

Forgive That You May Be Forgiven

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Greetings, brethren! This Sabbath we're going to have a special pre-Passover message. It is something very important for us to understand in our relationship with God, and our relationship with each other.

For the Passover, one of the things the Passover does is renew the New Covenant. ***The New Covenant is a special relationship with God through grace by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin, the receiving of the Holy Spirit and for an ongoing relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ to grow in grace and knowledge until we come to the time of the resurrection;*** whether we die in this life and are resurrected or whether we endure to the end and are changed from flesh to spirit.

One of the most important things that God wants us to do is to understand His nature, and His relationship in relationship to us, and then we impart that same kind of relationship to each other.

Matthew 26:26—this has to do with when they were taking the Passover: “And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed it; then He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And He took the cup; and after giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘**All of you** drink of it. **For this is My blood, the blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins**’” (vs 26-27).

If there's any one thing that everyone wants, it is *forgiveness!* I want it! You want it! Everyone who comes to God wants it! That's the whole basis of our relationship with God. As human beings we need forgiveness. *We need lots of forgiveness!*

When we go to God and ask Him to forgive us our sins, *He does*, and we have the blessing and privilege of coming right into the Holy of Holies, which is a new and living way. There is no better way than the New Covenant and access to God through His Holy Spirit in prayer. No other religion in the world can possibly even come minutely close to the greatness and superiority of the New Covenant. Let's understand how this is accomplished.

Hebrews 10:4: “Because *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*”

Let's also understand that the rosary cannot take away sin and the Eucharist cannot take away sin. The way that the Catholics do it is sacrificing Christ every time they perform the Mass. That is absolutely contrary to the Scriptures.

The only One Who can truly forgive sin completely is God the Father through Jesus Christ! Every other means of forgiving sin in any other ‘religion’ *is not a forgiveness of sin.* It's just a ritual, a physical thing that people do, and no physical thing can accomplish the spiritual means of forgiving sin. Sin is not an exterior thing.

- sin comes from within
- sin comes from human nature
- sin comes from the heart

Therefore, the true forgiveness of sin is the operation of the heart: your heart in repentance to God, and God's heart in love toward you!

That's why the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. Here is how God solves the problem, and this also shows why we need to come through Christ:

Verse 5: “For this reason, when He [Christ] comes into the world, He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire...’” *It never really forgave sin!*

You need to understand that all animal sacrifices—even to the temple of God in Jerusalem—when it was up and functioning before its destruction in 70 A.D.—only forgave sin to the justification of the flesh at the level of the temple worship. With the New Covenant, we are now dealing with the forgiveness of sin in heaven above before the throne of God. ***This requires a greater sacrifice, because it's a greater forgiveness!*** Christ did not offer any sacrifices. God really doesn't desire sacrifices. You can read Isa. 1 & 66 and understand that.

“...but You have prepared a body for Me. You did not delight in burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin. Then said I, “Lo, I come (*as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book*) to do Your will, O God”” (v 7). *That's a special covenant between God the Father and Jesus Christ!*

Verse 8: “In the saying above, *He said*, ‘Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin (which are offered according to the *priestly law*) You did not desire nor delight in.’”

Why didn't God not have pleasure in it, even though He commanded it? ***Because those sacrifices never changed the heart!*** There was never any conversion of the person.

Verse 9 tells us why God did not have the pleasure in it, even though they went up and offered

them. Go back to Jer. 7 and understand that they even offered these sacrifices to the gods of the nations around them, right at the temple in Jerusalem! But lots of times people would offer the sacrifice of the animal and then go do their own thing again. God doesn't want that. Far more important than sacrifice is:

Verse 9: "Then He said, 'Lo, I come to **do Your will**, O God.'..." That's the most important thing, **to do the will of God!**

"...He takes away the first *covenant* in order that He may establish the second *covenant*; by Whose will... [the will of God the Father and Jesus Christ] ...we are sanctified through **the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**" (vs 9-10). *That means everyone who repents, and also for all time!*

Verse 11: "Now, every high priest stands ministering day by day, offering the same sacrifices repeatedly, **which are never able to remove sins.**" It can never take away sin, only justified to the temple.

Verse 12: "But He [Christ], after offering **one sacrifice for sins forever**, sat down at the right hand of God." *In the earlier part of Hebrews, He's at the right hand of God as our High Priest and Intercessor!*

Verse 13: "Since that time, He is waiting until His enemies are placed *as* a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has obtained eternal perfection *for* those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after He had previously said, 'This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,' says *the* Lord: 'I will give My laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them in their minds'" (vs 13-16).

This is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit through repentance. Repentance: you confess your sins, you ask God to forgive your sins, but then you also ask God for the help and determination to do the commandments and laws of God so that you don't sin. As we know in the New Covenant, it doesn't end up being overt sins that we are doing, but most of them are inner sins because you're overcoming human nature. And through that process God writes and inscribes His laws into your mind and heart.

Then God gives a promise, v 17: "And **their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again.**"

- God can forget them!
- God can put them away!
- God can never remember them!

