

AF A9 BIBLE STUDY: “Servanthood and Gratitude” Luke 17

Scripture of Lesson: Luke’s Gospel 17: 1-17

1. *Many offenses likely and much need of forgiveness*

- A. There are two parties to an offence –the offender and the offended. By ‘offence,’ we mean a person commits a sin against another person to cause pain, loss or suffering on the offended. Sometimes a person tempts another to join in his/her sinful life, thus luring the person to become a sinner like the offender. Sinful people often drag moral people down to their decadent level of immoral living.
- B. Lord Jesus warns of a heavy consequence to such offenders – worse than being drowned with a mill stone hung around the neck. This is a condition of eternal damnation [v. 2]. That is why Lord Jesus severely scolded Peter when he tried to dissuade Him from going to the cross by saying, “Get behind me, Satan!” [Luke 4:8]. He saw in Peter Satan working so as to disrupt God’s plan for human salvation. But, we know that the Lord forgave Peter for this error and forgave him many more times.
- C. Lord knows that Satan is at work as the prince of this world until His second return. And there are many offences even among Christians due to our human nature, the lures of this world’s fashions/ foolishness/ currents, and the incessant lies/ temptations/ accusations of Satan and his cohorts. That is why Lord Jesus emphasized the need to forgive ‘even seventy times seven’ when brothers and sisters who have offended you come back to you for forgiveness.
- D. But, what should you do if your offenders do not come back to you for forgiveness? What if a fellow Christian leads an immoral life without offending any brother or sister? There is the need for church discipline. Apostle Paul admonished the Corinthian Church to discipline a brother who had been leading a sexually immoral life [1 Corinthians 5: 1]. The church must have handled this case wisely so that the ‘public’ offender became repentant and made a change in his life [2 Corinthians 2-11]. Paul encouraged the church to forgive this person, who had been subject to the church discipline, ‘lest Satan take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices’ [2 Cor. 2:11].
- E. The Christian community, such as a church, needs to maintain godly, moral standard both in personal and in community lives together so that the light of Christ shines through us. But, we are all imperfect human beings. And that is why much forgiving, self-introspection and daily renewing are needed through the powerful cleansing effect of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

2. *Servanthood – “I am an unprofitable servant; I have only done my duties as a servant”*

- A. Lord Jesus is the human incarnate of the Son of God. Yet, He fulfilled the ‘servant’ prophecy of the Messiah through a lowly, humble life –born as a son of a country carpenter, supporting the family as the first-born son until His public ministry at the age of 30. And He was willing to die a cruel death on a cross like a sinner although He was sinless Son of God. What Savior, what Messiah, what Lord we have! One of the reasons we love Him is His humble servant ministry.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. [Phil. 2: 6-8]

- B. Through this teaching about “an unprofitable servant” [v. 10], Lord Jesus testifies of His own attitude about His servanthood toward God the Father – He was fulfilling the servant prophecy in a truly humble spirit of considering Himself as “an unprofitable servant.” He is also teaching His disciples the true, humble, servant ministry before His coming departure. *“We have done that which was our duty to do [v. 10].”*

This servant did not want his reward until his master was done with the supper. The servant had toiled all day long and is now waiting at the table while his Master is dining. This picture is very different from the last Passover supper Jesus had with His disciples. Our rewards as servants of Jesus Christ must wait until His wedding feast is over in Heaven. So many pastors and preachers want to enjoy their material rewards right here

on the earth. True servants of Jesus Christ will have their rewards at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ in heaven [2 Corinthians 5: 10].

What a challenging ministry He gave to His disciples! What is the Christian ministry like today in contrast to this sobering teaching of Lord Jesus. There is much reflection, repentance and restoration to be done.

- C. However, Lord Jesus promised a great help to those who are in His ministry. If they have faith “as a grain of mustard seed,” they can have a mustard tree rooted up and planted elsewhere [v. 6] He used the parable of mustard seed to illustrate how a little faith as small as a mustard seed can grow to be fruitful and useful in the Kingdom of God [Luke 13: 19]. If a fully-grown mustard tree is pulled up and planted in a field far away, numerous seeds from this tree will spread to this new area and populate the area with many more trees. This illustrates how the gospel of Christ can spread through true faith in the power of God.

3. **Gratitude of a cleansed leper**

- A. In verse 18, Lord Jesus laments;

Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? [v. 18]

Lord Jesus made clean ten lepers, but only one restored person, who was a Samaritan, came back and worshipped Him in gratitude. He called this Samaritan a foreigner, a Gentile, who was supposed to be outside the hope of salvation. Yet God’s mercy was extended to this Gentile person as was to the nine Jewish lepers. This story illustrates the ingratitude of the Jewish people, most of who were unresponsive to the work of their Messiah, although He came as ‘the Jew’s Messiah.’ It also foretells the propagation of the gospel among the Gentile peoples apart from the Jews until the latter days of the Lord.

- B. This story also illustrates how ungrateful most humans are. Every day when we take a bath or shower, we are reminded of our need of physical cleansing. And we need to be aware of our spiritual cleansing, which can only come from God through Jesus Christ. The cleansing of leprosy represents God’s amazing grace because leprosy could not be cured by any natural means in this time but by a miraculous cure from God. All humans are born as sinners like these lepers. Unless God extends His grace of cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ, our spiritual leprosy cannot be cured and our souls remain, outside of any hope in eternity. Let us go to Jesus Christ, who can cleanse us of our sins as He cured these lepers. And let us live a life of true gratitude, praising His mighty power and amazing grace!

Topics of Discussion:

1. Do you find it difficult to forgive offenders? How can we learn to practice the Lord’s teaching of forgiveness?
2. How can we better express our gratitude of our salvation to God?