

The Discipline of God's Children, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 18:15-17

Code: 2330

Open your Bible, if you will, now to the 18th chapter of Matthew. We come in our continuing examination of this wonderful gospel of Matthew to a very poignant, informative, crucial portion of the Word of God, one with which you are perhaps familiar as I have been for many years, and yet have found so much greater richness in just the study of these last few days. Let me read to you our test for this morning. Matthew 18, verses 15 through 20. Beginning at verse 15, "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his sin between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more. That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man the tax collector. Verily I say unto you whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven. And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again, I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Now, this passage deals with the discipline of a sinning Christian, a sinning brother or sister. It is thus a very, very important text, and one to which we must heed. It is the very word of our Lord. It demands our response. Through the years at Grace Church, we have always believed very strongly in the purity of the church. We've always believed very strongly in the holiness of God's redeemed people. We've had this reinforced to us recently in our study of Romans 6, how that we have been redeemed unto holiness. Saved unto sanctification. Purity of life is the goal which God has in bringing us to Himself. You cannot read the Scripture, Old or New Testament, without being overwhelmingly convinced that God seeks the holiness of His people, that God is not content with disobedience of any kind. Peter sums it up so wonderfully in 1 Peter 1:16 where it says "Be ye holy for I am holy." That's the desire of God for His people. Now, from the start of my ministry here I was aware of that. And I endeavored in my own heart and those years the best that I understood the Word of God, and I didn't understand it as fully as I do now, but I endeavored in those years to commit myself to the Lord and I did this on my knees before Him, that if I found something to be true in the Bible, I would do everything I could within my power to live it in my own life and do all I could to make sure the church lived it in its life. In other words, I've never been able to separate biblical truth from life, and live with that lack of integrity.

If it says it in the Word of God, it must be lived out. And so, if God is so greatly concerned about the holiness of His people and the holiness of His church for the sake of His holy reputation and for the sake of the blessedness of His people, if He's so concerned about that, then I must be equally concerned about that as His representative. And no church can preach a message it doesn't live and have any integrity at all before God, or that matter before the world. Now, I was aware because of my own life experiences in many places and many churches, that a lot of people preach against sin and do absolutely nothing about it. Many, many churches, most churches would speak very clearly about the fact that certain things were wrong and certain things were sinful and call people to a certain lifestyle, but never really move out to enforce that message. And so, while there was no tolerance at all in the pulpit, there was a great tolerance in the reality of the life of the people. And what happened through the years, I think in the church, is that preaching got separated from living, and preaching became this exercise where you stand up and harangue about something, but in reality, you're not that concerned about it.

And as soon as people believe that preaching is unrelated to life, it's devastating. You cannot call people to a certain thing and not enforce its reality in their lives. And that's what our Lord is saying here. We cannot have a church wherein the proclamation of holiness is made and wherein sin is denounced, but nothing is ever done to enforce those things. There are too many people who separate preaching out from reality because they've, for years, been involved in churches where nobody ever really seemed to care whether they sinned or didn't sin, no matter what they said from the pulpit. And then, people get the idea that the Bible is nice, and we all believe it and we'd fight for its authority and errancy; we just aren't concerned about implementing it. And that to me is the ultimate hypocrisy.

And so, I believe that in the church today, in general, churches all across our country and perhaps in other countries as well, there's a tremendous lack of integrity in the matter of holiness. While they will affirm the Bible, and while they will affirm what is sinful, they just do not enforce that affirmation in life and that's compromise of the worst sort.

In fact, the disciplining of sinning members in a church body or a church family is almost unheard of in our society. Now, in recent years, it's become more and more discussed. I know because people have really come to us very often for such a discussion. But I can think back to early in the ministry here when I had a man say to me, a very dear man of God who had traversed this country for years and preached in all kinds of churches and places as a Bible-conference speaker and evangelist, say to me, "I know of not one single church in the United States of America that is involved in disciplining sinning members, not one." And I said to him, "Well, you're going to meet one, because we're committed to that." I told that to another pastor and he said to me, "If you do that, they'll never stand for that. You'll empty the place. You can't run around sticking your nose in everybody's business." You can't go around saying you're sinning." And so forth and so on, and they would always throw out that misinterpreted, misapplied Matthew 7 passage, "Judge not lest you be judged." And then, we

have this sort of American syndrome about well, I take care of me and you take care of you and never the twain shall meet. And everybody's a law unto himself, and we're all independent, and we don't want to get involved in each other's problems, and so forth and so on. And that seemed to be a cultural reality that had worked its way into the church to the loss of the church's purity.

But I couldn't get over the fact early in the ministry here, just in the first year that the Bible was so strong about dealing with sin. I studied Matthew 18 then. I studied Acts 5. I studied 1 Corinthians 5. I studied 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. Every part of the Scripture where I could find anything about this idea of enforcing the standard of holiness. In other words, how do you get a people to be holy? You can't just preach it and then be indifferent to what they're doing in response to that. There's got to be more than just saying it. There's got to be a way to pressure people to conform to it in a wholesome kind of godly pressure.

And then, the passage that really set my thinking in concrete was the fifth chapter of Acts. Look at it for a moment with me. In those days, when they took the offering in the church, everybody brought their money and laid it at the apostles' feet. And that's what they were doing. People were coming to give to the Lord, and it says in verse 1 of Acts 5, "A certain man named Ananias with Sapphira his wife sold a possession and kept back part of the price. His wife also knowing of it and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet." Now, let me tell you what happened: they had vowed to the Lord to give it all. And he got into probably an economic situation. They said look Lord, we've got this piece property and we'd like to sell it. If you'll help us sell it, we'll give it all to you, all the proceeds. They got a lot of proceeds for it. They sold it. They looked at all of that and they said, let's just keep some for us. The sin here has not to do with giving. The sin here has to do with lying to God.

So, Peter says to them, here they come up to give their offering. Oh, they're feeling magnanimous. They're feeling generous. Here's this large amount that we're going to give to the Lord. So, Peter greets them. "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land?" Now, I don't know why we don't take offerings like that anymore. Where the elders all line up and watch what everybody gives and say, why are you giving that when you promised this? "While it remained," he says in verse 4, "was it not your own? And after it was sold was it not still in your power." In other words, you didn't even have to make the promise to God. It was your own to control, but once you made the promise you conceived evil in your heart to defraud God, and you didn't lie to men, you lied to God. Now, would you say that's confrontation? Dead in the middle of the service when the guy's coming by thinking how great it is to give all this money. Peter stops him in his tracks and confronts him with that and says, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?"

And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died. God killed him on the spot, and great fear came on all them that heard these things. You can only imagine what the next offering was like. And

the young men came and wrapped him up, carried him out and buried him. He's dead and buried, and his wife doesn't even know it. Three hours later, his wife came in. By the way, that might say something about how long services lasted. I don't want to get into that. Verse 8, "Peter answered her, tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." The Peter said unto her, "How is that you've agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord. Behold the feet of them who have buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out. Then, fell she down immediately at his feet and died. And the young men came in and found her dead and carrying her forth buried her by her husband. A great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things."

Well, you can imagine that, can't you? That would shape up a congregation very fast. You see, God was dealing very firmly with sin, wasn't He? Very firmly in that early primitive time of the church, God was conveying His attitude toward sin. And they dropped dead in front of the church. By the way, it kept unbelievers from joining, verse 13 says. Nobody wanted to join that organization. I mean, it was really scary. They were serious about sin.

Well, as I studied that passage, the Lord impressed upon my heart this thought. This is still His church, right? He is still the head of His church. He hasn't changed His attitude toward sin, and He hasn't changed the desire to see the church pure. But, He has taken the authority and He has put it in the hands of the godly men who lead the church. And in essence, He has said: you represent me in that church and you be to that church what I would be to that church. And so, we are the apostles of today who must confront that sin. And while I'm not sure that God does things like that in all cases; I'm sure in some He does. I'm sure there are some people who die, some Christians who die as a discipline of God.

You see that in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. We see it in 1 John 5 as well. And so, God is concerned about the holiness of His church. And He may still take some lives now and then, but basically what He's called us to do is to deal with sin in His assembly. Paul did it continuously. So did John, even naming names such as Diotrephes. And we see in our passage in Matthew 18 the same thing. God, through Christ, calling His people to purity. Heaven may still act in a very supernatural way to purge the church. But mostly, the church purges itself through the ministry of the Spirit of God among its people. But the point that you want to see in introduction is just that sin has to be dealt with. It has to be dealt with.

