Pursue Your Brother and Sister

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] Please open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 18. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a copy of it that you can use while you're here and take home with you. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean, and I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and it's my great joy and privilege to preach God's Word to you.

This morning, we've been going through the Gospel of Matthew for over a year. Now, in chapter 18, verses 10 to 20, let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word.
Heavenly Father, Your Word is living and active. So, Lord, I ask that Your Word would pierce through the division of bone and marrow, that we would be cut to the heart by Your Word, Your message would be convicted and comforted, that we would be reminded that as we remember Your love shown to us in Christ, that You would dwell more and more richly and fully by Your Holy Spirit in us, that we too might become Christ-like in seeking out lost sheep, pursuing one another in the body of Christ.
Lord, expand our vision for the church, grow and deepen our love for the church, all for Your glory, God.
Lord, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand, if you are able, so that we can honor God together as we read from His Word.
[2:16] Matthew 18, 10 to 20. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

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?
And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
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. 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.
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.
[3:30] Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 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.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. I don't mean any offense to people from the south here, but a popular stereotype about the deep south is that down there, everyone knows everyone's business. In the worst case, this is because of gossips and busybodies who meddle in other people's affairs, but in the best case, it's because of a strong sense of communal responsibility and neighborliness. In contrast, a popular stereotype about New England is that up here, the prevailing attitude is, it's none of my business.
There's a strong sense of individual autonomy and expression of personalities and personal boundaries, and people are encouraged to mind their own business.
[4:56] There's a biblical precedent for this idea of, oh, it's none of my business. Proverbs 25, 16, 17 says this, if you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.

Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he have his fill of you and hate you. Note the parallel between fill of honey and fill of you, right?

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The idea is be considerate of your neighbor. Don't presume upon your neighbor's hospitality. Allow for some space. Even if your neighbor really likes you, there's such a thing as having too much of something that is good, like eating too much honey and vomiting.
Just as you can have a fill of honey, you can have a fill of yourself. They can have a fill of you. And this is what the English proverb, good fences make good neighbors, means. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't be a friendly neighbor, but it means that you should respect your neighbor's personal space.
There's also Proverbs 26, 17, whoever meddles in a quarrel, not his own, is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears. If it's not your fight, don't meddle in it.
[6:09] Don't insert yourself into it, because like a passing dog, just passing by casually, and if you grab it by the ear, it will surely turn on you and try to bite you. So there is some biblical precedence.

I don't want to just dismiss it altogether, that kind of attitude, mind your own business. There's some truth to the idea of working hard and keeping your head down and minding your own affairs that is good and godly.
With that said, that attitude, none of my business, is not always a commendable attitude. Sometimes it's none of my business is not an expression of humility toward your neighbor.
It's not an expression of consideration of your neighbors. Rather, sometimes it's an expression of selfish individualism, apathy, and lack of concern for our neighbors that must be overcome.
That's the point of our passage this morning. When it comes to relationships within the church, the family of God, we ought to care for one another and be accountable to one another.
[7:17] When a brother or sister in Christ is sinning and not repenting, when they are straying from the path of God and from the truth of God, it is our responsibility to pursue our straying brother or sister.

That's the main point of this passage. The parable of the lost sheep in verses 10 to 14 tell us about the preciousness of the one little one. And verses 15 to 20 then tell us about the pursuit of that one little one.
Jesus says in verse 10, See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.
Jesus mentions the little ones twice in our passage. He's continuing the theme of the previous passage at the beginning of this chapter. Jesus said in verses 5 to 6, Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.
But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it will be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
[8:25] Despising the little ones is the opposite of receiving those little ones. Those who despise the little ones are likely to cause those little ones to sin because they don't really care about what happens to them.

