

MATTHEW

18:1-20

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Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 13th April 2025 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10 (Ephesians 4:31-32)

Introduction

Well, this morning we have yet another incredible chapter of the Bible ahead of us. And we're going to get into it very quickly, for as we'll soon see, there is so much here to consider.

Overview of chapter eighteen

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- **v1-4** — The disciples ask who will be the greatest
- **v5-7** — Our responsibility toward children
- **v8-9** — The seriousness of sin
- **v10-14** — The parable of the lost sheep
- **v15-20** — Forgiving those who have wronged you
- **v21-35** — The parable of the unforgiving servant

In the opening 4 verses we'll see the disciples ask who the greatest will be in the kingdom of heaven, supposing it might be one of them, or at least one of the heroes of the faith, but Jesus' answer wasn't any of *them*, but rather He pointed to the simple faith of children.

From verses 5-7, Jesus then spoke of our responsibility *toward* children, that no-one lead them astray, that no-one cause them to sin — before, in verses 8-9, Jesus explained just how seriously we should take the issue of sin in our own lives.

In verse 10 onwards, we will get to the well known parable of the lost sheep, then from verse 15 on we will see Jesus speak on how we should deal with sin *toward* us, and finally, in verses 21-35 (which we'll get to next time), we will read the parable of the unforgiving servant, which should cause all of us to sit up and pay attention as to how we forgive others.

Chapter eighteen

So, with many things to consider, let's get straight into verse 1. We read:

Matthew 18:1

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

At that time. At *what* time? Well, we know from what we *read* in chapter 17 that this was after Jesus had been transfigured on top of Mount Hermon, had come down the mountain, healed the demon-possessed boy, spoken to His disciples regarding faith, returned to Galilee, and now had gone to Capernaum where (upon Peter coming into the house) Jesus had spoken to Peter regarding the temple tax. And what we read here *also* took place inside that same house, for Mark writes:

Mark 9:33-34

Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

And so Mark says they kept silent, Matthew says the disciples asked Jesus, and Matthew records that Jesus perceived the thought of their heart, and spoke to *them*. So, which was it? I believe all three — for it's not hard to imagine how this played out. That the disciples had been disputing this amongst *themselves* as they walked to Capernaum. But, Jesus, knowing their hearts, spoke to them, gently prodding them saying "*What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?*" and after much silence, one of them finally admitted "well, we were trying to figure out who will be the greatest in your kingdom".

Now, it *could* be they had tussled over whether it was Moses, or David, or Elijah or Samson, or Noah or Solomon that would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. But, I think it's clear that they weren't playing some sort of spiritual Top Trumps, but rather pride was bubbling away here, that they each fancied *themselves* as the greatest. Perhaps Matthew reasoned that he had left *all* to follow Christ, perhaps Peter reasoned that he had walked on water toward Christ (albeit temporarily), or perhaps James reasoned that since *he* was one of the three who Jesus kept taking to the side as his closest disciples, that it must be him.

But Jesus turned their attention to something more fundamental. We read:

Matthew 18:2-3

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

In other words, forget about your ambitions to be the greatest, for you're not going to enter into heaven by your *works*, but by *faith* — that is, unless you repent and put your faith in Me as a little child fully trusts that God is able to do *all* things, then you won't even *enter* heaven, let alone have a shot at disciple of the year! And besides, what small child has ambitions for fame, or power, or wealth — they don't even have a concept of what those things are, so be like them in that regard!

Of course, in saying we should have a child-like faith, Jesus wasn't saying we should have a child-ish faith. That somehow we're excused from grown up or mature behaviour. But rather, we are to approach Him in pure faith that *He* is able to save us, not in pride that *we* are worthy to enter heaven by our own efforts. We are to trust Him as a young child sincerely trusts their father.

And of course, this requires humility. It requires a recognition that we *need* Him. And it should result in an attitude that we want the glory to *only* go to Him. That rather than disputing about which one of us is the most important, we would say, like John the Baptist did, that "*He must increase, but I must decrease*". We shouldn't be demanding or hoping that buildings or rooms or ministries be named after us. We shouldn't be doing anything to draw attention to ourselves. And as such, I find it quite sad when walking past old church buildings that you so often see a large stone laid that has someone's name inscribed on it as having laid one of the foundation stones of the building. How that ever came to be acceptable is beyond me.

Indeed, the Bible is clear on this. Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, how "from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." And to Timothy he wrote (regarding the appointment of elders), that they must "not [be] a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil." And in his third letter, the apostle John specifically called out and warned of a man by the name of Diotrephes who loved to have preeminence in the church, and had been refusing to hear godly men from outside that local church.

