

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: **March 10, 2019**

Sermon Title: **Guarding the Integrity of the Gospel**

Sermon Series: Matthew

Text: Matthew 18:15-20

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Title: Guarding the Integrity of the Gospel
Text: Matthew 18:15-20
Theme: The Church's Mission calls her to defend the integrity of the Gospel by removing disciples and loving sinners.

VISUALS

1. The "Paddle" versus "the lollipop." There is no paddle in the gospel.
2. A battery: a positive - draw them in; a negative - put them out
3. A magnet: draws them in; pushes them out. There are two sides to this. Use a small magnet taped to a piece of paper.
4. Two blocks of butter; who can tell the difference if the label is ripped off? What about taste? Perhaps.
5. Targets focus our purpose, intent. Hand out small "gospel" targets. Have a big target on the platform or on the cross.

Introduction:

If you understand the vision and the mission, then you have clarity in your ministry and life.

In Eagle, WI there is a coffee shop called Café Saloon. Their entrance is notable in that you walk through one door, step down three short steps and then walk through another door all within five feet. The door has on it in big letters **PULL**, but inevitably, when I walk down the three steps I **PUSH** and walk smack dab into the door [and usually I have Joe Herriges behind me, which isn't pleasant!] Even though the instructions seem pretty straightforward, it isn't always as easy as you think.

This passage is one of those passages that seem pretty straightforward, but end up being a little confusing. There is, however, a way to understand this text with a degree of clarity and hopefully shed more light than heat.

Questions / Observations

1. What sin is of such significance that at the end of it one would conclude that he/she is an unbeliever? [Unbelief]
2. Why would we treat the non-repentant as a gentile and a tax-collector? [The audience must be Jewish.]
3. The "church" in our context is the gathering of believers with recognized leadership.
4. Are the "two" in verse 16 different than the "two" in verse 20? [no]

If you become aware of an individual who is denying the gospel, you are to go to the brother or sister and tell them what you are seeing and hearing. If it is not true, let it go. If it is true and they have repented of their unbelief, let it be done. If it is true and they do not repent of their unbelief, then bring it to the elders. They elders will determine whether or not it should be addressed or you need to let it go.

Part of our problem is adhering to this text as if this is the unequivocal pattern for all cases of church discipline. Folks, it isn't. I would also suggest to you that if I had a friend and that friend was in serious smack sin, I would bring along those within our closest circle of friends and speak gospel to them with the hopes that they would put off their soul-destroying behavior.

5. The binding of verses 18-20 is done by the leadership of the gathered.
6. This is not something individuals within the church do.
7. Is the "you" singular / plural (v. 15)?" best MSS do not have the "you"
8. What makes verse 15 different than verse 21? [subject matter]

"For Christians today reading it as insiders, the text may evoke nods of approval at some memorable statements by Jesus. Start poking around a bit, though, and a host of questions arises. Who exactly is 'your brother'? Who decides what constitutes sinning? Isn't it rather racist to use the designation of 'gentile' in such a derogatory manner? Why does Jesus pick on tax collectors? Where is the unconditional love of Jesus if people are being excluded and shunned? What precisely does it mean for Jesus to be among those gathered in his name? Good questions."¹

What we need to note is what this text is not telling us. First, it is not telling us how to handle personal offenses. Our next paragraph will address personal offenses. Second, our text is not giving us a blueprint or three step process for solving any relational problem. It is always more complicated than the straightforward language of this text. Not only are we dealing with information, but it is often highly emotional. I find the following statement helpful in setting the stage for our treatment of this text.

"So, is this a good blueprint for church conflict today? Must we confront one another with these prescribed steps and swerve from them only to our detriment? Do we in a culture with so many choices in churches really dwell on the power we have to exclude some from our midst? After all, don't people leave churches all the time for any number of reasons and find another place to call a spiritual home? Don't churches split for any number of reasons? In a culture that does not seek out belonging in churches, do we still heed this call to community, to mutual belonging?

To be clear, **this is no mere handbook for resolving conflicts. Simply following this order of confrontation will not ensure a result consonant with God's hopes.** It is not as simple as moving through these steps. We know that the *mechanics* of decision-making do not always reflect our *values*. Checking off these duties step-by-step will not guarantee a decision rooted in God's love for us. This process could so easily be co-opted by selfishness and dislike and so many human frailties. Instead, what matters here is the concern for the other and the community imbedded in these steps.

