



Who is the Greatest in the Kingdom? (Part 3)

Series: Matthew: The King and His Kingdom

Matthew 18:10-20

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Introduction and Recap

This is one of the richest and most dense passages of Scripture ever. Here in this chapter, we have heard Jesus as He describes what the flock of God should look like, how we are to relate to one another, and how much God loves and delights in His people. They are words to the church first. I cannot re-preach everything that I have already preached, but I want to trace quickly the flow of Matthew 18 as we pick it up again this morning in verse 12 so we can keep everything in the proper context and relationship.

In verses 1-4, Jesus made clear that there is no room for pride, for arrogance, for self-promotion and exalting one's self over others in the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, people like that won't even see the Kingdom of Heaven. And in verses 5-7, Jesus explains why. There is no room for prideful and contentious people because the heart of Kingdom people, of Christ's people, is receiving one another-- taking someone in, deliberately joining someone to yourself, welcoming someone with an open heart in kindness and with tenderness with sincere care for their well-being and folding your life into theirs. There is a unity and closeness that we are to pursue because in receiving one another in Christ, we receive Christ and honor Christ Himself. It's a measure of the reality of our devotion to Christ.

He goes on to explain that welcoming one another leaves no room for encouraging one another into sin. A person who is responsible for leading a child of God into sin is committing a grave offense not only against that person but also against Christ Himself. Instead we are to receive one another, to spur one another on to holiness, to lead one another into a more faithful walk with Christ. Then in verse 8-9, Jesus explains how we must make war against the sin that divides us from one another, the sin that is contrary to Christ's Lordship, the sin that fractures

our fellowship with Christ and with one another. The pursuit of holiness is an expression of obedience and love to God, but also an expression of love for your brothers and sisters in Christ -- desiring purity individually for the sake of the blessing and unity of the body as a whole. Then in verse 10, Jesus explains the motivation behind all that He is saying, that God treasures His people and loves them deeply. He gives us that curious picture of angels who are before Him, watching His face so that when He shows the slightest concern over His little ones, they can be dispatched from heaven in a moment to come to minister to His own children. The children of God have His full attention and His full affection. It is a testimony to the depth with which God loves His own. It is the heart behind everything that Christ has said so far in Matthew 18. And He presses that truth home today and calls us to that same kind of love for His people. Pick it up in verse 12 and look with me at the parable of

The Shepherd and the Sheep (v. 12-14) Look at what Jesus says starting in verse 12: "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 mountains 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 is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." (Matthew 18:12--14, ESV) Jesus paints a beautiful picture of God's commitment to His people, of His redeeming and sustaining and pursuing love. In this parable we are the sheep and God the Father is the shepherd and there are four interconnected truths that Jesus puts forth here.

First, we see that God cares for us individually. This parable pictures God as the shepherd, a shepherd who cares for and who knows His sheep individually. They are not just a nameless, faceless bunch, but God knows and cares for us individually. If you are a believer, it is because God called you individually because He loves you with an eternal love and when you heard Him call you, you turned from sin and trusting in yourself and your trusted in Him instead. Yes, you are part of a greater whole, but God knows you individually so that He takes notice when even one has wandered. He is mighty God, the great God, the Sovereign God, the Glorious One and the God above all others. He reigns in heaven and in earth. He is the creating, sustaining God, who operates the entirety of the universe in all of its vast and awesome complexity but who loves each of His precious sheep individually and that is why we see

Second, God seeks us when we stray. The wandering sheep that Jesus is speaking of is the believer who wanders away from intimate fellowship with the Shepherd and with the flock, the one who walks away from consistent obedience to God. It is because God loves us with a

steadfast and faithful love that He pursues when we go astray, when we sin. And God uses a variety of means to pursue us —the conviction of the Holy Spirit; the Word of God preached and applied to our lives; brothers and sisters in Christ who will speak the truth in love and true concern and who will seek to turn us back from sin; circumstances, trials, sickness, greater and greater degrees of discipline. God will use all of this and more to bring us back to the fold.

