? 10 Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do.

*Comments*

*And he said unto his disciples.*—Some assume that there is no connection between the three thoughts that follow: (1) offenses; (2) the request for increased faith; (3) the story of the unprofitable servant. It does make sense, however, to take them as a unit. Offenses are impossible to avoid, but one must forgive a brother who sins and repents even if it is seven times a day. Such an order was

so astounding that the disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith." But it was not increased faith that they needed; all they needed was to obey His command to forgive. The story of the unprofitable servant illustrated this very point.

*It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come.*—Since it is impossible to avoid occasion that lead to giving offense, one must be ready always to forgive when the offender says, "I repent." To be guilty of causing another to sin is a serious offense. It would be better if one were drowned in the sea rather than suffer the consequences of causing one who is immature in the faith to sin. Sin can lead to eternal death. What awful danger and responsibility are involved in "occasions of stumbling!"

*If your brother sin.*—Watch out! This is a very real possibility. What are you to do to avoid the consequences of it? Two things are suggested: (1) rebuke him, and (2) forgive him.

It is wrong to let a brother go on in sin without trying to lead him to repent. James has a word to say about this: "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

*And if he sin against thee seven times a day.*—This means that there is no limit to forgiveness "if he repent." The one who sins has an obligation in the matter also. If he sins, he should repent and seek forgiveness. But an unforgiving attitude on the part of the offended party could cause the sinner to be lost eternally. See II Cor. 2:5-11; Matt. 5:23-24; 18:35; Eph. 4:31-32; Col. 3:13.

*Increase our faith.*—The response of Jesus' disciples seems to suggest that they felt that His command was too much for them to obey. But what did they mean by the request to increase their faith? Were they suggesting that it would take a miracle to carry it out? One thing is certain: Jesus' reply indicates that all they needed was to obey His order.

*If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed.*—See also Matt. 17:21 where this expression is found in connection with the miracle of casting out the demon from the epileptic boy. See also Luke 9:37-45 for meaning of "faith as grain of mustard seed." The least of this faith would cause the sycamine tree to obey them. No increase in faith in connection with power to perform miracles was necessary; all they needed was simply to believe Him and show that they did

by obeying what He said about forgiveness. This faith involves a total commitment to Christ that is intellectual, volitional, and emotional. This is the faith that takes the Lord at His word and does what He says. See it illustrated in the lives of the great men of faith as reported in Hebrews 11:1-12:2.

The reference to faith in Mark's account of healing of the epileptic boy helps us to see the difference between faith in connection with miracles and faith that is trust in the Lord. See Mark 9: 22-24. The disciples had failed to help the grief-stricken father. When Jesus arrived, he said, "If you can do anything, help us; have pity on us." Our text seems to suggest that Jesus rebuked him for saying "If you can." It is quite possible, however, that Jesus' response should be translated: "As to your suggestion, 'If you can,' why, all things are possible to the one who believes." Then the father said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." His unbelief had to do with his questioning Jesus' ability to perform the miracle. This is not the "little faith" of the disciples, for that concerned the ability on their part to perform the miracle.

Our own unbelief may need to be overcome on many occasions. It can be done by knowing what He would have us do and by a willingness to trust Him even though we may not always see the immediate outcome. Knowing what He would have us do depends on studying His revealed will, the Bible. The examples of those who have acted by faith can help to encourage us to trust the Lord. As we see in our own experience what it means to trust Him we are strengthened in our desire and determination to live the life of faith. *But who is there of you, having a servant plowing.*—This illustration shows that the disciples were under obligation to obey the command to forgive. The servant does not tell the master what he will do. Even when he has worked hard all day, he may have additional services to perform in the evening. But not even for that is he thanked, for it is his duty to do whatever his master commands. It was the duty of Jesus' disciples to do whatever He commanded them—forgive even seven times in a day—even though it might seem difficult. *Even so ye also.*—There could be no mistake about the purpose of the story: Jesus meant for them to obey His command to forgive. This was their duty, for they were like unprofitable servants. The reason which lies back of this is seen in the story of forgiveness which is presented in Matt. 18:21-35. When God forgives those who sin against Him, He does so not because of duty but of grace. That

puts the forgiven sinner under obligation to forgive his fellowman from the heart.

### *Healing the Ten Lepers*

#### *Scripture*

17:11-19 And it came to pass as they were on the way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: 13 and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; 16 and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17 And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18 Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? 19 And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

#### *Comments*

*along the borders of Samaria and Galilee.*—The route He was following lay along the line that separated Samaria from Galilee. To say "through the midst" would be to suggest that He was actually going through these two provinces.

*there met him ten men who were lepers.*—For the subject of leprosy, see comment on the healing of the leper in 5:12-16. These men followed the law of the leper, standing afar off and calling out to Jesus for mercy.

