

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only )**

**Luke 17:1-4**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 17. Today, we will read verses 1-4.

Luke 17:1–10 is again a conversation between Jesus and His disciples. Here I would like to emphasize once more that when we read the Scriptures, we must read the context—understanding the situation in which Jesus spoke, what He said, and to whom He was speaking. We should not take a single verse and, with unlimited imagination, apply it independently; doing so often leads to misapplication. Especially when we read chapter by chapter each week, we can clearly see when and to whom Jesus spoke these words.

For example, in the previous chapter, Luke 16:16 says, “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” We all know that salvation is entirely by grace and does not require special effort on our part—so why does Jesus speak this way? Or consider the parable of the unjust steward at the beginning of chapter 16. It was spoken to the disciples. The steward was clearly unjust, yet Jesus commended his shrewdness—what does this mean?

In fact, this whole section begins in chapter 14. There, Jesus was invited to dine at the house of a Pharisee. During the meal, the Pharisees watched Him closely and brought before Him a man with dropsy. Jesus healed him on the Sabbath. He also spoke to them about banquets—how to be a proper guest, and if one is a host, what kind of people he should invite. After speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus left, likely in the afternoon of the Sabbath.

From Luke 14:25 onward, many people began following Jesus. He then spoke to those who desired to follow Him about the conditions of entering the kingdom of

God. These conditions were very strict. Yet the tax collectors and Pharisees did not withdraw; instead, they drew near to Him. This led into chapter 15, where Jesus spoke to them. Chapter 15 is entirely about salvation. It shows how the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, came like a shepherd to seek the lost sheep—out of one hundred, even if one was lost, He would go into the wilderness to find it. Then it speaks of the Holy Spirit lighting a lamp and carefully searching the house for the lost coin. Finally, it shows the heavenly Father eagerly waiting for the prodigal son to return.

After explaining salvation and how the Triune God works together to accomplish it, in chapter 16 Jesus turns to the disciples and speaks about service. God's requirement for those who serve Him is that they be faithful and wise. Through the example of the unjust steward, Jesus emphasizes the need for wisdom, and then teaches that one must also be faithful—faithful in small matters like money in order to be faithful in the greater matters of eternal life.

While Jesus was speaking about money, a group of Pharisees nearby interrupted Him and ridiculed Him. So Jesus turned to them and told the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man represents these Pharisees—living in wealth but not using it to make friends—while Lazarus represents one who is saved; though he suffered in life, after death he was carried to Abraham's bosom.

After Jesus responded to the Pharisees, we come to chapter 17. At the beginning of chapter 16, Jesus spoke to the disciples about service—that those who serve God must be faithful and wise. Luke 17:1–10 is Jesus' concluding word to those who serve Him.

**Verse 1: "Then He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!'"**

When we desire to serve the Lord, He requires that we be faithful and wise—faithful to Him and knowing how to serve appropriately. Then Jesus very practically tells us what we will encounter in serving Him. The first is causing others to stumble. Those who come into the church are sinners, the sick, those who need healing and

help. Before they are made complete, stumbling among one another is unavoidable. Yet Jesus says: though offenses are inevitable, woe to the one through whom they come.

If a person stumbles, fails, or falls, he himself bears responsibility. But the person who causes him to fail, who causes him to stumble, who causes him to become weak—this person bears even greater responsibility. Therefore Jesus said, “Woe to him through whom they come.” In other words, Jesus said to these disciples, In the future when you go out to serve, there will be many people around you who need your service. Stumbling issues between you and them are unavoidable, but you must by no means give any cause for stumbling others. Do not become the reason for others to fall. If you cause someone to stumble, woe to you.

**Verse 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.”**

In other words, if your service causes others to stumble, it would be better for you not to serve at all—even to die. The way Jesus describes death here is very striking: a millstone tied around the neck and thrown into the sea. Why a millstone? And why tied to the neck?

The neck signifies stubbornness—a stiff neck. In serving others, our neck must be soft toward God. We must not rely on our own zeal, but serve according to God’s will, continually praying before Him for those we serve.

The millstone is a tool for preparing food. Grain must be ground into flour before it can become suitable food. Likewise, in serving others, we must prepare spiritual food so that it is easy to receive, digest, and absorb. This requires patience and labor. If in feeding others you cause them to stumble—if what you give them causes them to choke or be unable to digest—then it would be better for that very tool, the millstone, to be tied around your neck and for you to sink into the sea.

Jesus' words are very serious. Everyone who is learning to serve must realize this before God: our service must not become a cause of stumbling. What we speak and supply must come through labor before God.

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

First, do not cause others to stumble. Second, in serving others—who are often more immature—they will inevitably offend you. Just as parents raising children are often offended during the child's growth, so it is in service. Jesus says this will happen. But you must take heed: if your brother sins against you, rebuke him and let him know his fault. If he repents, you must forgive him.

One who cannot forgive others cannot serve them. Every time you see that person, you will remember what he did to you. If you cannot forgive, you cannot forget; and if you cannot forget, you cannot properly serve him.

**Verse 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."**

What Jesus says here is quite extreme. The same person, the same matter—seven times in one day he offends you, and seven times returns saying, "I repent." Perhaps once a week or once a month might be understandable, but seven times in one day? He may only be saying it with his mouth, not truly from his heart. Yet what does Jesus say? You shall forgive him—whether or not he is sincere. As long as he softens his attitude and says, "I was wrong, forgive me," you must forgive him.

God's requirement for those who serve Him is strict: you must be faithful and wise. In your relationship with those you serve, you must not cause them to stumble. But when they offend you, as long as they say they repent, you must forgive.

When we hear this, we feel it is very difficult. The disciples felt the same way—who can serve under such conditions? In fact, it is through such difficult service that God works on those who serve Him: on the one hand, not becoming a cause of stumbling to others; on the other hand, not easily offended—and even when offended, being quick to forgive.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us. Seeing how seriously You deal with those who are willing to serve You, we can only come humbly before You and say: Lord, we truly do not know how to serve, and we are not worthy to serve. Have mercy on us and increase our faith. In the process of learning to serve, may our lives grow gradually through service, until we can render a service that is according to Your heart.

During our learning and growth, may Your grace continually come upon us. Give us a sensitive spirit, a discerning mind, and a tender feeling. When we become a cause of stumbling to others, may we quickly come before You to confess. When others offend us, give us a broad heart, willing to forgive. We know that in ourselves this is very difficult, but we are willing to commit our service entirely into Your hands. Lead us and perfect us Yourself. Bless our daily life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.