Third, God rejoices over our repentance. God rejoices when His people repent and return to Him. You know, the Greeks believed that God could not have real emotions because if He did and if we could in some way affect His emotions -- whether bringing Him joy or causing Him sorrow -- that we would have control over Him. But Scripture is clear that God grieves over sin and He rejoices when the sinner is reclaimed. That is the picture of the shepherd, of God, in this parable: And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

That does not mean that the Father is less than delighted over the disciples who are safe in the fold, nor that He does not rejoice over those who do not go astray. The point is that there is a special and peculiar joy over bringing one that has strayed safely back into the fold. The joy of finding that straying one is so great because of God's unfathomable love for His people. Last, in this parable, we are to see

God will never let one of His sheep perish. Jesus says: So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. In sending His Son into this world to give His life as a ransom for many, In the pouring out of Christ's blood, God has redeemed and formed His flock, and God will not allow any to go fully and finally astray, He will not allow His Son's blood to be spilt in vain. That is not an encouragement to live carelessly or to play with sin, to abuse grace and treat God's kindness as a safety net. That is not the idea at all. But it is instead a great comfort to know that God's love for His people is steadfast and sure and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ -- not even our sin. God's grace is greater and more powerful. It is a conquering and unrelenting love that will ultimately keep His people safe. Again, like Jesus said in John 10: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (John 10:27-30, ESV) This is great love, great commitment, great security – do you see it?

It is not God's will that any of His little ones, any of His children, any of His sheep should perish. As we said before, God uses a variety of means to ensure that they don't and one of the means is what Jesus describes for us next. God uses the means of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ acting in love and shepherding one another's souls. Jesus is showing us just how important it is that we join God in His love and care for the flock. We are to be sheep that love the other sheep. That is the heart of these next verses that we are looking at this morning. Jesus describes what it looks like to be your brother's keeper in verses 15-17.

I Am My Brother's Keeper (v. 15-17) Read this with me starting 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 them, 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." (Matthew 18:15–17, ESV)

Now as we look specifically at these verses, let me make a few comments. First, this command from Christ is one of the most loving commands He could possibly give to us. It comes from a heart of love that desires holiness and righteousness in His flock and the divine blessing that comes with that, a heart of love that cannot stand to see His people mired in sin and living below their position as a child of God, a heart of love that longs for good for His sheep and hates the destructiveness that sin always brings, a heart of love that desires to see His children grow in true love for one another and true care for each other's soul and not remain distant from one another, a love that demands that sin no longer have dominion over His people but that it be increasingly put to death, a love that desires and commands the unity in the people of God that He died to create, and a love that desires the purity and protection of His flock from habitual sin but also from false brothers and sisters who would commit habitual sin without repentance. This command is rooted in love and should be lovingly applied.

Second, we have to remember that Christians are sinners – saved sinners, redeemed sinners, sinners being sanctified, saints set apart to God – but sinners nonetheless. That is not a denial of the power or the work of the gospel. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18, ESV) But this process of

sanctification is just that – a process. Certainly there is to be a radical difference between the church and the world. We are children of God, redeemed by His shed blood, justified by faith in Christ, indwelt with the Holy Spirit and set apart to God as His own. We worship God, we serve God, we desire to be obedient to God and keep His word, but Christians are still sinners and when sinners spend time with other sinner, they sin against one another. Sin and offenses will occur in the body of Christ. There is no escaping this. What should set a Christian apart from the world is not that we do not sin, but that when we do sin we hate it. It grieves our hearts not merely for the consequences of that sin but because that sin grieves God, harms others, betrays the gospel and betrays Christ's love. Our sins ought to make us hate sin, truly be remorseful and repentant, quick to admit our sin and eager to repudiate it and put on obedience out of love for Christ. This text presupposes that this is the true heart of God's people – to sin but also to properly respond to correction.

Third, the heart and the spirit of this instruction is God's desire to preserve and protect His little ones and the recovering of one of His flock that has gone astray. He is not laying down legal procedures to follow to ensure that everyone gets the same treatment. Nor does He desire that His people become busybodies, trying to find a sin under every rock. This text is not to be used as a hammer to unnecessarily bludgeon other Christians who do not measure up to your standard. Nor is the intention of this text to give someone a loophole to continue in sinful behavior and escape correction because someone "didn't follow Matthew 18". Neither is this meant to turn us into the sin police, looking under every rock for every possible offense or infraction of the law, parsing every word and scrupulously trying to ferret out every apparent inconsistency. Christ's point is not to create little Pharisees. That misses the entire spirit of this text. What Jesus is doing is this: He is a shepherd making sure that His sheep learn to care for one another like He does. He is expressing here the most gracious, most merciful, and most compassionate way of caring for one another's soul and steering one another away from sin.

