

The Pages of Heaven are Turning

Part Two . Luke Chapter 17

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Thank You, Lord Jesus for being here and giving us the ability to bask in Your Presence. It is a wonderful thing to worship the Lord together with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, awesome. There is nothing like smiles from the joy of the Lord. More than just coming from inside of yourself, you can see it in those around you. When you see it in others, God is reinforcing what He is doing in our hearts.

The scripture I want to lead off with today has nothing to do with what I am going to be teaching . . . I just love this verse from Revelation chapter 21.

⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." . . .

Isn't that good? That is going to happen. That's the provision God has for us. It is waiting for us. In fact . . .

. . . ⁶ I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

I'd like to teach today on Luke chapter seventeen. It is the time when Jesus was mostly with His disciples only. Luke shows us a different slant on this than Matthew or John. He doesn't embellish, he just records. These are really difficult teachings in the context of the Hebrew culture and who the disciples were. Remember the disciples at this point were not filled with the Holy Spirit. They were called by the Lord to be that Apostolic company, but for the most part they didn't always know what was going on. They loved the Lord but maybe they didn't even understand why! They didn't get it together sometimes, but they still loved Him. More importantly, the Lord loved them.

In that context, I can read the following scriptures because without the knowledge that Jesus really loves us, we could be turned off. We could say, "*Who is this guy and what is He teaching?*" So consider this teaching in the Hebrew context. These are young Jewish boys and women. Remember that the Hebrew culture educated their children. They were required to read the Torah. They were required to know scripture even if they were fishermen; they were required to learn and go through at least what we would call Elementary Schooling in today's culture. It was probably one of the only cultures to have that requirement. Most other cultures didn't care what their children did or didn't do unless they were royalty. The Royal's children were set aside and coached and is still true today. For instance, ask Queen Elizabeth. She had to be coached. She didn't go to a public school like we in America did. We are really fortunate that

everyone here can read the scripture. Everybody here can understand; we have been taught how to reason.

The first thing that Luke talks about is “stumbling blocks,” things that *get in the way*. When I first came to the Lord, there were things that got in the way. I was brought up like everybody else in public schools and I didn’t really go too much for “miracles.” I didn’t understand what they were. I never saw one. Even if I did, I wouldn’t have recognized that it was one. When I watched Oral Roberts on TV, I thought it was “ho-hum.” Can you imagine a teenage boy doing that? I didn’t get it. It seemed like a lot of stuff going on but I didn’t understand any of it.

Therefore when I came to the Lord, there were a lot of things most people expected me to believe and understand. But I didn’t. I didn’t understand and I didn’t believe. It doesn’t come all-at-once for everybody. You see, I had to be *taught* about water baptism. I had to be *taught* about being filled with the Holy Spirit. I had to be *taught* about walking-with-the-Lord. So here we see in chapter seventeen, Jesus was talking to His disciples and those who were following Him. They are just following this guy and there is nobody else talking about the things like He is.

Jesus Warns of Offenses

He says to His disciples.

Luke 17:¹ It is impossible that no offenses (stumbling blocks) should come, . . .

We might say that to the Left Wing today. By the way, “*You are going to be offended. It is impossible for you not to be!*”

. . . but woe to him through whom they do come!² It would be better to have a millstone hung around his neck, and be thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little (fragile) ones.

It doesn’t even mention in this text if there were children around Jesus or not. But grownups are also fragile! Sometimes I myself am more fragile than I want to think about. I’m serious. If I had said that to my mother about my older brother John, for an example, she would say, “*That’s it. You are being punished. You will not even think about a millstone hung around somebody’s neck and throwing them into the sea. That’s just plain wrong.*” That is homicide.

These are difficult teachings coming from our Lord. His disciples just wrote it down. Luke made sure that this was included in his transcription, written down even if he didn’t understand. How could they understand this teaching? Okay stumbling blocks are going to come and you’d better not be the one they are coming from. But how can it be avoided? When we teach the gospel it is going to cause somebody to stumble. This is a difficult teaching. Don’t you agree? You see in the natural, people may just put this off. But in the context of Jesus’ LOVE for us, we have to stop and think, “*Well there must be something*

there or Jesus wouldn't have told us this. There must be something that I need in this scripture." And there is something there for us! We should be very cautious not to make stumbling blocks when we don't need to. They are going to come. People will be offended. People are sometimes offended by what I might be saying, even when it's not the intention of my heart.

