

How Do You Treat Fellow Christians

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into the importance of how Christians should treat one another, emphasizing the need to avoid despising, causing others to stumble, lacking forgiveness, impatience, and neglecting to confront issues. The message highlights the significance of humility, love, patience, forgiveness, and reconciliation in our interactions with fellow believers, reflecting Christ's love and care for His children.

Scripture: Matthew 18:6, Matthew 18:15, Matthew 18:21, Matthew 18:10, Matthew 18:12, Matthew 18:21

Topics: "Christian Relationships", "Humility and Forgiveness"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of how Christians should treat one another, emphasizing the need to avoid despising, causing others to stumble, lacking forgiveness, impatience, and neglecting to confront issues. The message highlights the significance of humility, love, patience, forgiveness, and reconciliation in our interactions with fellow believers, reflecting Christ's love and care for His children.

Transcript

Well, Matthew 18. One way to look at Matthew 18 is that it contains at least six examples of how to treat or not to treat fellow Christians. So I want to think about that this morning.

How to treat your brethren. And you could add the phrase how to avoid spiritual abuse. And I don't think the word abuse is too strong of a word to use, because if you look at Matthew 18, even verse 6, he talks about someone who causes another little one, a Christian, to stumble.

He says it'd be better if he had a great millstone fastened around his neck and that he was drowned. So if that type of punishment, if that's light, if it'd be better for that to happen, then whatever would be deserved for that individual, it shows the seriousness of the offense that that individual had. So, how to treat your brethren.

Six things here in the chapter to not imitate. Six things that we should be imitating. And in the Lord's eyes, you're going to find here that true greatness goes hand in hand with how we treat the Lord.

But how we treat the brethren is us treating the Lord. Do you understand? So you've got to reprogram your mind. Rather than say how I treat my brothers and sisters is some evidence of something in my life, my treatment of them is me treating the Lord.

Isn't that what Christ said? Think about this picture of judgment day in Matthew 25. What does the Lord Jesus say? Verse 40, the king will answer them. Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did what? You did it to me.

Christ takes it personal. So it's the same thing. How I treat fellow Christians is also how I treat the Lord.

That treatment is going towards the Lord. You can't take those and divorce them from each other. They go hand in hand.

So our treatment of the least believer... Think about the person you most struggle to love in your Christian life. Maybe you have one. Maybe you have none.

Maybe you've got multiple individuals. It tries your patience to love them, to bear with them as Christ is more with you. However you treat them, Christ views it as you treating Him.

Right? Because this little one is someone who's been bought by the same blood. They've been ransomed by the same perfect, perfect, holy Son of God. And God is jealous and concerned of our treatment of them.

We're going to have to answer to the King Himself for what personal offenses we have made to other ones whom He has adopted. And so we best look at ourselves in an accurate way and ask myself, how do I treat my fellow Christian specifically? It kind of ties into what I dealt with last week in the 10 a.m. You've had a church at Laodicea that used to be firm in the faith, and now lo and behold, 30 years later, they do not realize that they're blind. And so one of the things we have to constantly watch is our treatment of one another, that we not lower the bar of the amount of love that we should be wanting to give and show to our fellow Christians.

And this is such a big deal that John can dogmatically give. Love for the brethren is one of the tests that you even know you're a Christian. You hear 1 John 3:14. Listen to this.

We know that we have passed from death to life because what? We love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. That's somewhat of a shocking verse.

People want to think of all these other things that are evidence that they're a Christian, but John puts out a big thing as how you love one another. That is an indicator of whether the Spirit is in you and their spiritual life. So in other words, if you don't love fellow Christians, which Christ looks at you treating fellow Christians as treating Him, then it's proof you don't really love Him.

That's one of the reasons why the local church is so important. The local church is where we're really going to grow in our love. We're going to be tested to see how we love one another.

It's very easy to step out of the church. We could go to the Internet and just stay there, and we're not going to face opportunity to love. We can have a thick head full of theology, but no heart of love.

So what areas of treating the brethren could you, could I, have blind spots in? In more than just blind spots, what if we're actually doing something in some way that Christ would look at our punishment to be worthy of being drowned? Where are we at in our sensitivity to these things? If you look at the chapter, you'll notice some bookends in a way. Verse 18, verse 1, He says, at that time, the disciples came to Jesus. So the disciples came to Him.

So He's talking to the disciples. And you go through this entire chapter. You get to the end.

And then chapter 19 starts and it says, now when Jesus had finished these sayings, He went away from Galilee. And so you've got all of this Scripture right here. All of it which has different aspects of how you and I treat fellow Christians.

So I want to look at this. I want to look at this. And He's addressing His followers here.

And we're going to take it basically section by section. And in each section, I'm kind of going to personify two individuals. And you want to ask yourself as I've asked myself, right? The preacher is always preaching to himself as well as to the people.

