

## **Right-hand Sins**

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"And if your hand offends you, cut it off." [Mark 9:43](#).

SALVATION is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not of works, neither can it be procured by human merit. It is the free gift of God through the atoning Sacrifice of Christ to every soul that believes. But what is salvation? Salvation is, in short, deliverance from sin, deliverance from the guilt of it, from the punishment of it, from the power of it. If, then, any man is saved, he is delivered from the reigning power of sin. It is not possible, therefore, that any man should have salvation and yet continue in the indulgence of sin. Jesus Christ came to open a hospital for sin-sick souls, not that they might remain sick in a hospital but might go out of it healed. He came not to take men to Heaven with their sins about them, but to purge them from their sins and so make them fit to enter Heaven! Hence, Jesus Christ is the severest of all moralists and while He and His followers denounce all trust for salvation in merit, they equally declare that no man is a saved soul who tolerates any known sin. All the Gospel declares this. In all its parts it implies this and that man cannot and ought not to consider himself to be saved and cannot truly be said to be saved while he lives in the indulgence of evil propensities as he did before. We shall not at all, therefore, come into conflict with the Doctrines of Grace while we preach to you the strongest claims of Christ upon our hearts and lives through His Word. We shall have to urge upon you the most strenuous giving up of sin and that which leads to sin—but this, not as a means of salvation—but as a result of faith and as an evidence that salvation is truly possessed—as the sign and token, the proof and the earnest of the good work of the Holy Spirit within the soul. We shall begin, therefore, with this short assertion which will serve as our first point of thought—

### **I. EVERYTHING WHICH OFFENDS GOD OUGHT TO OFFEND US.**

You notice the text says, "If your hand offends you." We might read it, "Makes you to offend God." The two expressions ought, in our experience, mean the same thing, for everything which offends God does offend every truly gracious heart. That short statement will serve as a touchstone for us all to know whether we are reconciled to God or not. Remember, if you truly love God, it must be so—that that which is hateful to Him will be hateful to you. Where two hearts are bound together in the bonds of love, they are quite sure to endeavor to remove everything out of the way that would cause pain to either. You cannot love me if you favor my enemies. You can have no affection for me if you delight to thrust before me that which vexes my spirit and grieves my heart. True love feels a sympathy

with the person loved and learns to put away that which is obnoxious. Now say, Heart, do you put away from yourself that which God hates? Do you hate it because He hates it—not so much because your fellow Christians dislike it, or because the public judgment would go against it—but do you hate evil because it is detestable in the sight of God? If so, then you have a clear mark that you love God and you should be thankful for the Divine Grace which has put your heart into such a state.

Again, if that which offends God offends us, then we may congratulate ourselves that there is some degree of conformity between God and us. All the saints are to be made like unto God. It was in God's image that man was first made—he lost that image by his sin—but that image is to be restored by the work of the Holy Spirit. If you do, even now, in your soul war against that which God loathes—if you strive and cry after that which God loves—then there is between God and you some degree of likeness. You are like He in your hatred of evil—like, not in degree, but yet still in substance. You are like God in your love towards that which is lovely and good and pure—not like He in degree, I say again, yet still in the matter of fact there is some likeness between God and your soul.

Then there is one other thought that ought to cheer you. If you can honestly answer this question—If that which offends God offends you, then there is some communion between God and your soul—and though it may be a question with you and you say, "Will God in very deed speak with such a one as I am? Will He reveal Himself to His servant and show Himself gracious to such a worm as I?"—He has done it and He is doing it and this practical proof of His communion is far better than half the raptures and the joys which may be but the fruit of men's carnal excitement! This solid gold of holiness is full and true proof that the hand of the Lord has been laid upon you. Settle this, then, my beloved Brother or Sister, in your heart from this day forth! If there is a good man in this world, if God loves him, I must love him. If there is a good Doctrine preached anywhere, though I may scarcely understand it, yet if God loves it, I must believe it and rejoice in it! If there is any Providential dispensation that is really of God's mind, then let it be of my mind. Oh, Spirit of God, bring me to love what God loves, not only to acquiesce in His will, but to rejoice in His will! And Lord, teach me to hate what You hate. If there are those in this world whose company You would not have, for they blaspheme and rail and speak lightly of holy things, help me to shun their company! If there is a song that Christ's ear would not hear, let my ears refuse to hear it. If there is any sight that a holy God would not gaze upon, let not me gaze upon it. May I seek only to love that which would approve itself to the pure mind of Christ and to be offended, heartily and naturally—without any twisting of myself towards it—at everything that is at enmity with God. That stands as the first thought. Now, let us pass on.

II. EVERY SAVED MAN WILL FIND THAT THERE ARE MANY SINS WHICH OFFEND GOD WHICH

MUST BE VERY SUMMARILY DEALT WITH.