Pride, like leaven, like yeast does to bread, puffs up. And we must not let any of it into our lives.

Matthew 18:4

Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

In other words, there is no room for pride or arrogance in Heaven. But isn't that the opposite of this world's way of doing things? I have marketing colleagues who, frankly, are as skilled at marketing themselves as they are at my company's products. And of course, social media platforms are always showing us how many friends, followers, likes, shares, or views our profiles or posts have had, right?

But as Christians, we are to be humble, for there is much to be humble about when we consider our sin, our need for a Saviour, and the great lengths Jesus went to in order to pay for our sin.

And Jesus continued:

Matthew 18:5

Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

What a statement to consider! What this shows of God's love toward little ones! And how it ought to motivate our hearts to do this. That we would have all the time in the world for little ones, not that we might entertain them, not that we might appear cool to them, but that we might show Christ to them. Oh, how precious the work of Sunday School teachers and children's ministry leaders and workers is! So, make no mistake, those ministries are not merely to tell them to be better behaved, but to lead them to Jesus.

I was thinking about this last night, and came across an insightful comment by Phil Visscher, who created the Veggie Tales cartoons based on Bible stories. He said *"I looked back and realized I had spent 10 years trying to convince kids to behave "Christianly" without actually teaching them Christianity. And that was a pretty serious conviction. You can say, 'Hey kids, be more forgiving because the Bible says so,' or, 'Hey kids, be more kind because the Bible says so!' But that isn't Christianity, it's morality."*

We are to receive children in His name, that they might receive *Him*, just as we have done. Teaching them to be nice, to listen to their parents, to be kind at school, is not what these ministries should primarily be about. That's not to say it's wrong to teach those things, but we must not forget the wonderful purpose of these ministries, which is to sow seeds of faith that might grow in their hearts, that they might come to know Jesus as their Saviour, not their life coach.

Now, there's more in this passage to get to, but note one more thing *about this verse*. For Jesus said whoever receives **one** little child like this in My name receives Me. That is, Jesus did not consider one child to be too few. So remember that, those of you in any kind of children's ministry. That when the numbers are low one week at Livewires, or you have just one child in your Sunday School class, that what you are doing is still entirely worth it.

Let me share a story that may encourage you to not be discouraged. A good number of years ago, a Scottish pastor stood before his congregation and resigned, saying, "In the past two years, I have seen only one conversion in this congregation: wee Bobby Moffatt. With such little fruit, I can no longer serve in this ministry." And it is said he walked away from the pulpit a broken man. But that little Bobby Moffatt grew up to be Robert Moffatt, a missionary who preached the gospel throughout Africa, whose son-in-law would often serve with him, who himself was a Christian man by the name of David Livingstone, who also bore much fruit. Don't underestimate the impact you can have on *one* child. And that goes for all of you who are parents too.

Jesus places enormous value on these little ones. And because of that, it makes sense that next Jesus added warning to this encouragement. He said:

Matthew 18:6

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

And oh, how this should give warning to all those who dare to hurt a child in *any* way. This illustration is vivid, for a millstone at this time was at least 18 inches in diameter, and 3 inches thick (which is surely enough to drown a man when hung around his neck) — but some believe would have been far bigger and heavier, being able to drag body down into the depths of the sea beyond any possibility of recovery. And Jesus says *that* would be the *better* option. Oh, what torment and horror awaits those who abuse children, for God *is* just.

But as heart-rending as these things are, and as much as my heart sinks when I read article after article in the news how not only these things take place, but the *effects* of such abuse lasts a *lifetime*, I must ask you a simple question this morning. And that is; what is worse... years of abuse, coupled with decades of distress OR *eternity* in hell. Those of us that are certain of the reality of hell, can *only* say that *eternity* there is *the* worst thing that could happen to anyone. And so what does this mean? Well it doesn't mean that we ought not care about physical or mental abuse. Far, far, from it. But what it does mean is that we should give even *greater* attention to the spiritual needs of little ones.

You see, Jesus spoke here, of "*these little ones who believe in Me*". And warned anyone who would dare cause them to sin. And the idea behind that word is *to cause to stumble*. In sin, yes. But to stumble in their faith, to abandon their hope and trust in God too. And so, as one pastor put it, "*woe to the individual who gives himself deliberately to undermining the faith of a child or a new believer, someone else.*" And there are those who would deliberately seek to do that.