*Go show yourselves unto the priests.*—This also was a part of the law of the leper. The priest was appointed to pronounce on the cure. The remarkable thing about it is that Jesus ordered them to go show themselves before they were healed. He knew, of course, that they would be cleansed as they went.

*And one of them.*—All ten were cleansed, but only one thought to return to give glory to God. He was a Samaritan, but he fell on his face before Jesus and thanked Him for what He had done.

*Were not the ten cleansed?*—The thing that puzzled Our Lord was

the fact that only the Samaritan had returned to praise God and thank Him for the miraculous healing.

*thy faith hath made thee whole.*—Jesus said this same thing on many occasions to those whom He had healed. He believed that Christ could save him from the awful plague of leprosy; he expressed that belief by going on his way to the priest, and as he went the miracle took place.

### *The Coming of the Kingdom*

#### *Scripture*

17:20-30 And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23 And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here! go not away, nor follow after them: 24 for as the lightning, when it lighteth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day. 25 But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation. 26 And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: 30 after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he that shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose *his life* shall preserve it. 34 I say unto you, In that night there shall be two men on one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 There shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 37 And they

answering say unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Where the body *is*, thither will the eagles also be gathered together.

### Comments

*when the kingdom of God cometh.*—It was the Pharisees who asked Him when the kingdom of God was coming. Were they sincere or were they taunting Him about a favorite subject on which He had been teaching for nearly three years? Of course, not all of the Pharisees were opposed to Him, but most of them were. Nicodemus was sincere in his desire to learn about the kingdom—some would even question this.

If they were sincere, it is evident that they didn't understand the nature of His kingdom, for Jesus had to tell them that it could not be located "here" or "there." It was not an earthly kingdom.

*the kingdom of God is within you.*—Some assume that this meant that the kingdom was "in their midst" as represented by the presence of Christ the King. But more likely, it had to do with the spiritual kingdom or rule of God in the hearts of those who were willing to accept Christ as their King and obey His word. The spiritual kingdom, the church, did come on the Day of Pentecost. The citizens of that kingdom do acknowledge Him as King and Savior so that He does rule in their hearts.

*And he said unto his disciples.*—Having answered the question of the Pharisees, Jesus turned to the disciples to instruct them on another phase of the kingdom, that is, the eternal kingdom of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into which the saints will enter when He comes again. See II Pet. 1:11.

*one of the days of the Son of man.*—Not one of the days when He was on earth with them, but one of the days of His coming in His glorious kingdom. Just as He was to suffer before that day was to come, so they were to face persecution and even death. As this happened, they would long for the triumph of the gospel and the day of His coming; but it would not be in their day. Paul is a good example of this. See Phil. 1:23 and II Pet. 1:12-15.

*And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here.*—This is what false prophets and false Christs would say in order to deceive even the elect at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. See Mat. 24: 23-24 and Luke 21:5-8.

*for as the lightning.*—Why shouldn't they follow those who would speak of His coming in the days of distress and longing to be with



Him? His answer is clear: they would not need to be deceived, for His coming will be as lightning from heaven—everybody will recognize Him when He comes. There will be no need for anyone to say, "He is there, or He is here."

He mentioned the nature of His second coming in connection with His prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem to let the disciples see the contrast between His coming and the deceptive claims of the false prophets.

*must suffer many things and be rejected.*—They had failed to grasp this point in His teaching because of their own mistaken notion about the nature of His kingdom. They thought of an earthly kingdom like that of David or Solomon. They dreamed of the time when the Jews would again be a nation respected and honored among the nations of the world. But His kingdom was not of this world. He refused the crown when men tried to force it upon Him, for He came to give His life a ransom for His people. He came to die on Calvary for the sins of the world. He came to conquer the devil who has power of death, and that required His death on the cross (Heb. 2:14). But death, and suffering, and pain will forever be banished from His eternal kingdom.

*As it was in the days of Noah.*—This refers to His second coming. It will be as sudden and unexpected as the closing of the door of the ark or the raining of fire and brimstone on Sodom.

*They ate, they drank, they married, and were given in marriage.*—This is often taken to mean that extreme wickedness will be a sign of His coming just as extreme wickedness prevailed before the Flood. But the point is this: Life will go on in its normal fashion right up to that day just as it had done in the days of Noah.

There is no reason to assume that eating means gluttony, or that drinking means drunkenness, or that marrying means immorality. No one denies that these sins are present today, or that they have been present in all ages of the past and probably will be when Christ comes again. But these are not signs of His coming, for that will be at an unknown time.

There were to be signs warning people of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem which came in 70 A.D. But the warning about Christ's second coming is given in His word and the word of His apostles. That warning indicates that it will be at an unknown time as life is going on in a normal fashion. That's why He said, "Watch and be ready," for no one knows when it will be.

