

Matthew 21-07-25a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is a privilege to have everyone here. Those of you who are visiting can fill out a card in front of you and put it in the offering plate when it comes by.

Now we have no pews, no offering plates, and no visitor cards, so you're off the hook. But this is the 25th day of July 2021 and we're continuing our study in Matthew chapter 18, picking up at verse 15, Matthew 18, 15. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we'll get started.

Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for another opportunity to spend time together looking at your word and attempting to learn and grow and be a greater blessing to each other and shine as lights in the world. We pray that as we look at this portion of the scriptures that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, help us to understand it, and make good use of it in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew chapter 18, verse 15 says, 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. But if you will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the gathering.

Of course, in these days, there wasn't such a thing as the church. So the word ecclesia just means the group that assembles for a purpose. Kaleo, to call together.

Ec means out. You call them out of the population. They're meeting for a purpose.

This could be a It could be a meeting for marketing purposes, for business purposes. In these days when Jesus spoke, no such thing as a church that we understand today. So when it says church, it just means tell it to the group.

This would be the concerned group. It might be a family. If it's within the family, it might be a small community of associates of whatever kind.

Just the people that are directly affected by this problem would be the ones called together. So call together everybody that is affected, everybody that's close to the situation and knows what's going on. And if he refuses even to hear the group, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

How were heathens and tax collectors treated? They were outside the group. It doesn't mean to harm them, to egg their house or to persecute or try to inflict some kind of punishment on them. They're just kept at arm's length.

They're at a distance. Merciful and humble people would pray for heathens and tax collectors. If they would come to a knowledge of God, vengeance is mine, I will repay.

It's not their place to, he doesn't say figure out a good punishment and make them pay for this wrong. He just says keep them at arm's length. You don't cultivate association with heathens and tax collectors.

That's the way to end up partaking of their problems. Then he says, assuredly I say to you, now this is the interesting part. So many people have come to this passage.

You hear it on the radio. You hear it in a lot of different denominations and churches. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.

Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 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. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.

Patty and I have agreed several times that a substantial sum of money in the bank would be a wonderful thing. If I woke up one morning and there was six or seven figures in my bank balance, we agree on earth and we could easily take this verse and start praying in faith or however we think it might work and then start checking that online bank balance. We know that that's not what Jesus means.

So what does he mean? What is our standard rule for figuring out what scripture says? How do we establish what is being said? There's three things we look for. Context, context, and context. If you take this out of its context and just make a refrigerator magnet and say, two of you agree it will be done for you in heaven.

I could imagine any number of things. Harm those who are harming me, bless those who are blessing me, give me what I want. The only reason we have any hope of understanding what Jesus means here is looking at what is in the context.

You remember in preceding weeks, this started out with somebody causing somebody else to stumble. Remember in the earlier part of the chapter, whoever causes one of these little ones, verse six, Matthew 18, six, whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me, those who are trusting me, if you cause them to sin, it would be better to have the donkey stone, the upper millstone that the donkey rolls around, put around your neck, cast into the bottom of the sea, right? So the context here is brother to brother sin. If someone causes someone in the family, in this case, he starts out talking about the little ones because like a child, they are not out for their own gain.

They're not trying to gain fame or substance or power. They have the innocence of a child. And if you cause them to offend, i.e. you cause them to sin, you're in big trouble.

Woe to the world, he says in the next verse, because of offenses, sin in the world creates woe. These offenses are going to come, but woe to the one by whom they come. This whole section here is talking about sin in the camp, brother to brother sin, sin within the family.

What do you do about it? How should you think of it? It's a very important subject. Jesus says it's life and death. It would be better for you to drown with no hope of rescue than to cause sin in the family.

And when he starts talking about hands and feet and eyes being cut off and plucked out, what is he talking about? If these things cause offense, cause you to sin in the family, relationships are the most important thing. Even unbelievers. I saw an article this past week where someone was saying for the thousandth time, family is everything.

Family is most important. Well, many of our family relationships are as important to us as our hand or our foot or our eye. They're that valuable.

They're that vital. We think we really can't do without them. These links and these associations, shared memories, shared experiences, shared trials, shared triumphs.