But we have to ask ourselves which one of these individuals might I be most like in a positive way or a negative way? In some ways, you could actually preach six sermons on Matthew 18. But I'm going to kind of condense it all into one. And my hope is not to go long.

So let's look at this. We're going to look at the first situation. Matthew 18, verse 1-4.

Let's read that there. At that time, the disciples came to Jesus saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And calling to Him a child, so it's an actual physical child, He put Him in the midst of them and said, Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And let's just read on in verse 5. Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, or if you rightly look at the footnote, to stumble and the ideas fall away, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. And so the first two people we've got in verses 1-4, you could call them, Mr., I want to be the greatest.

I want you to write a biography about me. I want to be that great. And then you've got Mr., I humbly don't care about my social status.

I'm just here faithfully serving the Lord. Verse 4 makes it clear. Humility is what Christ wants.

Whoever humbles himself like this child. Then He mentions right there little ones. He says in verse 5, whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, but whoever causes one of these little ones, and the little ones there is talking about Christians, because He goes on to say, little ones who believe in Me to sin.

He's used a child to illustrate something, but then He's going and He's talking to you and me. He's not talking to children who are Christians. Yes, that would include them, but He's talking to all of us believers.

These are the disciples who brought this question up and He is using some imagery here to drive home a point. He calls us to become like children. What's a child like? What is He really hitting at here? Become like a child.

Clearly humility, right? Because He goes on to mention that, so we don't have to guess. He wants humility, whoever humbles himself, but He says like a child. So what was the child specifically illustrating? One thing that came to my mind was when you're reading this, who comes to Christ? The disciples.

Who gets called to come to Christ? The child. The child's not going to the Lord. The child's not the one coming and asking who is going to be the greatest.

The child is not that concerned about those realities. And if you're the disciples and the child is called forward, that's got to be one thing in your comparison there is the child, He didn't put Himself forward. He was unconcerned, you could say.

You know, the kids were not all around the famous preacher trying to get an in with him. The children did not care about those realities that often us older people might actually be concerned with. The who's who's.

It kind of reminds you of Jesus saying in regards to the wedding feast, if you sit in the lowest place, so when your host comes in, he may say to you, friend, move up higher. Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. Another way to look at it is this.

A child really had one of the lowest standings in society at that point. I mean, you had slaves and you had children. I mean, in the social structure, a child was not really high up there in society.

And you think about a child. Do parents pick favorites among their children? Most parents are not going to do that. They're not going to pick favorites among their children.

And so if a child is trying to be a favorite with his parents, what would you think about the child? The child would be unaware and insecure to his parents' love. And so here, Christ has the disciples right there and He brings a child. And this child is not out there trying to become the favorite with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The child isn't the one wondering who the greatest is. He is content in his situation. He's not just like a child wanting to be favorites with their parents.

We're not trying to outdo other Christians to be better than them. We're not striving in some way to earn God's love. Our children are content.

They know our love. They're not fighting to be the greatest. They're just thankful they have us, they have time with us.

And notice this. He says here, He makes the issue more than just who's the greatest. He says in v. 3, if you don't become like this, you'll never enter.

What does He mean? If you don't have humility, you're not going to go to heaven? I mean, He's saying that to people who are saying that they're Christians. Christ is really showing how important humility is in this encounter. Pride truly does come before destruction.

I mean, this is a sharp warning, right? Don't live for the approval of man, for position, for pride, for social status, whatever. All of that, it's like Romans 2.8 says, for those who are self-seeking, they will get wrath and fury. But we are those who are seeking honor and glory from God.

And this should really dispel in us any type of fighting for who's first in line, which ultimately prevents us from serving one another. Right? The proud man treats his brethren as competitors or as pawns to be sacrificed for his own greatness. But fellow believers are not to be pawns to be used by us for any type of supposed greatness, but in humility, we're here to serve one another.

Pride, it leads you to defend yourself, justify yourself, deflect your own faults. You get this type of ranking system in your mind. But what does Peter come along and say in 1 Peter 5? He says, clothe yourselves, all of you.

And what type of clothing? Humility. With humility toward one another. Notice that he doesn't just say clothe yourself with humility toward one another.

You can't, I mean, you don't just put clothing on for no purpose, you put it on to go and use it and to go somewhere. And the same way you're putting humility on in order to go to one another. And then Peter warns, for God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

And so without humility, Christ is saying you're not going to enter the kingdom. Without humility, you can't live out everything else that you're going to find in the rest of this chapter. It's going to be an absolute impossibility if self is right there at the forefront.