It will be as if they never existed! This is how you are blameless before God.

Verse 18: "Now, where remission of these *is*, it is no longer *necessary* to offer sacrifices for sin." *That is offering of animal sacrifice or the offering of Christ again!*

I hope you understand why *the Catholic Eucharist and the Protestant communion*—which is really not much different, except the Catholics say that the real presence of the body and blood of Christ is in the bread and wine—**are blasphemous to God!** It has nothing to do with the Truth of the Bible. You need to understand that. There is no more offering for sin, so there cannot be the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass every time the priest does it. It's an impossibility, though they do it; it's a vain thing, which does not accomplish anything.

Verse 19: "Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter into the *true* Holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Christ is our High Priest, and we enter in directly before the throne of God through prayer, on our knees. When we say, 'Our Father in heaven,' we have direct access to God the Father in heaven above. **There is nothing greater than that in this life!** There is nothing greater that you can do **except come to God with a repentant heart and a contrite spirit!** We are not to take this lightly, either our repentance—which has to be from the heart—or our relationship with each other.

Verse 20: "By a new and living way... [not only to God, but toward each other] ...which He consecrated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh), and *having* a great High Priest over the house of God, let us approach *God* with a true heart... [quite different from Jer. 17] ...with full conviction of faith..." (vs 20-21)—*no doubt!*

When you go to God and ask, 'God, forgive me of my sins' and you really repent and really mean it from the heart, don't get from that prayer and say, 'I wonder if God forgave me?' You just lost everything you did! **God does forgive! He promises!**

Go back and read the account of Manasseh and Ahab and understand. I have never met, nor have you ever met, anyone in the Church of God that has sinned as greatly as Manasseh or Ahab, and *God forgave them!* So, we have *full assurance of faith!*

Having "...our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience..." (v 21). *That we're not duopolistic minded, we don't have an agenda for ourselves with God, but we are simple minded and simple open-hearted to God.*

“...and our bodies having been washed with pure water. Let us hold fast without wavering *to* the hope *that* we profess, for He Who promised *is* faithful” (vs 22-23). *God promised He would forgive! He does forgive!*

Let’s see a little more about how He does this. Again, this is the whole operation of:

- salvation by faith
- forgiveness by faith
- repentance
- baptism

which ties in with the New Covenant and all of that together!

Romans 3:23: “For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God.” *Everyone sins!* We’re going to see that we sin much more than we really figure.

Verse 24: “*But* are being justified freely...” *It didn’t cost you; you didn’t put money in vending machine; you didn’t pay a priest!* You didn’t have to travel to heaven, you didn’t have to go under the earth.

“...by His grace through the redemption that *is* in Christ Jesus; Whom God has openly manifested *to be* a propitiation... [a continual atoning mercy seat for our sins] ...through faith in His blood, in order to demonstrate His righteousness...” (vs 24-25).

This means that *He counts you righteous*. Imputes this righteousness to you, because when He forgives sins and wipes them away and remembers them no more, *you are righteous!* That’s the righteousness it’s talking about.

“...in respect to the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God...” (vs 25-26).

It’s described again in a little bit different way by the Apostle Paul when he was writing to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ.”

That’s what we need to focus on and understand; not that we go to the extreme and just focus on Christ and forget about prophecy; forget about understanding the Word of God; forget about those things as many of the Protestants are now doing. They’re saying, ‘Focus on Christ’ and have a gospel of feel good, get rich and all of these sorts of things, which is not the Gospel of Christ. You focus

on all the spiritual blessings and the heavenly things.

Verse 4: “According as He has personally chosen us for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love; having predestinated us... [by calling us] ...for sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will, *to the* praise of *the* glory of His grace, wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*; in Whom we have redemption... [the remission of sin] ...through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, **according to the riches of His grace**” (vs 4-7). *This is how God has this operate before us, our relationship with Him!*

Let’s see how often we need forgiveness of sin. By our very nature, by the fact that we have *the law of sin and death* in us means that we have forgiveness of sin daily. Yes, many times more than once a day.

Luke 11:1: “Now, it came to pass *that* as He was praying in a certain place, when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us how to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ And He said to them, ‘When you pray, say, “Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, *so* also upon the earth. Give us our bread *as* needed day by day; and **forgive us our sins, as we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us**; and lead us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one”’ (vs 1-4). There is also another condition: *as we forgive everyone who is indebted to us!*

Let’s read the Lord’s prayer in Matthew; it’s just a little bit different. He adds something here that is very important, that we need to realize.

Matthew 6:9: “Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: ‘Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed... [sanctified; Holy] ...be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors”’ (vs 9-12). *This is not quite sin!* These are things where people do things and you get upset about it.

Verse 13: “And lead us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. **For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**” Why? *Because that shows us how the things that we ask for are accomplished!*

Verse 15: “But **if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**”

There is the condition, and this is something we need to understand. It’s very important with our relationship with each other. Especially having gone

through the history of the Church:

- all of the difficulties
- all the false doctrines
- all of the offenses
- all of the sins
- all of the things of nonsense

that has gone on in the name of God, which was really practicing 'religion' rather than living the way of God, as we should be living.