We ought to remember that what makes a church a church is precisely the presence of so many troublesome people. That the expulsion of the troublemaker is a last resort, a human condemnation that so easily redounds with divine implications. That Matthew's Jesus must assume that most conflicts will be confronted well with step one or step two, never requiring the harsh step of estrangement.

In short, **the steps Jesus lays out here are not a mere blueprint so much as a statement of communal values and an acknowledgment of both the frailty as well as the utter necessity of**

communal discernment. Love requires that we address the inevitable conflicts that will arise among us. It is not enough to sweep them under the rug and thus allow them to fester. Unaddressed conflicts can render a community unable to function as God hopes. But neither is rejection our first instinct. Separation is not to be taken lightly even when it proves necessary.”²

One of our weaknesses as believers is to say or do the right thing from the wrong text. We use biblical words, but without biblical meaning. As it relates to “church discipline” this is one of those passages we put a lot of weight on. However, this doesn’t necessarily answer all of our questions. In the absence of a direct answer, we create our own when we should allow the text to be silent.

Yet, this text points to the absolute seriousness of our corporate mission and how we must do everything possible in its protection and promotion even if it leads to casting attendees out and treating them as unbelievers.

1. What is the author’s structure of this passage? Please a) show *sections with verse references*, b) state the *author’s emphasis*, and c) explain what *strategies* you used to see this structure.

- ¹⁵ “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. ¹⁶ But 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. ¹⁷ If 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. 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^[1] in heaven. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:15-20).

“Insight from the Old Testament Back ground Jesus’ saying is quite likely based on Leviticus 19:17: ‘You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall reason frankly with your neighbor’ (ESV). NASB translates, ‘you may surely reprove your neigh-bor.’ The term elechnō, ‘to bring to light, to reprove, to convict,’ of Matthew 18:15 also appears in Leviticus 19:17, in addition to the noun elegnos, ‘rebuke’. So there is a connection between the two texts. However, the Leviticus text does not indicate that a brother sins against a brother. It is general in nature, as seems to be the case with Matthew 18:15.”³

I. Its literary context – The Parable of the Lost Sheep

vv. 15, 21 show their connectedness. V. 15, however, continues to speak to the corporate (vv. 1-14). V. 21 speaks to the personal / individual. In addition, the sin of verses 15-20 is repeated with long-term consequences; whereas the sin in verses 21-35 could be point in time with no lingering consequence. Regardless, we are to keep the gospel central and its flow unimpeded. We must do everything possible to keep the way clear. Keeping it clear on a personal level, is to forgive those who sin against you personally. Do not carry grudges. Learn to see your offense in light of what Jesus did for you.

All the “if” clauses in this paragraph are third class conditions in Greek. “If thy brother sin against thee (ean hamartêsêi adelphos sou). Literally, commit a sin (ingressive aorist subjunctive of hamartanô). Aleph B Sahidic do not have "against thee" (eis se). Shew him his fault (elegxon). Such private reproof is hard to do, but it is the way of Christ. Thou hast gained (ekerdêsas). Aorist active indicative of kerdainô in conclusion of a third-class condition, a sort of timeless aorist, a blessed achievement already made.”⁴

Sinaiticus and Vaticanus do not include the phrase εἰς σέ (unto or against you: i.e., if your brother sins *against you*), though the Majority Text does.

“The earliest and best witnesses lack ‘against you’ after ‘if your brother sins.’ It is quite possible that the shorter reading in these witnesses (ⲛ B, as well as 0281 f 579 pc sa) occurred when scribes either intentionally changed the text (to make it more universal in application) or unintentionally changed the text (owing to the similar sound of the end of the verb ἁμαρτήσῃ [hamartêsê] and the prepositional phrase εἰς σέ [eis se]). However, if the mss were normally copied by sight rather than by sound, especially in the early centuries of Christianity, such an unintentional change is not as likely for these mss. And since scribes normally added material rather than deleted it for intentional changes, on balance, the shorter reading appears to be original. NA includes the words in brackets, indicating doubts as to their authenticity.”⁵

This paragraph is tied to its surroundings. The “spring” feeding this “pool” are verses 10-14. In that paragraph, “The Parable of the Lost Sheep,” the mission of God is stated. THAT MISSION defines the subject matter over which church discipline would happen. Whatever might happen, happens because of the impact it has on the gospel.