That which offends God, offends the soul. That is the first step. Then the next step is—deal with it as an offense, deal with it with vigor, deal with it in a summary manner—as the text puts it, "If your hand offends you, cut it off." There are sins which are very dear to men. I shall not attempt to give a catalog of them. We are so differently constituted that the sin which might bewitch you, might not fascinate me, and the sin into which I should be likely to fall might not be that to which you would be so liable. We all have some besetting sins. We may fall into all sins, but some men are more disposed to certain offenses than others.

Now, if you have any wrong thing that has hitherto been dear to you, like your right hand, your right eye, your right foot, you are, according to this text to deal with it—and to deal with it at once!

Some sins appear to men to be necessary to them. "What shall I do without my right hand?" In certain trades and lines of business, the habit of telling white lies, or the indulgence of certain company, may seem as if it were absolutely necessary. "How can I get my daily bread unless I do such-and-such as others do? We must live," and so on. Well, if the thing is wrong, even though it appears to be necessary to your livelihood, as the right hand is to the body, yet you are still to deal with it, for you and your sins must part, or God and you must part! There can be no salvation to one that harbors sin, and if sin is not given up, hope must be given up, for into Heaven no man shall come who hugs his sins! Some sins, then, are dear and some sins seem useful.

Some sins, again, seem to be parts of our very selves. "I give up that habit?" says one, "If that were relinquished, I should be, indeed, a very different man from what I am, but I cannot give it up—it is impossible! The Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, or the leopard his spots." And yet, Friend, even if it is impossible, it must be done! Another power than yours must come to the rescue, for that sin of your must go, and the sooner, the better, if you are to be saved!

Now, observe Christ's word about this right-hand sin which seems so dear, so necessary and so much a part of the man, himself. What does He say? "If your hand offends you"—strap it up? Well, some have said, "I will take a vow not to fall into such a sin as that." "If your hand offends you"—secure it within certain bounds and limits, so that it shall only act up to a certain extent, but shall go no farther—fetter it, chain it? "If your hand offends you"—swathe it in bands, keep it from doing mischief? No! But hear the Master's sharp and, at its first sound, cruel words—"Cut it off!" In the Gospel according to Matthew, He puts it, "Cut it off and cast it from you," as though even after it were cut off and the vital union were dissolved, yet still even the thought of it becomes detestable! "Cut it off and cast it from you." You perceive it is a thorough-going action! It is a vigorous action! It is a final action, for, after the man has cut off his hand, he cannot put it on again! After he has plucked out his

right eye and cast it from him, he cannot have it restored again! And after the right foot has been cut off, it cannot grow there again. It is a final sentence of separation between the man and his sin!

Now, I put it to some of you, tonight, who have been thinking about going to Heaven but you will never get there, while you are what you are. You are accustomed to drink, perhaps. Now, it is no use your dallying with that sin, saying, "I will keep it within bounds!" Off with it, Sirs! And cast it from you! Those pots of yours must be turned upside down! The damnable habit must be relinquished, or it will certainly be your destruction. It is of no use for a man to say, "I have been unchaste but I will keep that sin within limits." There is no such thing as keeping the devil in a cage. Cut it off and cast it from you! Then there is your pride. It is in vain for you to say, "I will be somewhat humble. I will be somewhat resigned," and so on. Cut it off, Man, cut it off and cast it from you! It must be thorough work—a clean severance between you and sin. Ah, these are hard tidings and many will turn on their heels and go their way, and say, "We cannot endure this!" But as the Lord lives, the pearly gates can never open to any of you who keep your sins. All your iniquities shall be forgiven you—though you have blasphemed and have even committed murder, there is pardon for you if you hate those sins and leave them—and Christ will help you to hate them if you trust Him! He will give you Grace to quit them, but if you hug those sins, you may prate about faith in Christ, and you may lie about experience in Grace, but to such things as real faith and true experience, you are and must be utter strangers unless sin, with stern resolution, is given up—not so much as one sin hugged, or indulged, or loved. "Must a man be perfect then?" Sir, a man must desire to be perfect. "But he cannot be perfect." Sir, he can be perfect in intention, if not in fact, and there is a deal of difference between the sin of misadventure, and of infirmity, and the willfully wicked sin of some men! Alas, there are always men who can excuse their sins by the sins of God's people. They eat up the sins of God's people as they eat up bread—they make a sweet morsel of it! But the genuine child of God, if he sins, hates himself for it. The evil that he would not, that he does, but his heart is right. He would do good perfectly if he could, and he pants and longs to be delivered from sin. His heart does not go after his idols—he has given them up, cast them away, by God's Grace and, if he could, he would never take their names upon his lips again.