We've all experienced it. We've all had things where people have done things to us that we probably have even said, 'I'll never forgive that person.' Think about it for a minute. What position does that put you in?

Verse 15: **"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."** *That's profoundly important!*

Here's what we need to understand and the kind of attitude that we need to have. This can only be a Godly attitude. If we have this attitude, then God is going to intervene and do things for us. This is the attitude that Jesus had; if we're going to have the mind of Christ, this is the attitude we need to have. This is a very difficult one. Not only just your brothers or sisters in the Church, or your neighbor, but now Christ even gives a requirement for your enemy:

Matthew 5:43: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **love your enemies...**" (vs 43-44). **How do you love your enemies?** *Obviously, you can't agree with him!* You can love your enemy

- by wishing he would repent
- by doing no harm to him
- by staying away from him

You can love your enemy in many different ways; *even pray for their conversion*. It's possible! Look at the case of the Apostle Paul who was Saul before he was called. You talk about an impossible case of conversion. I would say, humanly speaking that would be an impossible case. But did God love Saul? And call him even though he was an enemy? *Yes, He did!*

"...bless those who curse you... [that's hard to do] ...do good to those who hate you... [that is difficult to do] ...and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (v 44). That's even harder to do.

You've probably heard the story of some of the things concerning William Tyndale. It is said that when he was in prison, before he was burned at the stake... I think he was there about a year and a

half. I think during that time he was able to finish all the rest of Old the Testament and give it to John Rogers who made the *Matthew Henry Bible*, which was the first one to be published after the death of William Tyndale.

It is said that his jailer, and the jailer's wife and daughter were converted to Christ, because of Tyndale's attitude, because of his love. So, it's possible. Even though God did not spare his life, through his death more was accomplished by the fact that you have a Bible here today, than any other event in the world. So, even in that God's blessings still continue.

Here's the reason why you're to do this, v 45: "So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven..."

In other words, if you don't have this attitude, you need to ask: Are you really the children of your Father in heaven?

Here's why: "...for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*?" (vs 45-47).

Here's the whole goal in everything that we are to do, v 48: **"Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect."**

This shows very clearly that you can't be perfected instantly. Perfection is a process, a growing, overcoming, a getting rid of sin. Obviously, loving your enemies is a process.

- you don't automatically, just by changing your thought love your enemy
- you don't automatically pray for those who persecute you and spitefully use you

The natural reaction is, 'I'll get you!' Or like it has been said. You come to the Catholic priest and ask him, 'When I am hit on the right cheek and I turn my left cheek and hit there, what then do you do?' *You hit them back, my son! NO!* That's not the way God wants it done! It's difficult! It is hard!

- Did not Jesus do this?
- Did not Jesus do exactly this same thing when He was on the cross?

He said, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.'

- Did not Stephen say, while they were stoning him and he was on his knees looking up into the heavens, say, 'Lord, lay not this to their charge'? *Yes, he did!*

This is a hard, tough, high, and perpetual spiritual standard that we need to continuously work at!

Let's see how this is put together. Matt. 18 tells us how we need to do it, and it also gives us some understanding of what God will do for us, or won't do for us. Here also shows another process of conversion.

Matthew 18:1: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is *the* greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?'"

You see the carnality involved here. Is this loving your neighbor as yourself? *NO!* 'I want to find out who is going to be the greatest, and I want it to be me.' That's what James, John and their mother wanted. They came to the Lord and 'Lord, let one sit at the right hand, and one sit at the left hand.' This is the opposite of humility.

Now He's going to teach them a lesson, v 2: "And after calling a little child to *Him*, Jesus set him in their midst." *Obviously, not children today!* You couldn't even sit them in the midst; they're up and running and just monsters. But these are children under normal conditions.

Verse 3: "And said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted... [be changed from this attitude of self-exaltation] ...and become as little children... [looking to God, believing in God, loving God, helping each other] ...there is no way that you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

That's quite a profound statement. Everyone expects that they're going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but are you really going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?

- here's a condition
- here is a standard
- here is a test
- here is an attitude check

Verse 4: "Therefore, whoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

When men pull themselves up by their bootstraps to their very highest, it's all total vanity anyway.

I was in Staples and I saw one of the self-improvement programs: *Be Your Greatest Self*. It had a picture of this man who was kind of smug and I said, 'Look what that thing breeds.' I wonder what would happen if I went to one of his lectures and whipped out a Bible and said, 'Here's the standard? It would be a totally different thing.

Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven! Why?

Because what God is going to give you in eternal life, with a spirit body and everything that He gives you is going to be so much greater than anything you can be or accomplish on this earth in this life! That's why the conversion of the heart and mind and the love toward each other is profoundly important, ***because that leads to conversion and spiritual perfection!***

Verse 5: "And whoever shall receive one such little child in My name receives Me. But whoever shall cause one of these little ones **who believe in Me...**" (vs 5-6).