You're not going to be able to love others. So that's the first situation. Where am I at in my humility? If I don't have that, if there's any type of selfish ambition, any type of competitive nature in my heart towards the brethren, or any type of arrogantly looking down upon others in a way that is sinful, that's got to be turned from or we're not going to be able to treat the brethren in the ways that we're being called to right after that.

We're not even going to hear Christ. If we don't have humility, we're not even going to hear what Christ is going to say here in the rest of this chapter. So, second thing, we already read v. 5-6, but in v. 5-6, you've got two people there.

You've got Mr. Wish-I-Had-Been-Drown because the punishment I have is so much worse than that. That might be shocking that Christ would say it that way, but He does. He says it'd be better to have been drowned.

And then you've got Mr. Welcome-to-Everyone. And we find Him in v. 5. Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me. You've got someone who's welcoming and they're receiving, and you've got someone they're not doing that.

There's something wrong in that individual's life and they're not willing to receive that person. They're being way too critical about something in that individual's life. Think of this warning here.

Have you ever done something you wish you didn't? Yeah, Christ is saying that to make a believer sin and stumble will make you wish you had a concrete beam tied around your neck and that you were drowned. That would have been better than to have faced God and answered for the treatment of His child. Now what's He speaking about? He says don't cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin.

Now, sin, as I mentioned, is not the best translation. The word here is fall away. And it has to do more with the idea of it pushing them towards destruction, them departing from the faith, them committing apostasy, or as one of the lexicons mentions, to cause someone to no longer believe.

So Christ is saying this not in a vacuum. There is conduct the Christian could have that could actually push someone in that direction. Do you even recognize you and I could do something like that and have this charge? It's not like this is a straw man that doesn't exist.

So, could I do anything that Christ views as a factor in someone falling away? According to what he's saying here, I could. This is not teaching a true believer can perish. We know that.

If you test Scripture to Scripture, you know that. And he says in v. 14, it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. But just because of that, we dare not minimize the warning with Christ saying that.

Don't minimize the warning in view of these promises of God. Remember, God uses means. And these people hearing this from Christ in Matthew 8, no doubt affected some change in them where they therefore treated others in a different way and it actually led to those individuals having the opportunity to hear the truth from them rather than be despised, and it kept them going.

If you understand, as one brother said, the doctrine of perseverance to imply that God's people will obtain the crown without struggle, that's a total mistake. The Bible does not teach there's not a struggle. There absolutely is.

As Spurgeon said, as people are tumbling over to hell, we should be there grabbing onto their ankles trying to keep them from going in. That's not an unbiblical illustration of what's before us in the fight for people's souls. You think about that parable of the sowers.

He said when tribulation or persecution arises on the count of the Word, immediately people fall away. One thing I never thought about was this. Some of that persecution is actually coming from false sections of Christianity in America.

They're actually hearing the biblical truth and the persecution that comes is actually sometimes other professing Christians persecuting them for the truth they believe and saying they're too narrow-minded. And that leads them to fall away, not completely, but to go into a set of doctrines that is not really from the Word of God. They didn't have that back then except in Judaism and these other groups.

So what must be avoided? Not accepting and welcoming one another. We have to avoid that. He says, whoever receives one, that is welcomes one.

And remember, when you're welcoming them, you're receiving Christ. Now what do you think he was thinking about here is a specific example. And we actually have it in Mark's account.

So turn real briefly to Mark 9. In Mark 9, you find a parallel account of this and there was a specific situation that happened that led to what Christ says right here. Mark 9:38, John said to Him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name. And we tried to stop him because he was not following us.

So they think what they've done is a good thing. Verse 39, Jesus said, Do not stop him. For no one who does a mighty work in My name will be able to soon afterwards speak evil of Me.

For the one who is not against Us is for Us. For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. And then right on in context, he goes on to say the same thing.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it will be better for him. And what was the exact offense? John, they were trying to prevent someone from going out and casting demons out in

the name of Christ. And their reasoning behind that was, well, he's not one of us.

He's not with us. He was in another group over there. It's like in pride, they viewed themselves as the only ones preventing someone from doing good in the name of Christ.

They were hindering him. It kind of reminds me of the church of England. You can't go out and preach unless you have a license.

Now thankfully, Wesley and Whitefield and the others, they went out and they preached. They didn't let that prevent them. But these guys here, they had this mindset, we're going to make distinctions to push and to segment people away.

He's not following us. He's not with us. We're going to make really hard cuts in our doctrine and we're not going to be able to associate with these individuals over here.

And are there heretics by which we shouldn't associate with? Yes. But we don't want to go too far to the other pendulum. Where we become too narrow in certain views and we can't have fellowship with other people who are true Christians.

See, pride is at the root of this. You really think you've got it all figured out and that the other individuals, they don't. I mean, here, you could have helped someone, right? But your lack of acceptance leads you to not receive them so they couldn't get help from you.

Isn't it good that Priscilla and Aquila, they didn't have that attitude when they ran into Apollos and they sat Apollos down and they talked about him because he only knew the baptism of John. They could have pulled out of that situation and they wouldn't have been able to help them because they lacked a welcoming heart and an attitude. But they didn't lack that there.

So, ask yourself, do you too quickly make a verdict about someone? Or you show your colors right away rather than welcoming them and building this relationship with them. At the quickest error that you see in their thinking, you call it out, and all of a sudden, the door just gets shut to have any type of ongoing communication with that individual to help them. You know, obviously another thing that he's talking about here is the unloving exercising of Christian liberties that leads people to stumble.

It's constantly spoken about through the Bible. And if you think about what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 8, listen to this, by your knowledge, so this guy's got the knowledge. These meats are okay to eat.

This is okay. It's true knowledge. This guy's got the best doctrine.

He's got the better doctrine than the weaker guy. By your knowledge, this weak person is destroyed. Destroyed.

The brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. You see, you shouldn't have done that in front of them to wound the conscience when it's weak.

You should have bore with them for a season and not brought those things up. And not used your liberties out in public that you could eat that meat that had been offered to the idols. Yes, you can eat the meat offered to idols.

But not around that other person who came out of that idolatrous worship. When they see you doing that, it bothers their conscience and it causes them to stumble. Paul said it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

Can we say that? Do you have that heart like Paul? That I am not here to fight for my liberties. If my liberties cause anyone to stumble because of some liberty that I have in some gray area, I am not going to do that around them lest I put some sort of stumbling block in their way. Or is there this mindset of I'm going to fight for my liberties and I don't care if it causes them to stumble or not.

Because I've got the knowledge that it's good to go. I've got the doctrine. By your knowledge, a weak person is destroyed.

That's incredible. Sound knowledge can be misused in arrogance and lead to someone's destruction. It's shocking.

Again, think about people causing people to stumble. One brother I read, he mentioned, in 1 and 2 Kings, the downfall of Israel had many causes. But the author repeatedly returns to the sin of Jeroboam.

He bore a special responsibility as the first king, the one who led the nation into idolatry and wickedness. Surely rulers who lead their nations into sin bear a special responsibility. So you've got pastors today.

You've got kings back then causing people to stumble. Causing them to not be able to hear the truth. Abuse of liberties or segmenting yourself in a way that is too strict where you view all these other people as wrong and you've got it all figured out.

And people recognize that pride. People recognize that sinful, unlike Christ character. And it makes it harder for them to hear the truth from you because of your carnal attitude.

And you miss out on an opportunity to receive them and be a benefit to them. Instead, they're gone. Unable to be helped by you.

Do you see this? You and I could be involved in someone being disillusioned and abandoning the faith. Have you ever been involved in that? We've shared this example before, but that one former pastor in a church up north, he mentioned that when one of their pastors fell into all sorts of immorality and lying, and they already had all this pride and legalism in the church, he said that entire generation of young people abandoned the faith because of all the hypocrisy among all of those leaders in that church. That's a terrifying reality because according to what I'm reading here, if I actually take Christ's words to mean what it means, there's a very strong warning against individuals who treat those people like that.

So if you don't have humility, verses 1-4, you're going to fail right here. So if you have humility, you will welcome one such child in My name. Right? Christ's name.

Receive them. No matter their status. Whether you perceive there's any benefit from you.

The fact is they bear the same Father's name. They're of the Heavenly Father. Receive them as family.

Seek to love them. And even if you think they're not really a true Christian, you know what? You love them. That will come out in enough time.

You don't have to tell them it on the spot the first time you meet them. You can bear with them and see what's going on there rather than being too quick to judge someone. Do you see how serious welcoming one another is? Are your reasons for not welcoming certain individuals, are they really righteous reasons or is it just entirely critical? And Christ warns us here.

And His warning here indicates to us this is a bigger problem than we might realize. The fact it's in the book. This is a problem.

What if we've desensitized ourselves to not recognize it? Mark LaCour in an article, he says this, child abuse in the Kingdom of God is a good way to get fitted with a concrete necktie for eternity. It's not literal children Jesus has in mind, but weak Christians who have little knowledge of their liberties in Christ. Those with oversensitive consciences who can be easily influenced to follow another Christian's actions for which they have no faith.

Those in positions of leadership or strong in convictions are called upon to be stepping stones for the weak, not stumbling blocks. Children shouldn't have to adjust their walk and stride to keep up with adults, but the other way around. And those adults who do that the best are called great in God's Kingdom.

I'm thinking that some of us might need to hear the words that were told to Saul in Acts 9. Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him... what was that voice saying to him? Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Do you realize you can do that as a Christian? You can persecute Christ by wrongly treating His little ones and your conduct and attitude, He takes that as a personal offense against Him. I mean, have you ever persecuted Christ? I'm afraid we might have done it a little more times than we've thought about it. And a thing like your use of liberties is one of the things tied into this.

These are things that can be very subtle. A third thing. Matthew 18.

If you look at v. 7, he says, "...Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it's necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom temptation comes." And then he says, "...if your right hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It's better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

It's better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire." And so here you've got another issue that's still in the context of how you treat one another. You read Matthew 5 and you think, oh, this issue about cutting off limbs and radically amputating things in your life that cause you to sin. Well, it deals with lust there at least part because he mentions if you look at a woman with lust, it's adultery in the heart.

There's nothing about lust here. There's everything about your treatment of other Christians. And so no doubt what was in Christ's mind, if you're hearing all this, the thing He's dealing with, even when He goes on to say in v. 10, see that you do not despise one of these little ones.

Are you welcoming them? Or are you despising them? Are you slighting them? Are you receiving them? Are there things in your life that cause you to not do that? And Jesus is saying you need to cut that out. And you know one of the prime things no doubt He was thinking about in the context there is you need to cut out a proud, arrogant mindset and have humility of the Lord Jesus. Because that's what He started with.

Humility. All these things are going to be interconnected with humility. If you're new here or new to the Bible, this is clearly a metaphor.

Christ is not talking about actually cutting off actual limbs. That will do you no good. It's an internal issue in the heart.

You know, the world, Jesus says it, is full of temptations. The last thing you want to do is add to that. And add to that by treating your brethren in such a way where they're actually victims of temptation because you were an aggressor of it and put them in that situation, especially like that situation of abusing your liberties.

Or even they're out there doing something good like this one man casting demons out in the name of Christ. And this group where they're all we're the ones, we're the ones, they come along and tell the guy to stop. And Christ is saying no, don't do that.

Well, what happened to that guy? Maybe they went home and they stopped doing anything for the Lord because of the comments that they made to him. Who knows how it affected him? The whole proud attitude that I ain't giving up my liberties or you're not in my denomination, so stop preaching. Those attitudes should be radically cut off from our minds.

And the biggest one is pride. Pride. Pride.

You know, Paul lived this reality out. 1 Corinthians, he said, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat lest I make my brother stumble. That is a man who has a heart of not wanting to put anything in anyone's way that could bother their conscience and put them in a situation where they might not make it.

That's love. So, have we learned this lesson? Okay, a fourth thing. There's a lot more that can be said on those verses, but look at v. 10.

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. And there's a conjunction there. There's a reason, an explanation.

Why not to? For I tell you that in heaven, their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountain and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So, it's not the will of My Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

And so here you've got Mr. looks down on everyone or Mr. goes after everyone and imitates the Good Shepherd. Or you've got Mr. Good-riddance and Mr. Good Shepherd. I mean, up to this point, Christ is focused on how we treat one another and not to harm any member.

Here He shows the Father's concern that none of these little ones should perish, yet He has already shown us that we can be the one involved in that happening. But He's also now saying you can be involved in the opposite direction of pulling and bringing them in. And this parable in Luke's account is aimed in response to the Pharisees.

Here, it's aimed in response to the disciples. Why in one place is it towards the Pharisees and why in the other place is it towards the disciples? Could both audiences really need to hear the same message?

Yeah. I dare say it's because sometimes we disciples can have more Pharisee in us than we realize.

Do not despise one of these little ones. Verse 10. The lexicon says this, don't feel contempt for someone or something because it is thought to be bad or without value.

Don't despise, scorn, look down upon. Don't treat with neglect or disregard. Don't slight.

As the word says, don't despise them. We're called to go after those who've sinned, to eagerly do such. He uses the word here in verse 12.

He says, go and search. Search. Think about the news recently.

This young lady, Gabby Petito, was missing. And the news is talking about what? Search parties. We've got to find her.

Then they ended up sadly finding that she had died. Then they're searching for the guy. They're searching.

Now what motivates their searching? Who knows what motivates some of those people searching. Some are motivated by love. Some are motivated, no doubt, by curiosity or the media frenzy or something.

But here Christ is saying that we ought to have the same mindset as the church to go out and search for those people who've gone out from the fold. Specifically here, talking of those who have fallen into some sort of sin. Gone astray.

It says, leave the 99. But you could change it and say someone who's just not been at the meetings recently. Christ is saying, you recognize that they have not been here recently or something? You go after them.

You go find out. Don't draw an assumption. Go after them.

These verses are addressed as disciples to all of us. And when you find and you win them, what does He say in verse 13? What's going to happen? He rejoices. He rejoices.

I mean, you want an occasion for joy? You're going after someone who's strayed? There's an occasion for rejoicing. When they come back. So notice the reason He gives why we shouldn't despise one of these little ones.

Because if you're going to overcome slighting or looking down on a fellow Christian and despising them in some way, what reason would He give? Because that's going to be the motivator. I'm not going to make up a reason. I want to use Christ's reasoning here.

He said, for I tell you. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. Now, that could mean multiple things.

I want to give you two options. I think both of them could be true, or maybe it's both are true at the same time. First is this.

He might mean, despite the Christian being unimpressive to you, to the Lord, the believer is represented in the immediate presence of God by angels. He is protected by ministering spirits and always has direct access to God. Or as John Piper put it, let the magnificence of every unimpressive Christian's entourage

of angels silence our scorn and awaken all at the simplest children of God.

Right? You're kind of despising that person. And then all these black SUVs come up, and they come out, and it's all His bodyguards. And what are you thinking in an earthly perspective? You're thinking, oh my, I should not have treated him like that.

I didn't know that he had that type of position. Guess what? Hebrews says the angels are ministering spirits for you, Christian. Psalm 34 says the angel of the Lord encamps around them that fear Me.

Or a second thing it could mean. You know, Jesus here is dealing with a whole class of people, not some individual. So He might mean upon death, the angels are their spirits after death.

And that the believer after death always sees the face of the Father. You think about Rhoda in Acts 12. They thought it was Peter's angel.

They thought he had died. They thought his angel was there. You think about Matthew 22.

It says in the resurrection we are like angels in heaven. So Warfield says this. Do not despise these little ones, Jesus says, for their destiny is the unshielded glory of the Father's presence.

Now whether that's what it says or not, the fact is that's the truth. In the end, our destiny, brethren, the veil is gone. There's no shield protecting us from the glory of the Lord.

And so same with the little one. They're having that same glory. It's going to come.

And so if I'm sinning against them, if I'm causing them to stumble, if I'm not loving them as I ought, if I'm treating them in a way that is un-Christ-like, I should look at that and realize what they have coming and the importance that they are to the Father. That He even wants even that one who goes astray to go search and to find. I mean, just think, the believer has continued existence in the Father's presence.

This shows how much He cares for us. So why should I think little of them when the Father does not? They always see the face of the Father. Or whether they're always represented before the Father by angels now, or they always see the face then, either way, the point is they really, really matter.

You and I really, really matter to God the Father. I mean, the person you might not rejoice over, the person that you might let go, God's not doing that. Christ rejoices more over them than you when they return.

He's got a love for individual sheep that is staggering, that we can't even get our minds around, that we fall so short of imitating and manifesting to one another. And so just as Christ brought a child to teach such a love, let me do the same. This is a journal entry Thomas Boston had in 1719.

Thomas Boston writes this in his journal. A poor lad came into the house begging, having such a defect in his speech that he pronounced the words father and mother, phoe and meo, at which my wife and others, smiling, desired him to speak over again what he had said. In the meantime, my little daughter stood looking on with tears in her eyes.

And in great distress and at length, she came up to her mother. Her mother was one of those smiling at the child, and said, mother, did God make the laddie? The mother said, yes, my dear, He did. Then the daughter said, will He not then be angry at us for all laughing at the laddie? For my Bible lesson today says, he that mocketh at the poor reproacheth his maker.

She was in mighty concern also to let the boy have some old clothes. Now you might look at that and say, well, the mother was just an innocent smile. Either way, that daughter, she saw the reality.

I've got to love these people. I've got to love this little boy. Not sit here and laugh at his speech problems.

So apparently, that's the type of sensitivity to the will of God that we should have in our treatment of others. So who is wondering that you could specifically go after? Christ goes after the 1%. Right? And that should obviously be our mindset as well.

And this really speaks of our need to love more. I mean, do you recognize that in yourself? Do you look at yourself and recognize you've got a greater need in order to love more as Christ loves? Adonai, I'm judging the missionary to Burma. He got to the point on the mission field where he recognized his standard of love was not high enough.

He had become content with a standard of love that was less than what the Bible teaches. And he didn't recognize it. He was blind to it.

And it records, page 838 in the second volume of the biography, he remarked that he had always felt more or less of an affectionate interest in his brethren. And some of them he had loved very dearly for their personal qualities. But he was now aware that he had never placed his standard of love high enough.

Our attachment to them should be of the most ardent and exalted character. I mean, it would be so in heaven. And we lost immeasurable... we're losing in an immeasurable way by not beginning that now.

Christ said, as I have loved you, so ought you to love one another. That was the precept continually in his mind. And he would often murmur in an unconscious way, as I have loved you, as I have loved you.

And then he'd burst out an exclamation, oh, the love of Christ, the love of Christ. I mean, this is a godly missionary. He gets to this crisis point in his Christian life where he has to be honest with himself that his standard of love was less than that of what is taught in the Word.

