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Matthew 18

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Matthew 18.

Topics.

- Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?
- If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.
- To be cast into hell (gehenna) fire.
- The parable of a man with a hundred sheep and one goes astray.
- If your brother sins against you forgive seventy times seven.
- Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus Peter James and John on the mountain of transfiguration. Jesus was asked, "Why do the scribes say Elijah must first come" and asked the disciples, "Who do kings of the earth take taxes from?" He healed an epileptic boy, spoke about faith and a grain of mustard seed and said, "The Son of Man will be put to death and rise on the third day.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

MATTHEW 18:1-6

1

Who is the Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?

- **Matthew 18:1-6:** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Jesus takes a humble child from the crowd and uses the child to show the disciples that to be great before God a person should be like the child he is holding. This is because children: -

- Are unassuming in attitude and behaviour.
- Show respect towards people regardless of their status in society.
- Speak and behave without pretensions.
- Are not ego driven desiring to be the dominant one amongst the group.

Clearly there are exceptions to this rule, but the children Jesus had in mind are 'little' and not rebellious, but the innocent.

Whoever causes a child to sin: Jesus, to show how much he and God values children tells the crowds it would be better for a person to drown themselves than cause a child who believes in Christ to sin. No-doubt the synagogues were casting children out of their meetings because they would not conform to the exact protocol of the Jewish legalistic religious

system and the religious leaders most likely considered children of no value to the Kingdom of God because of their young age. Jesus is turning this upside-down by saying children are more important to God than formal official rules or strictly adhering to religious ceremonial rites and regulations.

Jesus is saying to be great in the Kingdom of God:

- We have to become like little children.
- Humbles ourselves like a child.
- Protect children and accept them into God's Kingdom.
- Never causes a child to sin.

MATTHEW 18:7-11

Woe to the World for Temptations to Sin!

- **Matthew 18:7-11:** "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter (eternal) life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire (everlasting fire in KJV) ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell (gehenna) of fire. ¹⁰"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. (children) (v2) For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Gehenna: comes from the Hebrew word (geenna) and means gehenna of fire it refers to the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. It had previously been the site of child sacrifice to an Ammonite god called Molech.

- Manasseh burned his sons as an offering in the valley of the son of Hinnom and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger (2 Chron. 33:1, 6).

(Jer. 19:1-13) (Jer. 32:35) (2 Chron. 28:32) (2 Chron. 33:62) (Kings 16:3) (Kings 21:6)

Gehenna later became the place where the filth and dead animals of the city of Jerusalem were cast out and burned thus the reason it is used as a symbol of the wicked and their future destruction in the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction).

Hell: in the Old Testament is the English translation of the Hebrew word Sheol which means the grave and in the New Testament (except where Gehenna has been translated as hell) hell is the English translation of the Greek word Hades which also means the grave. The traditional religious belief that God has created an eternal place called hell were the unbelieving dead go after death not only to be cruelly tortured, by evil eternal spirit creatures called demons for all eternity, but also to be burned in flames of fire all the while being fully conscious of the extreme pain they are suffering is not only a gross corruption and interpretation of Scripture, but also an extremely gross reflection of God, His heart and His nature. The only two eternal destinations the Bible teaches are eternal life and eternal death (i.e. total extinction).

To be cast into hell (gehenna) fire: notice: it is the fire of gehenna that is everlasting and not the torment of the people thrown into it. The picture painted is that the fire of gehenna is always burning it is always looking for more fuel. The flames never die because they are always being feed with the wicked thus the reason it is called everlasting fire.

Matthew wrote:

- For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander (Matt. 15:19).

Mark said:

- For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery (Mark 7:21).

All sin either satisfies pride, ego or some sense of self-gratification. These verses shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth, until the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory the world will always be full of temptations and evil, but the people who cause the temptations will be judged accordingly.

If Your hand, foot or eye causes you to sin cut them off: Jesus is not telling sinners to literally cut off their hand, their foot or pluck out their eyes. Jesus is simply using graphic language to show how we should value eternal life. He is saying if anything has the potential to lead us away from salvation and eternal life forsake it, because it is of far more value to inherit eternal life than enjoy the temptations of this world for a moment. The reason it is better to enter eternal life blind or lame rather than not enter it at all is because we are given new bodies, immortal bodies so whatever damage has been done to this body will matter not since we will be clothed with an eternal indestructible body.

NOTE: almost all Christians know that when Jesus said, pluck your eye out and cut your hand and foot off he was speaking figuratively and not literally to highlight the seriousness of sin, so why is it that they do not treat the words gehenna fire in the same light? Why should one part of a verse be accepted as figuratively and the other part not? For further information see the titles:

- Gehenna.
- Hell.

Both titles are in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATTHEW 18:12-14

The Lost Sheep.

- **Matthew 18:12-14:** 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 go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones (children v2) should perish.

Jesus is not saying the ninety-nine are of less value than the one gone astray, but because the ninety-nine are well feed and secure they do not need the same attention as the one that has gone astray. This is not about loving one more than others, but of one needing more attention than the others. The one in this story that has gone astray is more vulnerable to being led completely away from Christ and the Gospel of eternal salvation than the other ninety-nine and therefore they need more attention and help.