We're going to talk about offenses. People today are very easily offended. I can understand why, because many people have been through so many things, that they come to the point that they have very little tolerance left. Nevertheless, these things are still there.

"...to offend, it would be better for him that a millstone..." (v 6). If you look in *A Harmony of the Gospels* you will see that a millstone was turned by a donkey; which is something that weighs 400-500 lbs. That's put around your neck and you're cast off into the water, you're going right to the bottom.

"...be hung around his neck and he be sunk in the depths of the sea" (v 6). *That has to do with you and I!*

There are going to be offenses in the world. Christ said that He came, not to bring peace but a sword. So, you also have that aspect of it. But that's between the converted and the non-converted, and between those who are Christ's and those who are persecuting.

Verse 7: "Woe to the world because of offenses! For it is necessary... [ordained; no way around it] ...that offenses come, yet, woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

Here's how serious it is. God doesn't want you to commit an offense and go cut off your hand, because you'll commit an offense in the next five minutes and you've got to go back and cut off the other hand, and you can't do it very well with a foot. So, the lesson is that it's going to take the same effort and the same determination to overcome offenses as it would as if you determined to lay your hand on the chopping block and whack it off.

"...and cast *it* from you; for it is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed than to have two hands or two feet *and* be cast into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to offend, pluck it out..." (vs 8-9). *You only have two chances because you only have two eyes!*

This means that you put forth the effort to

overcome the evil eye unless all of those things—criticism, looking down, all of that—as if your eye was going to be plucked out and cast from you.

“...and throw *it* away; for it is better for you to enter into life one-eyed than to have two eyes *and* be cast into the fire of Gehenna. Take heed *that* you do not despise one of these little ones...” (vs 9-10).

Sometimes this is very difficult. Not only little ones concerning children, but little ones in the Church. It is difficult because God has called the weak, those of us with problems. So therefore, we are not a homogeneous instant mixing and matching where we fit together like a hand in glove. God determined it that way:

- so that we can have things to work on
- so that we can have things to overcome
- so that we can see our faults and our problems
- so that we can change

The whole purpose and operation is for change and for conversion! So that you begin to have a heart with the Spirit of God more like the heart of God, rather than the heart of a man.

He gave a warning, “...for I tell you that their angels in heaven continually look upon the face of My Father, Who is in heaven. For the Son of man has come to save those who are lost” (vs 10-11). *This has to be our attitude!*

This is why I’ve always said ***as long as there is life there is hope!*** There is always a chance of repentance. That’s why for even those who have sinned grievously we do not wish evil upon them. Listen, if they sin evilly and they sin against God with determination:

- Don’t you think that God is very capable of taking care of them?
- Don’t you think that God is very capable of either leading them to repentance or bringing punishment and judgment upon them?
 - ✓ If it’s His desire?
 - ✓ Much more so than we?
- What could we really affect?
- What does it really affect when you are angry at someone and they don’t even know it?
- Have you affected anything besides yourself in your mind, heart and attitude? *No!*
- You haven’t done anything. Does the other person know? *No!*

Maybe they don’t even know that they have offended you. Maybe they are just sailing along in their life in blissful innocence and don’t know, and you’re sitting there all mad and angry. Furthermore,

you never talk to them again because of what they did. How are they ever going to know? *We’ll see how Christ solves the problem here!*

He asks, v 12: “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, *does he* not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and search for the one that went astray?”

Most people won’t do that today. *NO!* Their standards are not like that; they’ll say, ‘At least I’ve got 99. Most people when they do things today, they try and that’s good enough, whether they succeed or not you’ve got to accept them because they try. *No!* This shows it takes work. This also shows the work of Christ in coming after those of us who sin and go out of the way, and are temporarily lost.

I got a wonderful message from someone who has been in Worldwide and had almost given up on everything. Went to both extremes: from being a Pharisee of a Pharisee and ridged and going to make everything work to, ‘I’ve given it all up; I’m disgusted with men and I’m not going to do anything.’

God didn’t reject him. Christ didn’t cast him away. Spiritually, Christ went looking for that one who was lost. After receiving the materials we sent, they are restored to God. This needs to be our attitude. This is why we call ourselves *The No Hassle, Recycled, Last Resort Church of God!* We say ‘last resort’ because the last resort is if you’re not right with God then everything has gone over the waterfall.

Verse 13: “And ***if*** he finds it...” *The effort is made!* Christ is not going to lose any that are truly His—He said so. So, He’ll find them.

“...truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray” (v 13). *Remember the parable of the prodigal son!*

Verse 14: “Likewise, it is not the will of your Father Who is in heaven ...”

- What do we pray every day? Our Father Who is in heaven, Holy and sanctified is Your name! Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!
- What is the will of the Father on earth concerning those whom He has called?

“...that one of these little ones should perish” (v 14).

It doesn’t say ‘except those who have problems; except to those whom I don’t like.’ *NO!* It doesn’t say that, because God looks at it entirely differently. What we are going to have to do is we have view it the way that God views it, especially in

relationship to each other and our inner action with each other. Remember, He has given a warning, and we're going to see how that warning will be carried out. We will see what that really, really means.

