

Sin Causes Offense, But Jesus Gives Life

Luke 17:1-10 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to *him* through whom they do come! ² "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. ³ "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ "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." ⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 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. 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. 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.'"

When we talk about an "offense," what we mean is something that is contrary to our personal taste. In this sense people are offended by all kinds of things these days. In this sense of the world many people are offended by God's word.

That is not what Christ is talking about here. He is not talking about something that we find distasteful or something that hurts our feelings. The word that Jesus uses means a trap, a trap that leads to death.

Adultery and fornication is sinful. A lot of people find that statement offensive. Jesus says the sin, the fornication, the adultery is offensive not the commandment from God. Fornication is a trap which can lead people to death if there is no repentance.

When Jesus speaks of offenses He is not concerned with our feelings. He is concerned about our soul. It is sin which leads to death and it is sin which sets traps to lead others to death.

There are different types of mouse traps. Some of them catch the mouse but do not kill it. Jesus is speaking of those traps which break the back bone and lead quickly to death.

Romans 6:23 ²³ **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

These traps are a result of sin and they bring death, but Jesus would give us life

Luke 17:1 It is impossible that no offenses should come

Why is such a thing impossible? Why does Jesus say they must come?

Is it because God sends them out on purpose? No. James 1:13 reminds us that “God . . . does not tempt anyone.” He also reminds us that there is not even a “shadow” of darkness within God. In other words, He is completely without sin and no evil comes from God.

God does not send, nor does He desire offenses in the sense that Jesus speaks of here, ie traps that bring death. God doesn't set up mouse traps all over the world and sit back and wait to see if we get caught. These traps are a result of sin, they do not come from God.

Why then is it impossible for Jesus to stop them?

Because God has two choices. He can remove all sin from the world by destroying all people, or He can patiently bear the sins of humans hoping that humans will repent and be saved.

2 Peter 3:9 [The Lord] is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Where there is sin there will be death traps. Because God allows sin, therefore there are death traps, offenses. It is not possible to remove them without completely destroying all people.

Someone might say, “Ok but He could at least stop most of it. He could at least stop the worst of it.”

How do you know that He is not stopping most of it? How do you know that He is not stopping the worst of it?

When the Israelites complained in the wilderness that God was not doing enough to take care of them, God removed His protection. All the snakes that were there but which God had been keeping from the Israelites came into the camp and killed many people.

People are sinful enough that God could be stopping 99.99% of all sin and there would still be enough evil to fill this world.

The simple truth is that where there are people there is sin, and where there is sin there is death and offenses that lead to death. In order to put an end to it God would have to destroy all people. But God is patient and longsuffering not willing that any should perish, but waiting and hoping that everyone might repent.

As Jesus said, “It is impossible that no offense should come.”

For this reason, sin and offenses, pain and hurt, injustice and evil are not proof that God is unloving but proof of just how loving and patient He is.

When we see that God does not destroy other sinners it should not cause us to doubt His love but ought to cause us to be certain of His love. When God is patient and longsuffering with wicked men it is a

reminder that God loves all men no matter how sinful. It is a reminder that God loves me and is forgiving towards me.

Man's sin brings death, but God's love gives life.

Offenses must come "but woe to him through whom they do come!"

Since these death traps must come, let us beware lest they come from us. Let us instead pray fervently that they do not come through us. Who among us wants to be the reason that someone loses their faith and is separated from Jesus for all eternity.

"Woe," says Jesus, "woe to those through whom offense come."

We are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, He washes away your sin, but how sad if your sin causes another to lose faith.

This is why Jesus says:

Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

With these words Jesus urges us to do everything we can to make sure that our sin is not a death trap for someone else. If we know that we have sinned against another person go and apologize and do whatever you can to make it right, lest that sin somehow be a poison in their hearts which might grow and cause anger, resentment, and death in that person. This is so important that Jesus says even if you are in middle of worship stop what you are doing and go first and be reconciled.

The writer C S Lewis mentioned once an incident where having arrived in the country he realized that he had done a wrong against someone. Therefore, he rode the train all the way back to London that very night so that he might apologize in person.

Most of us won't even bother to pick up the phone when we have wronged another.

This is the reason that many pastors here at Faith and elsewhere encourage those who have committed public sins to write a letter to the congregation. A public sin may be a cause of offense to others. When any of us commit a public sin others may be encouraged to follow us in that sin. Publicly confessing and repenting of that sin, shows that it is not ok and helps keep others from walking into the same trap.

Jesus is not kidding around here when he says **woe**. This is a serious business and we all of us should daily pray that the Lord would help us to see when we have sinned against another, so that we might do what we can to keep our sin from becoming a death trap for them.

1 John 2:10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for [offense] in him.

Our sin brings offense and death, but Jesus gives life through His blood.

Offense must come therefore we need to forgive

On the one hand we do not want our sin to be a death trap for others, on the other we do not want their sin to become a death trap for us. This is why Jesus continues:

Luke 17:3-4 ³ "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ "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."

When our brother sins against us he brings death to his himself. When we refuse to forgive anger and resentment grow in our hearts creating a potential offense, a death trap within us. We avoid such a trap by learning to forgive.

Luke 17:6 If you have faith as a mustard seed

What a wonderful thing that it is not a matter of the strength of our faith which gives us assurance of salvation. He who believes is saved, even if your sin is a cause of offense to another. He who believes is saved even if you struggle to forgive as you should. No matter how big or small our faith still Jesus has died for your sin and because He lives you will live also. The name of Jesus is enough to save you, even though your faith be too small to see.

Because of our sin the world around us is filled with these death traps. We pray that we would not be the cause of offense to another, and that God would forgive those who offend us. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Sin causes offense but Jesus gives life. Amen.