

**Articles and Sermons :: Matt. 18:19 - If two of you agree on earth about anything**

Matt. 18:19 - If two of you agree on earth about anything - posted by theopenlife, on: 2010/5/25 23:52

I wrote the following tonight in response to a friend who asked what Matthew 18:19 means. What do you think?

"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."

No doubt, this verse has been troubling people for ages. However there is a common received opinion amongst the writers I am familiar with, consistent to my knowledge amongst the Continental Reformers and English Divines, and which I think does the text most justice.

The context, from which the verse is not to be isolated, deals with the subject of Church discipline. In particular, elders and their disciples are told that "whatsoever is bound on earth is bound in heaven," and likewise, "whatsoever is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven."

This process of Church discipline is referred to as "binding" and "loosing" for a very simple but profound reason. Persons with true faith in Christ are loosed from the condemning bonds of sin under the Law. Of course, we cannot know perfectly whether persons are actually regenerate, but elders have a duty to protect the flock of God and to alert men of grave hypocrisy. To do this effectively, they are granted authority to publicly declare who the bible, and thus God, regards as either loose or bound.

Public discipline underlines the fact that elders exercise the office of Prophet. To the extent that their teachings accord with Scripture, they speak with the delegated and real authority of God before the Church. For instance, in baptizing and granting communion, pastors declare publicly their confidence in the profession of particular church members. When an elder grants baptism or communion, he says in essence, "By the authority granted to me, I pronounce this person a member of the Church of Christ, loosed from the Law as a covenant of Works, and free in faith for salvation. Regard this man or woman as your fellow in Christ." This has a powerful effect on strengthening the faith of the church members, increasing love, and establishing the boundaries of the Church community.

However, if a member continues defiantly in sin after having been received into fellowship, other members and unbelievers may become confused, wondering, "is this the regular behavior of Christians?" This is why it is necessary for the elders to have authority to publicly draw the bounds again, to declare the gravity of the situation with a line around the Church, if you will.

Of course, biblical excommunication does not "un-save" a person, nor does it prove conclusively that they were unregenerate, but it does make a powerful statement: God wants the Church to understand and respond to the person as if they were "bound" in sin and strangers to salvation. In the words of Paul, "treat them as tax collectors."

This passage helps us to see that when ruling elders pass discipline upon a professing Christian in accordance with scripture, their act should not be regarded as merely human but as reflecting the spiritual reality of God's judgment upon that person. When elders say, "in the name of Christ we are turning this person over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh," the congregation should take that for exactly what has happened. Not mere show or opinion, but an act of God through His appointed representatives. No questions, no doubting, so long as everything is done according to scripture. Their words reveal on earth what is already a reality in the spiritual realm.

Now, finally, to relate this to verse 19, "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."

This sort of extreme discipline should never rest in the hands of one person alone, nor should it be done without due prayer. It is not uncommon for numerous members to be offended at the ruling of elders, especially in discipline. Flocks have been divided and wounded. This is made much worse when a congregation knows that one elder ruled alone, or that the decision was hasty and without prayer. Because of this, some elders have been cowed away from publicly disciplining at all.

For these reasons, elders are here told that when presenting declarations of excommunication to the body, they are to act in accord with one another and only after earnest prayers for the wisdom and blessing of God. Providing these are done, elders are assured that God will preserve the Church from corruption. The lines will be drawn in a way that is consistent with scripture and produces greatest harmony in the fellowship.

Hope that is clear.

By the way, I consulted Matthew Henry, John Calvin, and J. C. Ryle.

Re: Matt. 18:19 - If two of you agree on earth about anything - posted by mguldner (), on: 2010/5/26 0:00

Listen to Paris Reidheads If You Agree, Paris takes this verse and explains what touching means Good stuff, I would rank it up there on my favorite sermons list in the top 5

Re: Paris's sermon - posted by Lysa (), on: 2010/5/26 7:46

Here is the sermon link for those who would like to listen (to the sermon mguldner mentioned):

<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/singlefile.php?lid=1507&commentView=itemComments>

Edit and added:

About the original post: Whether there be elders or not, sometimes... I believe Christians can take this church discipline thing too far. Because I've wondered how many pastors and elders have ACTUALLY prayed "first" about kicking a particular someone out of church or if they just chose to go by the letter of the law (matt 18.19) over praying first? Just asking.

And I'm wondering if there are any men and/or women who would beg the Lord and/or pastor/elder and say, "Before you curse this fruit tree, let me hoe around it (this person), water it (this person), and see if this tree can live (bear fruit) and then in a year make a decision." Is there any who would be willing to work (lay down their life) with a person like that?? Remember James 5.20 Just asking!

There I've said my peace.. that's my comment; I don't want to take anybody "on" per se over Matt 18.19!!

God bless us all as we do His will,

Re: Matt. 18:19 - posted by savannah, on: 2010/5/27 1:43

Michael,

You begin your summary with these words,

"The context, from which the verse is not to be isolated..."

Your own words here stand against you, as you proceed in the following paragraphs to add words, imply meanings, and consequently draw faulty conclusions.

You say, "In particular, elders and their disciples are told..."

The Scripture says, "if he also refuses to listen to the assembly...I say to you, whatever you bind...and whatever you loose...Again,...I say to you, if two of you...For where two or three..."

Michael, you've added the words 'elders and disciples' to suit your own traditionally private interpretation.

Tradition has invented a class of men and elevated them to a place of authority which God, His Word, and His Spirit have not.

Michael, apparently you've received this false teaching which only God by His Spirit can deliver you from. It is error. Error

r puts men in bondage. But Truth makes men free.

Further proof of why I bring this charge follows.

Your article is chock full of references to 'elders' and their 'rule', to such an unhealthy degree, when they're not once mentioned throughout the whole chapter.

Rather, what is found are references to 'brother(s)', 'assembly', 'fellow-slaves', 'little ones', 'little child(ren)', 'witnesses', and the instruction toward humility.

Again you say,

"...elders have a duty to protect the flock of God and to alert men of grave hypocrisy. To do this effectively, they are granted authority to publicly declare who the bible, and thus God, regards as either loose or bound."

The above words of yours are nowhere taught here or in the whole chapter of Matthew 18. The authority lies in God, His Word, and His Spirit. The assembled body who has His Spirit within them, acts upon the authority of their Head.

Next, you claim in your own words, with no biblical warrant, that the following is a fact,

"Public discipline underlines the fact that elders exercise the office of Prophet."

In your desperate attempt to keep your traditional mindset, you stretch these words in Matthew to use a word which is never used in relation to any believer in the N.T. The word translated 'office' cannot be found in the Greek Text for men (or women) in the assembly. Those leading and guiding the people of God are doing just that, leading and guiding. First and foremost by example. They go ahead and do. Theirs is not an 'office' or a position as in the corporate world in America, but they're rather a functioning member of the body, which is necessary to its health and strength.

You then continue by saying,

"they speak with the delegated and real authority of God before the Church. For instance, in baptizing and granting communion, pastors declare publicly their confidence in the profession of particular church members. When baptizing and granting communion, he says in essence, "By the authority granted to me."

Your above words where you use such language as, "delegated and real authority of God...", "baptizing and granting communion..." , "baptizing and granting communion..." "I pronounce this person a member of the Church of Christ...", is egregious.

Such language is not the language of the Scripture. It may be that of some 'Confessions' or 'Church Constitutions' but not to be found in God's Word.

You'd be hard pressed to find any restriction in God's Word to 'office-holders' only, baptizing believers, or 'office-holders' only, serving or withholding communion.

You'd be even harder pressed to find the 'tradition of the elders' which would hold that a form of 'church discipline' is to be far one from the LORD'S Table.

A cracker and grape juice would also be impossible to prove from the Scripture in 1 Cor. 11.

But all these ye do that ye may keep your tradition.

These may all be found in men's writings i.e. 'church constitutions and by-laws' and 'Confessions', not in God's Word.

Again you say,

"...when ruling elders pass discipline upon a professing Christian in accordance with scripture, their act should not be regarded as merely human but as reflecting the spiritual reality of God's judgment upon that person."

Here again you add your twist upon the Scripture using language such as "ruling elders", "pass discipline" "in accordance with Scripture."

This is not in the context nor the text itself. Therefore it is not 'in accordance with Scripture'.

Again, you grant an elder or pastor (which you and others have made into offices) more power than Scripture when you say "their act" is not "merely human" but rather "the spiritual reality of God's judgment."

Please consider what is written above, and finally the following.

If God's people, who are called by His Name, would build one another up, we must quit lifting one another up.

Otherwise, all the members will be weakened and the body deformed.

Now, may we read God's Word for what it is, God's Word.

Now, may we be taught of God the Holy Spirit, the revealer of Truth.

Now, may we practice the Truth, and not the traditions of men.

Mat 18:15-20 "Now if your brother sins against you, be going, and show him his fault between you and him alone, if he hears you, you gained your brother. "But if he does not hear you, take along with you yet one or two, so that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.' "But if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembly; but if he also refuses to listen to the assembly, he shall be to you just like the heathen and the tax collector. "Positively, I say to you, whatever you bind on the earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth will have been loosed in heaven. "Again, positively I say to you, if two of you agree together on the earth concerning any matter, whatever they ask, it will be done to them from my Father in the heavens. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Psalms 119:130 The entering of Your Word gives light, giving discernment to the simple.

Re: - posted by mguldner (), on: 2010/5/27 1:49

Quote:
-----About the original post: Whether there be elders or not, sometimes... I believe Christians can take this church discipline thing too far . Because I've wondered how many pastors and elders have ACTUALLY prayed "first" about kicking a particular someone out of church or if they just chose to go by the letter of the law (matt 18.19) over praying first? Just asking

I agree we are to DO Justly, Love Mercy, and walk Humbly before God. :)