(go to the next track)

Let's see that Christ gives us a very practical way of applying all these instructions that He has given to us. This is something that has not been practiced very much in the past. If you've come out of any of the corporate Churches of God, this was *never* practiced. Rather, they would have the minister do all the 'policing' of everybody in the Church and the settling of all problems for all the difficulties that were in the Church. ***That is against Scripture! He is not to do that!***

What happens with corporate middle management of a church is—which is completely the wrong approach; you need to understand that—the ministers are so involved in activities and settling problems between ***people that he doesn't have time to study nor to pray, nor to teach the brethren how solve their own problems!*** God wants you to solve your own problems. The ministry is here to teach and to counsel, but not to live your life for you. Not to take the burden of your problems and try and solve them for you in your relationships between each other. That becomes each one's own personal responsibility.

Here's what Jesus said, and this is what needs to be, because too many people take the attitude, 'Well, I'll never speak to that person again.' You just cut yourself off from God, because you're going contrary to Jesus' instructions.

Verse 15: "So then, if your brother sins against you..."—go tell the minister, or the minister's spy, or the deacon, or the ministers wife, or the deacon's wife. ***NO! NO! That becomes busyboddiness' and gossip!***

He says, "...go and show him his fault **between you and him alone...**"

- now you're going to have to face each other face-to-face
- now you're going to have to be honest with each other
- now you're going to have admit your own faults and mistakes, whatever they may be
- now you're going to have get over your self-righteous attitude of never speaking to that person again

Because that makes you just as much at fault as the person who committed the fault! He says, 'Your responsibility is to go to that person *alone* and tell him his fault *alone*.

"...If he is willing to hear you... [which he probably will] ...you have gained your brother" (v 15).

You've also solved another problem. The difficulty is resolved between the two principle parties, therefore, it is not knowledge, news or gossip in the Church, and that is important. If you have a problem with someone—there are certain people who have problems with people and they write me. Look! I'm not going to answer the letter; it is your problem, your fault to solve, not mine.

You're trying to push your responsibility onto me or onto someone else. If there is a difficulty or problem between you and someone else—brother/brother, sister/sister, brother/sister, sister/brother, within the Church—then you are to, if you love God, if you keep His commandments, you're having the Word of God written in your mind, you'd better write this in as a way of practice. ***You go to that individual!***

I've even had people say, 'I'll never do a Matt. 18.' Well, don't think you're going to be in the Kingdom of God, because you're not. Remember what Jesus said, 'If you do not forgive your brother their sins, neither will your Father forgive you your sins.' Yet, the first thing you do when you pray, when you get on your knees, is say, 'God, forgive me.' When God does, then you have a responsibility toward your brothers and sisters within the Church.

Here is the first line of responsibility. Ninety-five to ninety-nine percent of all problems will be solved at this level. Because if you do that, if you pray about it, you have difficulty...

The way you do it is this: If you have a problem with someone, you say, 'Hey, I really need to talk to you alone, Matt. 18. Let's pray about it so we'll have a good attitude before we get together.' You pray about it before you come. Then you sit down and

- you put away all of your defenses
- you put away all of your self-justification
- you put away everything that is resistant within you toward that person

and sit down to solve the problem.

If you do that, let the person explain completely what the problem is, how he/she feels about it, and maybe it's a completely mistaken thing. Many, many times these faults are not that real. Many times they're assumed in our mind as a fault. Many times people get offended because of *the way you think* that a person looks, and *you think* you know what they're thinking in their mind, therefore,

that must be the reason that they have this look on their face.

Let's understand something. I can attest to that, because I'm one of these persons with the kind of face that is very easily mistaken, because of my personality and what I am. Maybe there are others in the same situation. That's why you have to come and put everything aside when you come one-to-one. When you do, do everything:

- with the Spirit of God
- with the power of understanding within you
- with mercy and forgiveness
- repentance and reconciliation

to each other to solve the problem, bury the problem, and do as Christ has done and forget the problem and go on.

If you come to a real obstinate difficulty, then v 16 takes place: "But if he will not listen, take with you one or two others... [make sure that these are people of character and responsibility and understanding, and knowing of the Word of God] ...so that in *the* mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."—so that you know exactly where everything is.

Ninety-nine percent of the problem should be solved here:

- step one—one to one (v 15)
- step two—take one or two more with you that you get everything established, work on a solution (v 16)

When you work out a solution then that also is to be a *private matter* not discussed with anyone, if it is worked out. If the problem becomes such that that doesn't work, then the final resort is public exposure. Rather than have public exposure first, *Christ has public exposure last!*

Verse 17: "And if he fails to listen to them, tell *it* to the Church...." ***This does not mean the ministry!***

- What is the Church?
 - Is the Church only the ministers? *No!*
- The Church is all the body of believers! *It's all the brethren within a congregation!*
- How do you tell it to the Church?
 - Do you go around with a sign or placard?
 - Do you have demonstrations?