Jesus is instructing His disciples on what their mission is and how they are to go about guarding this mission in the context of the believing community. He is also helping us to understand the responsibilities of those in leadership toward others who deviate from the mission. If we do not know what the corporate mission is, we will not be able to administrate “church discipline” properly.

Our text tells us that all of us are going to stumble (vv. 7-9). The greater threat is causing others to stumble. This stumbling has to do with gospel integrity. What is this gospel integrity? It is the ability to believe what it says as true. Is the gospel we receive, maintain, and proclaim reliable? We will fail in our relationship to the gospel, but may we never be the cause of others failing.

Here is how Jesus says it in Matthew 23:13, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.”

The word “close” or “shut off” occurs three times in Matthew (6:6; 25:10; and here). The other two occurrences speak of a literal door shutting or closing.

The ESV uses "in the face of." It speaks of, *Against* (emprosthen). Literally, before. These door-keepers of the kingdom slam it shut in men's faces and they themselves are on the outside where they will remain. They hide the key to keep others from going in."⁶

II. Its historical context – Gentiles and a tax collector

"Matthew writes, "Treat him like a tax collector," he surely means, "Treat him the way Jesus treated me. He loved me, accepted me, invited me!" When Matthew writes, "Treat him like a Gentile," he surely means, "Go to the ends of the earth to win him back into a life of discipleship."⁷

"Tell me, how did Jesus treat Gentiles, tax collectors, prostitutes? Did he cast them away as worthless sinners? Of course he didn't. He invited them in to the table. To Matthew (a tax collector) 'I will come and dine at your house tonight.' He made the Pharisees crazy because he did just the opposite of what they would do. He treated those outside as insiders. He treated them with respect and encouraged them to repent. He turned the social order upside down. So in that context think about what the injunction to 'treat them as Gentiles and tax collectors' might mean. Remember in the previous verses he uses a child as an example of who might be first. Children were not even counted in the census at the time."⁸

"Since the words of Jesus are being used here, it follows that the actions of Jesus should tell us *how* one treats a pagan or a tax collector. How did Jesus treat these folks? Did he shun them and protect himself from them so as to not let their sinfulness infect him, as I've heard this passage applied? No! Jesus treated pagans and tax collectors, not to mention prostitutes, thieves, and all other kinds of "undesirables" with love and respect. He didn't just talk to them for the purpose of encouraging them to get their act together. When he encountered Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19:1-10), he didn't even wait for Zacchaeus to say a word before saying that he would dine with him. Zacchaeus' declaration of turning over a new leaf was in response to Jesus' love. Grace came first, then repentance. But in the church we've flipped the equation around. Let's also remember that Jesus' harshest words were reserved for the religious people that thought themselves too pious to associate with the common "sinner." He called them "broods of vipers," among other things. It was the religious people who wanted to exclude everyone they didn't approve of who conspired with the Romans to kill Jesus."⁹

- ⁴⁶ "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? **do not even the publicans the same?** ⁴⁷ And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? **do not even the publicans so?"** (Matt. 5:46, 47).
- ¹⁰ "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, **many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.** ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, **Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"** (Matt. 9:10, 11).
- "Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, **and Matthew the publican;** James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus" (Matt. 10:3).
- "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, **a friend of publicans and sinners.** But wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt. 11:19).

- “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 and a publican” (Matt. 18:17).
- “Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, **That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you**” (Matt. 21:31).
- “For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but **the publicans and the harlots believed him**: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him” (Matt. 21:32).

Notable tax-collectors in the gospels

- Matthew
- Zacchaeus
- God, be merciful to me a sinner
- Friend of sinners

You remove those who have defected from Jesus, but you love them like Jesus would love them. Seek them like the Shepherd seeks His lost sheep. We put them out with the desire to pull them in.

III. Its ecclesiastical context - Formal and official [binding and losing]

Regardless of what era we live in, there is always a believing community and that believing community has structure and within that structure there are those with oversight / authority of which the rest of the believing community are to respond.

