

**Text:** Ezekiel 34:15-16, Matthew 18:10-20, Corinthians 2:5-11

**Theme:** Shepherding the Flock: (iii) How the Hurt and Wounded sheep are to be Bound up and Healed.

5 Before us today, is put a lofty task.

It is that of one sinner having to show another sinner on their sin.

In the life of any church, it is inevitable that some of its members would stray away from the church and from God by sinning.

This is the identity of the injured, the hurt, the wounded sheep.

10 They are those who while remaining in the fellowship of Christ are hurt and injured in their inner being; it is as if they have destroyed and shattered a spiritual limb,

i.e. the virtuous and godly ability to do those things which are excellent and right.

15 These limbs are injured, shattered, destroyed and broken through serious and gross failings and sins.

When Christians transgress in thought, word or deed or fail in the matter of good thoughts, words or deeds, this always leads to these spiritual limbs being hurt or injured or broken.

20           And although someone has perhaps been injured in only  
              one limb, he still needs to be helped without delay, or it will  
              lead to the corruption of the whole body.

There are many reasons why this happens.

              In some cases, members sin because someone else comes  
25           along and causes them to stumble ([Matt. 18:6-7](#)).

              In other cases, it is their own lusts that have led them to sin  
              ([Matt. 18:8-9](#)).

              You will recall that we mentioned two weeks ago that there is some  
30           overlap between the Lost Sheep, the Strayed Sheep, and the  
              Wounded Sheep.

              It happens all too regularly that when a Wounded sheep is left to  
              their own devices, they will short before long become a Stray  
              sheep leaving behind the protection and comfort of the  
35           sheepfold.

We are therefore implored to seek out and bind up the Hurt and  
Wounded Sheep so that they may be healed.

              This is the third thing that God promised He would do as the  
              Good Shepherd in Ezekiel 34:16.

40           The way that God tends to them is through us, the fellow sheep.

Jesus gives us a clear plan of how to do this here in  
Matthew 18:15-20.

Jesus says:

45 *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.  
16 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. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if  
50 he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile  
and a tax collector. ([Matt. 18:15-17](#))*

These are amazingly simple verses. Jesus begins with the situation of  
another believer sinning.

Initially, the sinning brother is confronted individually and called  
55 to repentance.

If the brother repents, then forgiveness is freely extended.  
However, if the brother fails to repent, then one or two more are  
brought into the process. This time, a group of people come to  
confront this individual.

60 If the brother repents, then forgiveness is freely extended.

However, if the brother fails to repent, then it should be told to the church.

If the brother repents, then forgiveness is freely extended, and fellowship within the body is enjoyed once more.

65 However, if the brother fails to repent, then he should be treated as an unbeliever, out of the fold of the church.

How easy this sounds, and yet, how difficult it is to practice.

70 When it comes to actually carrying this out, I might be the chief offender at failing to do this.

How often have I failed to directly confront the one sinning!

Rather than speaking to a sinning brother, I have spoken to others about the sin.

75 I have at times failed to confront sin in the first place.

I have seen sin and let it pass without confrontation.

This passage is incredibly easy to understand. Yet, I have found it incredibly difficult to practice.

Perhaps you have failed in this way as well.

80 We need to plead before God to grant us the strength to follow  
the Lord in obedience in this passage.

Let us look at this passage again in more detail. It yields four steps in  
how we ought to bind up and heal a hurt and wounded sheep.

85 **Step #1 - Go by yourself (verse 15)**

In verse 15, we read, "*If your brother sins against you.*"

Some manuscripts omit the *against you* part here.

There are some who argue, "only when another Christian brother  
sins *against you* can you go and confront them in accordance with

90 Matthew 18."

That's not necessarily the case here.

It might just be that you witnessed a sin, which wasn't  
directed against you which ought to be confronted.

95 For instance, suppose you see another Christian  
brother in a drunken stagger, walking down the street.  
His sin of drunkenness isn't against you, but it should  
be confronted.

Perhaps you witnessed a sin against a child, who  
wouldn't have the maturity to confront such a sin. In  
100 this case, you ought to go to the one sinning yourself.

Now, it's probably best if the one sinned against goes,  
but you aren't let off the hook if the sin wasn't directed  
against you.

105 So, if you see this or experience sin, you ought to "*go and tell him his  
fault, between you and him alone*"

The text literally says "*between you and him alone.*"

This isn't supposed to be a big show. It shouldn't even be a big  
deal.