There are no closer relationships. There is a friend that sticks close like a brother. These vital relationships are as important as it gets in human life.

That's why scripture calls fellow believers, brothers, brothers and sisters. Young believers are called children in the family of faith because those relationships should be as important as our family relationships that are by birth and by descendancy. So that's the context.

Sin in and among these very close personal links. And when he says, if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off. There are times when even these close vital associations have to be distanced.

Have to have the heathen and tax collector separation invoked because what's more important? Maintaining that link at all costs and allowing sin to perpetuate. Maybe it's every time you get together, gossip ensues and there's judging and backbiting and maligning and a lot of negativity and gossip and things being said that should not be said. If you can't clean that out of the relationship, if every time you get together, every time you converse, every time you work together, sit together, converse, eat, whatever it is, cut that off.

No matter how vital it is, pluck it out. No matter how vital it is, it is better for you to enter into the fullness of eternal life, the blessing and reward and opportunity that's in God's future kingdom than to try to maintain that and lose all of that. What is the thinking that Jesus is invoking here? Let's say that my brother Matthew and I suddenly start causing each other to sin.

I can pick on us because I don't think that'll ever happen, but in the hypothetical, Matthew and I, something happens and we've really, every time we get together, it just degenerates into an awful ugly scene. He's sinning. I'm sinning.

Maybe he's not sinning, but I sin. I'm caused to sin. He's caused to sin.

I lead him into sin. It's just toxic. That's what they call it in the modern day.

It's a toxic relationship. Now, Jesus says, even though he's like your right hand, you've got to put some distance, separate, cut that off, cut off that association, cease getting into those situations, send a birthday card and a Christmas card, and other than that, cut it off. This enables him and me both to enter into life, into the future kingdom.

That's what Jesus means by life. It's the future kingdom. Our salvation is not on the line, but blessing and reward and opportunity in the future is.

Now, what's going to happen when we enter into life? Are we going to take our sin and our fallenness and our corruption and our tendency to hurt each other into the eternal future? No, we're not. So what is Jesus saying here when he says cut off your hand? You might enter into life minus that hand, but what's going to happen in the eternal future? Are there any maimed people in God's kingdom? All losses are restored, right? Everyone is healed. He and I can get back together and enjoy each other's company for the eternal future, but we'll only be able to do that if we separate now so that we're not leading one another into sin.

Cut that hand off now, enter into life. In life, that hand is going to be restored. I won't cause him to sin in the eternal future, but the only way that's going to happen, neither one of us is going to enter in if we just keep causing each other problems now.

This is a look to the future. It's faith in God's promises of restoration, of cleansing, of fulfillment, of hope and opportunity in the kingdoms to come, kingdom of the son and followed by the kingdom of the father, right? So this is taking the long view. It's not that different from what Paul says when he says this momentary light affliction that we suffer here.

We are taking a long, slow, degenerating road toward death. Our bodies get a little bit less capable every day. Our minds get a little bit less capable.

Our eyesight gets a little bit less capable every day. We're afflicted. We are in the presence of sin.

We sin. We cause others to sin. Others cause us to sin.

We're afflicted. This is tribulation, but our momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory. Work through it now.

Be inoculated. We are getting vaccinated for sin. We're exposed to it.

God is teaching us how to react against it, to hate it, to flee it, to separate from it. What's going to happen in the eternal future? Does God have to prevent me from making choices so that I don't wind up sinning in heaven, sinning in the future kingdom? Why will people that are resurrected and go into God's kingdom not sin? For the same reason that once you stick your hand on a hot skillet and raise blisters on your fingers, you don't do that anymore. I've been exposed to that.

I know the detriment. I have experienced the pain. I am never sticking my hand on a hot surface intentionally again.

We will never intentionally sin in the eternal future because we're exposed here. We feel the pain. We see the degeneration.

We experience the hardship and the sorrow. And in some cases, that hardship and sorrow involves disconnecting where the connection creates sin in either direction. If your hand offends you, if your foot offends you, cut it off.