Fourth, this text does not allow for lovelessly ignoring sin in someone's life because it was not a sin specifically against you. As we have seen, sin does not occur in a vacuum but affects the whole body to one degree or another because we are, in the words of Ephesians 2:19-22 -- no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22, ESV) This command, therefore, encompasses both the sins that can be explicitly defined as being against you, like – you lied to me – and sins that though they are

not explicitly against you, still affect the corporate body – like sexual immorality. To do nothing is the exact opposite of the Christ’s command. It is to demonstrate a shocking lack of love and is the worst kind of hypocrisy and soul hatred. This is an issue of love and is of great importance -- “If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20, ESV)

Last, this is probably one of the least kept commands in the Word of God and when it is ignored it gives place to a whole host of other sins in those who ignore it: gossip that masquerades as pseudo-pious concern, slander and inflammatory speech, bitterness, distrust, broken relationships, wrecked friendships, division, embarrassment to the cause of Christ and a practical denial of the gospel. All this results in brothers and sisters who are left in sin and going astray, and destroys the unity of the body of Christ, being an horrific display of lovelessness and the despising of the value and the worth of the flock of God to God Himself. So this command is important and vital, important and vital to loving and caring for one another in the flock of God. So let’s walk through this text and see what it says and considering the principles behind it. How are we to relate to one another and care for one another in this way?

Jesus 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.” (Matthew 18:15, ESV) This is a pretty simple and straightforward command. What do we see here? What do we need to keep in mind? Well, first notice that Jesus calls the person “your brother” or by implication “your sister”. If your brother sins against you... That is important to keep in mind. This person is not your enemy, but your brother or your sister and you are to have that kind of love for them. Jesus reminds us that we are dealing with our brothers and sisters because our tendency, especially when we are offended, is to view one another not as family, but as an outsider or an adversary. But we are family and Jesus wants us to regard each other as such.

Second, notice that Jesus says: If your brother sins against you...In other words, part of what Jesus is saying is to make sure that this is really an issue of sin and of sin that needs to be confronted. If the action or attitude is not clearly identifiable as sin -- if it just something that annoys you or is not what you would do, if it is some minor flaw or something that doesn’t meet your personal standards, if it is something that is an issue of maturity, if it is just hurt feelings, or is a decision that you don’t like, a matter of personal conviction perhaps, whatever

– if it is not a sin, then the appropriate response is simply to bear with your brother or sister and to keep your mouth shut about it. You may have an opinion but you do not have the right to express it in a sinful way.

But if it is clearly identifiable as a sin, what then? Be wise. Obviously Jesus is not saying that we need to confront every single sin that another brother or sister commits. Right? Peter tells the church in 1 Peter 4:8: “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8, ESV) The idea is this. Where love abounds in a church or in a home or in a relationship, many offenses are readily overlooked and forgotten. Some offenses are better overlooked, giving room for growth and for the working out of salvation in fear and trembling, trusting Christ to deal with those things as by His Spirit He is sanctifying your brother or sister in Christ. Jesus did not confront every single sin in His disciples. Imagine how the gospels would read if He did. As I have said before, cover what you can and confront what you must, but how do we know whether to cover someone’s sin or to confront it?

Think about the big picture and what best for them and for the church. When we perceive that someone is engaged in a practice that is in clear disobedience to God's Word, that is clearly identifiable as sin from Scripture, one that brings reproach on the gospel and which causes real harm to himself or to others around him, something that causes division or factions, when it is something that is clearly ruining their growth in Christ or causing them to go astray from the flock of God, then it something that must be dealt with as Jesus commands right here.

Jesus says: go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. Jesus commands us to go to that person, not sit and sulk or act cold and withdrawn hoping they notice you are offended, not to go and get your posse together and gossip about it, not try to drum up support against that person or assassinate their character – but go to them. That is not to say that in a particularly difficult situation that you cannot seek counsel from a pastor or from someone that is more spiritually mature, but be real and be careful. There is a very fine line between seeking counsel and gossip and too often that line gets crossed.

If you are convinced this needs confronting, you are to go to that person and when you go, remember the words of Christ in Matthew 7: “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your

brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:3–5, ESV)

Examine yourself and make sure your heart is clean and your conscience is clear before God in this matter. Be sure that you have not simply glossed over your own sin and especially regarding the sin that you are going to confront. In prayer, ensure that your motives are pure – we'll talk more about that in a moment. Pray for the person that you are going to, to be prepared to receive and pray that they will be honest and repentant. This will allow you to go in humility and in the fear of the Lord, as an instrument of His grace.

Go and tell him his fault...that is, show your brother his sin from the Word of God. Define things biblically. It is Scripture alone that is: "breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16–17, ESV) – not your feelings and thoughts. We are not to present out personal preference for behavior and call upon someone to obey. We are bound to the Word of God. You can talk about how sin affects that person or the whole church, but you are to present your case from Scripture, and do it between you and him alone. In other words, be discreet. Speak in private. Go to them, in love and genuineness with a heart that says: "I love you, I care about you. I want to help you. It seems to me that you did this or said that, that you are engaging in this or in that. This is what Scripture says and I am seeing this sin or pattern of sin in you. Is it true? Did I miss something? Can you explain what happened?" It should be done in great love, humility, and care, in the same manner in which you would want someone to approach you if you were involved in sin.