Forgiving the Sinner

The next teaching is even more difficult for them to understand.

³ *Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.*

That's a lot easier to say but a lot harder to do.

*If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, "I repent," **you shall forgive him.***

And by the way, it doesn't say here that the person has to actually *ask* for forgiveness but if he just *says*, "I'm sorry." I don't know how many people have ever come to me and said, "You need to apologize and ask for my forgiveness." That's not scriptural. That's almost like "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." You need to PAY for this. However when a person truly repents, their forgiveness comes from *God*. God is the one who actually forgives not you.

Here is the stumbling block for the disciples. Are you kidding? It's an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If somebody murders a member of my family I am going to make sure he pays for that. If somebody offended me and then repents I am only going to take it three or four times and then, that's it. If my wife, my newly wedded wife turns on me and is unfaithful, whatever might happen making things very unpleasant, I'm filing for a divorce. Over fifty percent of Americans file for a divorce. And even a larger percentage among Christians!

That's a hard teaching. Who would want that teaching?! Not too many.

Faith to Forgive

⁵ *And the apostles said to the Lord,*

If we are going to have to forgive like that and not have stumbling blocks, etc. You need to do something for us. Let's make a deal. In the natural, we come to God and tell him we will be so faithful in prayer from now on, I'll come to Church. I'll love more. I'll do anything. They said:

"Increase our faith."

Let's not forget, we cannot do any of those things without the Holy Spirit. This does not come from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher where Jesus supposedly rose to Heaven. It came from Pentecost, the outpouring of God. So they say, "Well that's it. If we are going to follow You, Lord, You are going to have to do something for us. Increase our faith." But then Jesus says something that's very interesting, a little different than what you might have heard before.

⁶ So the Lord said, “If you have faith as a **mustard seed**, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea’ and **it would obey you.**”

First of all, who would even want to do that?! Who cares about mulberry trees anyway? Why would a plant be put into the sea? That doesn’t make any sense. That’s a difficult teaching. You might say, “Lord, excuse me. No. I’m not getting this.” But Jesus says it will obey you. The interesting thing Luke was getting at while he was writing this down, the mustard seed takes time to grow. It takes time for it to grow into a full plant. There is a time sequence, a time variable that you need in your own life. It is an answer to the request to “*increase our faith.*” How does that happen? Instantly? No. It takes time.

That is why the older saints are so precious in the eyes of God. You are not discarded here. I don’t know anybody here today that is younger than 29; look around. On a side track here, last Sunday I was teaching at the Air Base and I looked out onto the people assembled there, about 25-30 people, and none of them looked to be older than 29 and they were all on-fire for God! Just like you are. Isn’t that good? They too need to increase their faith. You don’t even have to ask God for that; He will do it. To be conformed into His image means that you are going to have His eyes to see, not your own, but His own. That is why this teaching of the Lord’s is so important. You are going to see things through the Lord’s eyes and the Lord is not so apologetic meaning, “*I’m sorry I have to say this.*” But He comes right out and says it. He doesn’t couch it in terms like, “*My poor children; I’m sorry this is going to hurt you. Don’t do this. Do this, like it or not.*” You might be old enough to take it but it is going to be a hard teaching for you.

Duty and Obedience is Enough

Notice the Lord keeps going, not hesitating in between teachings and saying the Lord still loves them. If I were to council Apostle Luke at the elder’s meeting, I’d take him aside and say, “*You need to listen to me. Soften your approach.*” Ha. God doesn’t always soften His approach. The next is really hard.

⁷ *And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when He has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? ⁸ But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.*

Well that’s a difficult teaching in today’s Christian world. Is God always so blessed when we bless Him? Maybe NOT!

¹⁰ *So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. **We have done what was our duty to do.**’*

He doesn't add or subtract from that teaching. Whoa. Do you like that one? Go out and DO it. You may get a blessing or not. I like to be thanked. I like to get a reward. Our culture is based on a kindergarten graduation, cap and gown sometimes. "*Wow. I never got that. Did you?*" When I got my master's degree I didn't even go to the service. Just give me the piece of paper; that's it.

