

## **Matthew 21-07-25b**

OK, we're ready to resume our study here. We're going to move quickly through the remainder of what we're looking at in Matthew chapter 18. Jesus is talking to his disciples about relationships between brethren, between brothers.

In that day, they would have understood this to be their fellow Jews, their fellow Israelites. They were the people of God. Everyone else were outsiders.

So if there is a division, if there's a dissension, if there is sin that has created a separation, this is the responsibility. The person who recognizes the sin, who is the victim of the sin, has the responsibility. This is not a suggestion.

It's an aorist imperative in Greek. Jesus says, you go and demonstrate, show by evidence, do it objectively, do it in love, do it with the objective and the goal of restoration in the same way that the Holy Spirit convicts with the idea for salvation. God sent his son not to condemn the world, but so the world could be saved.

Same words, same idea. We want fellowship. We want what God wants, which is unity among the brethren.

And as Paul will say later on, to the extent that it is up to you, live peaceably with all men. To the extent that it's up to you, you do your best to heal the breach. You do your best to show where the problem is and give someone the opportunity to change their mind, change their way to acknowledge.

When the Holy Spirit comes and elenchos us of our sins, what are we supposed to do? What does 1st John 1.9 say? We confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Forgiveness of sin is so important.

Remember in the Lord's Prayer, forgive us our trespasses to the extent that we forgive each other our trespasses. And Jesus says, if you do not forgive your brother, you are not forgiven. So to even begin this process, we have to already have the idea in our heart of forgiveness.

If you haven't forgiven someone in your heart, how can you possibly go to them in love and seek restoration? Are you trying to humiliate them? Are you trying to shame them? Are you trying to create some sort of guilt and widen the breach when you go and say, aha, you've done this wrong? It's just the opposite. What if God treated us that way? Jesus is about to give a parable about debts owed to somebody that's in a higher position. And we're going to have a demonstration because all of this is context.

You remember the parable. We're going to look at it in detail of where there was a king, a master who had a servant who owed him 10,000 talents owed him. Remember, a talent was what they would pay a guy or a denarius was what they would pay a guy for a

day's work.

10,000 talents is just impossible. It's an impossible amount. This would be like 15 million dollars.

He owed him 15 million dollars. And the master, the king, forgives the servant and says, let's just forget about that. You don't have to pay it back.

But then that servant has an underservant who owes him a few dollars. And he says, pay me what you owe me. And the servant says, I haven't got it, but I'll do my best to pay you.

And he says, no. And he he doesn't forgive the debt. And he puts this guy in a real tight because of the debt.

Well, the king hears about it and unforgives. You want to talk about something scary in scripture. We'll see this in that parable.

But because this servant did not forgive his fellow servant, a small debt, the huge debt that he owes the master is unforgiven. He re-institutes the debt after it has been forgiven. Forgiven sins, according to that parable, can be unforgiven if we do not have a forgiving heart.

Now, if that doesn't scare you into paying close attention to this passage, I don't know what will. Do you really want forgiven sins to be put back on the books? That's what Jesus says in more than one place. Forgive us our trespasses to the extent that we forgive others their trespasses.

Have you got a grudge somewhere? Better offload that thing right here, right now. Unforgiven sin divides. In the family of God, it can divide God's children from God himself.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. Your prayers don't make it to the throne of grace when that separation due to sin is in view.

So, do you really want to hang on to a feeling of being wronged by somebody at the risk of everything that partakes of eternity and of life and hope and grace and God's cleansing, forgiving power? It is so not worth it. This is polishing the brass on the Titanic while the ship sinks. It's it's this is serious stuff we're looking at.

So, okay, I'm ready to do this restoration thing. I don't I don't want to have this breach persist and it be my fault. If there's going to be a separation, if somebody is going to be a heathen and a tax collector, I want it on their head.

I don't want it on my head and on my hands. So, I will do this imperative command from Jesus to seek restoration, to have that sheep that's been separated by sin brought back into the fold, as Jesus is going to illustrate. So, here we are in Matthew chapter 18.

