

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

A Closer Look at Matthew 18:15-17

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:15-17).

This passage is second only to Matthew 7:1 (“**Judge not**”) in popularity among the replies given by those who have been called out for their sins and their sympathizers. It is especially invoked when one publicly sins in word or deed and is immediately or shortly publicly rebuked for his transgression. The one rebuked and his sympathizers often throw this passage back at the one doing the public rebuking. *“You are also guilty because you did not first come to me, or go to him privately, like the Bible says.”*

These verses are not dealing with sin committed publicly. It is the pattern for dealing with private sin known only to the offender and offended. It has two objectives: to gain a brother and to keep private sins as private as possible. Notice the progression from being known by two individuals (the offender and the offended alone). If it is resolved at this level it need not be known by anyone else. If not resolved by the two alone, then it is made known to two or three more called upon to help resolve it. If this fails, then it is made public by telling it to the church. Then if the church cannot persuade the offender to correct it, then he is to be treated as a **heathen and tax collector**” (the same as withdrawing and having no company with as in 2 Thessalonians 3). In this scenario, the sin began privately between only two people and then progresses to public knowledge only if private efforts to gain the offenders repentance is not accomplished.

Insisting on invoking this pattern to be applied to sin already public knowledge reduces the first two steps to mere formalities to say nothing of being unnecessary. When sin is publicly committed it is already past the first two steps of our text. It is being publicly made known as it is being committed. It is known by the church.

Just one other observation about this passage. There is an idea that renders this passage totally unnecessary. If the offending party in a sin is to be unconditionally granted forgiveness by the offended party even before he repents then it makes this whole instruction unnecessary. If this be the case, then the instruction of these verses could be greatly reduced. It would read, *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and put your arm around him and tell him that you love him and forgive him.”* Then one could go on his way feeling great that he has a forgiving spirit—while leaving the offender still guilty of his fault. — *The Reflector*, September 2017. ■

The Word of God on Mothers

By Cecil Douthitt

1. Mothers are to be honored. Jesus said in Matthew 15:4 quoting the Old Testament, *“For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’”* Children not respecting and honoring their parents is a very serious matter before God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:2-3, *“‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’”* Disobeying parents can lead to an early death in a great number of ways. In 1 Timothy 5:2, we learn the older women in the church are to be treated as mothers. This is with love, honor, and respect.

2. Mothers are to be teachers of good things. *“When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which*

dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5). This verse makes it clear that little Timothy was taught about God by his mother and grandmother. Their good influence and lives influenced him for good. In Titus 2:3-5, *“The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”* Most of these older women would be mothers. Mothers should teach their children in many ways.

3. Mothers are to be loved. *“She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.’ Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates”* (Prov. 31:26-31). Let us be sure we respect mothers.

4. Mothers are to discipline. *“The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother”* (Prov. 29:15). Notice what happens when children are not disciplined. They act in such a way that it brings shame on their mothers. Bad things happen to the child that scorns obedience to his mother (Prov. 30:17). Consider Proverbs 22:15, *“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”* Yes, godly mothers discipline because they love their children as God loves us and chastens us (Heb. 12:5-8).

5. Mothers are to be cared for in their old age. Proverbs 23:22 says, *“Do not despise your mother when she is old.”* Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 5:8, *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* And in verse 16 he wrote about the Christian’s duty to their widowed mothers.

6. Children are to bring their mother joy. *“The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice”* (Prov. 23:24-25). We can do this only when we love, obey, and respect our parents. We do this only when we obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and live the Christian life (Titus 2:11-13). I say this because of the above verses from God’s word and because of what Christ said in Matthew 25:46, *“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”* The child that loses his soul in hell for all eternity brings on his or her mother the greatest sadness, disappointment, and grief that can be brought to the human heart. Please think on these things. – *Knollwood church of Christ Articles*, June, 2011. ■

He Taught Them Again

By Joe R. Price

“Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again” (Mk. 10:1).

There is value in repetition. In elementary school, my classmates and I memorized and repeated the alphabet, the multiplication table, the U. S. states and their capitals, and many more such things. Good teachers do not teach something only one time. They teach, they review what has been taught, and they test their students on the lesson. Whenever the multitudes gathered around Jesus, His habit was to teach them “again.” He repeatedly taught His apostles of His approaching death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Mk.10:32-34; 9:31-32). We should not be yearning for some *“new thing”* when it comes to gospel teaching, because its message is the same today as it was in the first century. What we yearn for is to hear the same message again and again. Repeatedly teaching the truth of the gospel is for our spiritual safety (Phil. 3:1). By its repetition, we remain strengthened and resolute in the face of life’s trials and temptations (2 Pet. 1:12-15). You may have heard the gospel over and over. But remember, someone is hearing it for the first time. May we never grow weary of hearing God’s word taught again, and again, and again. – *Knollwood church of Christ Articles*, May 2018. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250