If your eye offends you, as vital as that seems, pluck it out. It's better to enter into life having lost that relationship on this earth because you're going to gain it back when you get there again. Now, what is our context? Interaction, relationship between believers, right? And when those relationships result in sin, sin is transferring in one direction or another.

Take heed verse 10 that you do not despise one of these little ones. Don't take their well-being lightly. What does Philippians chapter 2 tell us? The mind that was in Christ Jesus should be in us.

Who didn't just look out for his own interest. He came and was looking out for us. Looking out not only for our own interest but also for the interest of others.

Don't take lightly the effect you have on someone else. Don't take lightly the opportunity you have to be a blessing to someone else. Don't despise one of these little ones who believe in me.

These are fellow believers. We need to spend a little time thinking about what effect do I have in the association with fellow little ones. Am I a cause of problems? Do I need to cultivate association and try to be blessed and be a blessing in that family relationship? Or is this one that creates more harm than good and I need to set a distance? Don't take association with other little ones lightly.

Analyze it. See whether it is beneficial or harmful and act accordingly. Their angels are always beholding the face of my father who is in heaven.

God is keeping track of how much attention we pay to each other and there are angels as it were reporting how things are going. God knows whether we're willing to look at it or not. Verse 11 is not in the Bible.

You can just scratch it through if you haven't done so already. They've brought that in from a parallel passage. Then Jesus says, what do you think if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray? Does he not leave the 99 and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? If he finds it, he rejoices more over that than the 99 that did not go astray.

Even so, it is not the will of your father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. God is paying attention to each and every one of us and looking out for us. Now we come to our passage.

So you can see the context is all about our little ones being benefited or are they being harmed? Are they being blessed or are they being sinned against? God is paying close attention. So if your brother sins against you, I just think this is so interesting because you would think if I was writing scripture, just making it up out of my head, I would say, if you commit a sin against your brother, go and confess your fault to him and say, I'm sorry, I sinned against you. Please forgive me.

Seek forgiveness from this one you have sinned against. Jesus says the exact opposite. Why? Why does he say this? I had to really think about this for a while.

You would think the guilty party needs to fess up and go make it right. A lot of rehabilitation programs say, once you reach a certain stage of recovery, you need to go talk to all of the people that you've harmed and tell them you're sorry and try to make restitution. Restitution is a big part of humanly devised recovery programs.

Jesus' program is the opposite, and I ask myself, why is that? If someone sins against you, you have to go approach them. Why would that be? Who has more objectivity in this situation? Who is in a position to judge what is right and what is wrong, what is sinful and what is not? The person perpetrating the sin may think they're completely right. Well, there's nothing to confess.

It's their fault. Why would I go confess something I don't believe I did anything wrong? When Jesus says, you, your brother has sinned against you, you go. He's talking to people who are little ones, who are humble, who are searching their own hearts in the light of scripture and asking God, as David does in Psalm 51, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me. The little ones, the faithful ones, the obedient ones that Jesus is talking to here already know their own faults, have confessed them, and have biblical objectivity to

know what is a sin and what isn't.

And anybody who tries to go do this and they haven't first cleansed themselves, you remember when Jesus says about the beam and the moat, you know, if you've got a board in your own eye, don't go talking to somebody else about the speck in theirs. He's already taught that lesson earlier in Matthew, right? So, you got to make sure you don't have any lumber in your own vision before you go telling somebody, hey, by the way, there's a speck here, you've sinned against me. That's taken for granted here.

If your brother sins against you, go and... And by the way, this is a command from Jesus. This is an imperative. The word go is a command.

The only people that are going to follow Jesus' command in faith are people who are squared away. If you're messing this up, none of it applies anyway. So, go and it says, tell him his fault.

This is where we're going to spend a little time this morning. Tell him his fault. There's no word for tell, and there's no word for fault.

That is not what's in the Greek here. If your brother sins against you, there's really not even a word for against. This is into, unto, or with a view toward.

This is in your direction. It's not so much against in the sense of enemyship or opposition or attack, but there is a sin that is pointed in your direction. You're in view and you're the target.