Now, let's look at the context of chapter 18 again. Let me just very, very briefly remind you of its essence. It is a chapter on the childlikeness of the believer. That's the whole intention: the childlikeness of the believer. It sees the believer as a child. In fact, when the Lord is teaching this chapter, He has in His arms an infant. And He sees us like those infants. We are spiritually what they are physically: immature, weak, dependent, ignorant and so forth. And as we flowed through the chapter already, we've seen that first of all, you enter the kingdom like a little child. Saw that in verses 3 and 4. In verses 5 to 9, we go through protected like a little child. Verses 10 to 14, you must be

cared for like a little child, and now verses 15 to 20, you must be disciplined like a little child. We're children, people, and children have to be made to conform. It isn't enough to make announcements. It isn't enough to post rules. It isn't enough to give commands. There has to be an enforcing of those. And here, we learn that that's exactly what has to happen in the family of God.

This is made abundantly clear for us, I think, back in Proverbs chapter 3, verse 11 where it says, "My son despise not the chastening of the Lord. Neither be weary of His correction for whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth," here's the point, "even as a father the son in whom He delighteth." There's the same analogy. As a father must discipline correct a child so the Lord must discipline correct His children. We're like children, and we need to be made to obey. We need to be taught to obey. And basically, the way we learn to obey is to find out the consequences to disobedience, right? If there is no consequence manifest to disobedience, there's no change. And so, God brings to bear consequence to disobedience.

Now, if you follow this concept through Proverbs, it's enriched all the way through the book. In 10:13 it says, "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him that's void of understanding." Now, here you have this idea of a child. He needs to be correct. How are you going to correct him? Here you find you're going to use a rod. In other words, there needs to be pain involved. There needs to be consequential pain to his misbehavior. Go to chapter 13 verse 24 and it says, "If you spare the rod, you hate your son. But he that loves him chastens him early." You go to chapter 19, verse 18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Don't let that stop you. Chapter 22:15 says "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child. The rod of correction will drive it far from him." And so, 23:13 says, "Withhold not correction from the child for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from Sheol." And it progresses all the way on. "Correct thy son, he'll give the rest. He shall delight thy soul."

And you find the Lord picks up this same concept again in inspiring the writer of Hebrews in chapter 12 when it says again, "Whom the Lord loves, He," what? "He chastens, and every son He scourges." And it tell us in that marvelous chapter the reason why. It says, Hebrews 12:10, "That we might be partakers of His holiness." Great truth. In other words, God disciplines us to conform us by external consequences or internal consequences, either one. Sometimes the pain of guilt, sometimes pain that comes on the outside, but God disciplines us to force us into the track of obedience, that we may conform to the standard of His absolute holiness. So, we're children. And you cannot, it is an illusion people to think that you can just preach against sin and preach against sin and teach against sin and never do anything about it in the lives of the people, and expect them to conform to the pattern of holiness. Children don't do that. And like children, who have a bent to disobedience in life, we have a bent to disobedience in spiritual life because sin is still in us, isn't it? So, we have that problem, and we have the tendency to drift that way unless there is a sense in which we are pressured into the line of obedience. And that is why there must be an enforcement. And that sounds like a very strong

word, but that in fact, is a good word to use. There must be an enforcement of that principle, which is articulated from the pulpit or from the teaching of the church. We have to move ourselves in to implement the message.

And I really guess I believe it. People have asked me this a lot: why is the church in America, even the church that's evangelical, so unholy? And the issue may be it isn't that we have preached the wrong message always; it is that we have never been obedient in its implementation in the lives of the people. And so, we have said, in effect, as long as the sermon is right and as long as it's orthodox, we really don't care what you do. And you can't say that to children. Children aren't going to handle that. I would hate to spend a day with your children if you had just told them what do to all their life and never discipline them. You know what it would be like. So, we are called in this passage to implementation of discipline in the church to deal with sin in order that we might see the church follow the pattern of holiness.