110 Perhaps you are simply pulling someone aside after church.  
Perhaps you go out for coffee and talk. Perhaps you make a  
simple phone call.

When you reprove someone, it means to identify their sin and call  
them to repentance. You are calling him back.

115 Your spirit in doing this is of utmost importance. [Galatians 6:1](#) speaks  
of this same situation, "*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any  
transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of  
gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*"

You need to come to this person humbly.

You need to come gently.

120 You need to come with the spirit of love, maturity, affection, and  
love toward your fellow believer.

You need to come with a genuine desire to see repentance and have the relationship restored.

125 First, Jesus considers the situation in which the brother comes back. He says, "*If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*"

When Jesus says, "if he listens to you," it isn't simply whether or not he hears your words, but that he understands them, embraces them, admits the sin, and willingly returns."

130 If he comes back, it is pure joy.

Your love for your fellow Christian has been demonstrated in that you were willing to confront the sin.

And their love for Christ is clear in that they demonstrate a heart of repentance.

135 The result is that relationships are strengthened and the church is stronger as a result.

Confronting a fellow Christian in their sin is a church-strengthening process. When and where this takes place here at Covenant Reformed Church, the church will thrive.

140 But, what happens most often within the life of a church is that when someone sins, the sin isn't directly confronted. Rather, it is

discussed with other people. Everybody talks around the issue, rather than confronting it directly.

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The idea behind going in private first is to insure that everyone doesn't know about this. The sin doesn't need to be told to others. It doesn't need to be told to the church. It doesn't need to be told to the world.

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When repentance comes, talk of the sin should stop. But when people are talking about it behind this person's back, it crushes the church.

Those things that should remain an issue between two parties become an issue for the entire church.

Factions develop, sides are taken, and it becomes a big mess.

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The words of Jesus ring true, "*Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand*" ([Matt. 12:25](#)).

"Any church divided against itself will not stand."

160 We need to commit ourselves to this process.

If you witness or experience sin in another member of the congregation, will you confront that person individually in private? Or, will you talk about it with others in the congregation?



165 Will you work hard to keep the matter between the two of you unless the sinning party remains unrepentant? Or, will you spread the gossip abroad.

In fact, we need to go further.

170 Suppose that someone comes to you and begins to talk with you about the sin of another. As soon as you detect what the person is saying, will you stop the conversation right then and there and ask, "Wait! Before you go on, have you spoken with this person yet?"

175 If the answer comes back, "Well, no." Then, will you be committed to this process and send that individual away to deal with the matter biblically (i.e. privately)?

It may just be the case that the offending party repents and they reconcile and you never hear about it again. In that case, may all glory go to God!

180 But if the case is that they have talked, and the sin continues, then will you be willing to say, "Since you two have talked this over, and it is still unresolved, let me come with you and talk again."

That is step #2, ...

185 **Step #2 - Go with one or two more (verse 16)**

Jesus said, "<sup>16</sup> *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.*"

The idea here is two-fold. On the one hand, you are attempting to get  
190 a bit of leverage upon this person.

Rather than a me-verses-you confrontation, you lay the facts before others, and the situation grows in seriousness.

You present the sin.

You present the proof.

195 You call for repentance.

Hopefully, the presence of others might be a helpful incentive to call this brother to repentance.

But, there is also another reason for bringing in these other witnesses.

It is to confirm the facts.

200 Sin has a way of distorting our perspective.

Sin will attempt to confront the spec in a brother's eye, when he has a log in his own ([Matthew 7:3-4](#)).

It makes mountains out of molehills.

It makes molehills out of mountains.

205 It makes minor things become major things.  
It makes major things become minor things.

When sin is confronted, it is often the case that issues come up from all over the place. (Whack-a-mole)

210 People can become very defensive when being confronted.  
When they are attacked, they often retaliate.  
Things can easily degenerate into a "he said/she said" argument.

The presence of a third party, who isn't as emotionally involved in this issue, will help to "*establish ... every charge*" (verse 16).

215 These other witnesses can help direct the issue, and approach things rationally.

So, if you are in this situation of confronting a brother who has refused to listen to you alone, bring a witness who can look at the situation  
220 objectively.

Choose your witness carefully.

Don't bring your best friend.

Don't bring your mother.

Don't bring a new convert.

225 Bring somebody who is spiritually mature, who is respected by all.

Bring somebody who isn't emotionally involved in the situation.

And the goal in this meeting is simple: You are praying for the sinning party to return and come back.

