

# THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE AND FOUR LAWS

## LUKE 17:01–10

### *Introduction*

There are four laws in this passage that could revolutionize society. They are to revolutionize the believer's life. The believers are to "watch themselves" and to pay attention to the laws (v. 3)

- I. Law 1: leading another into sin brings judgment (vv. 1-2).
- II. Law 2: forgiving others is essential (vv. 3-4).
- III. Law 3: having faith is essential: one of the most powerful forces in the world (vv. 5-6).
- IV. Law 4: obeying God is a duty, not a service (vv. 7-10).

### **I. *Luke 17:01–02 Leading Others into Sin – Stumbling Blocks***

The first law is a severe warning: leading another person into sin brings heavy judgment. Note several facts.

1. The Lord was speaking to His disciples. The disciple had to guard against this grave sin. He was always subject to temptation, and if he yielded, he was going to mislead others. No sin will be condemned any more than the sin of misleading others into sin.
2. Sin is inevitable. Note the exact words of Jesus, "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come."

**Thought 1.** Sin enters the world. Sin enters the business, the office, the marketplace, the play field, the club, even the home and the church. No place ever escapes sin, for no person is perfect. Wherever a person is, there is sin. No person is without sin.

3. Committing sin is a terrible thing, but leading others to sin is even more terrible. The phrase "cause...to sin" means to be a stumbling block; to bait, lure, and trip someone (See Mt.17:27). Who are these, the ones who cause others to stumble? In one simple statement, it is anyone who *practices sin*, who *continues in sin*.
    - a. A stumbling block is anyone who *seduces others to sin*. Many persons seduce others into the sins...
      - of grumbling, complaining, and criticizing
      - of taking sides against others
      - of being worldly and materialistic
      - of craving more and more
      - of being conceited and prideful
      - of living loose and immoral lives
      - of cursing and talking filthy
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- b. A stumbling block is anyone who *makes a false profession*, anyone who claims to be a follower of Christ, but who is not. The person who makes a false profession scandalizes the name of Christ. He is a hypocrite who causes others to stay away and to detest Christ and the church. False professors not only shut themselves out of the kingdom, but they lead their children into a false hypocritical religion which shuts them out. The false professor causes others to say they want nothing to do with the church because it is full of hypocrites.
- c. A stumbling block is anyone who *discourages a person* from following and serving Christ by...
- word or deed
  - abuse or neglect
  - persecution or injury
  - gossip or slander
  - anger or hostility
4. Leading others to sin is heavily condemned (See *Millstone*, Lk.17:2).

**Mark 9:42** “*And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.*”

**Rom 14:13** *Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.*

**Rom 14:15** *If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.*

**Rom 14:21** *It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.*

**1 Cor 10:32** *Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.*

**2 Cor 6:3** *We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.*

**1 John 2:10** *Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.*

### LUKE 17:02 MILLSTONE (MONOS ONIKOS)

The word *onos* is the word for a donkey. The word *mulos* is the word for the millstone that the donkey pulled around and around to grind the grain. Thus, the millstone Jesus spoke of is the huge millstone, not the small hand millstone used by the women to grind a little grain at a time. Note: the very fact that Jesus chose the huge millstone shows how great this sin is. The person would be held to the bottom of the sea by the most awful and terrible weight. The sin of leading others astray is the most awful sin that can be committed. Jesus is stressing that its condemnation will be awful and terrible. □

## II. *Luke 17:03–04 Forgiveness and Church Discipline*

The second law is that forgiving others is essential. Note the words, “watch yourselves.” What Jesus said was of critical importance. If a person sins against us, we are to rebuke him; but if he repents, we are to forgive him. The point is strong. There is to be no sense of unforgiveness among God’s people, — no matter how grave the sin against us, no matter how big a stumbling block is put in our path (v. 1-2).

The word *rebuke* (*epitimeson*) is important. It means to charge, to be emphatic with. The believer is to confront the person who *offends* and puts a *stumbling block* in his way. We are to do what we can to correct an offending brother, but the correction is to be done in love and compassion, not in a censoring and judgemental spirit. The whole theme of this instruction is forgiveness, which means that a spirit of love and compassion exists. The instruction does not mean that the believer is weak or indifferent to sin, but rather that he responds to being mistreated by being loving and compassionate.

**Thought 1.** Believers are to correct those who sin against them and do them wrong. To allow sin to continue is to indulge and to give license to sin, and the last thing God wants is for sin to be indulged in and given the license to run wild.

