

Luke 17:1-4; I Cor. 10:12-14; Confronting Sin I. The Presence of Sin II. The Rebuke of Sin III. The Response to Sin

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever been surprised by sin- when you are caught off-guard? When your path led from temptation to rebellion in what seemed like a moment? As humans, we tend to think that our own experience is unique. Although it is true that there is no one exactly like you- it is also true that our lives are not all that different. We each share the common flesh and we each face similar temptations. One of the lies that the Devil tells us is that our temptation is so unique- that no one has ever suffered the pull of sin like I have. But Jesus would have us be prepared to deal with sin. Both before we sin and after we fall- we need to know how to respond when temptation comes. It is a foolish bird that get caught in a visible snare- so as Prov. 14:16 says- a fool is one who is reckless and careless while the wise are cautious. It is this cautious wisdom that Jesus is calling for today. So we look at this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us how to confront sin and temptation.

### **I. The Presence of Sin**

Jesus starts in v. 1 by revealing the ordinary and expected presence of sin. It is impossible to live without stumbling block- trials must surely come. The word here is “Skandalon” meaning a trap or snare. These will come! After Adam and Eve fell into sin, temptation has become the common lot of man. Temptation to sin are sure to be- they are certain and expected while you live on this side of glory. The lure of the flesh and the lust of the eye is as common as the rising sun. One of the tactics of the Devil is to lull us to sleep- or to cause us to boast in our own strength. Temptation- No- I am never tempted. And even if I was tempted, I would be able to resist! But Jesus warns us with the common and expected presence of sin in our lives. Just this past week I was listening to a sermon which pointed out the fact that we tend to both idolize and trivialize the OT saints. When thinking of Joseph and his temptation to commit adultery we think- well- of course Joseph resisted- its Joseph! But Joseph was a young man- just like some of you! The OT saints were really and truly tempted as we are! When tempted to say- why and I being tempted- Jesus

responds by saying- you should not be surprised by the fact that you are being tempted! This is not something uncommon- out of the ordinary- and unheard-of event! No- you are a sinner living in a fallen world! So don't be surprised by temptation- but expect it to come! As we read in I Cor. 10, the temptation you are undergoing is common to man! In other words- there is nothing new under the sun! Take comfort in this fact- that the lust of the flesh and the temptation to adultery is as old as sin itself! The flare of anger and the sting of the tongue as common as the nose on your face. This is not to make little or light of temptation and sin, but rather to comfort you! Other have gone through what you are going through- others have been tempted in exactly the same way- and they have over come! In fact, Jesus was tempted by the Devil himself after the 40 day fast in the desert- and He overcame! So do not be surprised when temptation comes- because it will come! The lure to sin is a consistent part of our lives. If the fish knew that the lure was hiding a hook- do you think the fish would bite? So when we are tempted, we must look for the hidden hook! Know that sin stings and iniquity bites! Temptation here is a bait stick- like a bait on a string. Pull it and you will trip the trap! Sin always promises something- but never really delivers. The old bait and switch scam- it looks fun but it carries a hidden dart! Temptation can come in many forms. People tempt us by being a bad influence- the mere presence of bad company can corrupt. Society as a whole pushes images and products aimed to pander to your desires. Temptation can even come from our own flesh- our own mind thinks up ideas that are contrary to God's word. But there is good news in all this- because as I Cor. 10:13 continues- God will also provide a way of escape so that you may be able to endure it. Our gracious God, knowing our weakness will not allow us to be tempted beyond or in a way that we cannot endure. No temptation is irresistible! Also- a way out- a route of escape is always provided by our God! By the Spirit's presence we can resist or refrain- we will see a godly solution or appropriate response. He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. So God is in control- each temptation is limited and each poison has an antidote. He gives us the strength for as well as the path by which we might escape like a bird from a snare. Think again of young Joseph- who literally ran out of the house. So Jesus continues in

v. 3- pay attention to yourself! Watch out! Be on guard! If you think you stand- watch out, lest you fall as we read in I Cor. 10:12. Do not overestimate your own strength and do not underestimate the enticement of the Devil. This calls for humble reliance on the Lord and a proper vigilance towards sin. We are called to flee from it, resist it- to give no place for it in our lives. Keep control of yourself- and keep your eyes open! Like a sentry on duty during the night watch- constant diligence! If you know where temptation comes from, don't put yourself in that place! Do not stand in the place of the wicked. Remember, we are not unaware of the Devil's schemes! If you are addicted to potato chips- should you fill your cupboard with them? No- Jesus calls for self-evaluation. Know your weakness- and resist the sources of temptation. If your eye or hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and put it away. So watch out for temptation- it is present all around us! But watch out also- for the bitter root of unforgiving pride!