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault. And all of that is this one word, *elencho*, make an objective demonstration, shine a light. This should be the light of truth, the light of scripture, the light that God himself shines.

God is light and in him is no darkness at all. This light shining on the situation ought to be God's light. God's light is merciful.

God's light is gracious. God's light is shined in love and in the hope that it will expose things that can be removed so that unity and fellowship can exist. That's the goal.

If he will not hear, try again. Now, this is really important here in verse 16. If he will not hear, this is the word *akuo*.

This is where we get the word *acoustics*. The *acoustics* in a room. I've got speakers that are made by AR, Acoustic Research.

They were one of the premier speaker makers back in the day. And there's two sets of them down at mom's house. And I've got another set, Acoustic Research, *Akuo*.

You want to hear, you want to hear clearly. You want to hear without distortion, without overdriving or lack of volume. You want a perfect reproduction of sound, *Akuo*.

So when this issue is made clear, we started out with looking at it, with sight. Now we're talking about hearing it. You go and present the evidence.

Here's what scripture says. Here's what ought to be. But here's what currently is in place.

And there's either a sin of commission or omission on your part. I know about this because I was the one that got hurt. If it has happened to me, it could be happening to others.

If you and I can come to an agreement on this, we can nip this thing in the bud. And it's not going to spread. It's not going to infect others.

It's not going to create an even greater division and harm. Right now, it's just you and me. So if he hears you at the end of verse 15, you have gained your brother.

This gain is a wonderful thing. This is the word that's used. Remember the parable of the talents where the guy gives out the coins and he sends his servants out and the one that got five comes back and he says, Master, I took your five talents and I have gained five more.

That's this word. This is like making money. You've invested in that relationship and there's profit.

It's the exact same word, K-E-R-D-O-O, if you want to know. But it's it's the word that means I invested and I got a return. It's not easy to go into these treacherous waters and approach someone and say, you know, you've committed a sin here and I'm the victim.

What do you think? Is there a way we can heal this up and make it right? If you make that investment, you've gained your brother. There is restoration. The breach is healed.

The cancer is cut out. There's no metastasizing. There's no spreading.

It doesn't infect others. It's forgiven. It's forgotten.

And all is well. You've gained. It's a profit.

But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more in order that and this again, this is the light of scripture being shined on that situation. If he will not hear, that's a new sin. Right.

Not listening to someone who is speaking the truth in love is a sin. So now there is a fresh. Insult, if you will, there's a there's a fresh problem.

So you can't just go back and say, well, you know, the fact that you're not listening to me is a new sin that the reason they didn't listen to the first place is for whatever reason, the case doesn't seem strong enough. So take one or two more. And then here is scripture shining a light on that situation.

By the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. This quote is here for a reason. You can't get through this passage without paying attention to this quote.

The standard in Israel, the standard according to God's law and God's word is you cannot convict somebody on the testimony of a single witness. There has to be a minimum of two witnesses. God doesn't convict the world on the testimony of a single witness.

The Holy Spirit comes. But what other testimony is there? Romans chapter one. What may be known of God is manifest in creation.

His eternal power and Godhead have been revealed. When you look at the heavens, when you look at creation, God is revealed. That's witness number one.

God's Holy Spirit comes and witnesses to the existence and the Godhead of Christ and of God, the father, sin, righteousness, and judgment. That's a second witness. The scriptures are a third witness.

And in the mouth of two or three witnesses, if people reject those witnesses, they're lost, they are headed for eternal condemnation. They've had three witnesses and rejected them all. And first and foremost, the witness of the Holy Spirit, blaspheming the Holy Spirit, like we talked about.

By the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. If he refuses to hear them. Now we're going to come back to verse 16.

So don't forget about it because it's going to explain something Jesus is about to say. If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the concerned group. Ekklesia, called out for a purpose, called out for a reason.

This is those who are in the know. These have to be witnesses. They're not uninvolved bystanders.

The Ekklesia are those who are also aware. They at least know the people involved. They may not be witnesses to the specific sin, but they are knowledgeable enough to render judgment.

You don't bring in a jury and say, this guy here stands accused of murder. What do you say? Guilty or not guilty? What do you have to do with a jury before you ask them for a verdict? You have to present the evidence. They have to be apprised of the facts.