Ten Lepers Cleansed

This is the next one for these Jewish boys to understand. He begins to talk about the ten lepers who were cleansed. And again they thought, "*What are You teaching?!*"

¹¹ Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem . . .

So this is an actual happening, not just a parable.

. . . that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. ¹² Then as He entered a certain village, there were ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

Now that was not unusual. Lepers usually hung out together to help each other since nobody else would associate with lepers. It was like if you got Covid right now, you would be put into isolation.

¹³ And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" ¹⁴ So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

It doesn't really make a distinction of what is going on but we get the idea that they were *all* cleansed from Leprosy. They were *all* healed. Well there was one who was different. And this would have been offensive to a Hebrew.

*¹⁵ And **one** of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, ¹⁶ and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a **Samaritan**.*

So one of the ten, not a Hebrew boy, was cleansed and came back to Jesus. Jesus made note of that.

*¹⁷ So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not **ten** cleansed? But where are the nine? ¹⁸ Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And He said to him (the Samaritan), "Arise go your way. Your faith has made you well."*

Well he was already well! What is Jesus really saying? The Samaritan was not a Hebrew and at this time in our Lord's ministry He hadn't as yet gone out to the Gentiles or the Samaritans for that matter. He will later on but not as yet. What He was saying was that this man was healed of ALL the things that needed healing in his heart and life, not just the leprosy.

That is what made this man different. When one comes to the Lord and then comes back and gives glory to God, then they are truly healed. The

Samaritan was going to be different from the other nine. I'm going to be looking for that in the next healing we have here and say, "*Which one is the one who is going to give glory to God?*"

The Coming of the Kingdom

Now as I said in the beginning, people are always looking for where things are going to happen.

²⁰ *Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The Kingdom of God does not come with observation; . . .*

That's odd. It seems like I understood the Kingdom of God by seeing what was going on around me. But rather, it will be revealed to you in the Spirit not in the natural. After it is revealed to you in the Spirit then you can recognize it in natural ways.

²¹ *. . . nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the Kingdom of God is within you."*

Wait a second. What kind of teaching was that? Are you kidding me? These guys were not about to be filled with the Spirit as yet. So how could they understand all of this? These are difficult teachings. Yet they did not desert the Lord, that they did not fall away, except for Judas later on.

Judgment

The most difficult teaching, one that most New Testament preachers will avoid is in the next few verses. But Jesus I find is never afraid to talk about judgment. I am since I don't fully understand it. I know it will happen but I always want to make sure when I am preaching to those who are fragile that they don't misconstrue what is going on. However the Lord just brings it right out there without any apologies or "*sorry I have to say this. I wish it weren't true.*" There are other scriptures when the Lord does say that but not here. It isn't something I want to teach but Jesus did. He had just taught them a lot of things they would have to understand later on.

²² *Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.*

Great. That's not great encouragement. "*Are you kidding; then why are we following You?*"

²³ *And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them."*

So, you are going to WANT to be with the Lord. You are going to be looking for the return of the Lord. It is not talking about the Second Coming, something Martha knew all about as you read that part in Luke. Martha knew very much when He said, "*Do you believe that Lazarus will rise from the Dead?*"

Martha said, “*Yes I know.*” He said there would be a Second Coming and a Resurrection of the Dead. He has taught this before. But then Jesus said to them something that is really strange.

²⁴ For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.

Now we just found out through satellite observation that when lightning strikes in the middle of a storm, it does not just strike in the storm but it also follows the whole continent! For example the lightning goes right up the East coast in sequence. Jesus knows. He is the Creator. He did that. It will be just like that. You won’t be able to understand it. It will be everywhere at once.

²⁵ But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

That must have been sad for Him.

²⁶ And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

He always goes back to the Old Testament. (I always get a little afraid when I talk about Old Testament judgment but Jesus is not afraid.) Get this: the people continued just like nothing was going to happen.

²⁷ They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

Whoa. It will be like that! Now we are awake! I better pay attention to this teaching. They ate and they drank; everything was going just like normal.

²⁸ Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot; They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; . . .

