

A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 18 15-20

Dealing with a Sinning Brother

- In the previous verses:
 - Jesus has warned His disciples about the grave seriousness of leading any of the other believers into sinfulness.
 - He has also warned them not to despise or disrespect other believers, even ones who have gone astray.
 - Jesus pointed out that God the Father's will is that none of the believers in Jesus should perish or be eternally separated from Him.

- In **Ch 18:15-20**, Jesus answered the question “What should the community of believers do if someone does fall into sin?”
- How can they both take sinfulness seriously and attempt to bring the sinner back to faithfulness?
- Jesus outlines a 4-step process in how to do this starting in **v. 15**.

- **18:15** – “**Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.**”
 - When a brother sins:
 - **STEP 1** – “**go and tell him his fault between you and him alone**”
 - Some versions use the term “reprove.”
 - Same word used in **2 Timothy 4:2**
 - This same word is translated several ways in the NT – reprove (6x), rebuke (5x), convince (4x), tell one’s faults (1x), and convict (1x).
 - Basically “showing him the error of his way. “
 - One should do this, Jesus says, “in private.”
 - There is never any Biblical permission for telling someone else about what one may have learned about another’s sin.
 - In telling, that also becomes a sin - the sin of gossip.
 - **Ephesians 4:29**

- **18:16 – “But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’”**
 - **STEP 2 – “take with you one or two more” (Take others with you.)**
 - You should return, this time with a small group, such as one or two other people.
 - Jesus quotes **Deuteronomy 19:15**.
 - The purpose and intent of the Law of Moses was that one could not be tried and convicted upon the word of only one person. There had to be two or more witnesses.
 - Every fact had to be confirmed.
 - These witnesses go with you and confront this person as to whether he did (or did not do) what you claim.
 - According to the Law of Moses, if the facts cannot be confirmed, the matter is to be dropped as far as public discipline is concerned.
 - Why?
 - **1 Timothy 5:24-25**
 - **Romans 14:11-12**
 - **Eccl 12:13-14**
 - What is the ultimate purpose?
 - What if this doesn’t work?
- **18:17 – “And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”**
 - **STEP 3 – “tell *it* to the church”**
 - When the facts have been confirmed, but the person in sin still refuses to repent, make it public.
 - This is the power in numbers. The one who is in sin, and is confirmed to be in sin, should be overwhelmed by the love of an entire community encouraging him to come back and change his life.
 - Why in front of the church?
 - **1 Timothy 5:20**
 - What if this doesn’t work?
 - **STEP 4 – “if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”**
 - What does this mean?
 - Strong Language - If the sinfulness of the accused has been established and he or she continues to refuse to repent and make things right, then the church is to begin to treat this person as an outsider.
 - He is an outsider and no longer part of the family.

- A couple of hard questions:
 - How should the church (the body) feel about this person?
 - Do they isolate themselves from him?
 - A couple things to think about to focus our answer:
 - God wants all people to repent (**2 Pet 3:9**).
 - God wants all to be saved (**1 Tim 2:4**).

- **18:18-20** “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”
 - Compare this to **Matthew 16:19**.
 - How does this relate to the previous verses (15-17)?
 - Jesus is STILL talking about how we deal with a brother who is sinning.
 - The plan Jesus just outlined for the disciples has already been established in heaven by God.
 - They (the apostles) are just to follow God’s plan for winning back a sinning brother. It’s not their job to establish the steps of church discipline.
 - The apostles are going to be asked for many things.
 - About what?
 - **Verse 20** refers back to the “**two or three witnesses**” mentioned in **verse 16**.
 - Why have these two or three gathered together?
 - In order to try to win back a sinning brother. When these “**two or three witnesses**” meet together, Jesus is in their midst - that is, He is supporting their effort.
 - They are doing this for Christ, and it has to do with important decisions dealing with an erring brother.

- Easy Question.
 - How do we do this?
 - **Galatians 6:1**
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:14**
 - **2 Timothy 4:2**

- Tough Questions?
 - Have these verses ever been misused?