

Increase our Faith

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Luke 17:1-10. This is the final passage in a long discourse that seems to begin at 14:25. Once again, the Lukan hearer is confronted with a series of sayings that seem only loosely related to the context.

Temptations are sure to come. The Greek for temptation is skandalon - A “scandal” a *trap stick* (*bent sapling*), that is, *snare*. This draws to the mind of the original hearers/readers the stick an animal stumbles over, causing the trap to shut. The Jews would see the crucifixion of the Messiah as a stumbling block because anyone killed on a cross was cursed. It was scandalous to think that their God was executed as a criminal.

To cause someone to temptation was a great sin. To show the magnitude of this is illustrated with the phrase *“It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.”* (v. 2). The millstone mentioned here, is one that was used to grind grain to flour and was so large that it took a donkey to turn it. “Little ones” was either someone young in faith or young in age.

We need to guard the faith of others with forgiveness and a helping hand. We need to exercise special care for the young and the young in faith. Forgiving seven times is unlimited forgiveness. God continues to forgive us without any limits.

This was all quite overwhelming for the disciples and they ask that Jesus would increase their faith. With all the mental, physical, and spiritual darts flying to us with hurricane force, it is good for us to make this request too. Jesus stood ready to fulfill their request just as he does for us. Paul says it well in Ephesians 3:20-21 *“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*

Verses 7-10 are a string of sayings concludes with an illustration only found in Luke’s gospel. The gist of vv. 7-10 is that we owe God our full service and truly can do Him no favors. God does not owe us thanks for our obedience. In Christ, He does not forever punish us for our disobedience but forgives us graciously. When He returns, we will eat and drink in His kingdom as He has served us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, greatly increase our faith so that we take care not lead anyone astray. Continue to have our faith life be ready to serve you and those around us. Amen