So things were going on just like normal, like nothing is going to happen. I’ll still invest in my 401K. No problem. I’ll still put an addition on my house and still mow my lawn. No problem. While even though it is natural to do all those things, there is an idea that He is planting in your heart, that there should be something that supercedes all of those things that we do. We need to be OBEDIENT to our Lord Jesus Christ in the little things that He asks us to do, like to speak to one who is fragile, to bring them into the Kingdom of God, like loving those who are unlovely. Our past elder Dale Rumble used to say, “*Bring in all the broken wood, splinters and bent nails.*” And the Lord is still doing that today. Don’t be afraid of them.

I’ve said this before but when I first visited a psychiatric hospital, and I was in charge of merging them into the regular hospital situations, I was *afraid* of the psychiatric patients! Especially when you go into the “locked-wards.” They lock them down. I found out quickly the nurses that were there didn’t know each other even though they worked in the same hospital since they were in a locked-ward. They went from the parking lot to their locked-ward day after day. Every once in a while they would let some of these guys out onto the lawn

in the FDRVA hospital in Peekskill. They had a large parade area in the middle of the hospital, a beautiful building by the way. You should go visit it.

However I was literally afraid of people who were mentally insane. Later on though I found them to be quite friendly. There was this one guy who was constantly going out onto the parade field and would “lose” his clothes somewhere. I said to him, “*Joe, you are going to get cold out here. Go back to your ward. It’s right over there. I’ll take you.*” But I wasn’t afraid of him anymore. Some of them would act out and some not. They would very rarely act out on themselves. I remember being in a meeting when all the physicians were discussing all the things that were happening in NYC, like someone taking the head of somebody else and killing them. The first thing they’d ask at these Ground Round meetings, “*Was it one of our patients?*” Whoa. What sadness would fill my heart.

The people I was afraid of I could now reach out to. So can you. So can we. We are not all that frail. We are not ready to be admitted to a mental hospital but we all have our frailties. Yes.

²⁹ . . . *but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and **destroyed** them all.* ³⁰ *Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

To make matters worse, you are not going to know everything that’s going on. . .

³¹ *In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. . . .*

If your laptop is down there, leave it. Cell phone? Don’t worry about it.

. . . *And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.*

I used to get really upset when my wife, Cheryl, would say, “*It’s dinner time,*” right when I was in the middle of a project! Well too bad.

³² *Remember Lot’s wife. (she turned around and turned into a pillar of salt)* ³³ *Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.*

So, there is never going to be a time when we should or could say, “*Ah, what am I going to do? I need my cell phone and I cannot go anywhere without my computer.*” Maybe we should fast for a while from those things. Whoever loses his life will preserve it. So you could lose your life in Christ and find it. He will never take it away from you because He created you. The scripture says, “*Even before you were in your mother’s womb He knew you.*” Wow.

³⁴ *I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other left.*

Talking about the Resurrection and Ascension.

³⁵ *Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.* ³⁶ *Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.*

Summary

Is this a hard teaching or what?! Which one will I be? Then He asked them a crazy question after that teaching of judgment and the rapture, however you want to interpret it.

³⁷ *And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord? (Can we be safe?)"*

Weren't they listening. Don't look here. Don't look there. That was the wrong question. They were like so confused, "*Where? What? How? What are You talking about?*" Primarily they wanted to be in a safe place. Don't we. We want to be with the Lord. That is the safe place, but where is it? Where can we be safe today?

Safe Place, a Place of Hope, a Place of Peace, a Safe Harbor

A safe place is a place of hope. A safe place is a place of peace like we were singing in our songs this morning. A safe place is a safe harbor, a place where a boat won't get wrecked in the storm. We can ride it out. That means things are going to get bad ahead of us.

I was reading this morning where one of our generals was addressing West Point Cadets and said, "*There is a good chance that there will be World War III.*" A good chance for a world war. . . at least war in most of the world, however you want to say it. There are warring spirits out there. Don't you feel it? Where are there not warring spirits? In the company of God, in His peace; it is a safe harbor. Then Jesus says this, the most important verse in this chapter.

Where the body is . . .

Where is the body? The real Church, the Kingdom of God, where the people of God meet together? The Body of Christ will be known by her name.

. . . where the body is, the eagles will be gathered together.