'This guy offended me and I want the whole church to know it, and everybody on my side come over here.' The other person is walking up and down with his placard: 'This person won't listen to me and everybody on my side, come over here.'

NO! That's not the way it's to be done! How do you tell it to the Church? I think the way that it should be done is this: The two or three of you who went to the person who did not hear you, then you do go to the minister for this purpose: Not to tell the problem to him, but to inform him that there is a problem and you have done step one and step two and you request that he setup a meeting with the congregation! The elder can preside at that, but the Church has their input on the solution to it. So then, the problem is stated before the whole congregation.

Maybe if the congregation is so big there may be some who may be appointed to do that, and you have a smaller meeting. That could be possible. But with smaller churches and fellowship groups like we have now it can be handled that way. Then you sit down and you find out what the problem is, have the input from both sides. You look into the Scriptures, you resolve the problem, and the whole Church makes the decision. The elder or minister is *only* the 'chairperson' in this. He also, once the congregation has made the decision, can say, 'The ministry agrees.'

I think you would be surprised at the amount of wisdom that there is out in the congregations, when the congregations have been taught to exercise their minds, to use the Word of God, to have these kinds of relationships with each other.

If he refuses to hear the Church in that kind of meeting, then Jesus says. "...But if he also fails to listen to the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and the tax collector" (v 17)—*and he is put out!*

Let's see how the Apostle Paul handled this same situation with the man who was committing incest with his step-mother.

1-Corinthians 5:1: "*It is commonly reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—allowing one to have his own father's wife. You are puffed up and did not grieve instead, so that he who did this deed might be taken out of your midst*" (vs 1-2).

They did not exercise the steps that we just covered in Matt. 18. Now Paul intervenes, because this is a widely known problem in the Church and he commands them what to do in following the instructions of Christ.

Verse 3: "For I indeed, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged *concerning* him who has so *shamelessly* committed this *evil deed* as if I were present: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, together with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such a one... [because he didn't

hear, he didn't listen and now the final step is put in place] ...to Satan... [put out in the world] ...for the destruction of the flesh... [whatever may happen; whatever God's judgment is upon him] ...that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (vs 3-5). *That means that with this action he will repent so he can be saved! That's what they were to do!*

- we know that in it worked (2-Cor.)
- we know that the man repented
- we know that the Corinthians purged this out of themselves, their attitude and his attitude

And Paul told them 'Whom you forgive, I forgive and you come back together with the way that it should be.' When that happens, then you must also be forgiving when that person comes back. Don't let that be a hammer that you hold in your hand over that person and your attitude toward him.

Please understand, God is perfectly capable of judging and taking care of it. *He will!* But people who get into circumstances like that, and especially today, we can apply that to people who are coming out of this society who have been involved in drugs and all kinds of things. When they come back and they are rehabilitated, you can't hold a hammer over their head and continually say, 'You better never slip back.' They know that! *Encourage them!* Tell them that they are doing well:

- keep up the good work
- keep doing the things that you need to do
- look to Christ
- look for His Spirit
- continue to grow and overcome

That's what God wants!

Matthew 18:11: "For the Son of man has come to save those who are lost."

Because we are now in a state of *being saved*, somehow it escapes our mind that *we are just as lost as anyone else without Christ!*

Verse 18: "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven..."

What is Jesus talking about here? Binding and loosing doctrine? *No!* He's talking about the solution of the congregation in relationship to the problem. Or the decision between one and one, between one, two or three, whatever decision you make.

What if someone borrowed a thousand dollars? Promised to pay it back, *promised to pay it back*, and now it came time that you really have need and they have the means to

pay you back. You go to them and say, 'please pay me back my \$1,000.' *No, I won't, I won't do it!* You've gone through the whole process and the decision is made that this person now is to pay \$100 a week until the \$1,000 is paid. O maybe you have success in meeting one-to-one and he says, 'Oh, I've got the money and I'll get you a check tomorrow.'

If that's the decision, you are bound in heaven above by God the Father to go get that check and give it to that person and pay what you owe. That's what this means.

"...and whatever you shall loose on the earth will have already been loosed in heaven" (v 18).

What if the person says, 'Look, I'm really broke, the most I can possibly give you is \$500. Will you accept that?' *Yes, I accept that!* You loose the \$500 and bind the \$500. That is your decision.

Verse 19: "Again I say to you, that if two of you on earth shall agree concerning any matter that they wish to request..." This has nothing to do with doctrine; this has to do with your agreements between each other.

One of the most grievous problems that have been in the past is where brethren get into business together and they don't do it right. Whatever you agree upon, on anything on the earth that they shall ask, you're bound by that. If it's one of those things that you now go to God the Father, because of this problem and you say, 'God, help us to work this out. Let this be the solution to the problem.'

"...it shall be done for them by My Father, Who *is* in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there, I am in *the* midst of them" (vs 19-20).