But let *us* not forget that not only our words, but our actions can cause others to grow in their faith, or abandon it too. That is why it is so very important that our Livewires leaders, our youth club leaders, our Sunday school teachers, and our elders, trustees, and myself as a pastor, **MUST** walk in a way that matches our talk. That we would not teach or preach one thing, then live another. And that is just one of the reasons why we should gather regularly as a church to pray. That we wouldn't only pray for the little ones who come through the doors of this church, but that we would pray for those leading, teaching, and witnessing to them.

The spiritual needs of these little ones is of primary importance. So, for those of you involved in our children's and youth ministries, let me say this to you; Never, never go into these evenings thinking the game, the activity, the craft you are leading is the most important thing you have to do that evening. Yes, you each have your responsibilities, and it's important to carry those out with diligence, but the most important thing is the spiritual impression you can leave on these kids.

We read on in verse 7:

Matthew 18:7

Woe to the world because of offences! For offences must come, but woe to that man by whom the offence comes!

That is, we know there is going to be sin. That's inevitable in a fallen world, with our fallen nature. But that is not an *excuse* for anyone to sin! Especially toward these little ones. And the man or woman who does, is in trouble.

But lest we become self-righteous, let us also consider how *we* so easily forget the seriousness of sin, for next Jesus speaks of the ultimate consequence of sin, which is even worse than having a millstone hung around your neck and being drowned in the depths of the sea. He said:

Matthew 18:8-9

"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

And so, very similar to what He said in chapter 5 in His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus notes the seriousness of sin, for no-one in their right mind would do this to themselves for our limbs and eyes are precious to us. But that's how seriously we should deal with sin. Jesus isn't saying you *should* cut your hand off, but stating that *would* be far *better* than letting your hand cause you to sin.

So how urgently and abruptly are you willing to deal with sin in your life? Are you willing to cut off opportunity for it? Think about it; if drink, or eating, or social media, or watching movies is causing you to sin, are you willing to deal with it urgently? Are you willing to leave behind anything that causes you to sin? As Christians, we know that our sin has been paid for, but that in reality is *even more* motivation to keep from it. As Charles Spurgeon put it:

I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best Friend. I must be holy for his sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

Charles Spurgeon

Now, as we reach verse 10, we see a verse that certainly can cause some discussion, for Jesus said:

Matthew 18:10

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

So then, we are not to look down on children, or undervalue them, for they are each special to God. But does this verse mean all children have guardian angels, as some say? Well, it doesn't explicitly state that, but what it does tell us is that all of heaven is innately interested in children, and their spiritual state, for children are not born needing to be taught how to sin, for that comes naturally to them, right?! Rather, we need to teach them how to be good, and critically we need to teach them of their need for a Saviour.

Matthew 18:11

For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

How is that connected with little ones? It is that children's formative years should be filled with knowledge about God. That is, our *need* as parents is to teach our children about *Him*, that they might come to know Him personally themselves. That is *our* primary responsibility. Not Sunday school's responsibility, but ours. What we are teaching them should be *reinforced* by Sunday school, of course, but Christian homes ought to be so oriented toward God, that they would reflect what Moses instructed to the children of Israel in the wilderness, saying:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

That is not merely coming to church on a Sunday morning and *hoping* your kids pick up something in Sunday school or in the sermon. The eternity of our kids is far too precious to treat their spiritual needs with such contempt. We read next of Jesus' heart for little ones, which we ought to have too. He said:

Matthew 18:12-14

"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

This reveals the heart of God. And Luke (in his account) goes on to append these words of Jesus to this parable:

Luke 15:7

I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Such is the love of God for you and I. Such is His love for all those we know. And God doesn't want a single one of these little ones to perish. He doesn't want even one of them to wander from the truth of His Word. So what are you doing about it?

When was the last time you prayed for our Sunday school leaders? When was the last time you even asked them how Sunday school went? Or what they were teaching that day?

When was the last time you prayed for our Livewires leaders? When was the last time you prayed for our Youth Club leaders. These are some of the things we pray regularly for at our church prayer meetings on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings. But when was the last time you or I prayed for them in our own prayer times? And when was the last time we prayed for parents in this church, that they might have wisdom in leading their Children to Christ? We surely ought to pray!

However, Prayer, as critical as it is, is not the only way in which we should respond to this. So how would God use *you* to reach these little ones with the gospel? How would He use you to support those who already serve in that way? I can tell you that much spiritual good was done for young people in this town in the 80's as my parents served as youth leaders, which was made possible by the simple act of those who babysat me as a child. Don't overlook the seemingly small things that enables others to serve.

Collectively, we should reach these little ones with the gospel. Individually, we should seek the Lord as to how He would have us be part of that.

