

>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 39 <<<<<<<

1) This passage, 18:15–20, has a lot to unpack so let’s dig in. We will begin with 15 - 17.

Matthew 18:15–17(ESV)

If Your Brother Sins Against You

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

2) First, who has a translation that does **not** have “against you” in verse 15?

- a) This is another textual variances which is not in all the earlier manuscripts.
- b) As I just read, the ESV has the “against you;” the NASB reads...

Matthew 18:15 (NASB 2020)

<sup>15</sup> “Now if your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

- i) NASB and NIV do not have “against you.”
- ii) Both the KJV and NKJV do have it.
- c) There is obviously a difference in what the two different readings actually say.
  - i) In the first case it is personal, in the second, it is sin but not necessarily “against you.”
  - ii) In my opinion, the remaining portions of the passage, the overall context, dictate that the reading without “against you” is the more correct and acceptable reading.
  - iii) Regardless of the “against you” or not, the end of verse 15:

**If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.**

- (1) Speaks to restoration – either to the faith or of the relationship damaged by the personal sin.
- iv) However, from that point on, we would handle the personal offense or “sin” differently than in an observed “sin.”
- v) The fact is that when we look at verses 21 ff, Peter gets clarification on that very point.
- d) Let’s look for a minute at some of the contextual points that speak to this being an observed sin rather than a sin “against you.”
  - i) **First** – the next statement Jesus makes is:

**take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.**

- (1) If this offense is assumed to be private and we are to address it in private, how would we have one or two others who could establish the sin by evidence?
  - (a) Slander, lying, verbal assault, physical assault ...
- ii) **Second** – Jesus then says:

**tell it to the church.**

- (1) If this is an offense against you that is not also an offense against God, does this not violate the first idea of keeping it private?
- iii) **Third** – in the case of a personal offense, I find that type treatment of the person to be very contrary to what Jesus teaches in other places.
- iv) Paul also speaks of the way we should treat each other:

**Colossians 3:12–14 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

- e) When we look ahead to verses 21 through 35, we will see clearly that things of a personal nature must be handled first by forgiveness.
- 3) Now, there are many offenses that might be done to us personally that could cause this set of actions to come into play.
- a) Again, we would be talking about not just a problem between two people but someone slandering, lying, verbally assaulting, physically assaulting you.
  - b) It is still up to us to attempt to forgive before we attempt any rectification of the problem.
- 4) However, these are not as likely as us just seeing a sin in someone and needing to address it for the purpose of restoration.
- 5) Let’s continue with verses 18 through 20 ...

**Matthew 18:18–20(ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

- 6) Verse 18 is very similar to the statement made to Peter and the other disciples at Peter’s confession back in Matthew 16:18 ff.
- a) However, here the authority belongs to the church – the words “you” in this verse are plural.
  - b) And in the context of the last passage, the “binding” and “loosing” refer to the decisions of the church in conflicts and disciplines.
  - c) The intent is for the church’s decisions to be God-guided and based on discernment of God’s Word.
  - d) Barton comments on this:

“Believers have the responsibility, therefore, to bring their problems to the church, and the church has the responsibility to use God’s guidance in seeking to discipline

members. Handling problems God's way will have an impact now and for eternity."<sup>42</sup>

- e) All of this is to my thinking further evidence that the idea being put forth in the last passage is meant not as sin "against you" but general sin.
- 7) Verse 19 is often linked to verse 18 saying that even a small group (church) fits this pattern.
  - a) However, others think that it links instead to the previous verses where we are dealing with restoring a brother or sister.
- 8) Personally, I can see it being applied either way provided God's word is followed and proper motives are displayed.
  - a) The real point in either case is that the individual church and even a smaller group dealing with restoring a brother or sister have the power with God's help to make right and proper decisions.
    - i) With that comes a responsibility of prayer, self-control, study, and discernment all of which God will help us with.

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<sup>42</sup> Bruce B. Barton, [Matthew](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 361.