Now, let's look at several elements, and we'll not get through the passage today. So, I think that's of the Lord, because it needs to be at least two weeks in our hearts and indelibly impressed upon us. First of all, let's look at the place for discipline. The place. And I want to take you to verse 17 for that because you need to pick it up there and then it'll run all the way through the passage. Twice in that verse, He mentions the church, the church. Now, that's the place. That's the place, *ekklesia*, the called out ones. The assembly. Listen carefully. This is the third time this word is used in Matthew. That is the second use of it; in verse 17 is the third use. In the book, the first one being in chapter 16. It's only used three times. It is non-technical in Matthew. It does not refer to the church born at Pentecost. It was a word simply meaning an assembly. Nothing more than that. It is used in that way elsewhere in the New Testament to speak of the church in the wilderness, referring to Israel as the assembled people of God in the wilderness. It was used in extra biblical Greek culture to speak of a town meeting. Any group of assembled people. And that's exactly its use in this text. It anticipates the church of Pentecost. It anticipates the church of today. It anticipates the official church with a capital C, that born by the baptism of the Spirit of God in Acts 2. In anticipates that for sure. But here the root idea is simply the collection of the redeemed community, the assembly of the redeemed, and it doesn't have to wait for Pentecost to be applied. It can be immediately implied in the assembly of the disciples who are gathered in the house at Capernaum on the day Jesus taught it. It simply means the collection of God's assembled people.

And as I said, it anticipates the church in its official character, its official reality from Pentecost on, but it is applied to any assembly of believers. It's used in the same non-technical sense it was used in Matthew 16 where Christ said, "I will build my church," and what he meant there was not some kind of future promise simply speaking of the Pentecost and beyond; but He meant, "I will gather my redeemed people." Certainly, the anticipated church will be a great part of it.

Some commentators have felt that it refers to the Jewish synagogue, but that isn't true at all. Nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus ever give rules for conduct in a Jewish synagogue. He's not interested in revising the synagogues. He's interested in established His own redeemed people and His own redeemed church. And furthermore, verses 18 to 20 could in no way, shape or form ever be related to a synagogue, because in no synagogue could it be said that they are gathered in my name and there am I in the midst of them. And so, it isn't a reference to a synagogue and it isn't a reference to the technical post-Pentecost church. It is simply a general usage consistent with Matthew, and consistent with a time period early in the New Testament era to refer to the assembly of God's redeemed people. Now, I want you to note further that there's no organization structure given here. When it says tell it to the church and it doesn't really say how the church is to be organized. It doesn't describe the church. Doesn't say tell it to the guy who's in charge and have him pick eight people and start a committee and send out the investigators. It doesn't have any of that. It just says tell it to the assembled redeemed people. It doesn't give us any how-tos or any particular steps or any processes. It leaves that to each individual assembly of believers and each individual era and country and time and place with all of the various gifts that come together with the various kinds of leadership styles that might be used. It's simply the church, God's assembled, redeemed people. That's where discipline is to take place.

And after all, isn't it there that God wants the purifying? Isn't it what Paul said when he said that he wanted to do what Christ wanted done, and that was to espouse to Christ a chaste virgin? Isn't that what he had in mind in Ephesians chapter 5 when he says, "That just as a bride and groom come together, so does Christ come together with His church, which church He desires should be holy and blameless and without spot and without blemish." It's His redeemed people that He wants to see holy, and pure, and spotless, and without blemish. And so, it's in that context that this goes on.

I say that to say this: there's no higher authority. There's no exterior court. We don't need to establish a national church court. If you go beyond to establish some bishop, or some pope, or some cardinal, or some synod, or some group of people or individual person who was unrelated to local assembly of believers, you have created a court beyond that which the Word of God creates. Because the redeemed people and their assembly is the vortex of where this occurs. To go beyond that is to go beyond the word of Christ and the teaching of His apostles.

So, we have very general things here. We don't have some kind of hierarchical structure. We don't kind of have some kind of a design for the church. We don't have some kind of upper division category of ruling people who sit as judges. It happens in the assembly of the redeemed. Along that line, a footnote that may help you in terms of illustrating this is in 1 Corinthians 6 where Paul indicts the Corinthians in confronting them about the sin of suing each other. He says, "Having a matter against another, dare any of you go to law before the unjust." What are you doing taking your grievances and your problems before the unjust? That is, the courts of unregenerate men and not before the saints.