They're little ones. They're not important. So who cares? To despise the little ones is to disdain and scorn them, to treat them with contempt.
Paul exhorts Timothy in 1 Timothy 4.12, Let no one despise you for your youth. That's the same word. But set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
Paul is telling Timothy, Timothy, because you're a young buck, people might disrespect and disdain you. But instead of confirming their suspicions of immaturity and youthful ignorance and inexperience, set an example for them in godly speech and godly conduct.
These little ones that Jesus mentions do not refer to literal children, but to all those who have become like children. Jesus said that in verse 3, those who have humbled themselves like a child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.
[9:35] What that means is those who have benounced their self-sufficiency and have acknowledged their dependence on the provision of God the Father. It's those who have despaired of their self-righteousness and cling to Jesus Christ alone and His salvation, His atonement, His righteousness alone for salvation.

Those who have forsaken worldly status and glory and now seek heavenly status and the glory that comes from God. In other words, the little ones are the Christians and this is confirmed by what Jesus said earlier in chapter 10, verse 42, and whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

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The little ones are the disciples of Jesus Christ, those who believe in Him and follow Him and Jesus warns, see that you do not despise one of these little ones.
This warning is necessary because little ones are easy to despise. They don't have status, power. They don't have a seat at the table.
They're easy to bully around and push around. They are unintimidating and unthreatening. People pay attention to and fawn after the great ones of society. They ignore the little ones.
[10:59] Little ones are the ones whom God claims as His dependents. Those who are poor but depend on God's wealth. Those who are weak but depend on God's power. Those who are sinful but depend on God's mercy.

But this world is not impressed by such people. This world doesn't take such people seriously. But Jesus commands us to take them very, very seriously.
So much so, He says that if you cause one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, Jesus says, it'll be better for you to have a massive millstone tied around your neck and drowned in the depths of the sea.
Why so serious? Jesus says in verse 10, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.
Seeing the face of God the Father in heaven is the language of the royal court. Not anyone gets admitted into the king's presence. Queen Esther, if you remember from the book of Esther, tremble to enter into King Ahasuerus' royal court even though she's the queen.
[12:08] She said anyone who enters his court unsummoned is executed unless he extends a special pardon and mercy. So it's not a small thing to have access to the king and yet Jesus says the angels of these little ones not once in a while but always sees the face of God the Father in heaven.

We see the hints of this idea of angels representing and guarding the people of God throughout the Bible. Hebrews 1.14 describes the angels as ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.
In other words, the little ones are the ones that are served by these angels. They exist. They're serving spirits that exist to serve the little ones of God, the children of God. Psalm 91, 9-12 promises divine protection for those who make the Lord God their refuge.
And it says that the Lord will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against the stone.
This is where the idea of a guardian angel comes from. At the end of his life, Jacob speaks of the angel who has delivered him from all of the evils in his life.
[13:31] In Genesis 48, verse 16. In Daniel chapter 3 when Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are thrown into a fiery furnace because of their refusal to worship this idolatrous golden statue of Nebuchadnezzar, the emperor sees that there's a fourth person in the fiery furnace and it's an angel who's protecting them so that not a hair on their head is singed.

In Revelation 2-3 we see that every local church has an angelic representative in heaven in the very throne room of God. So, it says in Revelation 2-3 that every angel, even the churches like Sardis and Laodicea that have nothing to commend them that according to Jesus himself, the church in Sardis is about to die.
It's a dying church. Churches that, local churches that have nothing to commend them yet they still have a lampstand that's burning before the presence of God and have an angelic representative that is before the very face of God.
These precious children, these churches of Christ, though flawed and plagued by sins they may be, have 24-7 access to God the Father. They're literally before the Father's face always.
Do you know that that is how you are loved, beloved children of God? That's, you are the, you are the apple of God's eye.
[15:05] He keeps you as the apple of his eye. He hides you in the shadow of his wings, it says in Psalm 17, verse 8. And this is why Jesus says we should not despise one of these little ones.

they are the very heirs of the kingdom of heaven. And to drive home this point further, he uses this parable of the lost sheep in verses 12 to 13.
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? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

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A shepherd will take his flock around and feed them on the pastures and lead them to the waters and usually at night when it's time to turn in, he will count his sheep to make sure that they are all present.
And he's counting his sheep as he's in the habit of doing and he's got ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine. Okay, I must have missed one. Okay, you start over. That's a lot of sheep to count.
[16:14] Ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine. It's not a mistake. Something's not right. And then his mind and his heart begin to race and then his feet follow soon thereafter and now he is running across the pastures trying to find the lost sheep.