Now, let me ask you; does God only care about children, or does He care about adults too? We know that He cares about all of us, right? And so we find, having notably spoken about children, and our responsibility to them, that Jesus now speaks about our responsibility to one another as adults that are Christians. Verse 15 says:

Matthew 18:15

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

So then, Jesus is speaking of the relationship between one believer to another, and in particular where one sins against the other. And perhaps *surprisingly* to us, Jesus says that the responsibility to restore the relationship begins with the one who has been sinned *against*. That is, the initiative begins with the one who has been hurt. And that means we are neither to let it fester, nor just sit there waiting for an apology, nor should we get the hump and walk away from attending church.

And sadly, so many do that. There are many who don't go to any church at all, because someone hurt them once. But that's not rational. You wouldn't avoid going into hospital because the other patients had upset you. And you wouldn't stop going to restaurants because the people on the table next to you had upset you. So why avoid church for that reason?

Rather, Jesus says, where someone has acted wrongly toward you, you are to take the initiative and talk to them. You are to do it privately, not making a big show out of it. And you are to *speak* to them, not shout at them. Furthermore, you are to tell them their fault, not unload your feelings — so note, you ought to be sure that how they have acted is contrary to the Bible, not simply contrary to your preference!

And Jesus then says "*If he hears you...*" — so let us note that this is no guarantee that they will listen, but a reminder that we are each responsible for our *own* actions. And here, we are to go and talk to our Christian brother or sister, that we might gain them. That is, that we might win the person, not the argument. This is about *restoration*, not retaliation or retribution. It is so that unity may be retained and maintained within the church.

But what happens if they don't listen? Well, Jesus continues, saying:

Matthew 18:16

But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

So then, it is Biblical to go to someone *first*. But if that person will not listen, then you *should* take others with you to talk to them. Why? Well, first, they should straighten *you* out if you're acting emotionally, or even sinfully yourself.

I love the playful example I heard between three great Bible teachers who knew each other well — Chuck Smith, Chuck Missler, and Walt Martin. Walt and Missler were talking with each other, and (if I have it the right way round) it was Walt who said, "*hey Chuck, you'll never guess what Chuck Smith said!*" and went on to state something that sounded concerning. Missler replied "*Walt, I know you're far too Biblical to not have spoken to Chuck Smith already - what did he say?*" to which Walt, said "*alright, you got me...*" and went on to say he'd already spoken to Chuck and it was something he'd heard out of context and there was no issue at all.

This was playful, but what an example. For would we respond the same way if someone came to us and said "you'll never guess what this person said or did", but replying "well, what did they say went you went to talk to them about it?!" We need to help *maintain* unity, not stir up *disunity*. But, of course, where someone has acted sinfully, and the person who has been wronged has already spoken to them, without resolution, then others are to go with them.

If you have been wronged, be sure to take others with you who are godly men or women — not those who you simply think will be on your side. Don't start a lynch mob! And if someone asks you to go with *them* to talk to someone, be sure to talk through what is actually *Biblically* wrong with any actions that have taken place. Again, your responsibility is to uncover the truth, with restoration as the goal. Verse 17:

Matthew 18:17

And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

So, here is the last resort. It should never get to this point! But if having concluded that this person was specifically in the wrong, and that they are in sin, and will neither repent or listen (either to the person they have wronged, or other godly believers who know the details of the situation), then that is a time to break off fellowship. We're not to ignore sin, but are even to put someone out of the church that they might come to their senses.

Why is it necessary that the whole church family be aware? Because you can't have just a few people who break off fellowshiping with that individual, while others say "oh, it's OK, we still love you, they're just being harsh and over zealous!". No! The goal here is not to make someone feel comfortable. In fact it's the opposite, that this would be a wake up call for them, that they would realise the seriousness of their sin, and secondly that sin may not linger in the church. Imagine removing cancer from one part of your body, but another part inviting it over for tea. That would be madness!

This is exactly the type of matter that Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 5 regarding sexual sin that had not been dealt with by the church. There, a man who was part of the church had been sleeping with his stepmother, and the church had failed to do anything about it. So Paul instructed them to "*deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*"

That meant breaking off fellowship with this man. Did that mean no contact, and no hope of restoration. No, far from it — the church were still to act civilly to him, it's just they weren't to hang out with him as if nothing was wrong. And indeed time would come to comfort such as person as they came to their senses. And we read in 2 Corinthians chapter 2: "*This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.*"

In all what Jesus is saying here, and in all of the tangible example we have in the Corinthian church, we are to aim for the destruction of the flesh, and restoration of the soul.