Then they render a decision. This group has to be in a position to process the evidence that the original victim and the two or three witnesses are aware of. It's presented objectively.

Still, the goal is love. The goal is restoration. You're not hanging this person out to dry.

You're not calling. It doesn't go on to say, and if you will not listen to the group, pick up stones and stone them, drag their body out of the city and let the crows pick their bones clean or whatever carrion birds are out there, I guess crows eat carrion. But that's not what he says, is it? The goal of the two or three witnesses, the goal of the group is maybe with more voices in unison, you can convince, you can convert, you can turn someone who is on a bad path, the goal is reunification, not condemnation.

If he refuses even to hear the group, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. We have all tried. They're unwilling to admit any fault or any wrongdoing.

Well, you're outside the group. Someone who is willing to do this kind of act and be unrepentant is a threat to the rest of the group. So you're no longer, they, you know, in extreme cases, the Catholic Church and others have talked about excommunicating and revoking privileges.

And it sounds like cancel culture in the modern day. Well, you're going to make them

pay. There is no sense of retribution, of punishment.

Heathens and tax collectors, they weren't allowed to punch them when they saw them in the street or break their stuff and steal their goods and speak badly about them. What would a good Israelite do when seeing a heathen or a tax collector? Just walk on by. No positive interaction, no negative interaction.

You just, you just maintain a distance. Touch not the unclean thing. Hate the garment spotted by the flesh.

Just keep a distance. As soon as punishment or retribution or gossip and maligning and bitterness enter in, now you're the sinner. And that person can come to you and say, you know, you're sinning against me talking about me and labeling me and, you know, doing all manner of evil to me.

You've got to be neutral, distant and neutral. Anything else, now you're the sinner and you got a whole fresh set of problems. Cannot do this with any sin involved.

Now, look at verse 18. This is the payoff for all of the careful work we've done in these past couple of verses. Look at verse 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. Now, what are our three rules of interpretation? Context, again, and a third time. So what is Jesus talking about here in terms of binding and loosing? What is he specifically talking about? That relationship that you are seeking to heal.

If he listens to you and you have gained your brother, what did you just do? You bound up a wound. You have healed a breach. You have brought something together.

If you've gone two and three times and he will not hear you and you have decided, well, I've got to do the heathen and tax collector thing, what have you done? You have loosed that individual. There is sheep that is not going to come back to the fold despite all of your efforts to bring them back. And if you and one or two others have approached them and that person won't listen, you look at those one or two others that you approached, that person who sinned, what do you do? You look at each other and say, well, we're going to have to keep a distance.

We've made the approach. We've been rejected. You and I, you and I and you, us, the group, our policy now is going to be distance.

We need to agree on this. Right. And where you come to that conclusion based on this careful approach, you did not sin in the process, you didn't disrespect God's guidance and God's word and God's example in approach.

It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He doesn't approach unbelievers with condemnation. He approaches them with love and grace.

If we have followed that approach and that approach has been rejected, we look at each other and we say, well, as two or three, as an ecclesia, this person is now in the column of heathen and tax collector. We just need to be neutral and keep a distance. That's the proper response to heathens and tax collectors and to unrepentant sinners who have been approached and refuse to turn.

If they haven't turned toward the group, they haven't turned toward God either. Let God deal with them. So what you bind and loose here, this is not any old thing.

I'd sure like to find a half a million bucks in my account tomorrow. Patty agrees with me. This is not what we're talking about here.

Agreeing, binding and loosing is in the context of inter-group relationship, fraternal dealings within the family of God. And it continues in verse 19. And notice he says again in verse 19, just as he said, moreover, in verse 15, these connecting words say, I'm still talking about the same subject.

Moreover means we're still talking about little ones. We're talking about sheep. We're talking about those who are in the group.

And again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, very interesting construction here. Remember verse 16, take with you one or two more. Even if you only take one with you.

And what do you, what is this asking? What have, have one or two others gotten together with you and asked? What would you ask God as you approach a wayward fellow believer? If I'm going to get together, let's say I'm the center. If one or two of you approach me, are you going to pray ahead of time? If I'm in the wrong, I'm doing something bad as a pastor. I'm not supposed to be an angry man.