MATTHEW 18:15-17

If your Brother Sins Against You.

- **Matthew 18:15-17:** “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by

the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

NOTICE: this is not general sin, but sin against us personally and the motivation behind what Jesus is saying is to win the offending brother or sister back, it is not about exposing their sin and demeaning and degrading them in front of others, but about bringing repentance and forgiveness into the relationship so that there will be harmony between the brother and sister who has been offended and the one who has offended them. This is a situation in which we personally have been offended or sinned against by a brother or sister. In this situation Jesus is saying, take others filled with the fruits of the spirit (i.e., love, compassion, kindness, mercy and grace) with you who are respected in the church so that we have witnesses to the conversations and others to help and go and talk to the offending brother or sister. These conversations are about trying to bring reconciliation between the person who has been offended and the one who has offended them. If after doing this there is still no harmony then share the events or situation with the rest of the church so that they know what is happening and hopefully the situation can be sorted out (in doing this gossip is stopped in its tracks). If there is still no resolution to the conflict then everyone has done all they can do to explain to the offending brother or sister the hurt they have caused and everything that can be done to correct the situation and keep harmony in the church. The only option now is to consider the offending brother or sister as a sinner outside the church, meaning those in Christ do not need to consider him or her as a brother or sister any longer. The entire spirit behind what Jesus is saying is love because the motivation is to restore a broken relationship not only between a brother and sister, but the entire church body.

NOTE: bringing an offending brother or sister up before the entire congregation is not about bringing them up before a congregation of hundreds where many in the congregation would be unknown to that brother or sister. During the era of the early church, church meetings were held in the homes of faithful brothers and sisters in the town, city or village they lived in. Everyone would have known each other reasonably well and therefore cared about the well-being of the offended brother or sister and the well-being of the one who has offended them. Today in a mega church where many of the congregation don't know each other the right and proper way to apply this principal would be to gather together those who do personally know and care about the one offended and the one who has been offended and call them altogether to try and bring healing to the broken relationship.

MATTHEW 18:18

Binding and Loosing.

- **Matthew 18:18:** Truly, I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Binding: refers to unforgiveness, because denying someone forgiveness binds their emotions in resentment and can lead to bitterness and hatred etc., and certainly stops a broken relationship from being healed and restored.

Loosing: refers to forgiveness because forgiving a person sets them and their emotions free from resentment bitterness and hatred etc., and opens the way for a broken relationship to be healed and restored. This verse is continuing on from the context of the previous verses and therefore could be stated in the following way:

- Truly, I say to the person who has been sinned against if you do not forgive on earth you shall not be forgiven by God in heaven, but if you do forgive on earth you will be forgiven by God in heaven (see Matthew 18:35).

What Jesus is saying applies to the person who has been sinned against in (Matt. 18:15-17) if we do not forgive, God who is in heaven will not forgive us, but if we do forgive God will forgive us.

NOTICE: Jesus is not saying a person cannot be forgiven by God in heaven unless we forgive them here on earth, because then another person's forgiveness from God would be dependent on other people forgiving them, but he is saying if a brother or sister who has been offended does not forgive the offending person when they repent of what they have done then God will not forgive them.

Jesus is warning those who have been offended to always be open and ready to forgive, they must forgive those who acknowledge their wrong and honestly repent of their offence no matter how much that brother or sister has hurt them, if they acknowledge their offence and ask for forgiveness they must be forgiven (see Matthew 18:35). For further information concerning forgiveness see the title:

- Forgiveness (at the end of this chapter).

MATTHEW 18:19-20

If two agree on Earth about anything it will be done by God.

- **Matthew 18:19-20:** Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

This verse is applying to (Matt. 18:15) and (Matt. 18:21) Jesus has been talking about forgiving brothers and sisters and now he says, if two or more brothers and sisters agree to forgive an offending brother or sister and they all ask for God's forgiveness in prayer their prayer will be answered. Jesus is encouraging all believers by telling them if they are prepared to forgive a brother or sister who has offended them, they can have confidence God will also forgive the offending brother or sister.

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MATTHEW 18:21-22

Forgive Seventy Times Seven.

- **Matthew 18:21-22:** Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

Seventy times seven equals four-hundred and ninety. In Daniel chapter nine Daniel gives a seventy-week prophecy (Dan 9:24). In this prophecy an angel tells Daniel seventy weeks (of years) are determined for: -

- God's holy people and the Holy City (Jerusalem).
- To finish the transgression and make an end of sins.
- To make reconciliation for iniquity.
- To bring in everlasting righteousness.
- To seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy (i.e., the resurrection and return of Christ).

Peter clearly understood that Jesus in (Matt. 18:15-20) was talking about forgiving a brother or sister who has offended another and asks the Lord how many times we are expected to forgive. Jesus tells him seventy times seven (490) which in Daniel's seventy-week prophecy takes us to the end

of this age and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. Jesus is telling Peter (and by extension all of us) we must forgive until the end of the age.