You see, the saints, it doesn't say the court that's been appointed by the saints. It says the saints. The context of the Christian fellowship and family is the highest court there is. And he proves it in the next line. He says, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" And then, in verse 3, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" In other words, the church is the highest court. And so all church discipline occurs within the community of believing people. It can be large like ours. It could be very small. It might be on a mission field, three or four missionaries. We don't even have a church yet established among the native people. They become an assembly of God's redeemed people in which the enforcement of God's principles of holiness must be carried out. It may be in your family. That's a unit of God's redeemed people that constitutes His church. It may be in your Bible study, or your flock group, your fellowship group. It's among God's redeemed people and there's no higher court than that. That is not to say that the spiritual leadership of that assembly don't get involved, because that would be obvious. Surely they do. But the place is the church. We don't go beyond that. We're not interested in forming an imposition committee, just the church.

Second point, very, very important. Not only the place of discipline is given here, but the purpose of discipline. The purpose of it. Look at verse 15, the end of the verse. "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." There's the purpose. Listen, the purpose of discipline is restoration. Restoring back to holiness. God has always been concerned with restoration. Proverbs 11:30, "He that winneth souls is wise." Maybe the element of wisdom of all is to win men back to God. In Galatians 6, Paul says, "If a brother be overtaken in a *paraptma*, if you fall into sin, ye that are spiritual do," what? "Restore such a one." Restore him. In James chapter 5, the end of the epistle, verse 19 and 20. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him or restore him or bring him back, let him know that who he converts the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death." You save a soul from death when you restore.

Now, this is always the goal of discipline. The goal of discipline in the church is not to throw people out. It's not to embarrass them. It's not to be self-righteous as over against their unrighteousness. It's not to play God. It's not to exercise authority in power in some unbiblical manner. The purpose of discipline isn't to throw people out; it's to bring them in. It's to bring them back. Now, notice in verse 15, there's an interesting word, gained. It's a word from the commercial world. It's a word of the marketplace. It is a word used, for example, to talk about accumulating wealth. Gain in the sense of treasure. Gain the sense of money or goods, commodities. And used in this connection, it sees a sinning brother then as a loss of treasure. As a loss of something valuable. And I would just point out to you that this in fact the heart of God that God cannot let one soul go because each is to Him a treasure. And the church has to have that same sense as well that we can't allow one to just float away and say well, I don't know where they are, but I just really can't get involved. I think they fell into sin. There's a loss to us. There's a treasure that's gone from us. And when restored, we regain that wealth. So, there's something lost to us of value.

No son of God, no daughter of God is valueless, worthless. And so, when a brother or a sister sins, we've lost them as a treasure that's lost to us. And we need to bring them back, and we need to work diligently to bring them back to restore them, because they are of value to us.

You say how so? Well, I can illustrate it this way. There have been people in my life who have sinned and been lost to me, and I have lost a treasure. I'll tell you how. Because when they were in the place of obedience, and the place of walking in God's will and harmony with His Spirit, the Spirit of God worked through them in my life. God blessed me with their ministry. God blessed me through their spiritual gifts. God enriched me through their fellowship. And as soon as they were gone, it was a loss to me. A loss, by the way, that no one else really feels because no one else is who they are. Do you understand that? And there is a loss. It is as the loss of a child, which another child does not make up, because each child is irreproducible.

And so, when one goes into sin, there's a loss. None of us can be content with that loss. If we perceive the value of that soul to God and the value of that soul to us as an instrument of the Spirit of God to minister. Go back into verse 12 with me for a moment and let me give you the heart of God in this. And this will pick up the passage we talked on last week. He's saying, think along with me now, "If a man has 100 sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the 99 and go into the mountains and seek that which has gone astray?" The answer, of course, is yes. "And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you he rejoiceth more over that sheep than over the 99 which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father who's in heaven that one of these little ones should become useless." That's what it means. Should be rendered of no value to you, because they are a treasure lost and need to be regained. Oh, men go to tremendous lengths to regain the wealth they've lost, monetarily, and to less lengths, by far, to regain the loss of a human life, which is of infinite value.

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul gives a word to young Timothy that I think is applicable here. He says, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive," don't be argumentative, "be gentle to everyone, apt to teach." So, you're gentle, you're teaching, you're patient, "be neat instructing those that oppose Him." There are always going to be those that oppose. I have that in my life all the time. But I need to be not argumentative, but gentle, straightforward in my teaching, patient, humble. And if I go after the person like that, God perhaps will give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil who are taken captive by him at his will. You know what happened to those people that drift on? Guess who got them? The enemy got them. And we need to go and recover them. In Galatians 6:1 it says, "Ye that are spiritual restore." And that word restore, *katartiz*, is a very interesting word. It has the idea, basically, of repairing something to bring it back to its original condition. It talks about mending fractured bones, replacing dislocated bones. It is used of mending fishing nets. It is to restore to the former condition.