I'm supposed to rule well my own household. There's a lot of guidance in Timothy and Titus about pastors. And you all look at me and say, you know, you're our pastor and you're violating scriptural standards and guidance and requirements for being a pastor.

You're out of line and you don't seem to be aware of it. We need to come talk to you because this affects us as church members. There's a good, safe example.

So you're going to come approach me and say, Sam, here's, here's the problem. We want to shine light on this. Would you pray ahead of time before you did that? I would hope you would.

You would ask, right? And if you had to recruit, you, you came personally and said, you know, I've really felt unjustly treated here by you in the church. You mentioned me as a sinner in the sermon or whatever. And that, that wasn't very nice.

And you bring one or two others as witnesses. Would you pray together? And what would you ask? If you're doing what Jesus is commanding here, you're going to ask that this be accomplished in the same spirit that God approaches us for salvation and for growth and for comfort and encouragement and blessing and reward in time and in eternity, right? You want this to turn out for good. You want it to be a healing event, not a divisive event.

Isn't that what you would ask? Is there something else you would ask? Oh Lord, please allow me to do a miracle. I will make a denarius appear in my hand and convince them that they have committed a sin. What other requests would there be in this context? What would you ask in Jesus name? Very important qualifier there.

Whatever you ask, where two or three are gathered, verse 20, in my name, I am there in the midst of them. This is all the same as if the Lord Jesus himself is approaching and pleading for acknowledgement, for confession, for unity, for healing of the breach. He is the shepherd that goes out and rejoices over the sheep that he finds and brings back where two or three are gathered in his name for what purpose? In this context, specifically, it is to promote unity, lack of sin and lack of division in the body of believers.

That's the context. Now, when you read this, it's not scary. You don't have to make some kind of excuse.

Well, you know, two or three of us got together and we agreed that God should do this thing. It didn't happen. Our faith must not have been strong enough.

Now, why is it God didn't hear our prayer? There's a promise in scripture that says if we agree, God will do it. It'll be accomplished in heaven. What's the problem with that view? Lack of attention to the context.

These requests, this agreement, this binding and loosing is all in regard to preserving, enhancing, maintaining the unity of the faith and the bond of peace. That's what you agree about. That's what you either bind or loose in your fellowship, seeking to do the will of God, you're unified.

And God says, I've got a unified group that is seeking to do what my spirit and my son have done. I agree with them. It's written in heaven the same way it has been done on earth.

What is in the Lord's prayer? The same one that says, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. How does Jesus start that prayer? Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Enable us to do on earth the same things you do in

heaven.

What does God do in heaven? He approaches us in grace and mercy, but not forever. Remember way back in Genesis 6, my spirit will not always argue with man, will not strive with man, will not be down here trying to guide and govern man. There's a set period of time.

The ark door was open for a set period of time and days before the flood came, the door of the ark was shut. There is, as it says in Hebrews, now is the appointed time. Now is the day of salvation.

There is a time when it is too late. There is a doctrine in scripture of it is too late. Now is the appointed time.

Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's a look forward to the millennial kingdom, of course, but it is also a look to situations like this. If two or three of you come together and ask, Lord, we want to do here on earth what you do in heaven, when God answers that prayer and gives us the grace and the enablement to approach a situation like this and do it the way it should be done.

The conclusion and the outcome down here is going to be written in heaven because God's will in heaven is being done on earth. The will of God on earth is recorded in heaven. That's what Jesus is talking about here.

What a great thing that we could be so in tune with God's plans and purposes that we accomplish those plans and purposes here in the light of scripture, in the power of the Holy Spirit. So what would you ask when it's time to approach somebody about their failing? Lord, give me grace. Let me speak the truth in love.

Let there be a supernatural spirit present. Let Jesus be in our midst. If anybody can convince this person, I'm not eloquent.

I'm not good at this kind of relational thing. But that's why the concluding promise is so wonderful, where two or three are gathered together in my name. Who are these two or three? You went alone and approached this person and they would not hear you.

