

(25) Lessons on Service, Faith, Influence (Lk. 17:1-10)

1. As this phase of ministry winds down, four common messages are recapped by Luke. Similar messages were delivered at the end of the Galilean ministry as well.
2. Stumbling blocks are inevitable (Lk. 17:1-2 || Mt. 18:7,6).
 - a. In Matthew's text, stumbling blocks "must" come. In Luke's text, it is impossible for them not to. σκανδαλίζω skandalizō #4624_{30x} & σκάνδαλον skandalon #4625_{15x} (Mt. 5:29,30; 13:21,41,57; 18:6,7,8,9; 26:31,33_{x2}; Lk. 17:1,2; Rom. 9:23; 11:9; 14:13; 16:17; 1st Cor. 1:23; 8:13; 2nd Cor. 11:29; Gal. 5:11; 1st Pet. 2:8; 1st Jn. 2:10).
 - b. That being said, be that as it may, nevertheless, (πλὴν plēn #4133_{31x}) woe (οὐαί ouai #3759_{47x}, LXX ויִהוּי howy #1945_{52x} or ויִהוּי 'owy #188_{24x}) to the one through whom the stumbling block arrives.
 - c. The instrument of stumbling would profit more through their own horrible execution (cf. Deut. 13:11; 17:13; 19:20; 21:21; Acts 5:5,11; 1st Tim. 5:20).
3. Disciples in spiritual combat must be alert to forgiveness opportunities (Lk. 17:3-4 || Mt. 18:15,22).
 - a. The Christian heart must be put on daily: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness & patience (Col. 3:12). This allows for genuine Christ-motivated forgiveness (Col. 3:13) and also provides for our adornment with agape love (Col. 3:14).
 - b. Since love bears all things (1st Cor. 13:4-8a), forgiveness has no numerical limit (Mt. 18:22).
 - c. Failure to forgive demonstrates an unforgiving heart (Mt. 6:15; 18:35). Such a heart is prepared for Satan's manipulations (2nd Cor. 2:10-11).
4. Disciples under increased attack in combat require increased faith (Lk. 17:5-6 || Mt. 17:20; Mk. 9:23,24).
 - a. Faith can wax and wane (Ps. 138:3; Mk. 9:24; Lk. 22:31-32; Rom. 4:19-21).
 - b. Strong in faith = spiritual maturity (1st Cor. 16:13; Acts 6:5,8; ch. 7; 11:24).
5. Forgiveness & faith are illustrated by unworthy slaves (Lk. 17:7-10).
 - a. The illustration uses an outdoor slave (plowing or shepherding) completing his daily assignment (v.7a).
 - b. The slave owner does not honor the slave with a rewarding meal or serve the slave in any way (v.7b).
 - 1) The slave owner even goes so far as to add to the work load of the outdoor slave by assigning him duties of an indoor slave (v.8a).
 - 2) The outdoor slave must delay his own sustenance until his (unfair?) assignments above and beyond the call of normal duty are fulfilled (v.8b).
 - c. The slave is unworthy of the owner's gratitude (v.9). The slave is simply doing what he has been commanded to do. He's functioning under a "have to" rather than a "want to" and is not expecting any reward.
 - d. Believers who lay hold of an increased faith for additional forgiveness assignments are the equivalent of these unworthy (NASB) good-for-nothing (HCSB) slaves.
 - e. Principle: Forgiving one another is a "have to" in the Christian Way of Life, even in situations above and beyond "normal" duties.