And God changed him. The fifth thing here, starting in verse 15, we find Mr. Two afraid to personally confront someone and Mr. Better is open rebuke than hidden love. He says in verse 15, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault.

Between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

If he refuses to listen to the witnesses, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am among them. He's giving assurance to them.

He's with them in the midst of disciplining individuals. And what a contrast, right? Because up to this point, humility, love don't cause people to stumble. And then he's saying confront people.

Confront people. That's a way we should be treating one another too. And in immediate context, what would maybe be the sin you'd be confronting someone to? It'd be the sin of despising another brother or causing someone to stumble.

And get this, there are times people don't confront others about matters they should not overlook, and they don't confront it, and by not bringing it up, you are ultimately actually despising the person by communicating to them, you're not worthy of me pointing this out to you and helping you because I'm too insecure and afraid to say something. He just said, see that you do not despise one of these little ones. And then he just says, if the little one sins against you, go and tell him his fault.

You can help him. And then you don't do it. Rather than talk to him, you go talk to others about it, and you don't go to the individual, and then he doesn't get help.

And you're despising him. And clearly in 15-20 of those verses, the heart there is to win them. So to refuse to offer help through telling them his fault, you might actually allow him to stumble into far worse of a situation based on your neglect.

And things might get far worse years later because you didn't have this desire there. The Father wants you and I to go after His lost sheep. They might be won.

And yeah, church discipline is mentioned here in v. 17 as a loving act that is a part of this. Do you obey v. 15? Your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault. And then he says, between you and him alone.

Because if you don't do the alone part, between you and him alone, you know what ends up happening? If they find out somewhere else that you were talking to someone else about the offense that you did to you and you've not actually gone to the person, now when you actually go to them, you could cause them to stumble to be able to hear and receive what you're going to say because they know you've not just gone to them. You're actually shooting yourself in the foot on trying to help the individual. If the goal is to win and to help them, how serious should we take these realities? So, the sixth thing, the last thing, and we're not going to read all of these verses from v. 21 to the end of the chapter, but you could have here, Mr. I forgave just three times.

That's enough. And you've got Mr. I've forgiven 7,000 times and I'm ready to keep on going in my forgiveness. Peter's words right after this talk about your brother sinning against you, it provokes a question in Peter's mind.

Again, all these deal with how we treat one another. Peter came up and said to Him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Right? He's wanting a number. How often? As many as seven times? I guess, you know, is that a lot? Seven? I put up with someone just seven times? Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times.

And then He goes on to give an illustration of a man who was forgiven an incredible debt and what did that man do? He had someone else who had a very minor debt and did he forgive that man? He did not forgive that man. It even says in verse 28, seizing him, he began to choke that man. That's bad treatment right there.

Horrible treatment. I mean, think, why do we even have forgiveness? Why am I even forgiven right now? Freely by the King. Okay, how can I not then forgive others freely? Because if I just spend the rest of my life forgiving people of all the wrongs they commit to me, it still isn't going to compare to all the wrongs that

I have done to God and His forgiveness of me.

So you never get to a point where it's like, oh, you know, I just passed God in my degree of forgiveness. You know, I just got to be more forgiving than God. That's never going to happen.

You can't beat the cross where He loved His enemies and died for them. And throughout this whole section, the Heavenly Father is mentioned, the Kingdom of Heaven. I mean, this is how God wants us treating one another if we are members of His Kingdom and He wants us manifesting His love to one another.

He wants us living in this way. I mean, do you treat brethren with a forgiving heart or do you hold a grudge? I mean, do you have any unforgiveness in your heart towards anyone? Especially if it's someone based on some sin against you and you've not even actually gone to them and told them their fault. You're now allowing that bitterness to rot your soul.

I mean, think, are you patient? He says right here in v. 26, the servant fell on his knees imploring Me, have patience with me. And you know, v. 27, the Master had pity and forgave him. But then the same guy, did he have patience on the other guy? No, he choked him.

He choked him. And his fellow servant asked for patience. Are you patient? Are you patient? Are you long-suffering or are you short-suffering? Do you only suffer a short time with individuals? I mean, how often we're impatient with others and thus we're impatient to Christ because how we treat the others, Christ takes that treatment as personally towards Him.

So you're ultimately being impatient towards the One who is perfectly patient, the Lord Jesus Christ. J.L. Frazier, missionary to the Lisu, he said he was assailed at times by the uprising of what he calls a fierce impatience with a very trying helper. A man whom he endured not a little rudeness, and the man was ineffective.

He was usually able to control any manifestation of annoyance, but the inward distress left him with a deep sense of defeat. He did not know by experience the meaning of victory in Christ, which is so much more than outward self-control. How can they be so calm and pleasant? exclaimed a young Quakerist, seeing the way an older lady responded to great annoyance.