So you have gotten one or two others. How many does that make? If you and one or two others have gathered for this purpose, how many are there? Two or three gathered in Jesus name. What is the name of Jesus hoping to do here? Restoration and unification.

I am in the midst. The fourth man in the fire. You got three and here's the fourth witness, Jesus himself.

And if that doesn't succeed, you're pretty well getting into the tax collector and sinner category, heathens and tax collectors. And it just has to be the policy and you do it

before the group so that there is a unified testimony. Why is it that y'all don't want me to come to the group? Well, you remember that threefold attempt to get you to acknowledge that you're a problem for the group.

You are a divider and not a unifier. Your sins are separating you from the group in the same way that your sins separate you from God. We represent God on this earth.

We are the body of Christ. We are supposed to be a testimony. We are supposed to shine the light of God.

So our policy toward you reflects God's policy toward you. Our witness, our request regarding you has been witnessed and recorded in heaven. Our attitude is God's attitude.

God's attitude is our attitude. We're unified. That person is always free to come at any future point and confess and acknowledge.

Wonderful restoration can take place, but it's on them. To the extent that it is up to us, we live peaceably with all men, but sometimes it's not up to us. And people make decisions that inevitably require us to separate.

That's what this is about. And it is about nothing else. It's not about any agreement you can obtain.

Oh, Lord, our church, we want to build a building and we want 10,000 square feet. We want bells in the belfry and we want a choir loft and we want a big parking lot and baptistry and we want an education building and we want paneling and we want plush comfrey pews so that we can sleep well as the pastor groans on. And we've all agreed, there's not just two or three of us, there's 10 or 12 or 15 or 50 or 100 or 500 or 5,000 of us that have agreed on earth.

So we know you're going to do it. Oh, Lord, in faith, we're going to step out and take this \$5 million loan and build our church because we're claiming your promise. Can you see how utterly and completely off base that kind of thinking is? Context is everything.

That's why scripture is not all Proverbs. It's not all Proverbs. If you want an example of this, and you can read this in your own time, because we're out of time for this morning, read John chapter eight, Jesus himself exemplifies what we have seen in these five verses.

Jesus does it. John chapter eight. When you get a chance, just sit down with a Bible and a beverage of your choice and just read John chapter eight.

While this lesson is fresh in your mind, look at what Jesus does. If you want to talk about Elegco and the word occurs in that passage, oddly enough, Jesus reverses it. And he

says, which of you convicts me of sin? He spends that chapter carefully, patiently, lovingly explaining the problem.

He is the one doing Elegco to the group of Jews that are assembled. And there are some who believe, but in John chapter eight, Jesus, so patient, so careful to leave the door open for change of mind so that some of them actually do, but just put out in the margin here, if you do nothing else, right in your Bible, John chapter eight, read it, Jesus shows you, shows us how it's done, beautiful chapter, beautiful example, uses our word, but Jesus says, look, I'm busy showing you where your error is, which of you is showing me where my error is, none of you, you can't find an error in my approach. And that's another test that if we do this right, could somebody find fault with our approach and say, you're committing a sin as you come to me, trying to tell me of my sin, you're a hypocrite.

Jesus says, you notice that in my conversation here in John chapter eight, you can't convict me of anything. But what a powerful chapter it is. What a powerful example.

Well, we'll pick up here with the unforgiving servant, which once again flows directly out of this context. If somebody does acknowledge their debt, their trespass, their fault, are we forgiving or are we unforgiving? And this is, I would say in Sam's list, this is the scariest parable Jesus ever told, this scares me worse than anything. That your forgiven sins can be unforgiven because I myself have an unforgiving spirit.

Wow. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for how powerfully and clearly it communicates to us your will and your desire on the earth and particularly amongst your children, we pray that as we reflect on it, that your Holy Spirit will help us to see clearly where we can bless and be a blessing by speaking the truth in love, by being careful to not be dragged down to the level where we are sinning as well as someone who needs approach, that in your grace and in your love, we can be reflectors of it so that there is unity, there is wholeness, there is growth and production, fruitfulness in the body of Christ. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.