230 You are praying for the healing of the injured sinner.

The whole context of this passage has been to bring back a straying lamb. If he repents and admits to his sin and asks forgiveness, you have won your brother (verse 15).

235 It doesn't need to go beyond this circle.

In fact, it ought not to extend beyond the parties and the witnesses.

If your brother repents, you should embrace him in love.

240 That is what Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 2:7-8, <sup>7</sup>so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>8</sup>So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

You should forgive him of his sin against you.

You should restore him.

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And the whole meeting shouldn't be a matter of discussion for the whole church to know about. In that case, may all glory go to God!

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But, sadly, it's not always the case that people will repent when they are confronted even when confronted by two or three. Jesus again takes this into account in verse 17 with step #3, ...

### **Step #3 - Tell it to the church (verse 17a)**

Verse 17, "<sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church."

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As with step #2, this is an attempt to get a bit of leverage upon this person.

Rather than a me-verses-you confrontation or a me-verses-these-self-righteous-and-arrogant-people, confrontation, we present the situation before the entire body.

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The sin is identified in the scripture. The process of confrontation is communicated. The church body is encouraged to contact this person and call him (or her) to repentance.

Now in communicating this to the church, it doesn't mean that at the end of the service each week, we ought to ask "Is there any sin that

265 you have confronted that you want to bring to the attention of the  
entire church this morning?"

This isn't wise.

Rather, the leadership of the church ought to be involved in this  
process so that issues are handled, and communicated appropriately  
270 and effectively.

In the RCUS this is a process handled by the spiritual council of  
the church. The elders and pastor form the spiritual council.

Now in our situation at Covenant Reformed Church, this is somewhat  
difficult currently, because we only have one elder at this point. We  
275 only have one pastor.

I am acutely aware of the challenges and difficulties of  
shepherding a flock of people as the only elder.

We all long for the day, and fervently pray for when we would  
have a plurality of elders here at Covenant Reformed Church.

280 We are as a church plant under the guidance and counsel of Zion  
Reformed Church in Menno, SD. We are all members of Zion  
RCUS meeting in Manhattan, MT.

We regularly meet with the men of their consistory, to report  
on the work here in Manhattan, we seek advice from them  
285 when difficult situations arise in the church, and we ask

them to pray for God's blessing upon our work.

We also have a good relationship with those men and they visit here from time to time.

I tell you this because if we ever encounter a church discipline process that comes to step three and we need to communicate it to the church, the elders in Zion will be fully involved in the process.

This whole process is very serious, and we do not go at it alone. We need the help of other, experienced, godly men, who are sharing in the responsibility of shepherding this church.

Understand that as these things are communicated to the church, it isn't simply for public consumption.

Rather, those in the church are to speak to this individual and call him back. This is what Jesus assumes in verse 17, "*and if he refuses to listen even to the church.*"

The only way that the sinning party can listen to the church is if those in the church are going to this brother or sister and pleading for them to repent and come back into the fold.

As three, six, ten, fifteen, thirty people call them, the hope is that eventually they would realize the error of their ways and repent and come back.

Unfortunately, the way sin works, people will often justify themselves.

310 The confronted individual will think that the one confronting him is wrong.

He will think that the group of people confronting him is wrong.

He might even get to the point where he thinks that the entire church is wrong.

315 He thinks that the whole world has gone crazy.

He thinks that he alone is the only sane one in the world.

Actually, it is the other way around. And "he refuses to listen even to the church." In this circumstance, you take it to step four, ...

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#### **Step #4 - Cast him out (verse 17b)**

At the end of verse 17, we read, "*let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*"

325 The meaning of these words is that we ought to treat this individual as one who is outside of the covenant community.



When the Jewish mind heard, "Gentile" and "tax-collector" they certainly thought that it means, "out of the commonwealth."

The "Gentiles" and "tax-collectors" were kept out of the temple area.

330 The "Gentiles" and "tax-collectors" were "strangers to the covenant." Jews were not permitted to eat with them or fellowship with them at all.

This is what Peter said in Acts 10 when he visited the home of the gentile, Cornelius. Though Cornelius was a God-fearing man, Peter told those gentiles assembled,

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*"You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him"*  
([Acts 10:28](#)).

These people ought not to be welcomed in the assembly of the church. You ought not to fellowship with them outside the church.