And as I mentioned to you when I preached on Matthew chapter nine some months ago that sheep are famously helpless without shepherds. Right? They don't have a good sense of direction. They're not like cats and dogs that can find their way back home. When they get lost they're actually lost. They're defenseless. They don't have claws. They don't have sharp teeth.
They can't fight back if wolves attack them. They're not very fast. They get easily spooked and they run headlong into danger or even off a cliff sometimes because they just don't have much sense.
And so the shepherd as he's thinking about this missing sheep all of these things are on his mind.
As the image of this helplessly bleeding sheep lost somewhere scared and vulnerable fills his mind he quickens his pace and he continues to search and he says in verse 12 that he leaves the 99 on the mountains and then he goes and searches for the one that went astray.
[17:37] Think about that for one moment. It doesn't say that the shepherd puts the 99 sheep safely inside the sheepfold and then he goes out to search for that one sheep.

It says that he leaves the 99 on the mountains and goes in search of the one that went astray. The math doesn't make sense. That's because this is not a picture of a calm calculated methodical rescue.
it's a picture of an urgent desperate search. It's a picture of a consuming love and the desperate predicament of that one wandering sheep takes precedence because that one has gone astray while the 99 have not.
And Jesus says God the Father's heart is like that shepherd's who leaves the 99 in search of the one. Notice how many times the word one is repeated in chapter 18.
Verse 5 Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin it will be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.
[18:55] Verse 10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. Verse 12 If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray.

Verse 14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. This is Jesus' point. God's love God loves his one wandering sheep as if it were the only sheep there to love.
And his love compels him to pursue. Beloved that's how God loves you. Verse 13 says And if he finds it truly I say to you he rejoices over it more than over the 99 that never went astray.
Don't feel bad if you feel like you're the 99. It's not because the one sheep is more valuable than the 99. Can you imagine what the 99 sheep would have felt if the shepherd after realizing that he's the one sheep had gone wandering he says oh just one sheep got 99 more cut my losses what do you think the sheep would think ouch well I better never wander off he sure will never come after me no they realized they realized that they are not actually that valuable to the shepherd the shepherd's consuming passion to recover that one lost sheep elevates the value of every sheep it shows his value for every sheep in that sheep fold that's how you would search for me if I ever got lost and that's what you should feel when you read this passage if you are familiar with the longer more famous version of this parable in
Luke chapter 15 verses 1 to 7 you may have automatically assumed that the wandering sheep represents unbelievers those who are not yet Christians in Luke 15 this is the case there Jesus tells the parable to the Pharisees and the scribes who are grumbling and complaining at the fact that Jesus befriends sinners and tax collectors and eats with them and through the parable Jesus teaches these legalistic Pharisees that it's not the healthy who need the doctor it's the sick that he has come to seek and save the lost however in Matthew 18 the audience is not the Pharisees and the scribes the audience is the disciples of Jesus and Jesus tells this parable in the context of how we ought to relate to one another as people of God as members of the body of Christ should we be

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measuring ourselves against one another and wondering who is the greatest among us that's what sparked all of this teaching no
[22:01] Jesus says that's not the way we should be instead we should become like little children so notice the flow of this passage before the parable of the lost sheep Jesus says you should cut off the things that cause you to sin if your right crippled and for you to be excluded shut out from the kingdom of God whole bodied and able bodied and then he tells the parable of the lost sheep and then after that he goes into talking about how we ought to address erring believers Christians professing believers who sin how should you address them so this parable is not about unbelievers in the context of Matthew it's about how we ought to pursue our brothers and sisters who sin and when you sin brothers and sisters God's posture toward you is not that defective wandering sheep has always made my day long and difficult good riddance that is not

