

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

Children, Temptation, and Forgiveness

Matthew 18 Lesson 33

Ministry of Jesus Timeline

According to Harold Willimington's Guide to the Bible "His Seventy-Two Steps from Glory To Glory" the timeline of chapter 18 covers step #46. (pp308-309)

#46 From Mt. Hermon to Capernaum (Matt. 17:24-28)

I hold to the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor for the following reasons: Luke says "mountain" but then qualifies it with, "the hill" (Luke 9:37). Matthew 17:22 gives the regional marker "while they abode in Galilee." Matthew 17:14 indicates that multitudes awaited them. Matthew 17:24 notes the proximity to Capernaum. It is unlikely that sickly multitudes did the 8 – 10 day round from the Gallilee to Hermon but lived near Tabor. ⁱ

Childlike Faith 18:1-5

Jesus uses a little child to illustrate God's perspective on grownups acting like egotistical children 18:1

- **Entrance into Heaven and the Kingdom** "be converted" στρέφω, strephō, *turn* quite around or *reverse* - convert,

"His tone at this time is markedly severe as much as when He denounces the Pharisaism... The strong double negative means that they will otherwise not get in... let alone have big places in it."ⁱⁱ

- **Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven** "humble himself"

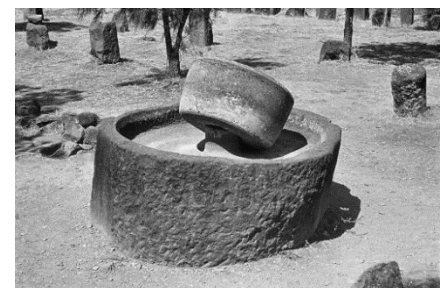
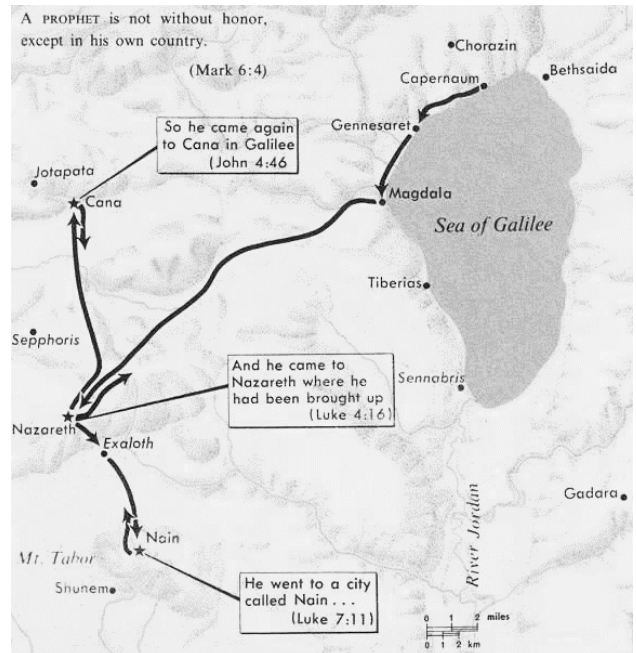
Ταπεινώ, *tap-i-no'-o* to *humiliate* (in condition or heart): - abase, bring low, humble (self)

A.B. Bruce pointedly observes that to humble oneself is " the most difficult thing in the world for saint as well as for sinner."ⁱⁱⁱ

- Reception of a child in Jesus' name as Jesus demonstrated equals reception of Him. (18:5)
- Offence to a child is deserving of drowning.

Inevitable offenses are a plight of the human condition

- **Jesus pronounces a "woe" to one intentionally causing offenses especially to children** (Luke 17:1)
- **The woe is endangerment of "everlasting fire"** (18:8,9)



Millstone at Capernaum

A.T. Robertson compares the New Testament uses of the Greek word “everlasting” αἰώνιος - *ahee-o'-nee-os*

It means without end in relation to both life eternal and eternal damnation. “If the punishment (by fire) is limited, *isps facto* the life is limited.”^{iv} If the fire of Hell is not everlasting then neither is life in heaven everlasting.

- **“Take heed...despise not” one of these little ones (18:10)**

“Little child” in 18:5 in Greek is Παιδίον *pahee-dee'-on* a *childling* that is,) an infant, or a half-grown *boy* or girl – Strong’s Concordance Greek English lexicon “Little ones” 18:6 is μικρός *mik-ros'*, micro – small

- **God’s care of “one of these little ones” is compared to the priority of one lost sheep. (18:11-14)**
- **“their angels” “behold the face of my Father” “in Heaven”**
 - ✓ **Angels are guardians of little ones.**
 - ✓ **Angels are both messengers of God and ministers to the saints.**
Hebrews 1:14 “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”
- **It is not God’s will that any including one of these little ones should perish. (18:14)**

Resolving the question of the destiny of children who die

- ✓ **Becoming humble like children is required to enter the kingdom of Heaven (18:3-4)**

This begs the question: When does the child pass from innocence to understanding? When are they fully accountable to a Holy God for their sins and that forgiveness and redemption is necessary?

The age and mental development of each child varies. In some, full mental development is absent. There is no set age of accountability applicable to all.

