

Matthew 18:1 ¶ At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 18:2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

Matthew 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Following on the heels of the events of the last chapter, the disciples came to Jesus with yet another question—“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” From Mark and Luke we learn that the disciples had been arguing among themselves as to who would have the most important position when Jesus established His kingdom.

Mark 9:33–34 “And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.”

Luke 9:46 “Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.”

Mark informs us that Jesus gathered the disciples around Him and declared that he who desires to be first must be willing to humble self as servant of all.

Mark 9:35 “And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.”

Then, as He so often does, Jesus answers them with an object lesson. He called a little child to come him and made the child the center of attention. He declared that unless one reverses course to become as lowly as a child, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Guzik adds the following insight, “...in that day, children were regarded more as property than individuals. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard.”

He who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven is he who humbles self as a child before God. John Trapp describes this attitude as describing one “who neither thinks great things of himself nor seeks great things for himself.”

With His statement Jesus confronts the disciples with their thoughts of selfish ambition. It is he who is willing to humble self in obedience before God that proves most valuable to Him.

Proverbs 29:23 “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.”

Isaiah 57:15 “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

James 4:6 "...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

1 Peter 5:6 "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time...."

Matthew 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Matthew 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Millstone = a large heavy stone used to grind grain

Jesus continued to explain that when one welcomes and cares for the little children in His name, He considers it the same as receiving Him. However, anyone that causes one of these little ones to stumble in or turn away from their faith would be better off having a millstone hung around his neck and thrown into the sea to drown.

Note that His "little ones" is a reference to a person who believes in Jesus. The Lord does not take it lightly when one endangers the spiritual well being of His children.

Matthew 18:7 ¶ Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Matthew 18:8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

Matthew 18:9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Jesus pronounces a curse on those who live in the world that cause others to sin. Although we must endure wickedness until the Lord Jesus returns, you sure shouldn't want to be one that is guilty of causing others to sin. If your hand or foot (referencing the things you are tempted to do) causes you to sin, it would be better to cut off it off and enter eternity maimed rather than to be thrown physically whole into the fires of hell. If your eye (referencing the things that cause you to lust) causes you to sin, it would be better to pluck it out and enter eternity with one eye than to have both eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell.

Insight from Chuck Smith: "This business of, if thy hand offend thee and all, is something that Jesus meant to be repugnant. He means it to be shocking....He did not literally mean that we are to cut off our hand or to pluck out our eye, but He is only illustrating how vital it is that we enter the kingdom of heaven. It is worth more than having a whole body."

Important to note is that Jesus is assuming we have the ability to make our own choices.

Matthew 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

What a beautiful truth Jesus reveals. Each child (and each believer) has an angel in heaven. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that they are ministering spirits, and they are meant to help us.

Hebrews 1:13–14 “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?**”

That these angels “always behold the face of my Father” indicates that they are ever ready to act on one’s behalf according to His bidding. One who is foolish enough to “think against” or cause harm to one of God’s children is just asking for judgment.

Adam Clarke offers this insight: “This is an allusion to the privilege granted by eastern monarchs to their chief favourites; a privilege which others were never permitted to enjoy....Our Lord's words give us to understand that humble-hearted, child-like disciples, are objects of his peculiar care, and constant attention.”

Matthew 18:11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Matthew 18:12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

Matthew 18:13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Matthew 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Continuing the flow of the context—Jesus notes that every child is important to Him. His purpose for coming to earth was to save those who are lost. Once again, He goes on to illustrate this truth. Staying in context, I think the sheep represent believers. Also in context, I think the reference is to believers who have been caused to stumble and have, therefore, gone astray.

Suppose a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray. Won’t that shepherd leave the 99 to go and look for the lost sheep? If/When (from the Greek) he finds that sheep, he greatly rejoices. Father God in heaven looks at His children in the same way; He is not willing for one of His children to perish.

Matthew 18:15 ¶ Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

Matthew 18:16 But if he will not hear *thee*, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Matthew 18:17 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.

At first it would seem that Jesus is changing the subject, but the context is still relationships among Christians. If a brother sins against you, you should go to him/her privately and try to restore fellowship. I liked Spurgeon's comment on this directive: "It is the injured one who always has to forgive, though he has nothing to be forgiven, it always comes to that, and it is the injured one who should, if he be of the mind of Christ, be the one to commence the reconciliation."