## **II. The Rebuke of Sin**

But what if someone sins against us? What if someone fell into temptation and let loose their pent-up anger? What if someone insulted me without cause- or they lied to my face. When someone sins against you, Jesus continues by saying you are to rebuke him. Knowing our own propensity towards sin opens our heart to deal with the sins of others properly. Go and show him his sin, just between the two of you as Jesus put it in Mt. 18. The word- rebuke in v. 3- is the word for censure or chasten. To confront with the purpose of showing them their sin. Now the reason you would show a person their sin is to give them an opportunity to repent. What is avoided in this process is the gossip of speaking behind their back. Far too often, when people sin against us with their speech, we sin against them back by gossiping or slandering their name to others. Instead, as Jesus said, go to them and rebuke them for their sin. Now this rebuke should be done with gentleness and respect- but a pointed rebuke none the less. Just between you two- showing them their fault. Just as we should not be surprised when we are tempted- we also should not be surprised when people sin against us! Within the church, we are fellow sinners on the road to glory- we are fellow travellers on the sanctification path. We all fall short of the glory of God. This rebuke of a fellow

Christian comes from a heart of love- we care enough for the other brother or sister- we cherish our relationship with them enough to confront them. We do not want our relationship hindered, nor do we want their hearts to be hardened by sin. So we confront and rebuke in love. It also needs to be said that we are dealing with inter-personal private sins. These are not public or life threatening transgressions. If someone is putting your life in danger or publicly teaching false doctrine, you need to go to the elder right away. But Jesus is speaking about the expected, common, daily sins that crop up in the church. Normally, these are sins of speech. So when sinned against, rebuke them in love.

### **III. The Response to Sin**

And, Lord willing, when confronted by their sin, this one will repent as v. 3 concludes. To repent here is the word- Metanoah- meaning to change one's mind, to return to a proper place or attitude. Repentance is really a change of direction. The sinner confesses wrong, asks for forgiveness and seeks to make restitution if possible. True, godly repentance is sorrowful and it leads to life. It is impossible for true repentance to make light of sin! And when this person repents- we will forgive- you must forgive as v. 4 concludes. We will and we must do it! These are the marks of God's people- repentance, faith and forgiveness of others. We are sorry to God that we have offended him, we have changed our thought about sin- we hate it; we have changed our life direction- seeking to go the other way; and we delight to share this gift of forgiveness with others! Those who know their sin- will seek to have those sins taken away. Sin causes friction- a divide- that only forgiveness can take down. When we see sin as it is- a burden and a barrier- we will delight to see that burden removed and that barrier taken down. That is what forgiveness does. The stain is blotted out, and the debt is paid. We do not want others to remain in this state of conflict- so for their sake and our own we offer forgiveness freely! We let the offense go- as we no longer look upon this wrong. In the Lord's working- repentance is always followed by forgiveness! As I John 1 says, if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleans us from all unrighteousness.

We also know that instead of forgiveness encouraging sin, quite the contrary- true forgiveness encourages godliness! As Paul said in Rom. 6, it is impossible for a Christian to say- lets keep on sinning so that grace can abound! How can those who died to sin remain in it- even enjoy it? It is impossible for those who have been forgiven- who have been graciously restored and given this liberty- to keep on sinning without a second thought. On the contrary, those who have received forgiveness are moved in gratitude to live a godly life! The fact is- forgiveness is so liberating! Because God in Christ has forgiven us, we will desire to forgive others and we will desire to lead a godly life! In joy we will both seek to avoid sin- as we saw in our first point- and we will seek to forgive others quickly and repeatedly! How often will we forgive? Seven times a day- Jesus said in v. 4. Or 77 times 7 times in Mt. 18. As many times as he asks in true repentance- we accept and offer true forgiveness. Remember, love keep no record of wrongs. We refuse to hold grudges, and we seek to live at peace with all men. If we have a number in mind- saying if you do that again I will not forgive you- we have failed to grasp the free and rich work of Christ. Because in this forgiving other we follow our God- He forgives us much more than 7 times a day. As we pray- forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Because we have been forgiven, we will freely choose to forgive others! As the parable of the Unforgiving Servant proves- those who refuse to forgive other men their petty sins offend the LORD and King who has forgiven them so much! As Col. 3 says- forgive as the LORD forgave you! Why must we forgive? Because our God graciously forgives us!

To conclude, today Jesus is speaking about the common occurrence of sin. Not that this makes sin any less of an offense- God is terribly angry with sin to be sure. However, since we are still sinners on this side of glory we should expect to be tempted and prepare for it. Jesus Christ teaches us how to confront sin and temptation. We should not be surprised when we are sinned against- and also be ready to forgive because God in Christ has forgiven us!