



MATTHEW 5:21-26

21 "You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. 22 But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister will be subject to the court. Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be subject to hellfire. 23 So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you're on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny. (CSB)

MATTHEW 18:15-20

15 "If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he won't listen, take one or two others with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. 17 If he doesn't pay attention to them, tell the church. If he doesn't pay attention even to the church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them." (CSB)

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT → MATT 5:21-26

- The term "fool" is (in Greek = *moros*)...where we get the word *moron*
 - *The meaning wasn't about judging someone's IQ but rather one's moral condition*
 - It was used to describe anyone who denied God's existence & therefore, fell to further evil
- Jesus is warning us not to think it is OK just because we have not literally killed anyone
- *We are still guilty enough to receive punishment if we have harbored anger and contempt*
- He basically claims that if you have ever even wished someone dead...then your heart has already experienced murder (that seems a bit harsh, right?)
- Jesus is demanding a radical righteousness that is not merely abstaining from outward sin...but sin that originates from the heart
- Which is, once again, meant to point us to our only hope...in Jesus Christ
 - So if you are *murderer* in your heart...then Jesus is welcoming you to Him, who alone, can rescue you from yourself
- Jesus gave two illustrations with steps for us to take when bitter feelings begin to fester between us

(1) In regard to worship

- It is far more important to be relationally restored to your brother (or sister) than it is to pursue outwardly worshiping Jesus
- Worship is simply a pretense if we have offended someone else in such a way that they are holding a grudge against us

"Ceremony, regular attendance at worship, & giving will never produce a clear conscience. If we are at odds with others because of our actions & are unwilling to do anything about it, attendance at a worship service is an exercise in hypocritical futility. We need to first attempt to make things right. Similarly, sometimes the reason our prayers are hollow is because we have offended another brother or sister & are not willing to do anything about it." - Martin Lloyd Jones

- As important as love and relationship is to being a follower of Jesus, then we must be discerning when it comes to our relationship with one another
 - And this discernment comes from the Holy Spirit, as we walk by Him

"...walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh" - Galatians 5:16

(2) In regard to legal issues

- Jesus' urges His followers...you...me...to seek restoration...ASAP
- The longer you wait, the more likely the issue may end up being a legal mess
- Most personal conflicts can be resolved restoratively if we are willing to humbly take the steps needed
- Although we are far from perfect, followers of Jesus should remain aware of our attitude toward others
- The more we continue to **become like Jesus**, the more we learn hostility, anger, and contempt are not characteristics of Jesus
 - And therefore, should not be characteristics in our life
- This is so true among *one another* (our fellow followers of Jesus) that Jesus tells us to stop trying to worship, and leave immediately to pursue restoration in the relationship
- If you are in a season of spiritual dryness...could it be (partly at least) because you have been offensive to someone?
 - If so, take some time right now...to confess this to one another, and commit to taking steps to restore the relationship TODAY

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT → MATT 18:15-20

WHY confront? Why do we need to practice church discipline?

- **Church discipline** is practiced in the local church about as much as public spanking is in the Walmart...as in...it isn't
 - As offended and sensitive as our culture seems to be today, it is difficult for most of us to even think about someone being excommunicated from our church
- It is a question Jesus does not even address...as He jumps immediately to the **how**
- Followers of Jesus should confront followers of Jesus who are sinning because:
 - We value even one straying sheep

- We hope for forgiveness and family reconciliation
- We care about the unity and purity of the church and the glory of God's name
- Because confrontation with *one another* is a loving command from our loving Savior

How to Confront

Disclaimer:

- *Note who is confronting whom—brother to brother*
 - These are not directions for the church's confrontation of the world
 - There is a time and place for confronting a non-believing neighbor and the non-believing world...verse 15 does not address that
- *Note when this disciple to disciple confrontation is to occur*
 - Only "if your brother sins against you"
 - Jesus is not saying we should all be digging in everyone's closet trying to find dirt to call out
 - He is addressing the need to confront sin...& specifically, sin between the two of you
 - However, this doesn't mean that if you see a brother publicly disgracing Christ you wouldn't say or do something
- *Note Jesus is assuming His followers WILL sin*
 - *By the way He responds to Peter in vs21*
 - *By the prayer He taught us to pray..."Father, . . . forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us"*

