

Being a Christian is Incredibly Difficult, and Extremely Easy

- Being Xian very hard! You know true! Our culture incrsly anti-Xian. In academia, idea of all-powerful Creator preposterous; Xian students mocked for faith. In society, only moral evil: calling someone else's view wrong – that's hate speech – which makes calling J only way of salvation and his will only true morality – unloving, intoll. Unbelieving world hates Xianity. Being Xian very hard!
- Esp when Xp makes it hard. J never promised that being Xian easy. In fact, taught quite opp. Xians must deny selves, take up cross, follow; renounce possessns; may be persecuted or even lose life for faith. There are sinful desires J says we must deny; and there are certain duties of discipleship J says we must follow. Walking with J is no stroll thru park. Being Xian incred diff!
- Just listen to diff duties J lists for us to do in today's Gos. First, **vs. 1-2**. Little ones: could be young Xian children, or any Xians fighting temptn. J says: not only you have walk str8/nrw & live godly life; but also have make sure don't do anything to cause anyone else to sin. Bec if you do, you're to blame. You're in trouble if cause someone else sin; so much trouble, that death by drowning is preferable – to standing before Almighty, answering for why you caused someone else to sin.
- Woah! That's incrdly diff! I look at my life, see all my sins. I wonder: who watches me & copies my behavior, listens to me & mimics my language, imitates me & sins my sins? Which little one are stumbling bec of me?
- You think that's diff?! **Vs. 3b**. Respsblty for approaching someone, telling them they're in wrong, J says, is on you! Doesn't even have be sin vs you. J says same thing in Mt 18: **"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you."** For whom is that not diff? Few wks ago in church, sermon was on parb of shepherd who tries bring back lost sheep. Work our church does thru Shp Cmt, Elder Bd, & pastors – work of trying bring back lost sheep – sometimes involves telling sheep they're in wrong. Smtms listen; smtms don't – no matter how gently, tactfully, loving you talk to them. **Vs 3b**. And I guarantee: this will always be diff work. But not just for prs & Elders; this is your responsibility, too!
- Then, **vs. 3c-4**. There's reason God has us pray "Forgive...as we forgive," bec God knows it's hard to do! Way easier to nurse grudge, look down on someone, hold their sin vs them – than to forgive them and just let it go – esp if they keep on doing it. But J says forgive 7x in a day; and in Mt says not 7x but 77x. IOW, unlimited forgiveness is what J expects from us. But if someone has ever hurt you or your fam, you know how hard is to forgive.
- So can you see what I mean: being Xian is incredibly diff! J tasks us with respsblties that are just plain hard! Hard for everyone, even for apostles. **Vs. 5!** J, no way we can do this w/o your help; we need more faith from you, if you really expect us to: live godly life, never cause anyone to sin, confront people when they do sin, and forgive everyone who sins vs us. **"Increase our faith!"** And I bet we all feel same way. We know very acutely ways we've failed; and since we know ourselves, we can forecast failure in future. Discipleship is hard; being Xian incredibly diff.
- But know something: being Xian is also extremely easy! Trusting in J, following J as our Sav – easiest thing do in world! Yes, he gives us diff tasks; and yes, we may smtms feel weak in our faith. But faith's power does not come from its size. Got something here, tiny in size – mustard seed. Really small. Baggie – kiosk – see how small. Elsewhere in Scripture, J: kingdom of heaven like tiny mustard seed; starts small; grown into largest tree in garden (Mt 13:31-32). Also: faith size mustard seed can move mnts (Mt 17:20). Here says, **vs. 6**. Obvly not saying: Xians can do landscaping projects no problem; got little faith; just move bushes/trees around – of course not. But mustard seed's power does not come from its size; its power comes from God, who gives it life, strength to become great tree. In same way, faith's power does not come from its size; its power come from God, who gives it life, strength to believe & do great things. Faith is powerful bec it trusts in Xp, our powerful Sav. That's what J means when says **vs. 6**. Faith is powerful bec J is powerful.

- Maybe right now you feel weak in faith; faith challenged, doubts; faith just not as strong. Not sure what do re that. Quit focusing on faith; focus on J! Look at J dying on cross for you; look at J raised from dead for you. Listen J say he loves you, forgives you, saved you, watching over you, got place in heaven for you! J has done everything for you; AND even gives you faith to believe it! So don't get worked up about trying to quantify your faith or manufacture more faith. You've got J!
- That's what makes being Xian extrmly easy: you've got J! He's on your side! You've got Son God, risen from dead as your Sav, ally, & friend. He's already done everything nec to save you – that's your strength! Got a diff task? You've got J! Trying make sure you don't do anything to cause someone sin; trying confront friend caught up in sin; trying forgive someone hurt you? Yeah, that's diff. But you've got J! Your strength comes from him!
- J tells this parb re master & servant. Master kind of jerk. **Vs. 8**. See: kind of jerk. But point of parb: servant does his duty, bec that's what's expected of him. Not looking for thanks or recogntn. Just does what told. God wants us to have that same kind of servant attitude, that says **vs. 10b**. And at first, may seem really hard. But actually, serving J with that humble servant attitude is extrmly easy bec: our master is not jerk. This parb is teaching what our attitude should be, not what J's attitude is. Our Sav JC never says **vs. 8**. No: he came not be served but serve, give life ransom for us (Mt 20:28). J washed his disc's feet; suffered cross in our place; even told parb (heard in church few wks ago) re master who arrives home in mid of night, and so pleased to find servants ready/waiting for him, that he serves meal to servants. That's parb re J's attitude toward us. J serves his servants; serves us with: forgiveness, HC, earthly blessings – it's all grace! We deserve none of it. This parb teaches us how respond to that grace – with attitude of gratitude, that wants to serve J, that says **vs. 10b**. Serving Jesus, who loves/serves us – easiest thing to do in world; privilege. Being Xian is extrmly easy.
- So today we have this paradox. Xianity's hard, and it's not. It's hard bec the expectations are great; and our failures are great. God asks us to do incrdly diff things. But Xianity is also extrmly easy bec our Sav is great; and his grace is great. He's done everything to save us AND gives us faith to believe in him AND gives us privilege of serving him. Being a Xian is incrdly diff and extrmly easy. May J increase our faith to trust him more; may he give us strength for the diff tasks; and may he fill us with joy in our service, that we may say with humble faith, **vs. 10b**.

Luke 17:1-10

Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. ² It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. ³ So watch yourselves.

“If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. ⁴ Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

⁶ He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

⁷ “Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? ⁸ Won't he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? ⁹ Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”