God's heart verse 14 so it is not the will of my father who is in heaven that one of these little! ones should perish it is not his will that's not his heart he runs after each lost sheep so let his unrelenting love draw you back if that's what you are doing right now if you're in sin and you are not a nameless sheep among a multitude of sheep God says in Isaiah 45 3 to 4 I the Lord God of Israel call you by name for the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen I call you by your name I name you God doesn't merely save you all in the plural as a collective whole he saves each wandering! sheep individually God's love is not love that is offered generally for everyone only and not especially for but especially for no one his love is not something that is offered generally for everyone but especially for no one no his love is offered it's a shepherd's love it's the father's love his love for each and every child of his he loves as if there's only one there's if there were only one to love he knows you and loves you and calls you by name and your angel is always before his face in the heavenly court he's always watching over you when it comes to things like money and you earn some and you spend some and you lose some and if your investment portfolio doesn't perform one year you cut your losses and you move on but we don't think you can't!
think! about! people you can't think like that when it comes to God's precious children a little over a year ago I read an article in the New York Times about a father in South Korea who had become a tragic national symbol of unwavering parental devotion his 17 year old daughter had gone missing in 1999 and for the next 25 years he never stopped looking for her by 2017 he had driven about half a million miles distributed 3 million leaflets!
and hung 2,500 banners throughout the country that say please help me find my daughter he said his one wish was to hold her hand one day and in an interview in 2013 he said I've never spent a day without thinking about my daughter I don't think anybody can live comfortably after losing a child while hanging his banners up he fell several times suffering a herniated disc and a severe brain injury and he continued to search for his daughter and during while he was continuing to do this his wife passed away and he continued to search for his daughter and he did this until he died in 2024 for 25 years why would a man do that no other man would do that it's because he's the father it's because it's his daughter you have to take someone else's children seriously that's what he's saying this is the father's son or daughter that you're going after
[27:00] I don't know what your politics are your opinions of what President George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq in 2003 might have been sorry I'm not going to talk about that but I appreciated how after that he honored George W.

Bush honored the lives of the fallen soldiers in the aftermath those soldiers weren't just numbers to him we got plenty plenty of young men he knew that they were real people with real families he met with over 1,100 relatives of more than 300 dead service members generally in private often without media presence he wasn't doing it for show and then his press secretary Dana Perino once recalled a time when he was meeting with the mother of a dying soldier who berated Bush and yelled at him saying why is my son the one that's lying down on that hospital bed and not yours and apparently Bush just listened to it all took it all in shared in her suffering and grief and then as they were leaving after that visit
Bush turned to his press secretary with tears in his eyes and said that mama sure was mad at me and I don't blame her a bit and then after his time in office he painted a collection of 60 full color oil portraits and a four panel mural honoring the veterans post 9-11 veterans entitled Portraits of Courage a commander in chief's tribute to America's warriors why is it my son that's on that hospital bed and not yours it's someone's child someone's son and when it comes to our relationship with God our situation is exactly the reverse we're the ones who sinned we're the ones who deserve to

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perish we're the ones who deserve eternal damnation and hell and why is it God's son that's on the cross why is it his son that's on the cross to die for us that's what he did to save each and every one of his precious sons and daughters that's what you mean to him and so when one strays in sin and one goes astray how are we to say well shrug our shoulders and well no no that's not the heart of God Jesus said in John 10 we read in our assurance of pardon I am the good shepherd I know my sheep and they know me I lay down my life for the sheep Jesus did that for you that's why you're precious to me the preciousness of the one little one to God our father leads naturally to the pursuit of that one little one in verses 15 to 20 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 brother or sister you could include that is a reminder of the truth that Jesus just illustrated these are not just anyone these are the precious children of God and that's why they're your brother and your sister because they belong to the same heavenly father the ESV the English standard version says if your brother sins against you but if you might if you're using the new international version the NIV he says if your brother or sister sins go and point out their fault just between the two of you this is because there's some variation among the ancient manuscripts! [31:25] that they're relying on for translation and some of the best ancient manuscripts! don't include that phrase against you the question of what to do when you are personally sinned against is addressed!

