

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Matthew: Jesus As Israel's Messiah And His Kingdom

Part XV: Christ As Israel's Messiah Seen In His Discipling Of His Followers, Matthew 16:13-20:34

D. Christ As Israel's Messiah Seen In His Teaching On Living The Cross Before The Crown

3. Christ's Messianic Identity Seen In His Instruction On Dying To Selfish Pride, Matthew 18:1-35

c. Christ's Instruction On Humbly Addressing A Brother's Sin

(Matthew 18:15-17)

I. Introduction

- A. The pride of life is one of the characteristics of worldliness (1 John 2:15-16), and the great men in this world typically dominate their subordinates and view them as of lesser value than themselves, Luke 22:24-25.
- B. However, this is **not God's way** for the *believer* to function, for those in God's cross-before-the-crown lifestyle (Matthew 16:24) are to relate in **humility** toward others, *especially in how they handle sin in other believers!*
- C. This truth is taught in Matthew 18:15-17, directing us on the cross-before-the-crown behavior (as follows):

II. Christ's Instruction On Humbly Addressing A Brother's Sin, Matthew 18:15-17.

- A. Having mentioned the need for the believer to avoid causing others to sin (Matthew 18:6-14, our last lesson), Jesus then spoke of the circumstance where **another** believer has *sinned*, something that affects the **body**.
- B. Thus, Jesus gave directions on **humbly** handling such sin, one that disrupts brotherly unity, and that can tempt the upright to function in godless, self-righteous, prideful retaliation, Matthew 18:15a.
- C. That instruction presented a *considerate series of five steps* in the **discipline** of the **brother**, Matt. 18:15b-17:
 1. First, if the fellow believer has sinned (some Greek manuscripts read "against you" while others do not, and the manuscript witnesses make it impossible to discern which reading is correct; Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 1971, p. 45), the upright believer should first go and tell him his fault in private, Matthew 18:15a. This gives the sinful brother an opportunity to repent with the least amount of the temptation to be defensive and thus least motivated to harden his heart. If the sinful party will hear the upright, the latter has gained a brother, preserving his fellowship in the body, and the matter is settled not to be discussed in a wider context with others not affected, Matthew 18:15b.
 2. Second, if the sinful brother chooses not to repent at the first step, the upright believer is to take with him one or two other fellow believers to speak with the sinful brother, asking him to repent, Matt. 18:16a. The purpose of this second step is twofold: (a) it heightens the importance of the subject of concern to the sinful brother via the addition of other believers though still respecting a degree of his privacy in hope of motivating the sinful brother to repent, Matthew 18:17a. (b) This second step also establishes a Biblical credible witness were the sinful brother to continue to harden his heart against repenting of his sin, for two or three witnesses were needed to fulfill the Biblical requirement of Deuteronomy 19:15 to testify of the reality of the sin before the assembly if repentance still were not to occur, Matthew 18:16b.
 3. Third, if the sinful brother still fails to repent (Matthew 18:17a), then the **upright brother** is to "tell" (*eipe* = second person **singular** imperative from *eipon*, "say, speak," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 69; The Analytical Grk. Lex. (Zondervan), 1972, p. 118; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 225) about the situation of the sin and the brother's relentless lack of repentance before the "assembly, congregation, church," (*ekklesia*, *Ibid.*, p. 240-241; *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) The Church was not yet in existence, so Jesus here spoke of a Jewish "assembly," but this practice later became applicable in the "Church" by the instruction in Titus 3:10-11. (John F. Walvoord, Matthew, 1974, p. 137)
 4. Fourth, the assembly (in our era, the Church congregation) was then responsible to urge the sinful brother to repent, Matthew 18:17b. If he repented, the assembly or Church would have gained a brother, preserving his fellowship in the body. However, if the sinner refused to repent, the sinful party was excommunicated from the assembly or Church, Matthew 18:17c.
 5. Fifth, though this step is not mentioned in Matthew 18, it is implied in 2 Corinthians 2:5-7: namely, if the sinful brother repents after he has been excommunicated, the Church is to receive him back into the fellowship of the Church presumably in a meeting of the congregation called specifically for that purpose.

Lesson: *In our cross-before-the-crown living, Jesus directed that if a believer sins, the upright must humbly try to get him to repent before having him excommunicated by the assembly versus proudly immediately censuring him.*

Application: *May we humbly try to get sinful believers to repent versus immediately censuring them in false pride.*