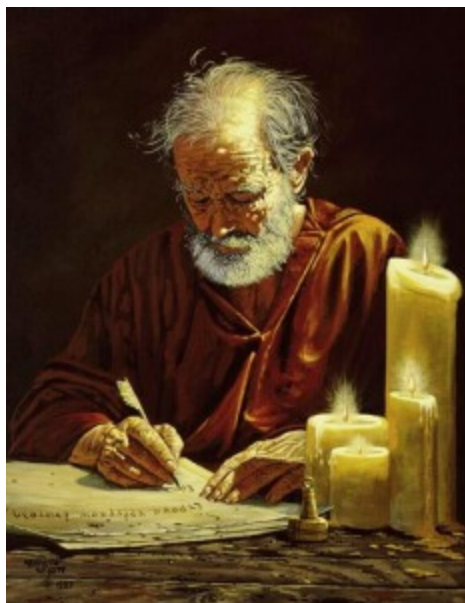


The Word of the Lord – Matthew 18:15-20

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January 13, 2023



Core Message:

It is important to remember the words of the Lord when it comes to dealing with those who have sinned. When Jesus tells us to “tell the whole church if they are following in a pattern of sin”, we are to take their sins seriously and to tell them that we will not tolerate such a thing in our church. If they are unwilling to listen, we will treat them as outcasts and unbelievers. In addition, we should avoid making contact with them.

If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

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Opening Prayer:

Your voice burns within the depths of our being,
O God of our ancestors,
and draws us into your presence and service.
Hear the cries of your people
and speak a word of comfort,
that we may proclaim to all the earth
the glory of your name. Amen.

Scripture: Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Intercessory Prayer:

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.

Prayers of the People:

Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

Treat them like total outcasts, unbelievers that won't come back

The people of Israel were commanded to return to the Promised Land after their exile in Egypt. They were also commanded to stop their idolatry and to lay off the idolatrous habits they had acquired in Egypt. However, some of the Israelites decided to leave for Egypt anyway. In fact, some of the prophets such as Jeremiah warned that the Israelites should not go to Egypt.

Ultimately, it is God who will bring back those who were banished to Egypt. But before this happens, he will punish those who will not listen to his commands. This is called the Day of the Lord, or Judgment. It is the end of the world, and it precedes the reign of Jehovah on Earth.

Avoid contact with the offender

One of the most misunderstood passages of the New Testament is Matthew 18:15-20. While it is often quoted by Christians in conflict, it can be a confusing statement if it is misused. This passage is not a command to follow but a directive to individual Christians. When used properly, it is a good and helpful method for dealing with sin, whether that sin is on the part of a pastor or a fellow church member. However, it is not the best strategy to use when a person has committed a particularly serious offense. Rather than attempting to avoid the offender, a better approach may be to seek the advice of elders and make an effort to get in contact with the source of the problem.

Tell the whole church if they are following in a pattern of sin

When a church member tells you they lied to you, you have to ask them directly about it. You don't have to go around asking all the other members of the congregation, and you don't have to expose every single thing your friend did. If you do this, you may get your friend to confess, but you'll also be exposing him or her to all sorts of criticism and condemnation.

Nevertheless, there are some things you can do to keep your congregation in the dark about a member's secret sins. First of all, don't be the one who stands up and tells your congregation about a liar. Instead, use the right questions to make your point.

Second, if you do decide to delve into the matter, there are certain steps you should take to ensure you don't end up being the next Christian pariah. For instance, a wise elder would never stand before the congregation with his or her best guess, or a bunch of facts that everyone agrees upon. This is because it could end up becoming a mob justice scenario.

Take sinfulness seriously

Take sinfulness seriously. It's no secret that God views sin as a mortal sin. One of the more interesting things to do is confront one's own sins and shortcomings. Keeping in mind that we aren't always in a position to control our own actions, there are things that we can do to mitigate the damage. In short, there is a path to redemption in Christ, no matter how far we wander. And, a plethora of resources to help us along the way.

In general, the biggest challenge to overcoming sin is a lack of a firm grasp on the omniscience of sin. It's also worth noting that there's been a great deal of controversy about what's exactly a sin and what's not. This isn't to say that we should necessarily go down the road of apostasy, but that we should take it on the chin and make amends.

Jesus' identity, a stumbling block to the Nation of Israel

In order to comprehend Paul's argument in Romans 9-11, it is important to know how the Jewish people responded to the call of God. The majority of Israel rejected Christ and His message of salvation. However, a small remnant of believers followed the Lord. This small group was the golden thread that connects Israel's past of salvation to its future.

For the legalistic Jews, the law was the only way to attain righteousness. It was an expression of justification by works. But Jesus proved that the law alone could not give life. As a result, the Mosaic law-covenant was not an act of faith, but a condemnation.

The laws of the Lord define the principles of holy living. While animal sacrifices should have pointed to future salvation, they were more a way of feeling guilty than of trusting the Lord. Nevertheless, the covenants with Israel were not abrogated. They were merely used as preparation for the Messiah.

Closing Prayer:

O God of Joseph and all his brothers,
your forgiveness transcends
whatever wrong exists between us.
Grant us the courage to forgive others,
and to practice reconciliation

by the kindness of our speaking,
the sharing of our resources,
and the honoring of your desire for good. Amen.