

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	ό	ἀδελφόν	σου·
if	Moreover	shall trespass	against	thee	G3588	brother	thee
G1437	G1161	G264	G1519	G4571		G80	G4675
ὑπαγε	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	ἔκέρδησας	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;