

I. Intro

A. Text: **Matt. 18:6-9**

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. ⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! ⁸ “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. ⁹ 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. (Matt. 18:6-9)

B. Recap

²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (Matt. 18:21-22)

1. Culture of Forgiveness
 - a. Not a mechanical act, but a fluid way of life.
 - b. Principal Characteristic of Disciples
 - c. Offense Is A Deadly Trap

Offend (chabal #H2254): to bind, to deal corruptly, to twist.

Offend (skandalon #G4625): to cause one to fall into a snare or trap, to cause one to trip and stumble.

- d. Offence Starts in the Heart and Quickly Spreads
- e. Offence Separates/Isolates
 - i. Prov. 18:19: *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.*
2. God’s Posture Toward Offense
 - a. The God of Accountability

¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:10)

- i. Our Sin Made Us Enemies of God
- b. The Son of Man Came to deal with sin and offense personally.
 - i. Demanded both justice and revenge
 - ii. His death and resurrection opened the trap to release us and forever free us.
- c. **Forgive**: To send away, to release, to let someone go.

C. Discussion on Offense/Forgiveness is a Response to a question about greatness. (v. 1)

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matt. 18:1)

1. Jesus called up a little child and explained that greatness in the Kingdom looks a lot like childlike-ness.

“... Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:3-4)

- a. Childlike Humility is the posture of greatness and is a distinctive of the Kingdom.
- b. If the Kingdom culture is about child-like humility, then who will protect when others try to take advantage?

II. Body

A. God Is Aggressive Toward Offense

1. Protector of Little Ones (v.6)

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. (Matt. 18:6)

- a. As a Father protects a defenseless child, so our heavenly Father exacts vengeance on anyone who causes one of his little ones to stumble.
- 2. Offense Is Inevitable, But Not Excusable (**v.7**)

*⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! (**Matt. 18:7**)*

- a. As natural as offenses are in this world, have nothing to do with it.
- b. Woe to the one who causes offense.
- 3. Jesus Invites To Confront Offenses Like He Does (**v.8-9**)

*⁸ 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. ⁹ 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. (**Mat. 18:8-9**)*

- a. Remove Offense No Matter the Cost

B. God Is Relentless Toward Offense

- 1. His Care and Concern is For “Little Ones” (**v.10**)

*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. (**Matt. 18:10**)*

- a. His protection of them is unprecedented
- b. Angels are dispatched to minister to them, protect them and report back intel.
- 2. Seeks Out the “Lost One” (**v.11-12**)

*¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. 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? (**Matt. 18:11-12**)*

- a. “Lost one” is linked to the idea of a “Little One”.
- b. Leaves the 99 to seek out the one.

i. Rejoices over that one. (v.13)

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. (Matt. 18:13)

c. The Father is not willing to lose one (v.14)

¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (Matt. 18:14)

C. God Calls Disciples to Approach Offenses With His Passion

1. Go over mountains, through valleys and across the wilderness to win one (v.15-17)

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. 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.' 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. (Matt. 18:15-17)

- a. Again, not a mechanical formula as much as it is a culture.
- b. Enlist every measure and resource at your disposal to go after that "lost one".
- c. Involve others (if you need help).

2. God Has Delegated Unbelievable Corporate Authority to Demolish Offenses (v.18-20)

¹⁸ 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." (Matt. 18:18-20)

- a. Speaks to the way in which God empowers the church to deal with offenses.
- b. Where two or three are gathered in my name... concerning confronting offenses... I am there.

III. Conclusion

- A. Forgiveness is not simply something we've been commanded to do.
 - 1. Forgiveness defines who we are.
 - 2. C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory (**Mere Christianity**)
 - a. *"I find that when I ask God to forgive me, I am really asking Him to do something quite different... I am not asking Him to forgive me, but to excuse me."*
 - b. *"To be a Christian is to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable."* – C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory