"THE COURAGE TO CONFRONT"

Matthew 18:15
8-5-2018

INTRODUCTION:

***You need courage to lovingly confront a believer who sins against you.**

I. <u>WHY</u> should you confront a believer? (v. 15a)

If he or she has sinned against you and has not acknowledged it nor asked for your forgiveness.

II. <u>HOW</u> should you confront a believer? (v. 15b)

A. Take the <u>initiative</u> (*"go")*

B. Speak the <u>truth</u> (*"tell him his fault"*)

C. Deal with the matter <u>privately</u> (*"between thee and him alone")*

III. <u>WHAT</u> is the result of confronting a believer?

A brother won back from sin.

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"Moreover if" - A transition in thought.

Jesus had previously warned against *"you offending <u>others</u>"* (v. 6-14); now He tells us what to do when *"others offend <u>you</u>"*.

Do you know the feeling you have when someone sins against you? Most of the world goes through these stages:

1. Shock - How could he/she do that?

2. Anger - when your temperature increases; your ears turn red; you get hot

3. Resentment - You "replay" what was done in your mind over and over

4. Bitterness - Whenever that person comes to your mind, negative emotions grip your heart

5. Scheming - I'll think of some way to get back at him/her

6. Mean or violent actions or words

Verses 15 - 17 give us the Lord's way of preventing bitterness from growing in between His people.

If Matthew 18:15 were carried out by all Christians, there would rarely be gossip, grudges, hurt feelings, anger, resentment, church schisms (splits), etc.

In verses 15-17, Jesus describes 3 steps to take in seeking restoration with a sinning brother:

1)Personal confrontation (*go. . . alone)*
2)Private confrontation (*one or two more)*
3)Public confrontation (*tell it to the Church)*

And the hardest step is the <u>first</u> one! (Today, we will focus on this one)

***You need courage to lovingly confront a believer who sins against you.**

I. <u>WHY</u> should you confront a believer? (v. 15a)

If he or she has sinned against you and has not acknowledged it nor asked for your forgiveness.

"Thy brother" - Your brother in Christ (a fellow-believer)

When Christ saved you, you were "born again"; He adopted you into His family. This meant you became united with Him and everything related to Him. God became your Father, and each other believer in Christ became your brother and sister (cp. I John 5:1). We are fellow adoptees.

--We share the same name (*"Christian"* - Acts 11:21)

--Have the same nature (the *"new man"* - I Pet. 1:4)

--We eat the same food (the Bible - Mt. 4:4; I Pet. 2:2)

--We live in the same *"spiritual house"* (we are each building blocks, *"living stones"* of God's temple - I Pet. 2:5)

--We share the same Spirit (I Cor. 6:19-20)

--Fight the same enemy - Satan (I Pet. 5:8)

--Have the same goal - to glorify God (I Cor. 10:31)

--Look forward to the same future (the Rapture and eternal life with Christ - I Thes. 4; Rom. 6:23)

. . . Therefore, we should care for all men, but *"especially those of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:10).

"Trespass" = to sin by missing the mark of God's standard of behavior. To come short of the Bible's expectations of proper Christian conduct.

One reason many are tolerant of sin in the lives of others (even when it is directed at them) is because they are tolerant of sin in their own lives.

Before Mt. 18:15 will ever be carried out, you must have a love for God and His truth. You must have a personal quest for righteousness, both in your life and in the lives of your brethren.

II. HOW should you confront a believer? (v. 15b)

A. Take the initiative (*"go"*)

***"Go"* -** This is the hardest step. It is easier to ignore the problem. It is easier to hold a grudge or to counter his trespass with one of your own.

It takes conviction, courage, love, and a desire to please God to confront someone who sinned against you.

ILLUS: I heard of a man who flew from California to Pennsylvania to meet with a Christian who had slandered his character and hurt his reputation.

No one (in their right mind) enjoys confrontation. It is easier to simply walk away from conflict than to lovingly settle it.

***"Go"* -** This is a mandate, not a suggestion. (an obligation, not an option)

In Matthew 5:23-24, our Lord commands the offender to go to the offended. Now, Jesus calls upon the offended to *"go"* and confront the offender.

Because he (not "I") is at fault, we can rationalize and say: "I don't need to go to him/her, he/she needs to come to me!"

"I'm not going to talk to him/her until he/she comes up to me and apologizes, kisses my feet, and sheds tears of genuine sorrow."

We should not "stew," "steam," "boil," "plot," "scheme," . . . God says to *"GO"*!

B. Speak the truth (*"tell him his fault"*)

"Tell him his fault" -

For many, it is easier to admit your own fault than to confront someone about theirs.

"Tell him his fault" - (*elen cho*) - to bring to light; to expose (Rienecker, p. 54).

To bring under conviction by humbly and clearly (no "beating around the bush") bringing to light the sin committed against you.

Why does God command us to lovingly "bring to light" the sin some brother commits against us?

1) That person may not be aware of what he did (perhaps what he did had no malicious intent. It may have been simply foolishness not intended to hurt, but ended up being offensive).

   The Bible speaks of sins of ignorance (the Old Testament even had a sacrifice to be offered for sins of ignorance - Num. 15:22).

   Many misunderstandings are quickly and immediately resolved by obedience to our Lord's command.

