

TITLE: TOUGH LOVE

TEXT: Matthew 18:15-17

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to make a very practical application of how Christians should show *agape* love to one another...that is, seeking one another's best interest...even when another Christian has sinned against you.

INTRO: Practical application of the "agape" love discussed Sunday night...especially needed in tough situations like the one discussed in our text (Mt 18:15-17).
One of the most difficult lessons to learn & practice!

CONTEXT (Matt 18):

All of this discussion sparks from the disciples' question... "who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?"

v. 1-5 – The doctrine of humility – he who is as a humble child is greatest in the kingdom.

v. 6-10 – The danger of pride - Don't be an offense (an occasion of stumbling)

v. 11-14 – Value of one soul (the 90 & 9)

v. 15-20 – What happens if someone is an offense to you?

v. 21-35 – Forgiveness!! 70x7; parable of the unmerciful servant

I. A BROTHER SINS AGAINST YOU:

3-step process to go through in a *certain situation*:

A. If he sins *AGAINST YOU!* This is not referring to just *any* sin a brother commits, but may be good advice even in other situations (if you see a brother in sin, you who are spiritual restore him (Gal 6:1))

B. It does not say if his sin was *private* or *public*. Therefore, this is not a factor...either way, handle according to Mt 18.

C. **1st** Step (v. 15)

1. Go – do not wait for him; **Mt 5:23-24** – if you remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, then go and be reconciled to your brother 1st. Both are commanded to GO! Should meet ½ way!

2. Tell him his fault (convince; rebuke; reprove)...better translated "*show him his fault*"

- not saying to just make claims...you should have a solid case...but do it in love (trying to win a brother)

3. *Keep it between the 2 of you. If the sin was not public, there is **NO** reason for anyone else to be told about it.

D. **2nd** Step (v. 16)

1. IF he will not hear you... (NOT when you decide that you're not going to talk to him because you're positive that he won't listen)! DO NOT talk to anyone else until you've spoken to him!!

2. Take 1 or 2 more. It does NOT say to convince the witnesses. Don't try to win them over. They are intercessors.

3. If you are asked to be a witness, first ask "**Have you approached _____ with this first?**"

4. Every word needs to be established – "to make firm, keep intact, fix, stand unharmed or unchanged (as in trial)." This process is not to be carried out to its full extent based on hearsay or differences in opinion. In this case, refer to part II below (questionable sin).

E. **3rd** Step (v. 17)

1. Again, **IF** he will not listen (see I. D. 1. – v. 16)

2. Tell it to the church

3. IF he will not hear (if he disobeys) the church, treat him as a heathen (Gentile) or publican (non-Christian).

Love him still...help him to repent...but until he does, treat him as a non-Christian (no Christian fellowship)

4. This is the only way to preserve peace and purity in the church, and to show the sinner the seriousness of his sin!

II. IF THE SIN IS QUESTIONABLE:

A. First, both parties are governed by the law of love. Love one another (*Read* 1 John 4:7-11).

B. Both must have love for one another. Both are in a hard situation. It's very hard to confront, or to be confronted.

C. Christians should be able to love one another to the point of giving each other the benefit of the doubt in questionable matters (1 Cor 8 – concern for brethren will result in sacrifice)

III. GOALS:

A. Lead an erring brother to repentance

B. Preserve a relationship

C. Preserve the purity of the church

CONCLUSION: Christians are not perfect. We still sin, and sometimes against one another. But God always provides a way for us to resolve situations, reconciling with Him and with each other. But we **MUST** do things the way HE has prescribed.