And the lady said, ah, my dear, was the quick reply, thee doesn't know how much I boil inside. It was just that boiling inside from which Frazier sought deliverance. He sought and he found it in the blessed fact, I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.

The indwelling Christ is my successful weapon against all sin was increasingly his experience in the details of everyday life. You can be like that. You can be like Frazier.

Oh, outwardly, I don't manifest any sort of impatience, but inwardly I'm boiling. Don't be content to boil. Find the power by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to overcome.

You know, you see here that one guy began to choke the person. Frazier was confessing that inwardly he began to choke the person. I mean, let's call it what it is, right? The Proverbs say a harsh word is what? It's like thrusting a man through with a sword.

If I'm sinfully harsh towards someone, the Bible says I just took a sword and I thrust it in them multiple times. It's plural. Sword thrust.

Do I view the harsh speech like that? That's what the Bible says. The Bible's my standard. So, how are you treating Christ? You don't know how you're treating Christ? How do you treat your brothers and sisters? How are you treating Christ? Do you want to know how you treat Christ? How are you treating the least of these? That's how you're treating Christ.

And Christ takes that treatment personally. There's nothing by which to stick our heads in the sand and say, nah, nah, nah, nah, and ignore. We want to face the reality of the areas in our life that we need to grow in Christ-like love and care for His little ones.

This is a marvelous privilege to be adopted. It's a marvelous privilege to be like a little child and not really care about social status and standing. It's a marvelous privilege to cut things off that cause my brother or sister to sin or to stumble and to cut attitudes out and to be more holy out of love for them.

It's a marvelous privilege to not despise the least of these, but go after them and seek to win them. It's a marvelous privilege to have the blessing of actually going to someone who sins against me and talking to them about it. And it all ends up good and makes our relationship all the deeper, not further apart.

It's a marvelous privilege to go and have the opportunity to forgive others when they offend thee. Because it makes me think about Christ and how much He forgave me. Are you an instrument of someone being lost or being found? Do you recognize the seriousness of abusing your liberties and thus leading one to stumble? Do you realize the seriousness of despising a believer in your heart? Do you see the seriousness of receiving God's patience and then you're not patient with others? Do you see your Father's care for you? If you really do, that right there, the love of God, it's the reason that we should turn from any types of sins in our treatments of others.

And the chapter's loaded with references to our Heavenly Father. And what He has just done with the disciples in this chapter is He had a family meeting with His children. He grabbed them all together and He's letting them know, look, there's some things wrong in the house.

That treatment of that guy out there casting out demons. This is what you should have done. This is off.

This is off. He's trying to help them. So even in these very teachings, it shows the Lord's love for us that He points things out in our lives by which we need to grow.

And we need God's help. It means specifically v. 10, see that you do not despise one of the least of these. Don't forget that verse.

Is there anything in me where I despise a fellow Christian? That should not be viewed as some small sin. Oh, that's a respectable sin. No, no, no.

Because you despise them, you'll lead them to stumble, and it would be better if you had a concrete necktie and were drowned. That's Christ's words. So where is this happening in your heart and your life? Maybe you don't recognize it.

Maybe you're like Addernam Judson and your standard of love is not where it should be. It got off on its calibration. It's saying you're at the right standard, but you recalibrate it and you find out, oh man, I'm like

way down here.

I thought I was up here. Let's pray. Father, Lord, we thank You for Your incredible, marvelous love for us.

Lord, the forgiveness that You've had for us. Lord, if anyone should have been choked, it was us. Lord, we were Your enemies.

Lord, going at You with the sword, and rather than choking us and putting us to death, You put Your Son forward and You slaughtered Him as a sacrifice. Lord, You've forgiven us. Lord, I pray, Lord, help our love abound.

Lord, as Paul prayed, I pray that for our church. Lord, help our love abound more and more with knowledge and discernment in order that we might approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Lord, we want that.

Lord, we want to be pure and blameless. Lord, we want to have the right amount of knowledge and discernment and love. Lord, we want all those things together, Lord, even in correcting people.

And Lord, give us the right love going after people. Lord, who are the people that have fallen through the cracks? Lord, that we're trying to go after. Lord, I pray, Father, that You would bring people back, that we could see this reality of certain people who've gone into sin or the apathy or something's happened internally in them, Lord, that You would work in their heart.

Please, Lord, we want to love more. Help us. Lord, if there's ways that we're failing to love and we do not realize it, Lord, I pray that You would show us that.

Make us like Christ. Lord, we ask You that we might grow. Lord, help us.

In Christ's name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/0WdrVEdzY7Y.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-jennings/how-do-you-treat-fellow-christians/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net