It literally means sins into you, sins unto you, sins with respect to you. Against sounds like there's more hostility. In many cases, this may be unintentional sin, and it is harmful.

Maybe it's a sin of omission, failing to do a thing, and there was no sense of attack. It's not like, well, I'm going to hit you in the head with a shovel. This is more like failure to fulfill a commitment, failure to do good where good is required.

And so it's sin in the direction of you. In some way, this missing the mark has taken place. It says, go and tell him his fault.

The word tell him his fault. This is a really interesting word. I'm not going to say it many times, but in Greek, this is a leg co a leg co.

It's a single word that they have to translate by tell him his fault. But looking at how this word is in scripture, we find out that it means a lot more than that. That's going and saying, Hey, you sinned against me.

That is not what this word means at all. If you turn back to Luke chapter three or forward, actually to Luke chapter three, this is talking about John the Baptist. Why did John the Baptist get locked up in prison and ultimately have his head on a platter? Well,

this is in Luke chapter three, verse 19.

All of chapter three records the preaching of John the Baptist. He's the forerunner for the Lord Jesus. He says the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

He says, you brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come. He's preaching and preaching all the way through chapter three. And in verse 18, it says with many other exhortations, he preached to the people.

It just sums up everything John the Baptist was doing down there with his hairy shirt and his locusts and honey by the Jordan river, baptizing, preaching, calling out sin, righteousness, and judgment, right? Then in verse 19, it says Herod, the Tetrarch being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother, Philip's wife. And for all the evils, which Herod had done added this above all that he shut up John in prison. John the Baptist called out to the attention of the people, the wrongness of Herod, the Tetrarch insinuating away his brother's wife and marrying her himself.

Now, how did John do this? He didn't go to Herod. He didn't talk to him. He didn't say now, Herod, you know, better than this.

Why don't we pray together and see if you can't come to a better arrangement. What does he do? He demonstrates with evidence. He cites the law of Moses, the king of the Jews here.

Herod is the nominal king of the Jews. He's supposed to represent the Jews. He's supposed to be an example to the Jews.

And instead he is violating the law of Moses in the marriage aspect. She was never properly disconnected from his brother and so on. So John cites the law, cites the behavior of Herod and says this is wrong.

It does not mean rebuke. It means demonstrate the error. It means to expose or show guilt by evidence.

This is what the prosecutor does in a court trial. You bring in the factual evidence that shows guilt. You can't just go to somebody and say, hey, you sinned against me.

You've got to say, you remember that incident that happened a few days ago? This is what you did. This is what I did. This is what should happen between us.

According to God's word, here's where failure occurred on your part. It's objective. It's evidenced and it should be done dispassionately.

There's not a lot of yelling and screaming. In this case, there wasn't even contact between Herod and John the Baptist. He demonstrated to the people that what the king had done was wrong from scripture.

That's Elegco. For an even clearer example, turn to John chapter 3. Remember, as soon as you say John 3, you've got John 3.16. But this is Jesus talking to Nicodemus. When he says God so loved the world, he's talking to Nicodemus in an evening conversation.

Well, this is John chapter 3 verse 20. You've got 3.16 there. God so loved the world.

17. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but the world through him might be saved. This is the context of our John 3.20 passage.

It's not for the purpose of condemnation. God didn't send Jesus here to guilt everyone into abject submission. It is to heal, to bring together, to save, to unite, to have God's children able to approach God.

That's why God sent Jesus into the world, not to condemn. And in Elegco, this is not condemnation. This is demonstration.

You do the demonstration. The person should arrive at an understanding of their own guilt. God didn't send Jesus to condemn the world.

He sent him so that he might be saved. Why is Jesus sending one brother to another here? Not to condemn him, but so that he can be restored. That's the purpose is restoration.

The one who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. This is the condemnation that light has come into the world. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

So making this demonstration is going to separate people into two groups, just like in our Matthew 18 passage. If you go to someone and demonstrate that sin has been committed and you know about it because it was toward you, do this objectively, do it dispassionately, do it with the encouragement and with the design that this person and your fellowship and your relationship be restored. That's the purpose, not to condemn, but to restore.

