

A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 18: 6-9

Jesus Warns of Offenses

- Jesus has been describing the child-like faith and humility required to enter the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 18:1–5**). Now He seems to be describing those who believe in Him, including adults, as "little ones."
- **Matt 18:6 – “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”**
 - Now Jesus changes the word from child (v.5) to little one (v. 6).
 - By using the term little one here it seems Jesus is referring not so much to a child, but to a beginner in the faith, a new convert.
 - **“whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin”**
 - If someone is inclined to follow Jesus and a person does something to persuade them to do otherwise, then Jesus says it would be better for that person to have a **“millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”**
 - What was a milestone?
 - Jesus has regularly warned about a judgment to come when He returns to earth with His angels, where people will be repaid for what they have done, including their sin.
 - **Matthew 16:27**
 - **Romans 2:6**
 - **2 Corinthians 5:10**
 - This is the first time, though, that Jesus has mentioned a judgment for those who cause others to sin, including leading those who believe in Him into sin.
- **18:7 – “Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”**
 - Compare the term “blessed” in Matt 5 with the term “woe” in verse 7.
 - What does “blessed” mean?
 - What does “woe” mean?
 - Offense = temptations
 - Our example is always a concern with God’s people. Jesus pronounces a definite woe to anyone who is a bad influence

- **Rom 14:13**
- **1 Cor 8:9-13**
- Anyone who causes another to stumble should feel sadness because they are endangerer of facing the wrath of God.
- **“offenses must come BUT woe to that man by whom the offense comes”**
 - Jesus adds that “offenses” (i.e. temptations) will come.
 - Temptation may be unavoidable for Christians, but those who lead them into sin will face God's painful judgment.
- **18:8-9 – “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire “**
 - Does Jesus really want His followers to cut off hands or feet or to tear out their eyes to avoid sinning?
 - Wanted to communicate to His disciples the degree of seriousness with which they should deal with sin. Jesus did not want any of them to have a casual attitude to the deadly consequences of sin.
 - Jesus uses this same illustration as He did in **Matt 5:30**.
 - Jesus has said that temptations in this world, in this life, are inevitable.
 - This simply means that they're natural to the human life (**Hebrews 4:15**). It does not mean Christians must give into them (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).
 - Here is one who is making some strides in the right direction, but stumbles because of a weakness of the flesh (lust, for example). Life (eternal life) is more valuable than anything else. All have to be careful to guard against stumbling.
 - Consider **Colossians 3:5–8**
 - He also uses the word Greek word “Gehenna” for hell.
 - Gehenna was where the city’s refuse was burned, and located southwest of Jerusalem. The fires never went out.
 - In Old Testament times this was where the pagan god Molech was worshiped (**2 Chron 28:3; 33:6**).
 - This thoroughly disgusting place is contrasted with eternal life in heaven.
 - Was Jesus really warning that any believer who sins—ever—will go into the "hell of fire"?