Step 1: GO...privately and humbly (vs15)

- ***GO, empowered by love and the Holy Spirit to have a conversation***
- Don't wait for them to make the first move
- Don't be passive aggressive
- Don't be condescending
- Don't be indifferent
- It is simply a private conversation that has been bathed in prayer to discern your motive, your level of assertiveness, and the timing

"My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19, 20)

- The hopeful purpose for GOing is restoration of our brother/sister to God and fellowship with the Church

"Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. . . . [But] In confession, the light of the gospel breaks into the darkness and seclusion of the heart. The sin must be brought to the light. . . . Since the confession of sin is made in the presence of a Christian brother, the last stronghold of self-justification is abandoned. The sinner surrenders; he gives up all his evil. He gives his heart to God, and he finds the forgiveness of all his sin in the fellowship of Jesus Christ and his brother. The expressed, acknowledged sin has lost all its power. It has been revealed for he has cast off his

sin from him. Now he stands in the fellowship of sinners who live by the grace of God and the cross of Christ.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Step 2: GO...with evidence (vs16)

- **Take 1 or 2 mutual/trusted friends to address the sin issue**
- Most of us when confronted get defensive
 - And our defensiveness is typically rooted in pride

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6)

- Humility is a mark of maturity in followers of Jesus, and sometimes it takes witnesses to arouse our humility
- The principles Jesus teaches here are based on *Deuteronomy 19:15*
- It is disciples disciplining disciples humbly, patiently, graciously, and restoratively
 - This is not a punitive action

Step 3: GO...before the church (vs17)

- **Bring the unrepentant sin issue before the church family**
- If they do not to listen to the two or three witnesses, then the next step (rooted in love) is to share it to [all] the church
- Then if they still refuse (to listen) to seemingly everyone in the body, then let them be to you [plural—the church] as a Gentile and a tax collector
- Disallow them to be an active participant in any church fellowship for as long they remain unrepentant and blatantly sinful
 - OT examples: *Genesis 17:14; Exodus 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38*
 - NT examples: *2 John 10; Titus 3:10; 1 Corinthians 5:11*
- For the hope, that eventually, this excommunication and shunning would lead to repentance, and a welcomed return

"You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 5:5)

"Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:15). That is, "have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thessalonians 3:14)

Step 4: Case dismissed (vv 18-20)

- In these closing verses, Jesus gives His authority to forgive sins (to loose) or not forgive sins (to bind) into the hands of the church
- If the local church gathers together in the name of Christ (even 2 or 3) to judge another brother (that's the context, v. 17 especially)
 - Then what these brothers decide on earth is decided in Heaven
- If/when you follow the guidelines Jesus gives (vv15-17), then you basically get God's endorsement and empowerment

THINGS to consider:

- **Have you ever wondered at how quickly we become angry at personal offenses...**
 - **And yet how 'gracious' (ie. passive) we seem to be with sin and injustice?**

- **Why is this?**
- **Have you ever been confronted by someone about something?**
 - **How did you respond? Defensively? Passively? Humbly?**
- **Have you ever confronted someone?**
 - **How did you approach it? Humbly? Angrily? Impulsively? Restoratively?**
- **Why, if we can readily admit we all have issues and are prone to wander (spiritually), are we so afraid of:**
 - **A...confronting someone we love**
 - **B...being confronted by someone (we know loves and cares for us)?**
- **Discuss what the church would look like when we begin investing in relationships enough to:**
 - **Seek forgiveness**
 - **Offer forgiveness**
 - **Seek repentance**
 - **Experience restoration**

PRACTICES: Discuss how you can begin to exercise the following practices this week in your life and pray for each other to follow through

PRACTICE →

- **Practice investing in restoration of relationship with one another**
 - Are you harboring bitterness toward another follower of Jesus?
 - What steps can you take this week to *leave the altar* and seek or offer forgiveness?
 - Share stories of relationships that have been restored due to a willingness to seek and offer forgiveness
- **Practice investing in church discipline**
 - Is a follower of Jesus you know living in active sin?
 - Have you prayed about it?
 - Are you willing to love them enough to approach them about it?
 - Have you ever practiced **step 2** by taking 2 or 3 witnesses to resolve a sin issue?
 - What was the result?
 - Share stories of how you have seen the Matt 18 discipline process lead to repentance and restoration