

## Review

As we have seen, Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 is a real "in your face" message to disciples with whom He doesn't have a lot of time left.

First, He confronted them with the need for humility. Then came the warning about being a stumbling block, and ridding your life of whatever makes you stumble. Today, we will begin to look at His commands regarding sin, confrontation, and forgiveness. These studies will not be easy things to hear.

### **18:15-17 If Your Brother Sins**

If you fail to follow Jesus' command to follow this method, the situation will not be worked out in a godly manner. You cannot reject His instruction and expect anything but disaster and destruction.

Here are the things we need to see:

1) First of all, who is "your brother?" The New Testament makes clear that this is a title of fellow Christians. And so this method is not meant to be applied to unbelievers - it is for fellow believers.

2) Next, what exactly is the cause for this confrontation? "If he sins" translates from Greek to English with some difficulty because of the Aorist verb tense. It speaks of a definite, particular action of sin which was done against you. Literally, it means "Has sinned into/towards you."

When you go to your brother in this manner, remember that it is not a character attack. It is not, "I see that you ALWAYS do this," or "I have noticed that you have a TENDENCY to do that." You must be speaking of a specific sin which was committed.

3) What is the purpose of going to him? Is it to get it off your chest? Is it to make him feel like a loser? Is it to show your superiority? No, it is to "show him his fault." Your intention must be to

**Heb. 10:24 ...stimulate one another to love and good deeds,**

**James 5:20 ...(turn) a sinner from the error of his way...**

If you're going to be vindictive, then don't go. If you are genuinely concerned about him growing and maturing as a Christian, then do it.

4) Your purpose is to show him his fault. How can you show him his fault? Only by the Scriptures. Sin is not subjective, it is defined in

the Word of God. If the guy showed up at your house drunk, you don't say, "I'm concerned about your drinking. You could have been injured in an accident. You are damaging your brain cells. You are harming your liver. You are alienating your friends." You say, "The Bible says..."

**Eph. 5:18 ...do not get drunk...**

**1Cor. 6:10 ...drunkards... will (not) inherit the kingdom of God.**

**Is. 5:22 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking...**

**Gal. 5:21 ...those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

You show the brother his fault using the Scriptures, not your opinions or your feelings. Demonstrate biblically WHY what he did is sin.

5) Now, you've got to do this privately - one on one. That Greek phrase literally means "between you and he alone." Don't bring your spouse or a friend. It's just you and the person who sinned against you.

Too often others are brought in too early. You sin against me, so I talk to my prayer partner about it. Then I call my wife. Then, I call the pastor... But the Bible says,

**Prov. 17:9 He who conceals a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.**

We have been taught,

**1Pet. 4:8 ...keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.**

When you talk to other people about the sin before you confront the sinner, you're being a gossip and certainly not being loving.

6) And you've got to go with the expectation of them hearing you and repenting. Pray and ask the Lord for the brother to recognize his sin in the matter. Many people refuse to confront sin because they say, "He won't listen to me," or "they're just going to flip out." But they're demonstrating that they're not loving that person, because love...

**1Cor. 13:7 ...believes all things, (and) hopes all things...**

7) If he does repent, then you've won him, and you must forgive. That means the matter is over and finished, not to be mentioned again. This is probably the toughest part for us to accept and apply, and we're going to hear Peter's follow-up question about this next week.

### **18:16 If He Does Not Listen To You**

There is always the possibility that the brother will not acknowledge that what he did was sin. In that case, you are required to follow up. Next, you bring one or two witnesses with you.

Who are these people to be? This is the first aspect of this process that seems open to interpretation.

You see, some people believe that they are just there to be witnesses to whether or not the brother receives and repents. Bring one or two Christians in that have no idea about the event, and allow them to hear the second confrontation.

But others say that verse 17 shows that they are talking and confronting. Thus, they must have been witnesses to the sin.

I don't know which interpretation is correct. To be safe, I think that if you have the opportunity to bring in one or two people who witnessed the sin taking place, that is who you should bring. If not, then bring alone one or two godly, mature Christian people who can be objective.

### **18:17 If He Refuses To Listen To Them**

If the brother still does not repent after this second confrontation, then the third and final step must take place: Go to the church.

This is the second aspect of these instructions that have been interpreted in various ways. Some believe that the entire church should be brought together to hear this. That was certainly the case Paul presented in regards to an elder who is in unrepentant sin.

**1Tim. 5:19-20 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.**

Notice that the purpose of a public rebuke is not to humiliate the elder, but to serve as a deterrent against sin for the congregation.

Others apply this third step in various ways, with church councils, and special boards or committees who hear these complaints. This stems from the fact that the word "church" Jesus used is "ek-klay-SEE-ah,"

which is "the assembly of those who have been called out."

This is the way we as a church have applied this Scripture: We believe that "those who have been called out" are the men who have been set apart to shepherd the flock, the church's pastors and elders.

Every once in awhile, we are called upon to listen to an accusation, and arrange a time to hear both sides, as long as the previous two steps have been followed. After all, we never forget that...

**Prov. 18:17 The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.**

At that point, if we determine that sin was committed, we give the person the opportunity to repent. Part of our job is...

**2Tim. 2:25-26 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.**

Let's face it, if you've got five or ten godly men who say, "It's clear that you're in sin. We've demonstrated this Scripturally, and now this is your opportunity to acknowledge this sincerely and repent completely," and you're still unwilling to repent, your heart must be hard as a rock. What do we do in such a case?

### **Let Him Be To You As A Gentile And A Tax Collector**

If the brother has not repented of his sin at this point, he must be to us as a Gentile and a tax collector. Remember, the Jews to whom Jesus is speaking had no dealings whatsoever with Gentiles or tax-collectors. In this case, he is to be as a Gentile AND a tax collector. Complete disfellowship, no dealings whatsoever. Not allowed in the church, no hanging out socially, no interaction with them.

Paul instructed the Corinthians regarding this method:

**1Cor. 5:9-13 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go**

**out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.**

### **18:18-20 Whatever You Bind Or Loose**

Just as we discussed in our study of chapter 16, we are faced with the concept of "binding and loosing." And once again, we see that this has absolutely nothing to do with spiritual warfare. If you have applied this passage to the belief of "binding the devil" and "loosing the spirit of this or that," then I highly recommend that you pick up the tape or CD on Matthew 16:5-19.

Once again, we must keep the context in mind to properly understand what Jesus is saying.

The term "again I say to you" in verse 19 tells us that Jesus is repeating the lesson just taught (for an example of that, look at Matthew 19:23-24). So, Bible study rules say that verses 18-20 have to apply to what Jesus said previously in verses 15-17. Thus, the "two or three" of verse 20 must be the "two or three" of verse 16.

And so, it is clear what we have bound. The unrepentant sinner is bound from the fellowship. But what is loosed? The same man, if he repents.

A man who was disfellowshipped by the Corinthian church experienced godly sorrow leading to repentance. But the church didn't know if he should be allowed back. Paul said,

**2Cor. 2:6-8 Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.**

We are called to bind and loose under the direction of Jesus Christ. When the two or three have gathered together in the name of Jesus to confront sin, and Jesus is present, we prayerfully and biblically must do the will of God.

So much of this can be avoided by quick repentance. When a Christian privately comes to you and says, "You sinned against me," and clearly shows you in the Bible that what you did was sin, then repent and ask for forgiveness.

**Rom. 4:7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS  
HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE  
BEEN COVERED."**