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Fulfilling Our Responsibilities

LUKE 17:1-10

Introduction

1. Many of us learned responsibility at an early age in our lives.
2. No doubt, the oldest among us grew up learning how to work the farm, cook meals, get in the crops, feed the livestock, and a host of other chores.
3. Others perhaps had the responsibility of washing the family car, mowing the lawn, running errands for mom or dad, doing the laundry, vacuuming and dusting the house.
4. Even the younger among us have perhaps had the responsibility of watching a younger sibling, taking out the trash, getting the mail, or any one of a host of other responsibilities.
5. We encounter responsibilities throughout our lives — at homes, in school and sports, in our jobs both full and part-time, in our marriages, in our communities, but most of all in our faith.
6. In our Sunday evening study on Paul's letter to the Christian in Ephesus, we found the apostle telling us to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1).
7. A worthy walk involves responsibility.
8. In our text today, directs His disciples to four areas of responsibility.
9. As we look at each area, ask yourself, "Am I doing this?"

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I. We Must Watch Ourselves

A. TEMPTATIONS TO SIN ARE SURE TO COME

“It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come” (Luke 17:1a, NASB95).

1. “Things that cause people to sin are bound to come” (NIV84).
2. It is vital that you and I realize that we are part of an imperfect church.
3. I am not talking about the church which Christ promised to build (Matthew 16:18), but of this congregation and every other congregation of our Lord’s body.
4. Every congregation in the N.T. to which a letter was addressed struggled with sin.
 - a. Paul cautioned the Christians throughout Galatia, “if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:15).
 - b. After a long list of what he called “the deeds of the flesh,” he wrote, “I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).
 - c. There were those in the church at Ephesus who still apparently struggled with lying, anger, theft, foul language (Ephesians 4:25,26,28,29).

“ . . . laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another”

“Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Ephesians 4:26).

“He who steals must steal no longer . . .” (Ephesians 4:28a).

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29).
5. All of us are sinful people who have been saved by the grace of God, but who keep putting on “the full armor of God” so that we “will be able to stand

against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

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B. WE MUST BE CAREFUL THAT WE ARE NOT THE SOURCE OF THOSE TEMPTATIONS

“... woe to him through whom they come! “It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard!” (Luke 17:1b–3a, NASB95)

1. While it is inevitable that temptations to sin will come, Jesus said that you and I must be careful that we are not the ones who are responsible for those temptations.
2. He said it would be better for you or I to die a horrible death than to be the cause of someone stumbling in their walk of faith.
3. Jesus exaggerated to make His point:
 - a. A millstone was a massive round stone with two flat surfaces which required a donkey or ox to turn it.
 - b. At it turned, it crushed and pulverized the grain.
4. He wants us to understand that He is serious about our causing a brother or sister in Christ who is weak or defenseless to stumble in their faith.
5. Such a person struggles to be what they should be in Christ and needs our help and encouragement, not for us to lead them astray.
6. Our Lord’s last words on this should cause each of us to think:
 - a. “Be on your guard!” (NASB95, NRSV, HCSB)
 - b. “Pay attention to yourselves!” (ESV)
 - c. “So watch yourselves” (NIV84)

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II. We Must Be Accountable To One Another

A. TO REBUKE

“If your brother sins, rebuke him . . .” (Luke 17:3b, NASB95)

1. When we “rebuke” (*epitiman*) a brother or sister in Christ we warn or reprove them with a purpose in mind.
2. It is to prevent them from doing something they are about to do or to stop them from doing something they are already doing.
3. None of us enjoy doing this — if we do, we have the wrong motives, our heart is not in the right place.
4. Our goal is not to humiliate them or drive them away, to correct and restore them.
5. I think all of us would admit that it is easier to turn a blind eye to sin among us than to confront it.
6. However, Jesus says that this is something we must do if a brother sins.

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“ . . . if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” (Luke 17:3c,4, NASB95)

1. Our duty to rebuke is attached to another responsibility — it is the responsibility to forgive.
2. Jesus added “if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”
3. His point is that our forgiveness must be unconditional, it must be given freely and without limit, even if we must forgive that person seven times within the same day!
4. The burden of responsibility falls upon those of us who are doing the forgiving rather than the person who is repenting.
5. We give to them the benefit of the doubt and accept their repentance as genuine.
6. As you listen to this, you have to be saying to yourself, “This is difficult

stuff!”

- a. I am responsible to rebuke sin, even though I do not want to.
 - b. I am also responsible to forgive sin, even though I do not want to.
7. I know this is true, but realize this, to do these things is to become more like God — He constantly stands in opposition to sin, and yet, He delights in forgiving repentant sinners.
 8. His forgiveness is limitless — How many times has He forgiven each one of us?

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III. We Must Truly Rely Upon God

A. IT IS NOT THE QUANTITY OF FAITH THAT IS IMPORTANT

“The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5, NASB95)

1. The apostles suddenly realized the demands Jesus was placing upon them.
2. However, they did not ask Him to give them more love or more tolerance so that they could forgive.
3. Instead, they understood that if they were to be responsible leaders, the challenges they would face would be greater than their faith.

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B. IT IS GENUINE TRUST THAT BRINGS RESULTS

“And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and be planted in the sea’; and it would obey you.”

(Luke 17:6, NASB95)

1. In Jesus’ day, a mulberry tree was known for its large, aggressive root system — it could live for up to 500 years.
2. Because of its root system it was not to be planted within 75 feet of a cistern.
3. For such a tree to be uprooted to another location would take great effort!
4. However, Jesus told His disciples, “If you had faith like a mustard seed, you

would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you." (Luke 17:6, NASB95)

5. What Jesus was saying to the apostles is 'the need is not to have more faith, but to have genuine faith, to truly rely upon God.'
6. Through His example of the mulberry tree, Jesus is telling us, 'unexpected and surprising things happen when you and I have genuine trust in God!'

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III. We Must Serve Dutifully

A. THE EXAMPLE OF A SERVANT

"Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?" (Luke 17:7-9, NASB95)

1. Jesus uses an illustration to make one final point.
2. He says, 'Imagine one of you has a servant who has spent the day plowing one or your fields or tending to your sheep.
3. At the end of the day when he comes in from the field, do you say to him, 'Come sit here and eat. I have prepared you a meal.'
4. 'No. Instead, you will say. Go and prepare me something for supper. After you shower and put on some clean clothes, bring the meal to me so that I may eat.'
5. 'Then, you may get yourself something to eat and drink.'
6. 'You will not thank your servant for doing all this, because he was simply doing what he is supposed to do.'

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B. SERVE THE LORD OUT OF TRUE HUMILITY

“So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’ ””

(Luke 17:10, NASB95)

1. We must never forget our position before God.
2. Our obedience to Him does not obligate the Lord to us.
3. He does not owe us anything for our faithfulness.
4. Our God is gracious, but we must not presume upon His grace.
5. To do what He commands is our duty.

Conclusion

1. Each of us here who is a Christian has a responsibility toward one another and toward our Father in heaven.
2. Each of us must also stop to ask ourselves, “Am I fulfilling my responsibility in this area?”
3. If not, take a moment and ask God to help you.
4. If you are not a Christian, please know that there is an area of your life for which God calls you to take immediate responsibility — your eternal soul.
5. There is no greater responsibility in all your life.
6. God extends to you His offer of eternal salvation, but you must respond before it is too late.