

Back Up

Matthew 18:15-20
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I. Brother Back Up

a. Brother Sins

- i. Brother - a common nationality or faith *neighbor*
- ii. **Sin - to commit a wrong**, ‘transgress’ against divinity, custom, or law
 1. Though Matthew frequently uses the nouns ‘sin’ or ‘sinner’, this is his first use of the verb. Except for v. 21, he will use the verb again only of Judas’s sin (27:4). Sinning is understood here as separating the perpetrator from the people of God. Matthew’s topic is sin for which there has been no repentance.
 2. The content of ἀμαρτήση [εἰς σέ], “should sin [against you],” is probably left deliberately imprecise so that a broad variety of offenses can be included.

b. Go and Show

i. Go and Show Fault

1. **Go- to be on the move, in a certain direction**
2. **Show Fault to express strong disapproval of someone’s action, *reprove, correct***
 - a. The same verb occurs in the LXX of Lev 19:17
 - b. The word does not mean only “to blame” or “to reprove,” nor “to convince” in the sense of proof, nor “to reveal” or “expose,” but “to set right,” namely, “to point away from sin to repentance.” It implies educative discipline
 - c. The meaning here is not to scold someone or to abuse them verbally for their conduct but rather to bring the offensive matter to their attention in the hope that they will repent of their actions and be restored to the community
3. It is also to be seen in passages reflecting the practice of the church (e.g., 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15; cf. too Gal 6:1; Titus 3:10). This first stage is to be done strictly in private, μεταξὺ σοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου, lit. “between you and him alone,” so as to avoid spreading unnecessarily the knowledge of the person’s sin (cf. Prov 25:9).

ii. In Private – Eph 5:11

1. It means “to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.” This may be a private matter between two people
2. The privacy of the initial contact allows the sin to be dealt with without any need for wider awareness or for public shaming. Insofar as this is possible, the privacy of the initiative protects the dignity of the person, even at the point of serious sin.

- c. If He Listens
 - i. Listens - **to give careful attention to, listen to, heed**
 - 1. listen to/take notice of' rather than the more common 'hear
 - ii. You have Won Your Brother - **to acquire by effort or investment, to gain**
 - 1. Gained' is the counterpart to the shepherd's finding in v. 13: the person is restored to the community of brothers and sisters
 - 2. The offender is thus like the stray sheep of the preceding passage, who must be brought back to the fold. Only in such a way can the community remain intact (cf. Jas 5:19–20).
- d. If He doesn't
 - i. Two are Three Witnesses
 - 1. Witness- **one who testifies in legal matters, witness**
 - a. The supporting parties will need to be able to be independently aware of the problem The addition of 'one or two' gives the 'two or three' stipulated by Dt. 19:15
 - 2. The hope is for repentance and restoration. But in this intermediate stage at the same time the matter acquires the status of legality (cf. 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19), which can serve to bring the process to the third stage, including excommunication, if necessary.
 - 3. Facts Confirmed
- e. If He Refuses
 - i. Refuses- **refuse to listen to, disobey**
 - 1. Intensification is marked at this point by a change of verb from μὴ ἀκούσῃ ('does not listen') to παρακούσῃ ('refuses to listen'). Containment is no longer possible; now the whole church must be involved
 - ii. Tell
 - iii. Church - specific Christian group *assembly, gathering* ordinarily involving worship and discussion of matters of concern to the community
 - 1. in practical terms the teaching of 18:15–17 will be worked out in relation to an individual Christian congregation which is one of many such congregations, the significance of the gathered group is to be understood in relation to a fresh gathering of a restored Israel.
- f. Let him Be as a Gentile or Tax Collector
 - i. Gentile - **to nationhood foreign to a specific national group, w. focus on morality or belief, unbelieving, worldly, polytheistic**
 - 1. As in 5:47; 6:7, is used in a typically Jewish way, calling up Jewish negative stereotypical images. The negative use of the image is confirmed by the matching term ὁ τελώνης ('a tax collector')
 - 2. The derogatory use of ἔθνικός, "Gentile," reflects Matthew's Jewish-Christian community and is to be understood in the sense of "heathen," i.e., pagan; use in 5:47 and 6:7

- ii. Tax Collector - Hence tax collectors were particularly hated and despised as a class
 - 1. A strict Israelite was further offended by the fact that tax-collectors had to maintain continual contact non-Israelites in the course of their work; this rendered an Israelite tax-collector ceremonially unclean.
 - 2. **Mt 9:10f; 11:19; Mk 2:15, Lk 5:30; 7:34; 15:1, Mt 18:17**
 - 3. Thus the unrepentant offender is not simply put out of the community but categorized as among the worst sort of persons. (The Pauline admonitions of 1 Cor 5:9–13 and 2 Thess 3:14–15 are similar in effect; cf. Titus 3:10.)
 - 4. The person is to be related to now as an outsider, but not as one who must permanently remain outside. The spirit to be adopted will be like that involved in the love of enemies, discussed in 5:43–48

II. God Backs Up

- a. Whatever You Bind- binding of retaining
 - i. We saw at 16:19 that the binding and loosing is best understood as having to do with the regulation of behavior. Having been instructed by Jesus, the church is able to prohibit and command in a manner that is backed by God himself. the specific point will be that the church is able to confirm the standard of behavior to which the erring one is being called to conform once more.
 - ii. Peter is addressed; here, by contrast, the verbs are plural, and thus other disciples and leaders of the community are also given the authority to “bind and loose.” Here the binding and loosing have to do directly with matters of church discipline, whereas in 16:19 they concern matters of conduct more generally.
- b. Whatever you Loose - Loosing is the equivalent of forgiving,
 - i. Shall be In Heaven
 - 1. The movement from individual reproof to the involvement of others and finally of the whole church ensures that severing a person from the fellowship of the church, where this needs to happen, is finally based on the most assured understanding of what God requires and therefore what God will give his backing to.
 - 2. The leadership thus has the ability to make decisions concerning unrepentant sinners in the community—decisions that carry authority such that they are said to be likewise fixed in heaven
- c. Agree on Earth
 - i. That they May Ask
 - 1. Most likely the church is seeking guidance for exercising the role involved in vv. 17–18: behind the binding and loosing of v. 18 stands the praying of v. 19.
 - 2. In instances of discipline, the community leaders will “ask” for guidance; they can be assured of God’s guidance in their decisions.

- ii.
 - iii. Is shall be done
 - 1. By My Father in Heaven
- d. Two or Three
 - i. Gathered- of persons *bring* or *call together*,
 - ii. In My Name
 - 1. “In my name” is another way of saying “under my rule.”
 - iii. I am there in their midst
 - 1. This presence of Jesus should not be understood as a metaphor (as in the case of Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 5:4) but is the literal presence of the resurrected Christ, in keeping with the promise to be articulated in 28:20 (cf. 1:23b). The community founded by Jesus (16:18) is assured that he will be present in that community until the close of the age