That's the goal of discipline. It's to see a person as a treasure. To see the people the way God, the good shepherd sees them, who leaves the ones that are there in the fold and goes out and finds that one and brings it back because one, just one of a hundred, is a loss. And there's something to be given to me and to you through the love and the ministry of that person that can never be given to another. And so, we're in the business of recovery. And you have to see that, beloved, because whenever a church gets involved in this and I know people have certainly felt that Grace Community Church is running around checking on everyone's sin. I've had people ask me that very question. You know, what do you have the Grace CIA and the Grace SS, Secret Service and spying on everybody all of this? And that isn't the idea. The idea is that we have a tremendous hunger for the fact that God wants His church holy, and we also put a very high value on the worth of a soul that belongs to God and one of His sheep and we have the heart of the shepherd.

And we want not to let them go. We want to bring them back for their sake and our sake and God's sake first and foremost of all. We're not content with letting them go. You say, well, you know, so and so. Oh, I'm not going to say anything to them. Who am I to say anything? You know? It shows their way. And there's almost a certain kind of relishing in our spirit that they fell because it makes us feel better. That's really a sickness. It's called pride.

If you feel yourself more spiritual than your sinning brother and you can smugly remain in indifference to his sin with the idea that you're better than he is, isn't that good? Then, you really are far afield from the heart of the shepherd. And you're in sin as much as he. One Christian said this; I read this this week. "I have often thought that if I ever fall into a sin, oh God don't let me fall into the hands of those censorious critical judges in the church. Let me fall into the hands of the barkeeper, street walkers, dope peddlers. Why? Because so often the church people would tear me apart with their long wagging, gossipy tongues cutting me to shreds." End quote.

Well, I don't know what church he went to, but, I'm sure there a lot of them that would have that experience. You know, it's a tendency for us when someone falls into sin to just relish about his sinfulness and his fall. Just talk about his sinfulness. And we feel so spiritual when it wasn't us. Instead of the heart of the shepherd that goes out and beseeches to recover, we get a certain satisfaction out the self-righteousness that comes to our minds where we know we didn't do that. That's not what God's after.

And so, we are to be involved in restoration. And if God makes the effort He makes in indication there in verses 12 to 14, who are we to make less of an effort. Now, I really believe that, you know, we talk a lot about holiness, and I've preached a lot on this in our church, but I don't think it's ever really going to happen until we get personally concerned with the people who fall into sin enough that instead of sort of relishing their fall or instead of indifferently letting it all happen. Instead of saying what our culture wants us to say, don't get involved, don't invade his life. He's his own thing. He's got his private deal. Don't tell him what to do. Instead of doing that, we really pursue that kind of person

to pull them back into the fold. We're never going to know the holiness that we keep preaching about.

Well, let me give you a third principle, and this is the last one I'm going to give you today. The place is the church. The purpose is restoration. The person, you say, now who's supposed to be doing this? The pastor? Oh yeah, the pastor, and we have a discipline committee, we have to form some people to do this. Well, let's find out who's supposed to do it. Okay? I didn't really see this in the passage until I studied it just the other day and I just read verse 15 over and over and over and over to see what stood out in my mind. I often do that. To see what stood out. Now, see what stands out in your mind. "Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you, you go and tell him his fault between you and him. If he shall hear you, you have gained your brother." Who's the star of verse 15? You. You got it. It's no discipline committee. It's you. You say, me? Why, you, I just can't do that. I'm not a confrontive-type person. I'm too loving. That's wonderful. This is all about you folks, not about me, not about some committee, not about some CIA, spiritual CIA or whatever. This is you.

Discipline is not for church officials; it's for everybody including those who lead in the church. In fact, in Galatians 6 it tells you exactly who it's for. "If a brother be taken in a fault, you who are spiritual," you who are walking in the Spirit, you who are walking in obedience, you who are in fellowship "restore him." Listen, "In a spirit of meekness, humility and love considering yourself lest you also be," what? "Tempted." You don't do it with spiritual superiority dripping all over you. You do it in meekness and loving humility. It starts with you. That's right. You're the key. This is all about you.

