

“Confronting Sin in the Church” (Matthew 18:15–20)

Introduction: The Theme of Seeking Wandering Believers (verses 12–14)

Big Idea: The church has heavenly authority to restore sinning brothers and exclude impenitent sinners.

I. The Process of Restoration or Exclusion (verses 15–17)

A. Private, One-on-One Confrontation (verse 15)

Luke 17:1–4; Matthew 5:23–24

B. A Second Confrontation with Witnesses (verse 16)

Deuteronomy 17:2–7; 19:15; 2 Corinthians 12:20–13:3; 1 Timothy 5:19–21

C. A Final, Congregational Confrontation (verse 17a)

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11–15

D. Excommunication of the Impenitent Sinner (verse 17b)

1 Corinthians 5:1–13; Titus 3:9–11; 2 John 7–11; Deut. 17:7, 12–13; 13:1–5; 21:18–21; 22:13–15, 20–24

Two opposite and inappropriate reactions:

Reaction #1: I’m so glad that we live under God’s grace rather than God’s law. Church discipline is one thing, but that death penalty in Israel was so harsh!

Reaction #2: Excommunication is so harsh and judgmental! What right have we to judge who belongs to Jesus and who doesn’t?! How dare we imply that some people who call themselves Christians are on their way to hell?!

The Goal of Restoration Realized: 2 Corinthians 2:4–11

II. The Authority for Restoration or Exclusion (verses 18–20)

A. The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (verse 18)

Matthew 16:18–19; John 20:21–23

B. The Assurance of the Father’s Backing (verse 19)

C. The Power of the Lord Christ (verse 20)

1 Corinthians 5:4–5

Closing Applications

- 1) Permissive tolerance is not Christian love.
Proverbs 27:5–6; Ephesians 4:15–16; Galatians 6:1
- 2) Sin can only be defined and proved by God’s law.
1 John 3:4; Romans 2:12–16; 3:19–20; 8:3–4; 13:8–10
- 3) In regard to demonstrable sin, the entire congregation is responsible and competent to judge between brothers.
1 Corinthians 6:1–6
- 4) Church membership and communion are of the utmost importance and worth.
- 5) To ignore church authority is to ignore the living God and his kingdom.