This can apply to two or three just getting together to study, to worship. This can apply to two or three getting together, in the name of Christ, to solve a problem. Christ is there in the midst to solve the problem. That's why you do it the way that God has laid it out.

These Scriptures have a whole lot different meaning than a lot of people have ever understood. Follow this along and you will see what I mean. That's why Peter asked this question. After having all this instruction:

Verse 21: "Then Peter came to Him *and* said, 'Lord... [I've understood what you said, but I have question] ...how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?'" God, I want a limit. Lord, I want a guideline. I want something definite that I can put my finger on and say 'enough and no more.'

Verse 22: “Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven.’ *That’s 490!*”

Have any of you suffered from a problem, difficulty, sin or mistake by someone committing against you 490 times? *I dare say, none of us!* So, if someone does something and they say, ‘Forgive me,’ then *you forgive!*

What if it’s a weakness and it’s one of those things that’s just kind of buried in their behavior pattern because of the way they have lived in the past, or because of their personality and it’s just one of those things that constantly happens? *You’re still to forgive them*, but also admonish them, ‘Please make an effort to overcome.’ You pray about it for them, and ask them to pray about it.

Christ is telling us very clearly: *He wants all of you to solve all of your problems between each other with the Spirit of God and the Word of God so that you’re not like the rest of the world!* The rest of the world goes to court. If it’s someone in the world, you may have to go to court.

What if you back out of a parking lot and you smash into one of the cars there—one of the brethren’s car—and you mess up his car and your car, you’ve got to go to your insurance companies and get it solved. That’s okay. That you already have working within the land. That’s all right.

But Jesus is saying here, ‘I want all these problems solved and you solve them yourself, because it is your Godly responsibility toward each other.

I’m telling you that before the Passover, if you have a problem or difficulty with someone; if you have something and you have not done what Matt. 18 says, ***you go solve it before Passover!*** Let’s see why. Jesus is going to make a point to Peter. Not only 70 times 70, but now more importantly:

Verse 23: “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a man, a *certain* king, who would take account with his servants. And after he began to reckon, there was brought to him one debtor who owed *him* ten thousand talents” (vs 23-24). That’s like 20-30 million today. Can you imagine this with some people today?

Verse 25: “But since he did not have *anything* to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. Because of this, the servant fell down *and* worshiped him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And being moved with compassion, the lord of that servant released him, and forgave him the debt” (vs 25-27).

There are several lessons here. Remember the debt we owe God is that our sins killed Christ. *He forgives us!* That’s one lesson.

In dealing with each other, here’s another lesson that comes: When you have your sins forgiven by God the Father, you do not go out and do as this man did toward your brother. Rather than be grateful and thankful and go back and tell everyone that owed him everything, ‘I forgive you because I’ve been forgiven.’ *NO!* Notice what he did:

Verse 28: “Then that servant went out *and* found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a hundred silver coins... [a pettily little nothing] ...and after seizing him, he choked *him*, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe.’ As a result, his fellow servant fell down at his feet and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ But he would not *listen*; instead, he went and cast him into prison, until he should pay the amount that he owed. Now, when his fellow servants saw the things *that* had taken place, they were greatly distressed; and they went to their lord *and* related all that had taken place. Then his lord called him *and* said to him, ‘*You* wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you implored me” (vs 28-32). You asked me and I had compassion on you.

That’s why, don’t go before God and ask Him to forgive your sins while you’re on your knees and confess that you’re a sinner—which you are—and have your sins forgiven, and then get up out of that prayer and you treat your brothers and sisters in a nasty, unforgiving way.

God is going to do something to you! You want your sins forgiven and forgotten. However, if you have the attitude of this unforgiving wicked servant, here’s what God is going to do:

Verse 33: “‘Were you not also obligated to have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had compassion on you?’ And in anger, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors, until he should pay all that he owed to him” (vs 33-34).

In other words, all the debt was reinstated! **Do we want all of our sins reinstated upon us?** *Think about it!*

Verse 35: “Likewise shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each *of* you does not forgive his brother’s offenses from the heart.”

That’s the way we’re going to have to do it, brethren. This puts the responsibility on each one of us. This makes us responsible to overcome our own faults, sins and mistakes; makes us responsible to go to the one who has offended us, which is hard. It’s

easier to go to someone and say, 'Did you know...' *I never knew...*

If someone comes and does that to you, you look them right in the eye and say, 'Have you gone to that person, yet?' *No!* 'Then I don't want to hear another word. You go, because that's your responsibility before Christ.' I tell you, verily all problems will be solved!

- that will stop gossip
- that will stop busybodiness
- that will stop entering into other people's business

Every minister needs to teach that. Every minister who does not teach that does not uphold the Word of God, and does not teach the true teachings of Jesus Christ, though he may claim to be a minister of God. It's that simple! We are now living toward the end of the age, and we're down to cases.

- Are we going to do what God says and be converted?
- Are we going to have the humble attitude?
- Are we going to be forgiving of each other?
- Are we going to be responsible for what we say and do and correct our own problems?
- Are we going to go to the person and work out our problems?
- Are we going to do it *or* not?