**Eph 5:11** *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

**1 Th 5:14** *And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

**2 Th 3:15** *Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.*

**1 Tim 5:1-2** *Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.*

**2 Tim 4:2** *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.*

**Titus 2:15** *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

**Titus 3:10** *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.*

**Heb 12:5** *And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you.”*

**John 7:7** *“The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil.”*

**1 Cor 4:14** *I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children.*

**Psa 141:5** *Let a righteous man strike me — it is a kindness; let him rebuke me — it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it. Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers.*

**Prov 1:25** *Since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke.*

**Prov 10:17** *He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.*

**Prov 12:1** *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.*

**Prov 15:5** *A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.*

**Prov 15:10** *Stern discipline awaits him who leaves the path; he who hates correction will die.*

**Prov 29:1** *A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed without remedy.*

**Eccl 7:5** *It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools.*

**Amos 5:10** *You hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth.*

The command to forgive is also strong. In fact, this is one of the most beautiful pictures of God's unlimited forgiveness. He continues to forgive and forgive. True, the believer does not have license to sin; the Bible is very clear about this (Rom 6:1-2; Ga1 5:13; 1 Pet 2:16). The believer is not to take advantage of the forgiveness of God, for judgment awaits the person who so abuses the grace of God. However, the Bible is equally strong in proclaiming that God forgives and forgives the believer who truly repents even if he sins time and again. It is God's unlimited forgiveness that requires the believer to forgive anyone who offends him and truly repents — even if the believer has to forgive the offender seven times a day for having wronged him. (See *Forgiveness*, Mt. 26:28.)

**Mat 5:7** *"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."*

**Mark 11:25** *"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

**Luke 6:36** *"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."*

**Eph 4:32** *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

**Col 3:13** *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

**Prov 3:3** *Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.*

**Prop 11:17** *A kind man benefits himself, but cruel man brings trouble on himself.*

**Hosea 12:6** *But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.*

**Micah 6:8** *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

### MATHEW 26:28 FORGIVENESS (APHESIN)

*“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” **Mathew 26:28***

Forgive means to send off, to send away. The wrong is cut out, sent off, and sent away from the wrongdoer. The sin is separated from the sinner.

There are four main ideas in the Biblical concept of forgiveness.

1. There is the idea of why forgiveness is needed. Forgiveness is needed because of wrongdoing and guilt and the penalty arising from both (see Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 8:1).
2. There is the idea of a once-for-all forgiveness, a total forgiveness. A man is once-for-all forgiven when he receives Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Belief in Jesus Christ is the only condition for being forgiven once-for-all (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 4:5-8).
3. There is the idea of forgiveness that maintains fellowship. Fellowship exists between God as Father and the believer as His child. When the child does wrong, the fellowship is disturbed and broken. The condition for restoring the fellowship is confessing and forsaking the sin (Psa. 66:18; Prov. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:7).
4. There is the idea of a releasing from guilt. This is one of the differences between man’s forgiving a man and God’s forgiving a man. A man may forgive a person for wronging him, but he can never remove the guilt that his friend feels. And often he cannot remove the resentment he feels within his own heart. Only God can remove the guilt and assure the removal of resentment, and God does both. God forgives and erases the guilt and resentment (Psa. 51:2, 7-12; 103:12; 1 Jn. 1:9). □

### III. **Luke 17:05–06** *Genuine Faith and Boldness*

The third law is that faith is essential; faith is a powerful force. The disciples realized something: their faith was weak — too weak to ever live like Jesus was talking about. He was insisting on a faith so strong that they would...

- be free from ever causing another person to stumble.
- be so loving and compassionate they could forgive a person time and again, even seven times in a single day.

They knew that they desperately needed greater faith in the power and love of Christ, that the power and love of Christ would infill and permeate their whole beings. They knew that they had to believe and trust His presence more and more. Note what Jesus answered.

1. Genuine faith is what is needed, not great faith. The stress is not quantity, not on how much faith a person has. It is not a matter of *increasing faith*; it is a matter of *possessing* and *having* faith. It is a matter of *genuine* faith. The very smallest amount of genuine faith, a faith as small as a mustard seed, can do the impossible. Nothing is impossible to him who has a faith that is genuine, even if the faith is the smallest amount possible. (See *Mustard Seed*, Lk.17:06.)
2. Boldness is needed. It takes boldness to walk up to a tree and tell it to be removed. Imagine — to really believe that the request is done! We either believe it or not. It is not a matter of how much belief; it is a matter of genuine belief. If one's belief is genuine, then it is done.

*Mat 21:21-22* Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

*Mark 9:23* "If you can [believe]?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

*Heb 11:1* Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

*Heb 11:6* And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

*Psa 31:19* How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

*Psa 37:5* Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this.

#### LUKE 17:06 FAITH AS SMALL AS A MUSTARD SEED

What did Jesus mean by "faith as small as a mustard seed"? The mustard seed was known for its small size, yet it grew to be a very large bush (See Mt. 13:32). Picture a mustard seed lying in one's hand..It is *real and very small*, yet imagine the potential for *growth and use*. So is "faith as small as a mustard seed." Faith is *real and small*, yet it has enormous power for growth and ministry. □

#### IV. *Luke 17:07–10 Obedience is a Duty not a Service*

The fourth law concerns obedience: to obey God is a duty not a service. There is danger that believers will become prideful and puffed up because of the gifts and power God gives, especially if they begin to live victoriously in faith as just described (v. 5-6). Jesus used an illustration, making three points to combat this danger.