Now here's the deal. The possibility exists that when you go to see a brother or sister in Christ about what you believe to be a sin, that you could be wrong. It is quite possible that you could be incorrect in your assessment, thinking that your brother or sister is in sin when, in fact, you have not correctly interpreted the situation. If that is the case, then have the humility to admit that you were wrong and that's the end of it.

But if it is truly sin and you show it to them from Scripture, Jesus says: If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. Praise God. If He listens and repents of His sin, and asks your forgiveness, you have gained your brother. Now that may not happen immediately, so you

have to give it a little time, but if he or she repents, you have won him back and that is the goal of the whole thing. This is the motive that needs to drive us. The motive is never to get your pound of flesh from someone or to nail them to the wall and be a prosecuting attorney and win your case. The motive is never to take it out on someone for past grievances, or to unload on someone. There is not room for vengeance, malice, or anger disguised as spirituality. No, the goal, the purpose, the motive is that your brother or sister not be hindered in their spiritual growth but encouraged and exhorted, they not become hardened in sin but that their hearts be soft to spiritual correction, to the word of God and to the leading of the Holy Spirit; that they not go astray but be brought into the safety of the flock. The goal is winning your brother or winning your sister, being reconciled to them, restoring them to fruitfulness in Christ; in gentleness, patience, humility, and genuine concern for their spiritual well-being to see God glorified and your brother or sister made well and right and restored to the joy and fellowship of Christ. That is the goal, the heart of this whole thing. If your brother repents, if you have won back the wandering brother, that is the end of the matter and it need never be mentioned again. You don't need to go tell people that you talked to someone about their sin and called them to repentance and they did. No one but you, that brother, and God ever needs to know anything about it. But what if your brother doesn't respond? Then what?

Jesus tells us: "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." (Matthew 18:16, ESV) If your brother or sister refuses to repent, you take 2 or 3 witnesses with you. Now why does Jesus say this? Well, first it makes you ask the question, "Is this that serious?" Would two other people of sound mind consider this to be a significant sin issue or am I wrong in this and should I simply leave this alone? It is a built-in check of sorts. But more than that, in the case of real sin that needs confronted, sometimes it is the added admonition of one or two others that God will use to bring the sinning brother or sister to repentance. Last, if the sinning brother or sister refuses to hear the combined warning and exhortation to repent of the 2 or 3, then they serve as a witness to every word spoken.

Now, what if the sinning brother or sister responds to the combined admonition, to the 2 or 3. What if the response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit is repentance and brokenness over sin and before the Lord? Then you have won your brother and the issue is settled. But what if, again, the brother or sister does not receive correction?

Jesus tells us: "If he refuses to listen to them, 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." (Matthew 18:17, ESV)

Because God has appointed elders to watch over and to protect and shepherd His church, the matter is to be brought first to them. The elders need to meet with the unrepentant brother or sister in Christ and with the witnesses and the elders are to lovingly, graciously, patiently, and firmly call the sinning brother or sister to repentance. That is the first step to telling it to the church because it honors the role and responsibility of properly appointed church leaders.

Perhaps the brother or sister will have their eyes opened to the seriousness of their sin and will repent. If they do, praise God, he or she has been won back to the Lord and the restoration of that wandering brother or sister can start. But if repentance is absent, then it is the duty of the leaders to inform the church family as a whole. The sin must be made public and the church family, as a whole, must now call this individual to repentance. If the person responds in repentance, praise God, the wandering sheep has been restored to the fold. The matter is over and the healing process can begin.

But if, as sadly sometimes happens, the sinning person refuses to hear even the church, then there is one more step that must be taken. It changes at that point from being a matter of calling a sinning brother or sister to repentance; and now becomes a matter of protecting the spiritual health and moral purity of the church body. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. They are to be considered as being outside of the family of God and removed from the fellowship of the church body. It is not that we are to hate them or to desire their destruction, but for the sake of the church and for the sake of the church's well-being, that person must be put outside of the camp. It is a hard, hard thing to do. It does not mean that we cease to love them but instead that we see them as a prospect for evangelism that needs to be won to Christ because they give evidence that they lack saving faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to repent of serious sin. We should pursue them with the gospel and if they repent and come to faith in Christ, with great joy they should be warmly forgiven and welcomed into the flock of God.