The “Two or Three” Witnesses

- **DEUTERONOMY 17**
 - ⁶ On the evidence of **two witnesses or three witnesses**, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. ⁷ The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.
- **DEUTERONOMY 19**
 - ¹⁵ **A single witness shall not rise up against a man** on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of **two or three witnesses** a matter shall be confirmed.
- **2 COR. 13**
 - ¹ This is the third time I am coming to you. **EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.**
- **1 TIM. 5**
 - ¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of **two or three witnesses**.
- **HEB. 10**
 - ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies **without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses**.
- **MATT. 18**
 - ¹⁶ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.**

Scandalon

- **The noun form 'Scandal'** is used in 13 verses in the New Testament.
- It is only used four times **in** the Gospels (Matt. 13:41; 16:23; 18:7; Luke 17:1).
- It can mean snare, occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends.
- **scandalizo**
- **The verb form 'Scandalize'** is used in 28 verses in the New Testament.
- It is only used three times **outside** of the Gospels (Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 8:13; 2 Cor. 11:29).
- It can mean to entrap, i.e. trip up or entice to sin, apostasy or displeasure.

Scandalizo

- ⁶“but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to **stumble**, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. . . ⁸If your hand or your foot causes you to **stumble**, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. ⁹If your eye causes you to **stumble**, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell” (Matt. 18:6, 8, 9).

IV. Its practical context – between you and him alone

Personal Self-Control – Friends – Church [Elders if possible; the entire church if necessary]

Author's Emphasis:

Only those who confess Jesus as Savior and Lord are to be identified as His followers. Everyone else is to be graciously given the gospel.

Author's Strategies:

This passage tells us how we are to treat those who claim Jesus but do not follow Jesus. It also tells us how we are to treat those who still need Jesus. We are to love sinners like Jesus loved sinners.

3. In light of the emphasis of this passage in its context, state the author's main idea for *his audience* (in one short sentence).

Churches are to protect the gospel. This requires a steadfastness that will tax relationships. The intent of all corrective acts are to grace people back to the gospel.

The church is identified by the gospel. Anyone who does not identify with the gospel is not a part of the church (John 6:66). A non-Christian is one who does not identify with the gospel. Those who do not identify with the gospel are to be loved into the gospel.

In matters of church discipline, we have thought the “putting out” is shunning, marking, avoiding, and rightly so based on what text you look at. But not every situation requires the same action. If someone is actively preaching falsehood and refuses to believe the gospel, then

we have nothing to do with them theologically. But regardless of who they are theologically, we are to bring the gospel to them.

For example, we shy away from those Buddhist or Muslims, yet they are the ones who need the gospel. We tend to shy away from those who are different from us economically, socially, culturally, yet these are the ones who need the gospel. The only ones that become problematic are those who are aggressively anti-Christian and would seek us bodily harm, yet they need the gospel as well.

We do not identify them as Christian, but this does not mean we should refuse to bring them the gospel.

4. What parts of this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ? What *particular facet of the gospel* is in view? [What are its Christological / Christo-centric contributions?]

The context for this paragraph is pre-cross, but He is speaking of what is about to unfold and our relationship to those who identify with the gospel and with those who do not identify with the gospel.

5. In light of your gospel connection, what **argument** (one short sentence) will you make to **your audience**? What **applications** from this argument will you make for the believer? The unbeliever?

To the believing:

To the unbelieving:

The Wheel

1. Why should you do this?
 - a. There are two kinds of people in your world: those who identify with the gospel and those who do not. Both groups need the gospel, but for different reasons.
2. What do I need to do?
 - a. You live in a wheat and tare world. The two often mix. You need to know who wheat are and who tares are. Those who openly identify with Jesus are wheat. Those who do not are tares. Both groups need the gospel, but for different reasons. To the wheat, it is a reminder. To the tares, it is a pulling in.
3. How do I do this?
 - a. It all boils down to the gospel. It is only the gospel that brings clarity to this matter.
4. What can I expect when I do this?
 - a. When you live in and out the gospel, your life finds its center. Much of what we do on the horizontal is frustrating. It is only when we connect our stories to His that we find meaning and fulfillment.

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- ¹ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-dr-mark-g-vitalis-hoffman/on-scripture-matthew-18-christian-inclusion_b_942337.html
- ² https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2164
- ³ <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/Reflections%20%2358%20%284-17%29.pdf>
- ⁴ A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures* on Matthew 18:15.
- ⁵ <https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+18>
- ⁶ A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures* on Matthew 23:13.
- ⁷ <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/thepeangeablog/2012/01/26/treat-them-like-a-tax-collector-reflections-on-matthew-18-church-discipline-and-andrew/> Timothy J. Geddert, *Double Take: New Meanings from Old Stories*, 46.
- ⁸ <http://www.aidanvba.net/files/125101378.pdf>
- ⁹ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2414/loving-pagans-and-tax-collectors>