*In that day, he that shall be on the housetop.*—He is still speaking of the day of His second coming. There will be no time to prepare when He comes. Now is the time to make preparation for that great event. This is clearly illustrated by the parable of The Virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13).

*Remember Lot's wife.*—The story is found in Gen. 19:26. Her heart was set on that wicked city even in the hour of its terrible destruction. The Christian is warned not to have his heart set on this world that will be destroyed by fire when He comes. Not even a longing glance at the world where sin did its corrupting work will be tolerated when the Lord comes. The one who seeks to preserve life as he is living it here will lose it, but the one who sets his hope on the Lord and life eternal will find it.

*In that night there shall be two men in one bed.*—Not only is the coming of Christ to be at an unexpected time, but it will also be at a time of separation (Matt. 25:32). Jesus dramatically pictures that time by saying, "Two men shall be sleeping in a bed; one shall be taken and the other left," "Two women shall be grinding together; one of them shall be taken and the other left." The same thought is suggested by the separating of the wheat from the tares (Matt. 13:40).

*Where the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*—These words are also found in Matt. 24:40 where they may refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. The judgment on Jerusalem was like that of the Judgment Day, for both deal with the rejection of Christ. The words as Luke records them definitely refer to the final Judgment and the separation that will occur when He comes. The disciples had asked, "Where, Lord?" That is, "Where would this terrible thing take place?" Would it be on this earth? Would it be at the end of the age? The final separation is at the end of the age (Matt. 13:40). But of course, sin separates and brings judgment wherever it is practiced. Jesus' words seem to indicate that wherever a condition exists that merits judgment, there judgment will come.

### Summary

Occasions of stumbling are inevitable, but there is a fearful penalty involved in causing the little ones who believe in Christ to fall. The brother who sins and repents is to be forgiven, even if it happens seven times a day.

This is a command that is to be obeyed. It took no miracle to

do so. The disciples had been given power to perform miracles and the faith through which that power was made operative. They could even command a tree to be planted in the sea and it would obey them. They, then, as intelligent followers of Christ could obey His command to forgive. Jesus illustrated the point with the story of the servant whose duty it was to do all that his master told him to do.

As Jesus and His disciples were traveling along the route that lay along the border between Samaria and Galilee, they met ten men who were lepers. Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priest. As they went they were healed. Only one, a Samaritan, returned to thank Him. Jesus said, "There were ten healed, were there not?" Why was it that only the Samaritan returned? Ingratitude? Jesus' language seems to indicate that it was. Their failure does emphasize the gratitude of the foreigner who came back to glorify God for what happened to him.

The Pharisees asked Jesus, "When is the kingdom coming?" They may have been taunting Him, or again they could have been sincere. He said, "It is within you." Evidently they were not submitting to God's rule or they would have known this.

This became an occasion for Jesus to teach His disciples about His second coming. As they faced persecution, they would long for the triumph of the gospel and the eternal kingdom of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He warned them against those who would say that it is here or there, for when He comes all will know about it. But it will be at an unknown time and a time of separation. Judgment, of course, will come wherever there is a condition that merits it.

### *Questions*

1. What is the connection between Jesus' command to forgive, the disciples request for increased faith, and the story of the unprofitable servant?
2. How often should one be forgiven?
3. On what condition is one to be forgiven?
4. What responsibility does the one who is sinned against have?
5. What does James say about the erring brother?
6. What did the disciples imply by their request for increased faith?
7. Why didn't they need to have their faith increased?
8. What did they need?

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9. What may be done to help those who are weak in faith?
10. What is the lesson of the story of the unprofitable servant?
11. Why did the lepers stand afar off?
12. Why did Jesus tell them to show themselves to the priest?
13. When did their healing take place?
14. Who was the one who returned to glorify God?
15. What about the nine?
16. Explain the fact that the faith of the Samaritan made him whole.
17. Why did the Pharisees ask Jesus about the kingdom of God?
18. Why did He say that it was not "here or there"?
19. Where, then, is the kingdom?
20. Why didn't the Pharisees know this?
21. What phase of the kingdom did Jesus have in mind as He spoke to the disciples?
22. What did He mean by "one of the days of the Son of man"?
23. What would happen before that time?
24. Why were they to pay no attention to those who would say that it is "here or there"?
25. What does the reference to lightning from heaven indicate about the coming of Christ?
26. What does the reference to Noah teach about His coming?
27. What marks the difference between the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the second coming of Christ?
28. How did Jesus show that there will be no time to prepare when He comes?
29. Why did He say, "Remember Lot's wife"?
30. How did He show that His coming will be at a time of separation?
31. What is meant by, "Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together"?