

## More About Jesus, Week 11: Jesus Cared for the Weak

(Luke 17:1-4)

by Paul Hammons

Jesus came to this world to reveal the Father (**John 1:18**), and what greater characteristic of God could there be than His desire to bless and protect His creation: men and women who can never hope to approach the power and righteousness of their creator.

We are weak in the eyes of God – far weaker than any brother or sister might be in our eyes. And yet Jesus came to bless us, heal our spiritual sickness, and grant us a seat in his kingdom, providing strength where we are lacking, and having mercy on us when we fall short.

So it should not surprise us that Jesus focused a substantial amount of his teaching on caring for those who are weak – whether physically, spiritually, or in levels of maturity. After all, if we are to emulate Christ, we must have the same compassion for our weaker brothers and sisters that Christ had for us.

And so in Luke 17, Jesus tells his disciples:

*“Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.” – Lk 17:1–2*

In Matthew 18, that point is highlighted by Jesus’ parables of the lost sheep, and the joy which he has in bearing the sheep on his shoulders back to safety and celebrating its return.

Matthew’s account links that concern with a willingness to forgive when a brother sins against us. He describes the process of restoration in v. 15, instructing us to go to a brother who has sinned against us and attempt to reconcile with him. Only after bringing two or three witnesses and finally taking the matter before the church is that brother to be disciplined: *“Let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”*

We often look at this passage as instructions on how to withdraw fellowship from a member of the local church. While that’s certainly described here, the purpose is not separation, but restoration. The desire is to rejoice in bringing the brother back safely. As Jesus emphasizes, *“if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”*

Great care should be taken in restoring someone who is spiritually weak and vulnerable. A refusal to extend grace or a harsh approach intended to hurt more than correct can drive a disciple away from the church and out into the world. How many times do we hear non-believers say, *“I used to be a Christian, but the way they treated me made me realize they didn’t really care about following Christ.”*

There is no easy, painless way to correct a brother in sin, but our responsibility is to do our best not to present an attitude of hostility or contempt, but instead showing ourselves to be humble *“as a little child” (Matt. 18:4)* in dealing with people, expressing love and compassion and care for their souls. That doesn’t guarantee that the brother will respond in kind, but it does ensure that we’ve done what Jesus instructed us.

The key to supporting the weak is remembering that in God’s eyes, we’re all weak – whether we are the *“weak”* brother who struggles with sin and a flawed understanding of God’s word, or the *“strong”* brother whose faith is secure and who is mature in his understanding and his godly behavior. And yet despite our weakness, God still loves us and has mercy and compassion toward us. And he is patient with us when our strength fails.

Jesus himself was the example of that for us, taking on the form of a man and submitting to the helplessness of crucifixion, depending on God to deliver him: *“For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God” (2 Co 13:4)*. In the same way, we are all weak before God, depending on His grace for our salvation. And so we are reminded to have the same care for others:

*And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all – 1 Thes 5:14*