

A Loving Call to Repentance

- **“As surely as I live, declrs Sov Lord, I take no pleasure in dth/wckd, but rather that they turn fr their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, pp/Isrl?” (Ezk 33:11).** And w/this loving call/repntnc in our ears, fr Lord to all us, we being this sermon. Told you last wk in sermon I’d say some dffclt thngs: not undrstnd but put prac. Same true today! If (as thght re last wk) dffclt forgv those sin vs us, then also dffclt (as see today) to apprch smone re their sin & urge them repnt. It’s easy see how that’s imp wrk; but, dffclt to do! And yet that is exctly what J calling on us do today: move out comftr zone & have the dffclt but necssry and loving convrstn w/smone re their sin – to reprove, rebuke, admnsh smone, always in love – so that they repent & are forgvn. Today J tchs us: 1 very imp aspect of Xianty: loving fellow Xians enough that, when they’re caught in sin, we issue them loving call/repntnc.
- Mt 18 is where we’re at. And smtms just that phrase “Mt 18” makes you immtdly think: Xian discipln. But this: not only place in Bible we’re taught do this. Jms: **“My bro/sis, if one/you shld wander fr the truth and smone shld bring that prsn back, remem this: Whoever turns a sinner fr the error of their way will save them fr dth and cover over a multtd/sins” (19-20).** Paul, Gal 6: **“Bro/sis, if smone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit shld restore that prsn gently” (1).** And Col 3: **“Let the msg/Xp dwell among you richly as you tch & admnsh oa w/all wisdom” (16).** And here in Mt 18, J: **“If...go...”** and what follows is whole procedure for what to do next.
- Bu first, you can sense urgncy in these wrds. J & rest/Scr consider this very imp. And reason for urgncy: sin is big deal! When sin is left untreatd by healng pwr/repntnc, it leads drctly unbel, which leads drctly hell. Think serious hlth concern, like rprtd appdix – doesn’t just heal on own! Needs trtmnt, othws die! Sin also needs trtmnt; and when left untreatd, when there’s no repntnc, sinner dies, forever in hell. When J: **vs.15a-sins**, he talking re when: ignore conscience, become comftrbl doing what know wrong, have no intention stopping or repntng – that puts you in very real danger of losing faith/Xp and becoming an unbel! That’s very serious! Matter life/dth!
- Exmpl: you’re playing outside w/child, ball street, child runs after, see car coming, yell stop. Or another exmpl: one night see neighbor lady’s house on fire, go bang on door, wake up, get out. These: serious situatns; and by stepping in, you’re saving lives. In same way, Xian discipln (what we’ll call this task) saves lives. It’d be unloving let kid get hit by car, or old lady across street burn alive in house. So you step in to help, in love, bec you care. Xian discipln: act/love & care, compssn/concern, carried out w/hr/J. It’s a loving call/repntnc. Love is what leads us do this, just like love is what led Xp teach this.
- So what’d he tch? This: **vs. 15.** So you start w/the private, confdntl, 1on1, 1 Xian to anthr. And this: not just Pr’s work; this is for you to do. Maybe: it’s a fellow school mom that you chat with in prking lot; golfing buddy fr ch; smone in cong you’ve known long time. You’re frndshp makes this both dffclt and persnl, bec don’t want lose that frndshp; and don’t want give imprsn: meddling in private affairs; and don’t want make seem like more intrstd in spec in their eye than plank in yours (Mt 7:3-5). But you also know: this is matter life/dth. And you love your bro/sis, so go privately, bec don’t want embarrass; and say smthng like: “I really care re you, & concernd re you. I’m no perf prson; I’ve got plenty sins my own. But right now you’re caught up in lifestyle/behvr that goes vs how J wants us live. And I don’t want see this get best of you. And I’m concernd that you don’t seem concernd re it. So this is just me coming to you, in love, asking you to think re what J wants you do here. He wants: stop, repent, & turn to him.”
- Do you think you have guts to say that? It may be dffclt, but this: what J calls on you to do! Xian dscpln starts w/1on1. “You: my bro; I: my bro’s keeper; and hey man, I got your back/6.” And you pray that your wrds: **“win them over”** – that they’d hear you out, turn fr ways, turn to Xp. That’s: victory/kngdm, and God lets you be part of it – not that your wrds that have the pwr; it’s HS at work within them. God’s law: like mirror; it shows our sin. We, of course, have to look in that mirror. But smtms we’ve also got hold mirror up so others can look in it for selves. Maybe they’ve been avoiding that mirror bec they’re pretty sure know what going see. But they need see what that mirror shows: a loving call/repntnc.