1. The believer is a servant, and a servant is a slave who serves his Master. (The parable is clear, but see *Servant*, Rom. 1:1.)
2. The believer is to serve and obey the commandments of God until all the work is done. He is to feed the cattle and plow the fields, then in the evenings he is to serve the household by feeding and waiting on tables. Plowing and feeding are tough work, requiring a sound and disciplined body and spirit. They require endurance. Note that the servant works all day and all through the evening until all others have gone to bed. He goes to bed *after* all others have retired, and he gets up *before* all others get up. *The servant serves his Master.* (What a lesson Christ lays out for the believer! How few serve the Lord so diligently! How many get up before others in order to spend time alone with the Lord, and then spend the last minutes of a day with the Lord after all others have retired?)

**Mark 10:43-44** *“Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”*

**John 4:34** *“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”*

**John 9:4** *“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”*

**Acts 28:23** *They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.*

**Rom 12:11** *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.*

**1 Cor 15:58** *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

**Gal 6:9-10** *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

**2 Tim 1:6** *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

**2 Tim 4:5** *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

**Heb 6:11-12** *We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

**Heb 12:1** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

**2 Pet 3:17** *Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.*

**Eccl 9:10** *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.*

3. The believer is to be humble in his service for the Lord. No matter what we do for Christ, it is our *duty* to do it. We are unworthy of the privilege to serve Him. We are to count ourselves “*unworthy servants*.” No man can claim he has done all he should; we know this: “We all come short, no matter how much we do or how great the work. There is no room for pride or arrogance or boasting. God commands perfection; therefore, He expects humility.

**Mat 5:48** *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

**Mat 18:4** *“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

**Luke 18:14** *“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

**Rom 11:20** *Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.*

**Rom 12:3** *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

**Phil 2:3-8** *‘Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross.’*

**James 4:10** *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

**1 Pet 5:5** *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. ■*



## ROMANS 01:01 SERVANT, SLAVE (DOULOS)

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God. **Romans 01:01***

Paul was a “servant” or “slave” of Jesus Christ. The word “servant” or “slave” (doulos) means far more than just a servant. It means a slave totally possessed by the master. It is a bond-servant bound by law to a master.

A look at the slave market of Paul’s day shows more clearly what Paul meant when he said he was a “slave of Jesus Christ.”

1. The slave was owned by his master; he was totally possessed by his master. This is what Paul meant. Paul was purchased and possessed by Christ. Christ had looked upon him and had seen his degraded and needful condition. And when Christ looked, the most wonderful thing happened: Christ loved him and bought him; therefore, he was now the possession of Christ.
2. The slave existed for his master and he had no other reason for existence. He had no personal rights whatsoever. The same was true with Paul: he existed only for Christ. His rights were the rights of Christ only.
3. The slave served his master and he existed only for the purpose of service. He was at the master’s disposal any hour of the day or night. So it was with Paul: he lived only to serve Christ — hour by hour, day by day, and night by night.
4. The slave’s will belonged to his master. He was allowed no will and no ambition other than the will and ambition of the master. He was completely subservient to the Master and owed total obedience to the will of the master. Paul belonged to Christ. In fact, he said that he fought and struggled to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:5).
5. There is a fifth and most precious thing that Paul meant by “a slave of Jesus Christ.” He meant that he had the highest and most honoured and kingly profession in all the world. Men of God, the greatest men of history, have always been called “the servants of God.” It was the highest title of honour. The believer’s slavery to Jesus Christ is no cringing, cowardly or shameful subjection. It is the position of honour — the honour that bestows upon a man the privileges and responsibilities of serving the King of kings and Lord of lords.

=> Moses was the slave of God (Deu. 34:5; Psa. 105:26; Mal. 4:4).

=> Joshua was the slave of God (Josh. 24:29).

=> David was the slave of God (2 Sam. 3:18; Psa. 78:70).

- => Paul was the slave of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1).
- => James was the slave of God (Jas. 1:1).
- => Peter was the slave of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:1).
- => Jude was the slave of God (Jude 1).
- => The prophets were the slaves of God (Amos 3:7; Jer. 7:25).
- => Christian believers are said to be the slaves of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:18; 1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:24).

(This point is built upon what William Barclay says in *The Letter to the Romans*. "The Daily Study Bible." Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1955, p. 2).

**John 12:26** *"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me."*

**Eph 6:6-7** *Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.*

**Col 3:23-24** *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

**Heb 12:28** *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*

**Exo 23:25** *Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.*

**Deu 10:12** *And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

**Psa 2:11** *Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.*

**Psa 100:2** *Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. □*