

"Offenses"

by Wayne Goff

"Then He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do 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 should offend one of these little ones.'" Luke 17:1-2

NO OFFENSES?

Jesus states that it is impossible that **no offenses** should come in this world. That is because man is stubborn, rebellious, and often wicked in his treatment of his fellow man and in his disrespect for God. So men **will** so offend as to cause some disciples of the Lord to fall away from the Faith.

"Offenses" here refer to sins against another, not just some petty difference of opinion, or imagined snub.

WOE TO THE OFFENDER!

Just because reality tells us that there will be **offenders** does not mean that such people are *unaccountable* for their offenses! On the contrary, Jesus says "**woe**" to the offender. It would be better for that person to have a millstone hung around his neck and be thrown into the sea! In simple language, it would be better for a man to be dead than it would for him to offend one of Jesus' disciples! The implication here is that eternal condemnation would be the reward for such an offender if he did not repent before God!

Probably Jesus has in mind the Pharisees whose doctrine comes from men and not God (Matt. 15:7-9). They sat in a position of **religious authority** in Israel at that time (Matt. 23:2-3), therefore Jesus told His followers to do as they said. But He scathingly denounced them for their hypocrisy and false doctrine. He pronounced a series of "**woes**" upon them in Matthew 23 as He concluded His earthly ministry. He knew that some naive souls would be lost in eternity for believing in and following these wretched men. And so Jesus said, "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves*" (Matt. 23:15). These are the kinds of offenders to which Jesus refers in Luke 17.

"LITTLE ONES"

You might think "*little ones*" has reference to small, innocent children. But in the context, Jesus is referring to His disciples. Luke 17:3-4 even warns disciples themselves **not** to be an occasion of stumbling to one another! Such could be done by (1) refusing to forgive a penitent brother; or (2) failing to be longsuffering toward them.

Thus, "**woe**" to those through whom offenses come, and "**woe**" to that brother or sister who behaves more like a worldling than a Christian in conduct toward the Lord's people.

"INCREASE OUR FAITH"?

Why did the apostles proceed to say to the Lord, "*Increase our faith*" (Lk. 17:4). Probably because they saw the *practical* difficulty of Jesus' teaching. How many of us are willing to *constantly* forgive one who sins against us *repeatedly* in a day? So they realized that need for change that would cause them to *think* more like Jesus than like the world. Such is the transformation that challenges every believer (Rom. 12:1-2). Church attendance is not a substitute for life transformation, so we must diligently attend to our attitudes and lives.

Then again, Jesus rebuked His apostles by saying "*if you have faith as a mustard seed*" (Lk. 17:6). How hard should it be to forgive a fellow saint when God has forgiven us of so much? God paid the price for our forgiveness, not us! Why then should we be so loathe to do for others what God has done for us? *If we had mustard seed-sized faith*, it wouldn't be so hard. Remember these things, brethren, the next time someone seems to "*offend*" you.