   "In some situations the sin is apparent and there is little or no doubt that the brother or sister has sinned. But it is wise in most initial confrontations to allow for the possibility that the sin is not actual. The person initiating the confrontation should explain his concern and then ask, "Am I understanding this situation correctly? Is there a matter of sin that needs to be dealt with or is there some clarification that can be made?"." (Carl Laney, The Biblical Practice of Church Discipline [Bibliotheca Sacra - Oct-Dec. 1986, p. 359])

2) That person if not confronted may continue down that road and continue to hurt others (and by so doing destroy himself).

In his sermon, "Reproof, a Christian Duty," Charles Finney remarked, "If you see your neighbor sin,a nd you pass by and neglect to reprove him, it is just as cruel as if you should see his house on fire, and pass by and not warn him of it" (Laney, p. 358)

Just as the Good Shepherd seeks out the lost sheep that went astray (v. 12-13), so a good Christian will seek to contact the erring brother (realizing the damaging and deadly effects of sin), and seek to help him come back to a Godly walk.

3) That person if confronted will be more convicted by your sincere, humble, loving rebuke than by his own unagitated conscience

Attitude is everything in confronting a brother. How should you deal with someone who sins against you?

You need -

--The motive of <u>love</u>

Prov. 10:12 - *"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins"*

I Pet. 4:8 - *"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins"*

--The kinship of a <u>brother</u>

II Thes. 3:15 - *"Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother"*

--The spirit of <u>meekness</u> (gentleness)

Gal. 6:1 - *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."*

"Restore" - (*katartizo*) meant to adjust, to put in order, to restore to its former condition - like a medical doctor would "set a bone." Such only can be done with gentleness. The word also was used of "mending" torn or tangled fishing nets (Mt. 4:21; Mk. 1:19). No one can effectively mend or pull out tangles without gentleness.

"Pointing out someone's fault is (in a sense) risky, for there is no way of knowing how he will respond. But if done gently and graciously, the offender will be more likely to recognize the error than become stubborn and bitter" (Laney, p. 358-59).

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

Seek to restore your brother the same way you would want him to restore you if the situation were reversed (Wiersbe, p. 65)

C. Deal with the matter <u>privately</u> (*"between thee and him alone")*

"Between thee and him alone" **-** Because the trespass was against you privately and personally, you should not broadcast his sin to others; you owe it to him to deal with it privately and personally.

RULE: Personal sin demands personal confession
Private sin demands private confession
Public sin demands public confession

"Any discussion of the sin must be with the offender, not behind his or her back. Many 'pious' gossips express concern for sin, often in the form of 'prayer requests'." (Laney, p. 358)

It's supposed to be a private meeting or phone call.

"But how different is our action many times! We say, 'Oh, have you heard about so and so?' Tongues begin to wag, and before long the brother that could have been corrected and restored is (more) deeply alienated from the fellowship of believers" (Paul R. VanGorder, <u>The Call for Church Discipline</u>, RBC, p. 19)

III. <u>WHAT</u> is the result of confronting a believer? *A brother won back from sin.*

"If he shall hear thee" = if he humbly listens to you, agrees with you, and asks your forgiveness -- then forgive him (18:21-22, 35).

(A willingness to *"hear"* shows humility - pride is the biggest reasons people don't seek restoration with each other)

"Listens" - The word often takes a stronger nuance, "to agree, follow, heed or obey" (John 5:25, 9:27; Acts 28:28) (Laney, p. 359)

"Thou hast gained thy brother" -

--To "gain" a brother is to win him from the clutches of Satan

--To "gain" a brother is to perhaps gain a better, closer, more meaningful relationship than you have ever had with him/her. Some of the closest, sweetest friends are those who did not allow a conflict, grievance, hurt to do permanent, irreparable damage to their relationship.

As long as we are in the flesh (given enough time and given the right circumstances) we are sure to offend each other. What we do at times like that will determine the future life of the relationship.

Why are there so many divorces? They don't know how to handle differences and offenses Biblically (reconciliation is not sought because a <u>commitment</u> to the relationship is not there)

There is something more important (valuable) than:

--Our hurt feelings

--Our stubborn pride

--The time and effort it will take to get in the "trenches" and battle with Satan and win back the brother or sister

The goal (purpose, reason) for confronting is:

1) Not to vent your anger and frustration

2) Not to "get even" (revenge, vengeful vindictiveness)
--Rom. 12:17 - *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."*
--I Thes. 5:15 - *"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."*

3) Not to give reasons for why you want your relationship to end

--Rather, the goal is to get the sin confessed and *"covered"* so that it does not come in between you anymore.

The goal is RESTORATION.

Going up to a brother who sinned against you says "I care about my relationship (friendship) with you" (one who ignores the problem is saying, "I don't care; I don't want to be bothered - Get out of my life").

"Love will confront and rebuke, but love will never ignore."

"Open rebuke is better than secret love" (Prov. 27:5).

"He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue" (Prov. 28:23).

"Above all else, go to him with the idea of winning your brother, not winning an argument. It is possible tow in the argument and lose your brother" (Wiersbe, p. 65).

CONCLUSION:

Luke 17:3 - *"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."*

James 5:19 - 20 - *"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."*

1) Make a list of people you believe have sinned against you (and that sin has affected your relationship with them)

2) Set a date to go visit their home (or call them by phone) and seek to have the hurt mended and the relationship restored.