in the later parable of the unforgiving servant in verses 21 to 25 I don't think that is yet the concern in verse 15 so I'm siding with the NIV here here the concern is not your own grievance or hurt as someone sinning against you here the concern is your brother or sister's welfare you might say well if the sin doesn't concern me then it's not against me well then it's none of my business but the Bible says otherwise James 5 19 to 20 says my brothers if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins that word wonder is the same word used in the parable of the lost sheep in our passage go astray from the narrow way of life and into the broad way of destruction not only the sins committed against you any sin and it is callous and heartless to stand idly by and to shrug our shoulders and say it's none of my business when your brother or sister is sinning and going astray in that way that's what
Cain said right in Genesis 4 verse 9 Cain was envious of his brother and he killed him and then when God comes to him to test him he asks him where is Abel your brother and then Cain replies I don't know am I my brother's keeper and God's answer here is yes yes you are you are your brother's keeper you are your sister's keeper it's none of my business I love this quote from another pastor Matthew Smith he says the church membership is where it's none of your business goes to die pursue your straying brother or sister the second person pronoun you in verses 15 to 17 are singular in verses 18 to 20 they become plural because it's starting to speak of our corporate responsibility as a church but here it's addressing our individual responsibility you you ought to pursue your brother or sister in
Christ who is straying if your brother sins go and tell him his fault between you and him alone! when it comes to other people sins and then we are as blind as a bat when it comes to our own sins right Hannah's nodding her head she knows that well yeah yeah and for that reason we need to do this first remove the log out of our own eye before we try to remove the speck out of our brother or sister's eyes so the first step then before you try to bring correction to others is to examine ourselves self reflection and confession of our own sins confessing our sins to our fellow brothers and sisters we humble ourselves in that way and that humiliation is destructive to our own pride and self sufficiency and therefore it's helpful and healthful for us a habit of self reflection and confession prepares us to bring correction!
Well if you are regularly receiving the mercy of God at the foot of the cross then you're going to have a merciful and compassionate disposition when you bring correction to others and it won't be out of self righteousness or pride secondly we need to make sure that we're bringing correction in love and gentleness and that means we give each other the best possible construction we give each other the benefit of the doubt we lead with questions and not gently yet with gentleness and humility if your brother sins go and tell him his fault it says this assumes that you have witnessed your brother's sin a telltale sign that we might be a little over eager maybe we have a log in our own eye it could be that even when we don't have first hand knowledge of someone sins if other might happen to my reputation but love that consuming love for that one wandering strange sheep leaving

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our brother sister to unrepentant sin is like abandoning that sheep that has gone astray
[38:01] Dietrich Bonhoeffer I've often used this quote nothing can be more cruel than that leniency which abandons others to sin nothing can be more compassionate than that severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one's community back from the path of sin we are accountable to one another because we are members of the one body of Christ members of the same family of God and I think we have to do this you know and of course it's better if you you're closer to that person you're a close friend of that person in the church it's easier!

