

A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 18 10-14

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

- **18:10** – “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”
 - Little ones = new believers.
 - What does this verse mean?
 - Most agree that Jesus is talking about His little ones, meaning all believers in Jesus, whatever their ages.
 - He seems to be warning the disciples not to despise or disrespect any believers in Jesus.
 - Why would the disciples ever despise or disrespect another believer in Jesus?
 - Jesus seems to be telling His disciples to elevate the value they place on other believers because of the value God places on those believers.
 - **“...in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”**
 - Jesus says, their angels always see the face of God the Father in heaven.
 - What does this mean?
 - Jesus' point seems to be that these angels are connected in some way to these human believers while also being in the presence of God's glory. As such, every believer is valuable and worthy of respect.
 - A couple point to think about:
 - **Acts 12:15** shows the people believed one's angel could be confused with the man himself.
 - Peter is knocking at the door. Rhoda goes back to tells the others, but they think it is his angel.
 - **Hebrews 1:14** shows us that angels do service for the saints.
 - There are many inter-testamental passages about guardian angels (cf. Tobit 5:6,21; Testament of Levi 5:6).
 - The point is that they (i.e. angels) continually behold the face of the Father = close association.
 - This is a way of expressing God's listening to, being with, protecting, and saving His children.
- **18:11**- “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”
 - This verse might not be in the version you are reading.
 - Why?

- This verse is not in the earliest manuscripts of the book of Matthew, which translators use to develop modern English Bibles.
 - That's why it is not included in many translations, including the English Standard Version (ESV) or New International Version (NIV).
 - BUT that possibility that these words were not originally part of Matthew' writing does not make them untrue.
 - They might have been added at some point to harmonize the account with **Luke 19:10**, which is included in all translations:
 - The sentiment is absolutely correct.
- **18:12 – “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?”**
 - **What do you think?**
 - Jesus has just warned His disciples in **verse 10** not to despise any of "these little ones," most likely meaning any of the believers in Jesus.
 - Why not disrespect other believers?
 - Because God the Father has decided they are of such great value that they are worthy of sharing in His glory.
 - What is the point of this verse for us? What is Jesus trying to emphasize?
 - Individuals are important to God.
 - The caring shepherd thinks about the value of one lost sheep.
 - The caring Christian thinks about the value of every lost soul.
 - How does this fit with the phrase often used, “They got what they deserve.”
 - Jesus uses this question to illustrate the value His Father, God, places on every single person who believes in Jesus. He will picture the Father as a shepherd with 100 sheep. Jesus asks what a shepherd with that many sheep will do if just one of them goes astray. Won't the shepherd leave behind the 99 to go search for the one?
- **18:13 – “And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.”**
 - Considering the illustration when Jesus is comparing His Father, God, to a shepherd with 100 sheep.

- If one of those sheep wandered off away from the flock, the common practice would be for a shepherd to leave the other 99 sheep with another shepherd in order to find the one that had gone astray. Why?
 - How does this apply to God?
 - Better question. What did God (the Good Shepherd) send his for people like us?
 - Sin does not diminish the value of a person in God's eyes.
 - He gave His Son for people like this, and He wants them back.
 - He wants all people to repent (**2 Pet 3:9**) and to be saved (**1 Tim 2:4**).
 - Since God wants no one to be lost, if we are responsible for making one stumble, how will that affect our relationship with God?
 - What does it mean for a believer in Jesus to go astray?
 - It seems pretty clear that Jesus is talking about believers who give in to temptation and sin.
 - God often compared the people of Israel to sheep in the Old Testament (**1 Kings 22:17; Ezekiel 34:5; Zechariah 10:2**). Jesus came to pay the price for our sinfulness and to make it possible for sinful sheep to be forgiven and be given a place with the Father.
 - How does this image of God fit with **Isaiah 53:6**?
- **18:14 – “Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”**
 - Christ seems to be saying, "Don't give up on any of those who believe in me." Why?
 - The Point: Christians should focus on the one lost sheep and exert the energy to find him.
 - The shepherd left the ninety-nine because they were safe. He did all that was necessary for their safety so he could go and look for the lost one.
 - Where did he leave the ninety-nine?
 - On the mountains – a safe place
 - Wrapping up verses 1-14
 - Jesus has warned the disciples not to despise or disrespect any of His "little ones," meaning those who believe in Him.
 - These verse helps explain why.
 - God places enormous value on each one of Jesus' followers.
 - It is His will that none of them should perish or die.
 - The Father's will is for every believer in Jesus to live eternally with Him in heaven, even those who go astray into sin and must be brought back.