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This is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5. There was a man involved in unrepentant sin within the congregation ([1 Cor. 5:1](#)). He instructed them to remove this man from their midst ([1 Cor. 5:2](#)). In other words, they were to discipline this man and "cast him out" of the church.

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But, the objection comes, aren't we supposed to reach out to those who are outside the church? Aren't we supposed to befriend sinners as Jesus modeled for us? Aren't "Gentiles" and "tax-collectors" to be loved as Jesus did? Aren't "Gentiles" and "tax-collectors" to hear the gospel in a context of love? And if we discipline a man, aren't we simply supposed to treat him as an unbeliever in need of the gospel, by befriending him?

No. We are to cast this one out.

This is because there is a difference between the one who has been in the fellowship of the church and the one who has never been in the fellowship of the church.

The one has made a claim to believe in Christ, been in the church, and experienced the blessings of the church and then, becomes unrepentant.

The other has never heard of Christ, does not profess to believe in Him, has never been in the church, and has never experienced the abundant blessings that come with being within the church.

The one who has been outside all the time is the one we need to love and have a heart for them and bring the gospel to them, as Jesus did.

But the one inside the church, who is unrepentant, ought to be cast out. This is what Paul said in [1 Cor. 5:9-11](#).

*<sup>9</sup> I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— <sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ([1Cor. 5:9-11](#))*

Did you notice the distinction Paul made between the two types of immoral people?

The one, you are supposed to be with and preach the gospel to them.

The other, you need to avoid like the plague.

Let's get back to the thrust of the passage. We do these things because we care for the sheep who are injured and hurt. Our heart is that those who fall into sin will repent.

Therefore, in all of this, we act in a heart of love and compassion and grace. We are patient and kind with them. We pray for them longing for God to grant them repentance.

The words of [2 Timothy 2:24-25](#) should be in our heart, "<sup>24</sup> And

390 *the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to  
everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup> correcting his  
opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them  
repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, "*

395 We pray that God might grant them repentance that they  
might come back.

And in the day that they acknowledge their sin, and repent, and come  
back within the fold, we want to embrace them in love, holding  
nothing against them. we want to be rejoicing over them more than  
400 over the "*ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance*"  
([Luke 15:7](#)).

This is the heart of God and we want to have the heart of God.  
We long for the church of Jesus Christ to have this heart as well.

405 The goal of this process isn't to hurt these people.  
It isn't to retaliate against them for the hurt that they have  
caused.

The goal is to see them walking with Christ once more.

410 The good news is that today, we don't have anyone in our  
congregation who is in this state.

These words of Jesus have been proclaimed in theory, only.

But my desire for you would be that you would embrace these words today entirely apart from any one, specific situation, that you might be ready to act upon them in obedience to God the day that one of our  
415 members injure themselves in this way.

God pursues the injured sheep and we ought to pursue them as well.

Verse 18 gives us one last bit of advice. ...

420 We should bathe the process in prayer (verses 18-20)

Jesus says,

*"<sup>18</sup> 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.*

*<sup>19</sup> Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they  
425 ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."* ([Matt. 18:18-20](#))

We ought to bathe these matters in prayer for two reasons.

430 **1. This is a serious matter (verse 18).** Jesus says that these matters have eternal implications.

What amazing authority that Jesus Christ has given to the church.

What is bound by the church is bound in heaven.

What is loosed by the church is loosed in heaven.

435 It works like this. When a person is under the discipline of the church, the church has made it a matter of public declaration that this individual has sinned and is unrepentant for his sin.

440 Thus, the sin is not forgiven. This isn't merely an earthly reality. But, it is a heavenly one as well.

When the cast out one repents and comes back into the church, his sins are forgiven, both on earth as well as in heaven.

## **2. We have astounding promises (verses 19-20).**

445 Remember, these words come in the context of those in the church, who have been cast out to their unrepentance.

Jesus said that if you all agree upon this individual's lack of repentance, heaven agrees with you. These verses give divine authority to what takes place in the church.

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Before you confront another in his sin, bathe it in prayer.

Before you bring along another witness or two, bathe it in prayer.

Before you tell it to the church, bathe it in prayer.

Before you cast an individual out of the church, bathe it in prayer.

455 Pray because it is a serious matter.

Pray because heaven will agree with your process when you pray.

This process is simple to understand, but difficult to do.

We can't do it on our own.

460 Pray for God's grace in this entire process.

Pray that we may be faithful in binding up the injured and wounded sheep so that they may be healed,

and that God may be glorified in this whole process.

465 AMEN.