

Luke 17:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

Analysis

Jesus teaches: 'Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him' (προσέχετε ἐαυτοῖς. ἐὰν ἀμάρτῃ ὁ ἀδελφός σου, ἐπιτίμησον αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐὰν μετανοήσῃ, ἄφες αὐτῷ). The command 'prosechō' (προσέχετε, take heed) warns of spiritual danger. The verb 'epitimaō' (ἐπιτίμησον, rebuke) means to confront or admonish, not merely overlook sin. Conditional forgiveness follows repentance (ἐὰν μετανοήσῃ, ἄφες, if he repents, forgive), balancing grace with accountability. This pattern reflects God's own forgiveness—He requires repentance, not unconditional tolerance of unrepented sin. Yet verse 4's extension (forgiving seven times daily) demonstrates grace's abundance.

Historical Context

Jewish teaching debated forgiveness limits. Rabbi Jose ben Hanina taught forgiving three times; Peter's suggestion of seven times (Matthew 18:21) seemed generous. Jesus' 'seventy times seven' (Matthew 18:22) or 'seven times in a day' (Luke 17:4) obliterates scorekeeping, demanding limitless forgiveness for genuine repentance. This teaching challenged both the Pharisees' harsh judgment and cultural honor/shame dynamics that demanded retaliation for offenses. Early Christian communities struggled to implement this radical ethic (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5-6).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does biblical forgiveness differ from both harsh unforgiveness and uncritical tolerance of sin?
2. What does the balance between rebuke and forgiveness teach about combining truth and grace in Christian relationships?

Interlinear Text

προσέχετε	έαυτοῖς	έὰν	δὲ	ἀμάρτη	εἰς	σὲ	ό
Take heed	to yourselves	if	If	trespass	against	thee	G3588
G4337	G1438	G1437	G1161	G264	G1519	G4571	
ἀδελφός	σου	έπιτίμησον	αὐτῷ	καὶ	έὰν	μετανοήσῃ	ἄφες
brother	thy	rebuke	him	and	if	he repent	forgive
G80	G4675	G2008	G846	G2532	G1437	G3340	G863
αὐτῷ							
him							
G846							

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 19:17 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

Matthew 18:21 (Parallel theme): Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Proverbs 9:8 (Parallel theme): Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

Proverbs 27:5 (Parallel theme): Open rebuke is better than secret love.

James 5:19 (Parallel theme): Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

Exodus 34:12 (Parallel theme): Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

Deuteronomy 4:23 (Parallel theme): Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.

Deuteronomy 4:9 (Parallel theme): Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

Hebrews 12:15 (Parallel theme): Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Psalms 141:5 (Parallel theme): Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.