The Father is not willing that one of these little ones should perish (18:14)

The Father is not willing that any should perish but many do. Does this leave open the possibility that some children who perish ie: do not go to heaven?

The words of David over the death of his infant are reassuring.

2 Samuel 12:22-23 “While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

Response to Trespasses - Confrontation and Forgiveness (18:15-35)

The context is the forgiveness of a brother who “trespasses” against a brother. (18:16,21,22)

To “trespass” is more serious than to offend. μαρτάνω *ham-ar-tan'-o* miss the mark (morally) to *sin*.

To “offend” σκάνδαλον *skan'-dal-on* offence, thing that offends, stumbling-block.

Biblical confrontation (18:15-20)

- **Private restoration of fellowship is the goal (18:15)**
- **Private accountability is the initial method (18:16) “with thee, one or two more”**

Deuteronomy 19:15 “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

- **Corporate accountability is the final process (18:17)**
- **Corporate enforcement of disfellowship is required by all in the congregation. (18:17)**

A brother has broken fellowship by sinning. It is confirmed by two or more witnesses. He refuses to take responsibility to repent and reconcile. The matter is told to the “church.” I believe wisdom guides that this is initially limited to the New Testament officers of pastors and deacons/elders. He continues to refuse to heed the admonition of the church leadership and repent and take responsibility to reconcile. The last step is that the church congregation is to follow the decision of the leadership. They affirm the offender’s decision to break fellowship and his refusal to be restored to fellowship by repentance and reconciliation. Therefore disfellowshipping is initiated by his choice, and is now enforced by the church. “let him be unto thee as a heathen man.”

Jesus prior teaching on forgiveness

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matthew 6:14-15

Corinthian Church example

In the case of sexual immorality of a believer “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. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven.” (1 Corinthians 5:5-7)

Repentance, reconciliation, and restoration is the goal

“Sufficient to such a man *is* this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many. So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ;

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (2 Corinthian 2:6-11)

The reconciled must be about reconciliation “given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Paul’s example with John Mark – Paul and Barnabas separated ways over the contentious matter of giving John Mark a second chance when he had abandoned Paul while on a mission trip. This breaking of fellowship was not over a trespass nor an offense committed but rather over failure to finish a task. Later Paul instructed Timothy. “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:11

**Failure to forgive and restore the repentant is just as much a sin as the violation. Satanic devices divide us
Forgiveness is always possible. Reconciliation is not.**

Binding in Heaven, Loosing in Heaven (18:18-20)

This is by no means saying that disfellowshipping an unrepentant brother on earth makes them an unredeemed heathen and therefore doomed to miss out on heaven. The phrase “let him be unto thee as” is not saying that he is a heathen. The emphasis is on fellowship, not relationship. If an unrepentant violator could cease to be in relationship as a son of God because of a trespass, then he would no longer be a brother but would be a heathen indeed and would thereby be self-expelled. Therefore the instructions to discipline would be a moot point. Discipline can only be applied to one in a relationship as a brother by faith and out of fellowship by actions.

Putting one out of the church does not put them out of Heaven. That belief is a man-made dogma with roots in Catholicism based on their false interpretation that Peter and ie; his successors have the only keys to let people in or shut people out of heaven. Peter nor the church has the power to either bestow eternal life or to rescind it. Peter and all of Jesus’ disciples have the keys of the Gospel of Grace to open the door to whosoever will. If we don’t open it to the lost then to them the door remains locked.

Pastor Dr. W. A. Criswell summarizes this verse when addressing the local church's responsibility in discipline. "When thus given to the will of God, the church acts with the full sanction of heaven in dealing thus with an unrepentant brother...If Christ is really in the midst of His disciples, then they must be thinking His thoughts and uttering His prayers and there will be no question about the fulfillment of their petitions...Under such conditions Christ will be there to reveal His will to them and guide them." ^v

"Two or three gathered" in His name asking, is in the context of this church discipline scenario.

- **The final result of reconciliation is presented to Christ by the unified prayer of the church**
- **It behooves us to pray that God grant the errant brother repentance and to restore him and if necessary to discipline him.**

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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." (1 Corinthians 5:4,5)

"whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Hebrews 12:6)

Frequent trespasses and perpetual forgiveness (18:21-22)

- **Peter knew his limit to human forgiveness.**
- **Jesus stressed the unlimited resource of God's forgiveness. When ours runs out, resource His.**

The Parable of the forgiven but unforgiving steward. (18:23- 35)

- A servant is forgiven a great debt
- The servant refuses to forgive a small debt owed to him
- Fellow servants report it to the King
- The King reverses his forgiveness of debt and imprisons the servant

Jesus said "likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also to you" (18:35)

God can meet out forgiveness based on the forgiveness we show. God can deliver us to torment just like we wish torment on those who sin against us.

"If ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother."

ⁱ McMillan Bible Atlas, Revised Edition, 1966, Carta, Ltd.

ⁱⁱ A.B. Bruce, The Expositors Greek New Testament, Vol. 1, The Synoptic Gospels, Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1951, P 236

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} A.T. Robertson in his word Picture of the New Testament, Matthew and Mark, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 2004, P155

^v Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew, W.A. Criswell, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1961, P 108