Eagles is a great reference.

Isaiah 40 ³¹But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

They are not going to be cowering, waiting for the storm to be over. There is going to be a whole new thing happening in your bones. They shall run and they won't be tired. They shall walk not caring how far and they are not going to faint. Isn't that great? They will renew their strength as the eagles.

Luke 19¹⁰: for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now Jesus is an active participant in what is going on in the Church. He is also an active participant in what is going on in civilization. He is seeking whom He can save. He isn't just gathering the “fish” out of the ocean and separating them out. He is seeing which ones He can save! Who will respond to Him?! Who will **love** Him? Who will allow Him to love them?

Some people might say, *“I don't need love. I just need science. I don't need God. I just need science and I will just do what I see is right in my own eyes, my own judgment.”* Well you are going to be outside of a safe place when you do that. Where the eagles gather together is where you want to be. That's the answer that Jesus was saying to them. Do you want to know how, why, what and when? It is here in the Body of Christ!

It is a wonderful place to be, a good place. So has there been fear in your heart these days and in this hour? When you watch the news perhaps not all the time but even glimpsing it one can get very agitated. *“Good grief. What is going on in this world?! How can those people be thinking that?”* Can we just turn back the hands of time to 1957-58.

I remember that time frame well, very well. I didn't think there was ever going to be another World War even though we were taught to hide under our school desks whenever we heard the bomb shelter sirens go off. We practiced doing that thinking that somehow that would even stop the gamma radiation! Not happening! For some reason I didn't have any fear. Maybe I should have, but I didn't.

Neither should we be afraid today. God wants to erase that fear from us. Now we are afraid of the next virus that may come along . . . Don't be afraid of it! I've taken all the vaccines that I possibly could take. However when I took the last booster for Covid, I came down with Guillain-Barre Syndrome. I was in the hospital for five days! I wasn't motivated by fear but around the second day I was in the hospital, I realized this was really bad news. They were afraid I wouldn't be able to breathe and then I'd be put onto a ventilator, since I couldn't catch my breath. I thought, *“How long is this going to take?”* After five days in the hospital I might have to have more infusions later on! *“How long is this thing going to last?”* Well, maybe even a year!

However I am not afraid of it. Not afraid because I stand in your midst, in the midst of the Body of Christ. I stand under the covering and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I refuse to be afraid of a virus. I refuse to be afraid of it! Yeah. I refuse for those of us who will be living in the last days:

Revelations 12¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

There us nothing that we have to be afraid of. And so, I am cautious because of the first scripture I read, not to make stumbling blocks that don't need to

be there. *But we do need to hear about the judgment of our Lord.* There is a world out there that will be judged. There are people that are aligning themselves on either side of that judgment line. We need to *pray* for them as we do on Friday night prayer and praise. There hasn't been one Friday night where we haven't prayed for them. We've prayed for our enemies, prayed for those who are offended by the Church, literally offended by the Church. Can you imagine?! I thought it would just be the Moslems but it is more; almost anyone can take offense.

Well, Father we pray today that You would go before us. Let our righteousness not be what we see with our own eyes and what we do in the natural. Rather our righteousness would be under Your authority when You poured out Your Holy Spirit upon Your disciples and then they laid hands on all that they could possibly bring to You. They still thought it was a "long shot." Their faith still needed to be increased. But today the Church is rising up!

This is a New Page in Heaven. *The angels know it. Be assured that our enemy knows it also. There is a New Page opening in Heaven! The Church to come into the promises given to it. That we would DO greater works than even our Lord Jesus did when He was on earth since He has now gone to be seated with our Father. The disciples would raise those from death. They would bring things to pass that were and are impossible. Even as they prayed or perhaps none prayed for the Apostle Paul, we can pray for those who are cynical and the chief sinner and they are able to come to the Lord. So we pray that even now, this morning.*

We pray for the Nancy Pelosi's that are out there. We pray for them that somehow You would cause dreams in their sleep to torture them until they say, "What am I doing?!" And they would understand they are doing something totally and completely adverse to the idea of Life that You have created here on earth. Life is to be a blessing not a curse. So, Father, we ask that you would give and make us a blessing to this earth in this hour, in Jesus' name. Amen.