- So you start w/private convrstns and pray for victory. But evently, **vs. 16**. This shows sinner: you're not only one who cares re them and is concernd re their behvr; and reinfrcs imprtnc/matter. It's not a gang-up; it's shared loving concern. **Vs. 17a**. If smone refuses to repent and is in danger of losing faith/Xp, leaders/ch need know that; and loving convrstns will continue. But evntly, **vs. 17b**. And that's a really sad, somber situation, but still an act/love. When a cong has to say to sinner, "After multpl atmtpts & yrs of trying to show you danger of your behvr, you have given us every reason bel: you've rejctd Gos/J and are no longer his disc" – when a cong has to say that thru act/excommnctn (hopefully rarely), that's still a loving call/repntnc. One author I read called it "the strongest possible preaching of the law, done with holy intent to lead the sinner to recognize and repent of his sin."
- This whole disccsn on Xian discipln: very humbling & sobering, bec it shows us pwr/Satan. He "**prowls ...devour**" (1 Pt 5:8). And smtms he gets his prey – which makes us pray, "Lord, spare me fr hard-hrtedness. Forgive me for failing love your ppl enough to warn them when they're in danger. And please Lord, spare me from ever rejecting your Gos & refusing to repent when I sin." And when we hear growl and feel warm breath/lion breathing down necks, and we're sure we're a goner, it's then: we look up and see standing right beside us our GS. In vss right before this reading, J: "**If a man owns 100 shp, and 1 of them wandrs away, will he not leave the 99 on the hills and go to look for the 1 that wandrd off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier re that 1 shp than re the 99 that did not wandr off. In the same way your Fr in hvn is not willing that any of these little ones shld perish**" (12-14). JC is our GS, who not only laid down life for shp on cross, where paid for all sins, incldng sin/remaining silent when fellow Xian fell into grave danger; but he also found us when we wandrd off. He loves us that much; loves all his shp that much. And when his shp wander away, he wants them back at side, safe fr lion. So reaches out them w/a loving call/repntnc, which speaks thru ppl like you. So as a shp, once lost but now restord, J calls on you: imitate his love & speak loving call/repntnc to a fellow shp in need.
- Imagine what it'd be like if we didn't: if didn't warn sinners; if let kids run into street in front of traffic; if let old lady burn in house; if didn't express concern to young Xian lady who moves in with & shares bed w/boyfrnd; if remain silent when good buddy cheats on wife; if turn blind eye to fellow ch members who stop coming ch; if love ppl so little that we: allow our silence to give nonvrbl aprv'l, & inadvrtnly teach fellow bels that their sinful behvr is really no big deal. Imagine if we ignored these words of J.
- Or, imagine if you found self on other side of Xian discipln. Imagine that you got self tangled up in web of soul-dstryng sin, and a friend comes talk you; can tell she's nervous, and you are too, bec you know what she's going say; and she **vs. 15b**. What you going do; how react? Or what if your Pr, or fellow ch member, maybe smone on Board Elders or SC, or anyone fr ch, reaches out to you, says: "You know, it's been really long time since you've come to worship; come on back." How react? Bk/Prov: "**Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise. Those who disregard discipln despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding**" (31-32).
- So, if we Xians truly love oa, then when we see a bro/sis caught in a faith-dstryng sin, we step in & say smthng, tactful yet pointed, direct yet loving. We speak a loving call/repntnc, and we pray that Spirit'd change their hrt – or that he'd change our hrt when smone lovingly calls us to repntnc. And finly, we remem: we are all just shp of our GS, who found us when we wandrd off, and who is determnd to bring wandrng shp back into his fold. Such is his love! So may be ours, as well.

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.