

LUKE 17-19 ON FORGIVENESS; MORE PARABLES



We continue in Luke where more teachings of Jesus are only found.

In Lk. 17:3-4 Christ says, "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And 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.'"

Here in Luke it adds the condition which is implied in Mt. 18:21-22, that a member should also be repentant in order to receive forgiveness.

As *The People's New Testament Commentary* mentions about the difference between Mt. 18:21-22 and Luke 17:4, "Until seventy times seven--that is, there should be no limit at which it shall be refused if it is asked in the spirit of sincere penitence. By reference to Lk.17:4, one can see the condition of forgiveness. It is that the offender professes repentance. We are to forgive men their trespasses on the same condition that God forgives us ours, and he does not forgive the impenitent. Our mercy must be just as unlimited as that of God."

The Believer's Bible Commentary adds, "All rebukes should be delivered in a spirit of love... We must accept his own word that he has repented. This is the gracious way our Father treats us...No matter how often we fail Him, we still have the assurance that 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 Jn. 1:9)."

The healing of the ten lepers

Next comes one of the most incriminating accounts about humanity's typical ingratitude.

"Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' 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. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So

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

The lepers were compelled by the law to remain outside the villages, so they came as close as they could. They didn't expect to be healed but asked for mercy. Yet, Christ had compassion on them and brought about their healing.

Yet, only one of the ten lepers, who was a Samaritan, who were normally despised by the Jews, returned and gave thanks to Christ. Of all sins, surely the sin of ingratitude or thanklessness is one of the most common among human beings.

The parable of the persistent widow

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: 'There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?'" (Luke 18:1-8).

The Believer's Bible Commentary points out: "The parable of the praying widow teaches that people always ought to pray and not lose heart. This is true in a general sense of all persons, and of all kinds of prayer. But the special sense in which it is used here is prayer for God's deliverance in times of testing. It is praying without losing heart during the long, weary interval between Christ's First and Second Comings. The parable pictures an unrighteous judge who was ordinarily quite unmoved by fear of God or regard for his fellow man. There was also a widow who was being oppressed by some

unnamed adversary. This widow came to the judge persistently, asking him for justice, so that she might be delivered from his inhumane treatment. The judge was unmoved by the validity of her case; the fact that she was being treated unjustly did not move him to action on her behalf. However, the regularity with which she came before him prompted him to act. Her importunity and persistence brought a decision in her favor. Then the Lord explained to the disciples that if an unjust judge would act in behalf of a poor widow because of her importunity, how much more will the just God intervene in behalf of His own elect...The reason God has not intervened long ago is because He is longsuffering with people, not willing that any should perish. But the day is coming when His spirit will no longer strive with men, and then He will punish those who persecute His followers. Jesus closed the parable with the question, 'Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?' This probably means the *kind* of faith that the poor widow had. But it may also indicate that when the Lord returns, there will only be a remnant who are true to Him. Meanwhile, we should be stimulated to the kind of faith that cries to God night and day."

The parable of the Pharisee and tax collector

"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted'" (Luke 18:9-14).

The Believer's Bible Commentary explains, "Although the Pharisee went through the motions of prayer, he was really not speaking to God. He was rather boasting of his own moral and

religious attainments. Instead of comparing himself with God's perfect standard and seeing how sinful he really was, he compared himself with others in the community and prided himself on being better. His frequent repetition of the personal pronoun I reveals the true state of his heart as conceited and self-sufficient. The tax collector was a striking contrast. Standing before God, he sensed his own utter unworthiness. He was humbled to the dust. He would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast and cried to God for mercy: 'God be merciful to me a (literally 'the') sinner!' He did not think of himself as one sinner among many, but as *the* sinner who was unworthy of anything from God. Jesus reminded His hearers that it is this spirit of self-humiliation and repentance that is acceptable to God. Contrary to what human appearances might indicate, it was the tax collector who went down to his house justified. God exalts the humble, but He humbles those who exalt themselves."

Jesus and Zacchaeus

Christ then traveled to Jericho, where a rich publican lived whose name was Zacchaeus. He was of short stature and had to climb a tree to see Jesus. Remarkably, when Jesus saw his efforts to see him, He told him to prepare his house for He was going to lodge there. Zacchaeus gladly received Him, but some began murmuring about Jesus going to a house of a "sinner."

Unfortunately, in the NKJ version, it sounds as if Zacchaeus had already been doing good deeds, but actually, it was after receiving Christ's teaching and accepting it that he repented and changed his ways.

As *Vincent's Word Studies* brings out, "Not, 'It is my practice to give' for Zacchaeus' statement is not a *vindication*, but a *vow*. 'I now give by way of restoration.'"

As usual, many complained (began to mutter) because Jesus had gone to be the guest of a "sinner" (cf. Luk_15:1). But Zacchaeus stood up and voluntarily announced that he would give half of what he owned to the poor and repay fourfold all he had wronged. He publicly wanted the people to know that his time with Jesus had changed his life. Interestingly he parted with much of his

wealth, similar to what Jesus had asked the rich ruler to do (Lk. 18:22)."

The account is in the correct present tense in the *Contemporary English Version*, "Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.' Jesus then said to him, 'Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'" (Luke 19:9-10).

The parable of the pounds or minas

Next, we read, "So he said, 'There was once a man of high rank who was going to a country far away to be made king, after which he planned to come back home. Before he left, he called his ten servants and gave them each a gold coin and told them, 'See what you can earn with this while I am gone.' Now, his own people hated him, and so they sent messengers after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' The man was made king and came back. At once he ordered his servants to appear before him, in order to find out how much they had earned. The first one came and said, 'Sir, I have earned ten gold coins with the one you gave me.' 'Well done,' he said; 'you are a good servant! Since you were faithful in small matters, I will put you in charge of ten cities.' The second servant came and said, 'Sir, I have earned five gold coins with the one you gave me.' To this one he said, 'You will be in charge of five cities.' Another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your gold coin; I kept it hidden in a handkerchief. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take what is not yours and reap what you did not plant.' He said to him, 'You bad servant! I will use your own words to condemn you! You know that I am a hard man, taking what is not mine and reaping what I have not planted. Well, then, why didn't you put my money in the bank? Then I would have received it back with interest when I returned.' Then he said to those who were standing there, 'Take the gold coin away from him and give it to the servant who has ten coins.' But they said to him, 'Sir, he already has ten coins!' 'I tell you,' he replied, 'that to those who have something, even more will be given; but those who have nothing,

even the little that they have will be taken away from them. Now, as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to be their king, bring them here and kill them in my presence!'" (19:11-27, GNB).

The young ruler clearly represented Christ. The Gk. word "mina" was the equivalent of about 3 months' worth of wages. The cities mentioned here as a reward will be those cities given to the faithful when Christ returns to rule the earth. The "mina" is what God gives us now, which is a portion of His spirit that we are to multiply through spiritually wise and profitable use.