for you and you should take it upon yourself to do that but sometimes it's going to have to be with people that you don't necessarily know that well because what are you going to do for the newer people in the church that don't have close friends yet and they're in unrepentance sin you're just going to leave them alone that's why we should strive to get to know each other and pursue each other you know I know we're getting a little bigger as a church and this is harder to do than it used to be and sometimes single people can look at married people and think oh man they're too busy they got kids you know they don't want to spend time with us don't think that that's not the case in fact the busier people are I think they appreciate it more if you take the initiative and set something up and they're like oh we'll show up you know and they're eager to do that and some of you single people in our church do that really really well and if you're married people in the church and your family don't assume automatically all those young single people don't want to hang out with me I'm so not cool anymore you know and don't assume that either so many young people in our church want to long to spend time with older people in the church get to know each other pursue each other and love each other so that you can have this kind of relationship with each other we're speaking the truth and love to one another pursue your brother or sister
Galatians 6 1-5 it says brothers if anyone is caught in any transgression you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness keep watch on yourself lest you too be tempted bear one another's burdens And so fulfill the love of Christ in this life that's our call as brothers sisters to bear one another's burdens And this is one way that we do that so if your brother sins go and tell him his fault between you and him alone that's the first guidance the correction should be private and should be sensitive you're not making a big fuss of it and public shaming no you don't talk to other people about that person's sin that be slander or gossip no instead and that's cowardly and self serving no you go to the person that sins and address that sin directly and if he listens to you you have gained your brother that word gain comes from the language of commerce and profit it's again communicating the preciousness of our brothers sisters in
Christ God considers you his treasure possession and when we win them back from sin we are gaining something precious but if he does not listen take one or two others along with you verse 16 that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses this is an allusion to Deuteronomy 15 where required that a charge cannot be established in court except on the basis of two or three witnesses!
he said he said he said he said this and she said that and it's not one person's word pitted against another person's word but instead you can establish fact based on the testimony of multiple witnesses! Maybe that one witness is not enough you need another one right there are situations that call for more and verse 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 look at all these words if there's lots of ifs if he listens to you verse 15 if he does not listen verse 16 if he refuses to listen to them verse 17 if he refuses to listen even to the church and that goes back to the if in verse 13 and if he finds it truly
[43:21] I say to you he rejoices over and more than over the 99 that never went astray it's a painful if because sometimes that wandering sheep is not found sometimes some sheep never return to the fold sometimes the sheep turn out to be goats and that's what he's referring to if they don't listen even to the church let them be to you as a Gentile and tax collectors Gentiles and tax collectors in the gospel of Matthew are proverbial for unbelievers do not keep saying these random words when you pray as the Gentiles do in Matthew 6 don't greet only your brothers only those who love you do not even the Gentiles do that the

Gentiles and tax collectors are proverbial for unbelievers he's saying if someone is in unrepentant sin then treat them as an unbeliever this is what churches call some churches call excommunication what some churches call disfellowshipping someone declaring them as outside of the kingdom of God verses 18 to 20 confirm this truly I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in

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heaven and whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven 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 for where two or three are gathered in my name there am I among them this is an often misused verse right this doesn't mean that you know you just have to get one or two other Christians with you and you start praying you get your friend to pray!
something and you say I agree with this and you pray for the same thing and you just guarantee that result that's not what that means this verse is here in the context of church discipline of excommunication in the context of reaching out to an erring brother or sister to bring them back to the fold and they refuse!
to repent it's the gathering of the church the church means the gathering this is the only there's another one was in Matthew 16 when Jesus promised that he's going to build his church on this rock on the rock of Peter and that the gates of Hades will prevail against it the church the gathering of the people of God is given the authority the power of the keys to bind and to lose in allusion to Isaiah 22 20 to 22 when God declares he will make Eliakim a steward of the kingdom of David and he will give him the key of the house of David so that he shall open and none shall shut and he shall shut and none shall open and that's first and foremost the prophecy about Jesus himself that's why in Revelation 3 7 to 8 Jesus says to the church in Philadelphia the words of the holy one the true one who has the key of David who opens and no one will shut and who shuts and no one opens
I know your works behold I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut Jesus is the one who ultimately holds that key and we see here that that key that Jesus gave to Peter as a representative of the apostles and of the church of Christ is now of course it's a fearful power but this doesn't mean that you know that we have some kind of autonomous authority separate from God and if we do something and declare something God has to now submit to it the phrasing of this verse is very intentional the words shall be bound or shall be loosed here they're perfect passive participles in the Greek and if we translate that more literally as the Christian standard Bible does it reads this way whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven and whatever you lose on earth will have been loosed in heaven in other words when the power of the key that [47:49] God's given to the church delegated to the church is used to bind on earth we learn that as we do that the person has already been! earthly representatives of Christ they're found to be executing the will of heaven and not vice versa this is not a promise that God will endorse every decision that every local church will make no but it does mean that the church is authorized to execute the will of heaven on earth I know this is a tough topic and some people have a time with the idea of church discipline or excommunicating someone or disfellowship someone isn't Jesus the friend of sinners isn't Jesus the friend of tax collectors shouldn't we have compassion on these people of course we should have compassion for those people and we're not talking here about confronting unbelievers in the world of their sin Paul makes that very clear in 1 Corinthians 5 what do