MATTHEW 18:23-35

God's Kingdom may be compared to a King who wished to settle Accounts.

- **Matthew 18:23-35:** "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he (the king) began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity (mercy) (v33) for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³²Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

One denarius was a day's wages (Matt 20:2, 10).

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THE STORY: the king wants to collect the people's debts, but one of his servants could not pay the ten thousand talents (thirty million denarius) (thirty million days wages) he owed the king so the king's chief servant orders the man and his family to be sold. The servant pleads for mercy and says he will pay all that he owes so the king's chief servant forgave him the debt and released him. After being given his freedom he finds one of his servants who owed him a hundred denarii (one-hundred days wages) (approximately three months) and begins to choke him saying, "Pay what you owe" so the servant pleaded for mercy and also offered to pay the debt, but his master instead of forgiving him put him in prison. When the other servants heard that their friend had been put in prison they told the chief servant of the king, naturally he was horrified that this man that he had forgiven of such an enormous debt (one that was impossible for him to pay) had treated his own servant so cruelly so rather than forgiving him he had him put in prison.

Repentance and sorrow: some people weep and are enormously sorry, but they are only sorry because they have been caught and know they are going to suffer some form of penalty or punishment, this kind of sorrow is called worldly sorrow and does not have the power to change a person's life. Other people are sorry and weep because of the hurt they have caused to others or even God Himself this kind of sorrow is called godly sorrow and has the potential to turn a person's life around and even lead them to Christ.

CONCLUSION OF THE STORY

Jesus uses the story to teach us that God has forgiven us a tremendous debt, one we could never pay therefore when a brother or sister hurts or offends us but afterward is open and prepared to listen when we explain what they have done and how it hurt us and they in turn respond in

repentance asking forgiveness and we do not forgive (perhaps because of the great hurt) God will not forgive us. This is what Jesus means when he says what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and what you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. In this context binding and loosening means, God will not forgive us in heaven when we do not forgive someone who has offended or hurt us on earth when they ask for our forgiveness. God's forgiveness to us freely flows when our hearts are always open and ready to forgive those who come seeking and asking for our forgiveness (Matthew 18:18).

Forgiveness: consider for a moment how the world treats God, yet Jesus tells us: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). This shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the forgiveness of Christ and his heavenly Father is forever flowing it is always readily available to those who seek it. Despite the world's blatant denial of God and total lack of any care toward what God values, His forgiveness is ever flowing toward them, but for them to be united in fellowship with the Lord they must humble themselves and come to him in honest heartfelt repentance. Now applying this principal to men and woman forgiving each other it means that our hearts should always be filled with forgiveness and always be ready to forgive, but the relationship cannot be mended until the offending party has come with an honest heart of repentance to the one they have injured and done everything they can to heal the hurt (in most cases this might just be saying sorry).

Forgiveness is always difficult because it is about forgiving someone who has hurt us certainly it helps if the person who has hurt us comes to us and says "Look I'm so terribly sorry that I hurt you". But if that doesn't happen and the hurt is great some might wonder, "Why must I forgive?" Simply this, if we don't we remain mentally and emotionally controlled by the one who has injured us, by our craving for revenge and by our anger, resentment, bitterness and hatred toward them and as long as these attitudes have power in our hearts and minds they will rob us of mental peace and heartfelt joy. Even worse than this if the hatred and lust for revenge grows strong enough it can lead to murder. This is why we must forgive it is the power that sets our minds and inner most being free to put the hurt behind us and begin living a new life afresh. Some may think, "It is just too hard," yes no one would ever say forgiveness is easy in fact the greater the hurt the harder it will be, but if we don't forgive then we are choosing to give the one who has injured us the power to continue to injure us mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Perhaps the following testimony might help: I remember watching and listening to the testimony of a middle-aged woman (one of Doctor Phil's family members) sharing how a man had thrown a bucket of hydrochloric acid into her face, her entire face was grossly scared and deformed (it still is). She told Doctor Phil, "I made the choice to forgive, because I was not going to allow my grandchildren to grow up knowing a grandmother full of bitterness, hurt and resentment. What a tremendous influence of good and strength this grandmother would have imparted to her grandchildren. To make such a choice clearly takes enormous fortitude and strength of character, but there is no personal value or benefit in holding onto resentment and anger? Now trust is a totally different thing to forgiveness, a woman who has been raped will have to find forgiveness in her own mind and heart to overcome bitterness, hatred and the lust for revenge, but it would be totally foolish for her to have a relationship with the man, until he had proven his honest heartfelt remorse and done whatever is needed to heal the deep wound he has inflicted on his innocent victim and proven he can be trusted.

There is no malice in the heart of Christ only love: to overcome the reluctance to forgive because of the deep hurt it is helpful to look at Jesus who though we were sinners against God was prepared to be cruelly nailed to the cross, and even more while in tremendous suffering he prayed: -

- Father forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:32-34).

There is no malice in the heart of Christ only love and if we are to have a deeper relationship with God, we cannot do it with malice in our hearts. Take the hurt and pain to the throne of God and before the bloodstained cross and forgive and embrace the eternal love and grace of God who showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace