

## **TELL IT TO THE CHURCH**

### **MT.18:15-17**

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#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. This topic and the text it necessarily involves of necessity involves us in a study of church discipline.
2. Our text clearly teaches there is a distinction between the individual Christian, individual duty and action, and the local church, collective duty and action. Cf. 1Tim.5:16.
3. Eccl.3:1-8 declares “there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...”
4. Having warned about giving offense in vv.1-14, Jesus in our text reveals two things about telling it to the church when one member sins against another, or when sin on the part of one member requires that action be taken against that member.
  - a. There is a time not to tell it to the church.
  - b. There is a time to tell it to the church.
5. This brings us to our discussion and development of our topic based on Mt.18:15-17.

#### **II. DISCUSSION**

##### **A. WHAT IS TO BE DONE BEFORE IT IS TIME TO TELL IT TO THE CHURCH?**

1. The offended is to seek the offender (and him alone) and the offender is likewise to seek the offended (and him alone). And neither is to wait for the other, Mt.18:15; Mt.5:23,24.
  - a. Why?
    - (1) It's commanded of God.
    - (2) To show him his fault – get him to see it; get him to repent.
    - (3) For the purpose of gaining his brother – not from a desire to humiliate him, or to seek revenge against him.
    - (4) To seek reconciliation with his brother.
    - (5) To ensure the acceptability of the offender's worship of God. For God will neither accept the man nor his offering unless he accepts both. Cf. Gen.4:5.
  - b. Thus a personal effort is to be made to solve the problem for both parties, an effort that does not in any way involve the local church.
2. But if the offender will not hear the offended, then he is to go again, this time with one or two more brethren as witness to try to bring the offender to repentance, v.16.

- a. To this point it is still more or less a private affair between individuals.
  - b. But witnesses are now needed in case he still will not hear his brother, because of the next step that must be taken, wherein the testimony of witnesses will be necessary.
  - c. Once again personal efforts are made to solve the problem, efforts which, as yet, do not involve the church.
3. If the offending brother still refuses to hear them, it is now time to tell it to the church, 17.
- a. Not to tell it to the courts of the unbelievers. Cf. 1Cor.6:1-8.
  - b. The final court of appeals for the offending brother in such matters is the local church.

**B. WHEN THE TIME COMES TO TELL IT TO THE CHURCH, WHAT IS INVOLVED? WHAT DOES AND WHAT MUST THE CHURCH DO?**

- 1. A brief summary of what the church must do at this time based on Mt.18:17.
  - a. Hear the accusation, the evidence for it, and the progressive attempts to rectify it.
  - b. Determine the guilt or innocence of the one charged.
  - c. Try to bring about repentance if guilty as charged, and reconciliation between both parties whether or not guilty.
  - d. If he will not hear the church, or still refuses to repent, “let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican,” – as one no longer worthy of or to be considered as in fellowship with the church.
- 2. Specific scriptural proof for the action to be taken by the church to bring a sinning member to repentance in addition to Mt.18:17.
  - a. Gal.6:1 teaches (a duty both individually and collectively):
    - (1) You are to seek to “restore” (mend, set right, perfect, complete) the brother “overtaken in a fault” (“caught by the trespass,” Vine,III,153; not necessarily caught in the act of sin).
    - (2) That “ye which are spiritual” (referring to those in Christ who are faithful, who walk so as to please God; those who are not “caught by the trespass,”) have the responsibility to do this.
    - (3) We are to do it “in the spirit of meekness” (gentleness, not with self-assertiveness and self-interest).

- (4) We are to do it being ourselves on guard against temptation, or lest we also be tempted to sin; perhaps in our attitude toward the one and or in our treatment of the one we would restore.
- b. 1Th.5:14, “warn them that are unruly” (disorderly, careless, out of line).
- c. 2Tim.2:24,25a teaches that the servant of the Lord:
  - (1) “Must not strive (fight, quarrel); but be gentle (fair, mild, inoffensive, courteous) unto all.”
  - (2) Must be “apt to teach (skilful in teaching, able to teach), patient (forbearing when wronged, ready to endure malice, or overlook grievances).”
  - (3) Must “in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves (the opposition, those who go against the teaching).”
- d. Tit.1:9-11, and the elder’s tremendous, all-important responsibility in striving to bring sinning members to repentance. Each elder:
  - (1) Is to “hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught.”
  - (2) Is to do this “that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort (entreat) and to convince (convict, refute) the gainsayers (contradicters, to say against).”
  - (3) There always will be some and there were at that time “many unruly (not subject to rule) and vain (empty, aimless) talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision (judaizers).
  - (4) The elders (who, as elders, always act for and oversee the local church) were charged with stopping (bridling, closing) the mouths of these who subvert (overthrow, turn upside down, lead astray) whole houses, teaching things which they ought not for filthy (greedy, shameful) lucre’s sake.”
    - (a) How they are to do this: with the word; by sound doctrine.
    - (b) Not by lawsuits; locking buildings; spreading false rumors; branding them as false teachers without proof, etc. etc.
- e. 1Tim.5:19,20
  - (1) Receive no accusation against an elder without proof – “but before two or three witnesses.”

- (2) But when there is proof, even an elder who sins is to be “rebuked before all,” before the whole church.
3. Specific scriptural proof for the action (the corrective discipline, which is penalizing in nature) to be taken by the local church when the sinning member can’t be brought to repentance by instructive discipline, which is preventive in nature.
- a. Rom.16:17,18.
- (1) “I beseech (exhort, urge, entreat, implore) you, brethren”
  - (2) “Mark them (“take note of them”) which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.”
  - (3) “And avoid them”, KJV; “turn away from them,” ASV; “dissociate yourselves from them,” TCNT; “to turn away from,” Vine, I, 91.
  - (4) Such are not serving the our Lord, but are slaves to their own base desires; they are serving “their own belly.”
  - (5) By their smooth, flattering words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the innocent, unsuspecting, quileless.”
- b. 1Cor.5:4,5,11,13, concerning the impenitent fornicating brother:
- (1) “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together...
  - (2) “Deliver such an one unto Satan..
  - (3) “With such an one no not to eat,” i.e. have no social engagements with such an one; keep him aware that he is in Satan’s camp as long as he continues in sin without repentance.
  - (4) “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”
- c. 2Th.3:6,14,15.
- (1) “Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly (out of ranks; deviating from the prescribed order or rule),”v.6.
  - (2) It’s commanded “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” v.6.
  - (3) “If any man (any brother or sister) obey not our word by this epistle note (mark, put a tag on) that man, and have no company with him,” v.14.
  - (4) “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish (caution, warn, reprimand) him as a brother,” v.15.
- d. 2Tim.3:1-9 describes perilous times in the last days and “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith,” with v.5 demanding “from such turn away.”
- e. Tit.3:10,11, concerning the “heretic,” who holds or maintains heretical opinions to the division of the church. Cf. Rom.16:17,18.

- (1) There is to be a “first and second admonition” seeking correction of his heretical views.
- (2) When that fails he is to be rejected (shunned, refuse fellowship with him).
- (3) Knowing he is subverted (perverted, corrupt, turned inside out), and condemned of himself (self-condemned).”

**C. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS ACTION OF WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP FROM THE IMPENITENT MEMBER?**

1. 1Cor.5:4-7.
  - a. To save the sinning brother: “deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (fleshly lust) that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Cf. 1Tim.1:19,20.
  - b. To save the church; that the local church might be purged and preserved as pure, 5:1,26,7-13 (with emphasis on vv.6,7).
  - c. To magnify, exalt, and maintain the honor and authority of Jesus Christ, vv.1,2,4. Cf. 1Cor.10:31; Col.3:17; 2Th.3:6; Lk.6:46.
2. 2Th.3:6,14, “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
  - a. “Ashamed of himself; to put to shame”
  - b. Literally, “to turn in; that is, to turn one upon himself and so produce a feeling of shame, a wholesome shame, which involves a change of conduct.” Vine, I, 77.
3. 1Tim.1:19,20, when there is proof positive that an elder has sinned, he is to be rebuked before all to bring him to repentance.
  - a. To save his soul.
  - b. “That others also may fear” – be warned and stand in wholesome awe and fear.
4. 2Tim.2:24-26 teaches that the servant of the Lord who must not strive, fight or quarrel, but “in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves” ( or the opposition, those who go against the teaching) – are to do this:
  - a. “If God peradventure (in hope that God) will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”
  - b. “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil (the devil’s trap), who are taken captive at his will (or entrapped by him to do his will).”
5. Rev.2:4,5; 3:15-19.

**D. IF AND WHEN THE DISCIPLINED MEMBER PUBLICLY REPENTS BEFORE THE CHURCH, WHAT IS THE CHURCH TO DO?**

1. 2Cor.2:6-11, we must stand ready to receive him back into fellowship.

- a. Let him know we are ready to receive him; not just talk about it, do it! Make it plain by both word and deed!
- b. “Forgive him, and comfort (encourage) him.”
- c. “Confirm your love toward him” (reaffirm your love toward him; restore him to his place in you affections, love and fellowship).
- d. Don’t be guilty of always saying, “Well, I’m going to wait and see!” “I’ll wait until he proves himself to me!”
- e. Let your forgiveness and restoration of him to your fellowship be as public as your withdrawal was.
  - (1) “Lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up (overwhelmed, driven to despair) with overmuch sorrow (by the excess of his sorrow or grief).”
  - (2) “Lest Satan should get the advantage of us,” v.11a.
    - (a) “We don’t want Satan to win any victory here,” J.B. Phillips.
    - (b) “To keep Satan from getting the better of us,” Good-speed.
  - (3) “For we are not ignorant of his devices,” v.11b.
- 2. Mt.5:23,24; 18:15,16, whether the offender or the offended, we must seek forgiveness and reconciliation.
- 3. According to Mt.6:12,14,15, we must be willing to forgive in order to be forgiven.
  - a. All of us want forgiveness.
  - b. But not all of us always want to forgive!
- 4. Lk.17:3,4 teaches that whether once or many times, when “thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.”

### III. CONCLUSION

- 1. The command for the local church to exercise corrective discipline or the withdraw fellowship, such as that commanded in 2Th.3:6, has been said to be “the most neglected command in the Bible”!
- 2. If we, each one of us, will cultivate a faithful serving spirit in God’s service and a forgiving heart one toward another, there will never be a need to “TELL IT TO THE CHURCH,” except as Paul and Barnabas did in Ac.14:25-27 to the church in Antioch, at the end of Paul’s first preaching tour, when they had left from Antioch at the start of it and returned to Antioch at the end of it to report to the church on what “God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”