This all seems kind of overwhelming, but you can understand the heart behind this command and instruction from Jesus. You can see how this command, properly followed contributes to the well-being of the flock of God. Properly carried out with the right motive, this confronting and pursuing one another leads to the growth of love and faith and joy in the body of Christ, creating a real heart for one another that goes beyond superficial niceties to true love and care for the soul as we obey the commands of Hebrews 3:13: "But exhort one another every day, as

long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”
(Hebrews 3:13, ESV)

It leads to holiness and Christlikeness across the entire face of the church as logs are removed from eyes and sins are forsaken and brothers and sisters are steered away from sin and to the Savior. It contributes to unity. If this command is faithfully and humbly obeyed, it leaves not room for the destructive wickedness of gossip under the guise of concern, for slander and assumption under the guise of intuition, or for the building up of bitterness left undealt with that spews forth in a divisive torrent of sin by forcing us to deal with sin as it comes instead of allowing it to build up. Properly done this cultivates a heart that for Christ and for one another.

It protects the body, identifying the true believer and exposing the false professor, protecting the purity and the well-being and health of the visible church. And it makes the reconciliation that has been accomplished between us by Christ on the cross to be lived out in practice in our midst. It requires us to apply the gospel interpersonally for the sake of others. As James wrote: “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19–20, ESV)

This is so important and Jesus gives to His church three great encouragements in carrying out His commands here.

Three Encouragements (v. 18-20) Look in verse 18: “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.” (Matthew 18:18, ESV) We have seen this language before, haven’t we? Literally what this says is that “whatever you bind on earth has already been bound in heaven and what you loose on earth has already been loosed in heaven.” The point is that as we faithfully follow these commands of the Lord in properly dealing with one another’s sin, we can be assured that whatever the result, it will be in keeping with the will of God – we will be acting in accordance with what has already been declared in heaven. Some will be freed of their sin and others will remain bound but all in accordance with decree of heaven as we follow the Word of God. Then Jesus says:

“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.” (Matthew 18:19, ESV) Keep this in context. He is not just saying if a couple of you agree on anything you can ask for it and get it. We need to understand this in the context of what has just been said. The idea is that when two brothers come together in concern over a sinning brother who has wandered away, and when they ask for God’s work in their life and pray for God’s wisdom and discernment regarding the state of that sinning brother’s heart, and they pray for the protection of the church family and for the work of God to bring an erring brother back to the fold, that God will hear because God has a Father’s heart for His church. And last Jesus says:

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”” (Matthew 18:20, ESV) This is not a word about scarcely attended prayer meetings. The promise here is not only that Christ is present when we are gathered in His name. That is true. But the primary context for this promise is that Jesus promises to be in the midst of us when as His disciples, two or three gather in the pursuit of a wandering Christian, of the brother or sister going astray. Jesus is promising: “I will be with you in this.” Though it is hard, though it is trying, though it can be difficult, He will be with us in it. He will guide us, strengthen us, lead us to make the right decisions, giving us the right attitude of heart, and laboring through us to reach the erring brother or sister.

This instruction is such a wonderful expression of God’s love and care for his church. As I said earlier, and I am just going to quote it -- this command from Christ is one of the most loving commands He could possibly give to us. It comes from a heart of love that desires holiness and righteousness in His flock and the divine blessing that comes with that, a heart of love that cannot stand to see His people mired in sin and living below their position as a child of God, a heart of love that longs for good for His sheep and hates the destructiveness that sin always brings, a heart of love that desires to see His children grow in true love for one another and true care for each other’s soul and not remain distant from one another, a love that demands that sin no longer have dominion over His people but that it be increasingly put to death, a love that desires and commands the unity in the people of God that He died to create, and a love that desires the purity and protection of His flock from habitual sin but also from false brothers and sisters who would commit habitual sin without repentance.

That being the case, why do we fail so often to do what Matthew 18 clearly commands? Sometimes, it is because we simply don't care about pursuing holiness ourselves. As John MacArthur explained, "A believer who is not concerned about his own purity will have no obedient willingness or righteous zeal to help protect the purity of the church" Sometimes we like to hold on to an offense, to use it as fuel for our own sin or to have it in reserve if anyone ever confronts us. Sometimes, it is self-preservation. To do this is awkward. We want to be liked. Sometimes we don't confront sin because we would rather complain than do anything about it. Sometimes it is because we simply don't care enough to do it. But every time, it is because we are failing to love one another as Christ loves His church. Loving the church means embracing the responsibility for being our brother's and sister's keeper, for investing in one another's life even when it is messy, for pursuing holiness and exhorting one another to do the same.

The question is this: Do we love Christ, love His church and love one another enough to live out His heart for us as His people? I pray that we do and will grow to love Christ and love His church and love one another more and more.

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