Beloved, we must be concerned with bringing back sinners to God. We can't let them go. And if you're not concerned, then you're not concerned with the things that God's concerned about. If you allow yourself false pity, indifference, smug, contented, self-righteousness, contempt for someone, disdain for them because maybe their sin was against you and you're kind of glad their gone. Or pride, or sentimentality, or cowardice, or busyness, or whatever it is that you allow to prevent you from being faithful in the work of Christ to confront a sinning brother, you have failed. So have I. If I ignore the restoration of the wandering sheep, I've become, in a sense, a wanderer too, don't I? Disobedient.

The purity of the church is our concern. And I know it's your concern, and it's mine, and it's on our hearts. But it never is going to happen until we become committed to the confrontation of that which makes it impure in love and meekness. I mean it's not just, well, we're praying for them that they'll see the light. Listen, you've got the light, take it and shine it in their eyes. Now, in order to do this, you need three things. And we'll bring it right down to practical points.

Three things. Number one: willingness, willingness. You've got to be willing to do it. Look at verse 1, the main verb there: go. "Go and tell it." You've got to go and tell it. You say well, if I see a brother in sin, what am I supposed to do? Go and tell him. You mean, just go and tell him? That's what it says, go and tell him. Go and tell him what? Just go and tell him he's in sin. Look at verse 16. If he doesn't

hear you, take. First you go and tell, then you take. If he still doesn't hear you, verse 17, you tell again to the whole church, go, tell, take, tell.

Now, every one of those commands implies a response. And they each imply that you could respond, right? Because God doesn't give commands to people who haven't a capacity to respond to them. So, they indicate that there must be a willingness on our part. God says go and tell him. If he doesn't hear it, take some people and tell him again. If he doesn't hear it, tell it to the whole church and have the whole church go and tell him. That's right. In other words, it's dependent on you responding willfully to act. Now, we have a lot of people in the church say, oh, I wish I could teach in the church. Oh, I'd like to be a minister of holiness. And they want to know if they can get podium and get a group and be up there and teach. That's a great ministry. We have a lot of people, and we train people to be teachers in the church. And other people say I want to preach. I don't just want to teach. I want to do like you, John. I want to teach, but scream now and then, and yell and do whatever you do. I want to preach and I want to call people to repentance and call to people to holiness and all of this stuff. Other people say, oh, I want to be involved in evangelism. Boy, I want to go out and win the loss. And so, forth, and others want to be involved in ministering to the needs of people or praying or whatever.

You know, there's a ministry in the church that's just been totally lost. And I mean, I don't think in my entire life I've ever heard a message on this, read an article on it, or a book, ever. And that is what I would call the ministers of holiness, whose task it is as seen through the eyes of Jesus Christ to confront the sin of the church to call it back to purity. Now, what we need is not only a whole church full of preachers and teachers. That's fine, but that's just the outstanding articulation of the facts. We don't only need a whole bunch of people who are praying and a whole bunch of people who are training. We need a whole bunch of people who are out there enforcing. Really. Ministers of holiness who become awesome weapons in the hand of God. And this doesn't mean that you do it with spiritual pride; it means you do it with a heart of concern and compassion and love. And that's up to you; you've got to be willing.

This isn't anything new by the way. I'll take you back to Moses, Pentateuch. First set of books in the Bible, see if I can find it here. I think Leviticus 19, yes. Verse 16, listen to this. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." I like that. Don't go around just badmouthing people and gossiping. "And thou shalt not stand against the blood of thy neighbor." In other words, don't join in on the condemnation of somebody. And then, He says, "I am the Lord." And what it means is in case you're wondering if this is serious, I'm the one that said it and I'm the Lord. So, don't do this. Then He says this. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart." You say, oh, I wouldn't think of it. I just have so much, I wouldn't hate anybody. "Thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor and not allow sin upon him." What does that mean? Listen again. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, but rather thou shalt rebuke thy neighbor and not allow sin upon him." In other words, if you hate your brother, it'll be manifest in the fact that you'll never bother to rebuke him for his sin. You say, oh, I'm too loving to rebuke. Don't tell me that. You're too uncaring to rebuke.

