

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

Take note that Jesus did not say in 17:3, "If your brother sins against you, forgive him!" No, he said, "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." So if I have been offended by a brother (or sister) in Christ, I am not to forgive him or her. I am to confront the offending party. Then, if the offending one repents, I am commanded to forgive. I've observed Christians who allegedly forgave those who don't repent (something God generally does not do, by the way), and they are often fooling themselves. They (naturally) avoid any contact with the people they've "forgiven" because they remain offended. There is no reconciliation. That is not forgiveness!

Nine times out of ten, if we confront an offending fellow believer, and I'm speaking of a true believer, he or she will repent. Then genuine forgiveness can be granted and reconciliation can occur. But if we don't confront the offending one, we disobey Christ. We hold a grudge, and we haven't even given the offending party an opportunity to repent in order to achieve reconciliation.

What Jesus taught was nothing new. It is an application of loving one's neighbor as oneself. God said in the Law of Moses:

You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord (Lev. 19:17-18).

When we reprove our offending neighbor, it shows that we value our relationship with him, and thus do what needs to be done to work towards reconciliation. And if a brother or sister offends us seven times in one day and repents, we are commanded to forgive (17:4).

Like so many of us, the apostles thought that they possessed some faith and needed more. But according to Jesus, just a little faith goes a long way. A mustard seed is very tiny, but a mustard seed's worth of faith can do what would be otherwise impossible. Perhaps Luke included the story of the ten lepers in this chapter as an illustration of the kind of faith of which Jesus spoke. The lepers begged Him for mercy, obviously believing that He could heal them. He told them to show themselves to the priests, which would require a one- or two-day journey to Jerusalem. The clear implication was that, by the time they arrived, they would be cleansed of their leprosy, and the priests would declare them clean, as required by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 14:1-32). The point is this: they had to act upon their faith. As they did, they were healed.

Faith acts on God's word regardless of other circumstances. Had any of the 10 lepers not acted on their faith, it would have indicated that they had no faith. Had they not believed, they would not have been healed, even though it is obvious from the story that it was Jesus' will that they be healed. This is inescapable truth. Jesus told the Samaritan leper who returned to give thanks, "Your faith has made you well" (17:19).

Why are more of us not healed by our faith? I suspect there are two primary reasons. One is lack of faith. Modern, unbelieving theology regarding divine healing has robbed us of any faith we have. Second, many of us are digging our graves with our teeth, eating foods that have been processed to death and robbed of much of their nutritional value, rather than on foods that God has given to nourish us. We are eating slow poison. I recommend an eye-opening book by Dr. Joel Fuhrman, M.D. titled, *Fasting and Eating for Health: A Medical Doctor's Program for Conquering Disease*.

The second half of Luke 17 contains Jesus' consistent teaching on His future coming. You may have noticed that He gave no indication that He will be returning twice! No, He is coming back once, and when He does, He will rapture the righteous (17:34-36) and pour out His wrath on the unrighteous (17:26-32).