Now, Jesus' next words were as follows:

Matthew 18:18

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

So to what is this referring? Well, the word translated *bind* gives the idea of putting under obligation, such as to the law, or to duty. And it carries the idea of responsibility. Responsibility for what? It is responsibility for the church to act in unity and with authority with regard to Christian behaviour. That we might all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, as we read in 1 Corinthians earlier this morning. How is that possible? By basing everything we do on the Bible, and *not* on our opinions. That we wouldn't act on what we *feel*, but what we *read*.

I was looking at Barry's study notes on this, and found this comment helpful:

The theme here is unity. God has granted his blessing on the basis we work together. The Kingdom is not to be full of solo warriors, but of servants willingly submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord... Whatever you bind, whatever you jointly agree upon, specifically in regard to church government (as emphasised in the previous verses), will receive heaven's sanction. God will add his signature to the cheque drawn up in unity. There is less possibility for error and greater accountability when two or three are working together.

Barry Forder

Another way of putting it, is that there are things that are prohibited for us as Christian's that we ought to be in full agreement on — that no Christian be drunk, or having sex outside of marriage, or taking recreational drugs, or getting in fights, or stealing from their employer, or cheating on their taxes. Those are not negotiable. They are to be bound. They should be locked in.

But then there are areas of freedom. Can a Christian play cards? Like Uno? Poker? Are you talking about gambling, or about playing a game. There is to be wisdom in knowing what to do. What about movies — is it OK to go to the cinema? Perhaps. There are occasionally movies that are released that I'd even *encourage* you to go and see. But all movies? Certainly not. There are some movies that you simply should not go and see, nor watch in your home. What about dancing? Can Christians dance? Some can. Some really can't. But as to whether you do or don't requires discernment — for some styles of dancing would be very unhelpful indeed.

So then, there are those matters on which we must agree are no-go areas for the Christian, for scripture is clear. And there are matters where there is freedom can be exercised. In both, there should be no difference between what we determine here, and what God has already said.

We read in verse 19:

Matthew 18:19

"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

And so unity is to be found in our times of prayer. In fact the Greek word translated as *agree* here is **symphōneō** which is where we get our word *symphony* from — which of course is the idea of being harmonious, of being in one accord, of all going in the same direction, of all playing the same piece of music. Not sounding like a chorus of tom-cats wailing our own tunes. There is to be unity.

And so note, we *should* be gathered together with others to pray, not only praying on our own. But this isn't us ganging up on God to try and get our way. We are not some sort of union to protest until He relents! For we read next:

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

The key here is gathering in His name. And how can we do that if we have no interest in His Word which we read He has magnified above His own name!? We have these wonderful words that tell us that God wants to answer our corporate prayers. So don't neglect praying with others. But whether in personal or corporate prayer, don't fail to submit to His Word and His will.

Now, let's look more deeply at this verse. First, Jesus says "where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst of them". What a wonderful promise! What a wonderful reason to gather! I wonder, do we wake up on Sunday's thinking about that? Perhaps we should set ourselves a little reminder of this verse each Sunday — that we're not merely coming together with each other, but we're coming into His presence. And the sense here is that He will already be here when we arrive — Jesus isn't sitting around, and thinking "oh look, there's more than one of them, I better get down there!" No! He is God, He is omnipresent. He will already be Here when the second person arrives. But we also read here that He particularly blesses us with His presence, with His closeness, as we gather together.

And let me say this; meet together now while you have the chance. Get along to everything you can, because one day you will likely not be able to. That *could* be through persecution, but more likely in this country is that you'll find yourself confined to your home, or a home, and you simply won't be able to get out to church. And don't be so naive to think that could only happen in old age. It could be injury or illness at any point that keeps you from this place, that keeps you from the blessing of Christian fellowship. And trust me, you will want close Christian friends if and when that time comes. So don't delay. Get along to all you can. And if there are movable things that are getting in the way of you fellowshiping, then move them!

Now, second, remember that Jesus has been talking about unity in the preceding verses. And now He is talking about His presence. So, if you are finding it hard to resolve your differences with another believer, remember that Christ is there with you, listening to your every word. That ought to change your tone (and mine) for the better, right?

Rather than bear grudges, we ought to forgive. And all this raised a question in Peter's mind. We read in verse 21:

Matthew 18:21

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

And that is what we will look at next time we study Matthew's gospel account.


Application questions

This week, I encourage you to think on these three questions:


- Is there any pride in your life that you need to root out? (are you trying to be the greatest, or point to Jesus who *is* the greatest?)

- How urgently are you dealing with sin in your life? (are you as severe on your sin as cutting off your hand or poking out your eye would be to your body?)
 - What are you doing to pursue unity and restoration in the church? (are you seeking restoration, or division? How might you pray more with others that you may both learn more of each other's hearts?)
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