You know, you see a parent who never ever, ever disciplines a child. That parent doesn't love that child. That parent doesn't care at all about that child. You hate your child if you don't discipline your child and conform your child. Same thing is true in the spiritual dimension. He's saying: don't you hate your neighbor in your heart by never rebuking him of his sin and confronting him with his evil? Why? If you loved him, you'd want to restrain him from the consequence of sin and you'd want to restore him to the place of blessedness, right?

It's obvious, it's obvious. So, there has to be a willingness, people. Now, I believe this willingness is born out of a second thing, and these are progressive. Willingness is born out of zeal for God. Look at John 2 and I'll give you an illustration of this. Willingness to confront about sin is born out of zeal for God. In John 2:13, Jesus came to the Passover in Jerusalem and found in the temple the people selling ox and sheep, doves. And the money changers who were ripping off the people, they were all sitting there doing their business. Now, this is a lot of sin. And it's really very flagrant. It's going right on in the temple. And so, He made a whip. Took some small pieces of rope and wove the rope to make a thick whip and literally drove them all out of the temple. And you know, they didn't leave easily. "He drove them out with the sheep and the oxen, poured out all the money all over the place and flipped over the tables. And said to them that sold doves take these things from here. Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." Now, what in the world made Him do this? Why did He have such a reaction to sin? Why did He have such a tremendous desire for the holiness of the house of God?

Verse 17, "His disciples remember that it was written," Psalm 69:9, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And the rest of the verse says, "The reproach that falls on thee falls on me." In other words, God when you're dishonored, I have such a zeal in my heart, such a longing for your glory, that when you are dishonored, I feel the pain. Now, the willingness to confront sin is born out of the zeal for God's name, and God's reputation, and God's glory. You see, Jesus says, I can't let you make His house a den of thieves. I can't tolerate sin in His house. I must drive it out. The temple is not the house any more. You are the house of God, right? The assembly of the believers is a holy habitation in which God dwells. And we should have the heart of Christ who can no more tolerate unholiness in this His temple than He could tolerate it in His Father's temple in Jerusalem. Zeal for God. You can't have willingness to confront sin in a vacuum. It is born out of zeal for God.

Where did zeal for God come from? That's the third point. In order to be engaged as a minister of holiness for the sake of the purity of the church there must be personal purity. That's the third point. Three things necessary: willingness, zeal for God, personal purity. You're not going to be filled with zeal for God's house. You're not going to be consumed with the desire for the holiness of His name unless you are walking in that holiness. Look with me at Matthew chapter 7. Although this passage comes in a somewhat different context initially, its principle bears repeating in our text. Verse 3, "And why beholdest thou the mote," that means a splinter, small splinter, "in your brother's eye, but

consider not the beam,” that means a two by four or something to that effect, “in your own eye.” How will you say to your brother, let me pull this splinter out of your eye and behold you have a two by four in your own eye. You hypocrite. First, cast the beam out of your own eye and then you’ll be able to see clear enough to cast the splinter out of your brother’s eye.

Now, what did we learn here? Before you can go to confront anybody else about their sin, what do you have to take care of? Your own. Now, listen people, I’m going to tell you this is a very important principle. When a church moves out to enforce holiness and enforce purity, when a church moves out to confront sin, by very virtue of that direction, it will be in the process of self-purification. And the end result will be: there will be less discipline necessary, though the church is more committed to doing it. Do you understand that? Because when you begin to move in that direction, the demand that it makes on you is to purify yourself. This is a difficult ministry, but it ranks with all the rest. We hear a lot about teaching and preaching, training, serving, singing in the choir, helping here and there, leading this and leading that, but where are the ministers of holiness? Where are they? Our Lord calls for them in His church. Next week, we’ll find out how they go about their work. Let’s pray.

Gracious Lord, we feel that we have been confronted by thee. We have faced the reality of our inadequacy again, and we go back to where we started. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Lord, we need cleansing because we have failed here. We haven’t been willing because we haven’t passionately had a zeal for Your holiness, because things haven’t been all they should be in our own lives. May we start with us, make us pure. Fill us with the kind of zeal that feels the very pain that the heart of God feels, that we may have the same holy reaction to sin that thou doest have. Make us willing in love in tenderness, in gentleness, to confront, to show that we love for love confronts and restores. Thank You Father for what you’ve taught us. In Christ’s name. Amen.

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