I have with judging! is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge God judges those who are outside purge the evil person from among you we have no business judging outsiders or unbelievers because we can't expect unbelievers to live by Christian standards we we're talking about people who are little ones those who are professing believers people who claim that they follow Jesus and they are trying to obey Jesus and that they represent Jesus but are living in unrepentant sin and for that reason is bringing disrepute to Christ and discrediting the witness of the church and that is a serious problem and for that reason this drastic step is necessary some people who have a very compassionate and merciful disposition have a hard time with this but for them it's not the over abundance of compassion that makes it hard for them to accept church discipline excommunication
Jesus has more compassion than all of us and he's teaching this it's not too much compassion or over abundance of compassion it's under appreciation of the holiness of God and the glory of God it's under appreciation of the gravity of sin that makes us question this or dispute this teaching or not practice it sin every sin drives a wedge in your relationship with God every sin and it grows that wedge grows and you hammer that in and hammer that in and eventually it's a chasm that you cannot bridge and sin leads to death sin leads to eternal damnation and if we take sin seriously in that way then we will pursue our brother or sister in
Christ and follow through with this process it's kind of like even when you're disciplining children if you're a father or mother if you have no consequences I guarantee you they'll stop listening to you

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at some point they know that you don't mean it you could threaten all you want but if there's no real consequences they will stop listening to you this final step is intended to be that consequence to say no this what you're doing right now is no laughing matter it's serious it's grave and that's the consequence what we're doing now of where sin leads separation from God now what does it mean then to treat someone as a Gentile and a tax collector and I want to remind you of how
Jesus has been interacting with Gentiles and tax collectors throughout this book in Matthew chapter 8 Jesus healed the Gentile centurion paralyzed servant in Matthew chapter 15 he healed the Canaanite woman the Gentile woman's daughter who was demonized and then he proceeded to minister to feed 4,000 Gentiles by multiplying bread and ministered and healed their sick and cast out their demons and then in chapter 9 verse 9 to 13 Jesus came to Matthew who was the author of this book while Matthew was a tax collector he's sitting at his tax booth taxing his own people betraying his own people to enrich the oppressors the Roman occupiers Jesus comes to Matthew when he's at the tax pool and tells him to come and follow him and when
[52:59] Matthew responds to that the Pharisees and the scribes look at that and they grumble what you're calling him he's a scumbag he's the lowest of the low and you're calling him to yourself why does your why does your teacher eat with and receive tax collectors and sinners so this doesn't mean that you treat them as Gentile this does not mean okay well you're dead to me now no it means you separate them out you disfellowship them from Christian community and Christian fellowship because they are acting as if they're unbelievers but you pursue them now as unbelievers you pursue them as Jesus pursues tax collectors and sinners in love calling them to repentance and when they repent and believe the door is always wide open and they can come and be included once again at the table of

God and within the family of God that's what that means I wish I had more time to talk about this but this is I do talk about it in the membership class so plug for the membership class and the baptism class if you haven't gone through it I pray that we'll be a church that practices this well so that people can anybody who is looking at our church in the way we relate to each other can see that we love each other with the love with which God has pursued us and come after us let's pray father give us a glimpse of your heart and help us to be transformed by that vision of your love in Jesus Christ Lord in our own strength we cannot love each other this way so we fall short but so fill us with your love so that out of the overflow of your love we care for one other in this way in
Jesus name we pray!

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