Hopefully, the response will be positive and fellowship restored. If not, however, you are to take one or two witnesses with you to try once again; this is to ensure that you have approached the offending brother with the right attitude and to provide testimony to the body of believers if need be. If your overture is still rejected, you are to inform the fellowship of believers; and the offending party is to be banned from fellowship. Paul goes on to explain that the purpose of such action is to bring the offending party to repentance.

1 Corinthians 5:5 "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Matthew 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Following in context, the Lord is basically saying that God honors such decisions.

The Greek for "agree" states to be harmonious. I loved Adam Clarke's observation on these verses: "It is a metaphor taken from a number of musical instruments set to the same key, and playing the same tune: here, it means a perfect agreement of the hearts, desires, wishes, and voices, of two or more persons praying to God. It also intimates that as a number of musical instruments, skilfully played, in a good concert, are pleasing to the ears of men, so a number of persons united together in warm, earnest, cordial prayer, is highly pleasing in the sight and ears of the Lord. Now this conjoint prayer refers, in all probability, to the binding and loosing in the preceding verse; and thus we see what power faithful prayer has with God!"

I think the key truth is found in verse 20. When believers gather together in the name of Jesus to seek His will and/or ask His blessing, He is with us. That fact should serve to purify our petitions.

Matthew 18:21 ¶ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Matthew 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Evidently, the Lord's words had set Peter to thinking; and he poses a question basically saying—"Lord, how many times must I forgive one who sins against me?"

The NIV Commentary provides some insight: "In rabbinic discussion, the consensus was that a person might be forgiven a repeated sin three times; on the fourth, there was no forgiveness. Peter, thinking himself big-hearted, volunteers "seven times" in answer to his own question."

Peter must have been shocked when Jesus answered not seven times but until seventy times seven. I had always assumed this to mean a number so large that it inferred we were not to keep track. I loved the following insight I received from listening to Joe Focht.

My wording—Seventy times seven is a reference to the timing revealed by Daniel as denoting the coming of Jesus to set up His kingdom.

Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."

"weeks" = weeks of years or 70 x 7 (see journal on Daniel)

So, Jesus is basically saying that we should keep on forgiving our brothers/sisters until He returns.

I wonder if Peter made that connection?

Matthew 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

Matthew 18:24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

Matthew 18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

Matthew 18:26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Matthew 18:27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

Once again, Jesus tells a story to make His point. He compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who decided to reconcile accounts with his servants. It was soon discovered that one servant was indebted to him for 10,000 talents. The man could not possibly pay his debt, so the king commanded that he, his family

and his possessions be sold to make payment against his debt. The servant fell down before the king and worshipped him begging for patience and promising to pay the debt off. The king was moved with compassion, set him free and forgave him the debt.

The Jewish New Testament Commentary offers the following insight: “In Roman times one talent equalled 6,000 denarii, a denarius being roughly a day’s wages for a common laborer. If a day’s wages today is in the neighborhood of \$50, 10,000 talents would be \$3 billion! In the *Tanakh* a talent weighs 75.6 avoirdupois pounds. This amount of gold, at \$350/troy ounce, is worth nearly \$4 billion; the same amount of silver, at \$4/troy ounce, comes to over \$40 million.”

Matthew 18:28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

Matthew 18:29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Matthew 18:30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

That same servant, however, went out and found one of his fellow servants that owed him a mere 100 pence in comparison to the debt he had owed the king. He grabbed him by the throat demanding that the man pay him what was owed. His fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him for patience, and he would pay off the debt (just as he had done before the king). The servant, however, showed no compassion; he had the man put into prison until he could pay the debt.

Matthew 18:31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Matthew 18:32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Matthew 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

Matthew 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

Matthew 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

When the other servants saw what had happened, they were grieved and went to inform the king. He immediately called the servant before him and confronted him with his wickedness. The king pointed out that he should have shown compassion to his fellow servant just as he had been shown compassion. The king was very angry and delivered the servant to the “tormentors” until he paid his debt of 10,000 talents.

Now the point of the story—God the Father, Jesus’ Father, will respond in like manner to those who do not forgive fellow believers of their sins against them. I like the way Guzik words it: “The principle is clear. God has forgiven such a

great debt, that any debt owed to us is absolutely insignificant in comparison. No man can possibly offend me to the extent that my sins have offended God. This principle must be applied in the little things done to us, but also to the great things done unto us."