Look at verse 20. Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. That word exposed, circle it and put right beside it.

Matthew chapter 18, verse 15 and following our passage, Elegco, the light, the light doesn't start shouting condemnations and accusations, does it? The light just shines and exposes what is already there. If your deeds are evil and light shines on them and they are exposed as evil, you have to make a choice. You can either flee the light so that you can get into the darkness and continue those bad deeds.

Or once these things are exposed, you say, wow, I've got to change my ways. I've got to

do something different. The light shines on it.

This is what the approach one brother to another should do is simply shine a light, creates a decision point for the other person. Our purpose is not condemnation. Our purpose is salvation.

In this case, salvation saving the relationship, saving the opportunity to be united in faith and in Christ. That's the goal. So it makes a lot of sense here in, you don't have to turn there, but in John chapter 16, verse eight, you remember the very well-known we've quoted it a hundred times.

When the Holy Spirit comes into the world, what is he going to do? Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit comes, he will do what? He will convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Guess what the word convince, convict is there? Elegco. The Holy Spirit doesn't come to condemn.

The Holy Spirit comes and shines the light of sin, righteousness, and judgment with a view toward salvation. The Spirit comes and convicts the world, elegcos the world, hoping that they will come to Christ, be cleansed, be forgiven, be restored, be renewed, be connected to God, be given a future eternal life. The Holy Spirit doesn't come so that he can judge and smash with a hammer and punish.

It is to make the issue clear so that the person can make a decision. If they are evil, they're going to reject the ministry of the Spirit. What does Jesus call that? It is the one unforgivable sin.

All other sin will be forgiven men. But if you reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit, it's called blaspheming the Holy Spirit. That's the one unforgivable sin.

Jesus says that sin is not forgiven in this life or in the life to come. Why? If you reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit, you can never come to Christ. The Holy Spirit doesn't speak of himself, about himself, or from his own behest.

He talks about Christ. And if you reject his testimony, you can't be saved. It's the one unforgivable sin.

People do not go into eternal condemnation because of sins they have committed. Jesus paid for everybody's sins on the cross. 1 John 2.2. He's the propitiation, not just for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

So why do people go into eternal condemnation? The one unforgivable sin. The Holy Spirit has come and done this exposing, this telling of the status. And men love darkness rather than light.

They flee that. They reject that testimony. And that relationship with God is never

connected.

It's never brought to being. And the only result of that is eternal condemnation. So the word convict in John 16.8, the Holy Spirit will convict, is the very same word.

If your brother sins against you, go and make the issue clear. With a view toward recovery, a view toward restoration, a view toward uniting that relationship in the same way the Holy Spirit does us when he comes to us and says, you need Christ to reject that message results in no relationship. Same thing when a brother approaches another and tries two or three times, even recruiting others.

And there is no acknowledgement. There is no restoration. Well, now there's that separation, that hand or foot or eye is cut off, plucked out.

Heathen tax collector status. You've made the approach. The approach was rejected.

Keep a distance. God approaches people on this earth, makes the issue clear. If they run from the light and seek out darkness because their deeds are evil and they enjoy it, and that's their choice, God leaves them to themselves.

It'll come up again at the judgment. It's important to understand what this word means. Telling him his fault doesn't catch it.

Exposing it, hoping for relationship and restoration rather than separation and condemnation is the goal. So that would condition the attitude with which we do this and the care and the tact and the love that we would express in so doing. God loves the world.

When God sends his Holy Spirit, it is in love, not to condemn, but to make it clear that he loved the world enough to send his son to die for us. That should be our attitude when there is sin in the camp, sin between brethren. And it's our job to go and expose that issue with the goal of healing and restoration.

Very clear when you look at these parallel passages where this very same word is used. Well, let's pause here and take our break. We'll have some fellowship.

You have a chance to recharge our coffee cups. When we come back, we'll pick up here and see what the result of this is, if he hears or if he does not. And it is equally fascinating to look at what scripture says about those who hear and those who do not and how we can know what to do in that case and what the outcome of that is.

That takes us all the way through verse 21. So we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we will continue at this point.