I'll tell you one thing, there is no way that we are going to enter into the Kingdom of God unless we have our sins forgiven. ***The wages of sin is death!***

- You see how important this is!
- You see how profound it is!

Let's see how we make this work, because we are to make it work. It can work!

- If God said to do it, will it work? *Of course!*
- If God says to keep the Sabbath, will it work? *Yes!*
- If God says to keep the Passover and Holy Days, does it work? *Yes!*
- If God says to love one another, forgive one another, does it work? *Yes!*

Let's see that it also requires changing on both sides if there is a dispute or problem!

Ephesians 4:22: "That concerning your former conduct, you put off the old man..."—*which is vengeful, unforgiving, not taking care of your responsibility face-to-face with the brethren*, but you're going to the minister or someone else and creating problems and gossiping and being busybodies. You put that off!

"...which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts" (v 22). *That is true*, because you're just satisfying your own lusts to go *inform* about someone, and the problem and difficulty.

- What are you serving?
- Who are you serving?
- *Self and Satan!*

Verse 23: "And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind... [with Matt. 18, so that you do it right] ...and that you put on the new man... [which is Christ in you, being perfect as your Father Who is in heaven] ...which according to God is created in righteousness and Holiness of the Truth" (vs 23-24).

If you want the character of God created in you, then that's how you're going to do it when you have difficulties with brethren within the Church. It's not going to be solved any other way! You may have to really pray about having enough courage to go do it, but remember, you can always give yourself an easy opening by saying: 'Hey, So and So, I really need to talk to you, and it's got to be a Matt. 18.'

If someone says that to you, put your antenna up and you be willing to listen. And both of you set to resolve the problem and forgive each other and love each other, and bury it. That is creating true righteousness and Holiness in your relationship with each other.

Verse 25: "Therefore, let each one put away lies..." That's where a lot of the problems come. It's so easy to lie because lies are right there, because human nature is deceitful!

"...and speak the truth with his neighbor because we are members of one another. *When you become angry, do not sin...*" (vs 25-26). *Don't carry it beyond!* There's a right time to be angry, then get over it!

"...Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (v 26). Remember that every time you're tossing and turning in bed because you're angry or mad or wrathful, or there's a problem or something that hasn't been resolved, all you're doing is just bearing the whole thing yourself. Put it on Christ. Go to the individual and solve it. Why lose sleep anyway?

Verse 27: "Neither give place to the devil"—*because that gives the devil a place!*

Verse 32: "And be kind *and* tenderhearted toward one another, **forgiving one another**, even as God has also in Christ forgiven you."

When we do that let's see what our conduct is to be, and let's see how the congregation and fellowship groups are to be.

Ephesians 5:1: "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children." *That ties right back with Matt. 18*, to have an attitude as a child.

Verse 2: "And walk in love..."

- not in strife
- not in doubt
- not in suspicion
- not in antagonism
- not in busybodiness toward each other

"...even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us *as* an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor" (v 2).

Here's how to avoid the problems: *Don't let them happen!* Verse 3: "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, do not permit it even to be named among you, as is fitting for saints."

Here's where a lot of offenses take place; it is the tongue with the speed of light plowing through people's emotions and feelings.

Verse 4: "Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking or jesting, which are not becoming; but instead, thanksgiving."

Don't stand in the congregation and think that you can be justified because *you're right, and you won't talk to that other person!* That won't work. It won't work any more than these other things, because you put yourself in the same category as these:

Verse 5: "For this you know, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous *person*, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

What we have to do, v 9: "(because the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and Truth); proving what is well pleasing to the Lord" (vs 9-10). *That's what we need to do!*

Here's what we need to do in our relationship toward each other. When we get the problem solved and we have them buried, we have them forgiven, we have them forgotten, and we go on. Here's what we are to do:

Colossians 3:12: "Put on then, as *the* elect of God, Holy and beloved, deep inner affections... [compassion and feeling] ...kindness, humility, meekness *and* long-suffering; forbearing one another..." (vs 12-13). *Someone has a little fault; don't let it upset you!*

"...and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another; **even as Christ forgave you, so also you should forgive.** And above all these things *put on* love, which is *the* bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called into one body, and be thankful" (vs 13-15).

This is what God wants us to do. Brethren, if you have a fault, a difficulty, a problem; if any of these things have been between you—brother/brother, brother/sister, sister/sister—***go solve the problem and get it buried before Passover!***

Scriptures from *the Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- Matthew 26:26-28
- Hebrews 10:4-23
- Romans 3:23-26
- Ephesians 1:3-7
- Luke 11:1-4
- Matthew 6:9-13, 15
- Matthew 5:43-48
- Matthew 18:1-17
- 1 Corinthians 5:1-5
- Matthew 18:11, 18-35
- Ephesians 4:22-27, 32
- Ephesians 5:1-5, 9-10
- Colossians 3:12-15

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Isaiah 1; 66
- Jeremiah 7; 17
- John 17

Also referenced: Book:

A Harmony of the Gospels by Fred R. Coulter

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