

Matthew 18:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jesus establishes church discipline procedure: private confrontation first. The phrase 'if thy brother shall trespass against thee' indicates personal offense within the faith community. Going 'between thee and him alone' protects the offender's reputation while addressing sin. The goal is restoration—'thou hast gained thy brother'—not punishment or public humiliation. Reformed church polity takes Matthew 18 as foundational for discipline, emphasizing reconciliation as the purpose and discretion as the method.

Historical Context

Jewish tradition had formal processes for addressing disputes (Leviticus 19:17). Jesus adapts this into Christian community practice. The emphasis on private resolution before public action reflects biblical wisdom (Proverbs 25:9-10). Early church practice followed these steps, as seen in Paul's letters addressing church conflicts.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do you typically respond to personal offenses—avoidance, gossip, or biblical confrontation?
2. What fears prevent you from pursuing private reconciliation?
3. How can you make restoration the goal when addressing others' sins?

Interlinear Text

ἐάν δὲ ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς σὲ ὁ ἀδελφόν σου·
if **Moreover** **shall trespass** **against** **thee** ^{G3588} **brother** **thee**
G1437 G1161 G264 G1519 G4571 G80 G4675

ὑπάγε καὶ ἔλεγξον αὐτοῦ μεταξὺ σου· καὶ αὐτοῦ
go **and** **his fault** **him** **between** **thee** **and** **him**
G5217 G2532 G1651 G846 G3342 G4675 G2532 G846

μόνου ἐάν σου· ἀκούσῃ ἐκέρδης τὸν ἀδελφόν σου·
alone **if** **thee** **he shall hear** **thou hast gained** ^{G3588} **brother** **thee**
G3441 G1437 G4675 G191 G2770 G80 G4675

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 19:17 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

Colossians 3:13 (Parallel theme): Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Galatians 6:1 (Parallel theme): 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.

2 Thessalonians 3:15 (Parallel theme): Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Matthew 18:35 (Parallel theme): So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Psalms 141:5 (Parallel theme): Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

Romans 12:21 (Parallel theme): Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Proverbs 11:30 (Parallel theme): The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

1 Peter 3:1 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;