Let that second point sink deep into the souls of all who would be saved. Sins that offend must be given up, and given up at once. Now, in the next place—

III. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH CAUSE US TO OFFEND, and if we are true Christians, we shall not hesitate to give them up. Now, I am about to address those who are really in Christ Jesus. There are certain matters which to Believers are very risky and dangerous, and if they love Christ, they must give them up.

I think I know some who, I trust, are the Lord's people, but they are very fond of a certain class of company. There are attractions to them in certain pleasures. Now, if they would but

look at their own hearts, they would find that this company is a snare to them. They are kept from weeknight services. They have little zeal for God's Glory. Prayer is not kept up as it ought to be, kept up after such meetings as they sometimes hold. And yet the society is very fascinating and not altogether in itself to be condemned—but the tendencies are, to this soul at any rate, exceedingly detrimental. The man is backsliding and he certainly gets nothing to help his growth in Grace in that society. All he gets there is evidently to the bad and has an evil tendency. Now what ought the Christian in such a case do? He ought without hesitation to give up such society! I have no right to be constantly found where I cannot grow in Grace. I have no right to find happiness in associations which are dangerous to my soul, which drive away the Holy Spirit and break my communion with Christ. Off with that right hand, then! "Oh, but it will seem so painful to give up that society! It would be like losing a right hand!" Well, but it would be a grand thing to lose a hand for Christ. They are not altogether the most ignoble soldiers who come back from battle maimed—no, their scars are their honor—and for a Christian to have to sacrifice some dear connection, to have to give up standing and position, to receive the cold shoulder, to have the wink of the eye, to have the unkind word for Christ should be counted for an honor! We should be willing to do and bear it. No, without the slightest hesitation, we should feel that there is no connection to be compared with communion with Christ, no society for a single second to be put in the scales with walking near to Him! And so, off with the right hand and stay close to Christ.

It sometimes happens that things which are right, and good, and desirable, may be causes of offense. Yes, there may come a time when a man's good name and reputation may have to be given up. I believe that a Christian minister had better, once and for all, as soon as ever he sets out earnestly preaching the Gospel, make up his mind to give up his reputation. It is very hard to be accused of this, and that, and the other—some unknown crime to which you were never tempted—to have your words wrested and your motives misconstrued! But every faithful servant of Christ ought to go in for that, and reckon upon that and settle it at first. Mr. John Wesley, I think, once said in the pulpit that he had been accused of every crime in the whole catalog of sin, except drunkenness, and he did not know that anyone had accused him of that—whereas some wicked blasphemer in the crowd accused him of it to his face, and Mr. Wesley lifted up his hands and said—"Now this day is fulfilled the Word of the Master wherein He said, 'Woe is unto you when men shall speak well of you, but blessed are you when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake and the Gospel's.'" Why, in the old times, the old days of the Covenanters, the old times of the Puritans, there were found plenty of the followers of Christ who would keep close to Him if they could keep their reputations and their characters! But those werethe brave men who would be counted the offscouring of all things, be set down for fanatics and I know not what besides, but who declared that for the Truth of God, for Christ and for His cause, they

could bear it all! I was reading yesterday the famous sentence of excommunication which Cargill declared against Charles the Second, in which he cast him out of the Church of God and brought all his crimes against him—and went to the block for having done so! He and Alexander Petrie and such were known to say that they would die a thousand deaths, sooner than admit that any king could be head of the Church, or put the crown on any head, except the head of Christ Jesus the Lord! In such times, and in other times as well, the most of men are cowards—they must keep a reputation—they must not oppose themselves too much to popular opinion. They must, if they can, sail with the current. Oh, child of God, if your reputation is ever a snare to you, off with that right hand of yours and be willing to be called a dog or a devil, if Christ can get the greater honor out of you!

To some professors, their love of profit becomes a snare. I need not say many things about that. If there are any profits that you get in business that are not honest profits, I charge you before the living God, have nothing to do with them! But let the Christian's business be conducted with such uprightness that he could afford to have it proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet at the market, for only such business is fit for a Christian! So if there is anything about your trading that would not stand the test of the most searching investigation, cut it off! Cast it from you—what have you to do with it, you child of God?

So, too, with very much besides, which I have not time to mention. There are a thousand things we might plead for concerning which much might be said, but if these things, though they may be indifferent in themselves, should to any of us prove a preventive of our serving Christ, they become sins to us. Even if they are allowable to others, we have no right to touch these doubtful things. That which is not of faith, is sin—that is to say, that which you cannot do, believing it to be right, even if it is right, is sin to you. You have got to know in your own soul that it is according to the commandment, or else, as a child of God, you have no right to touch it, or go near it.

May I urge upon my dear Brothers and Sisters, the members of this Church, to avoid all places where they give Satan the advantage. In a battle it is a great thing for a general to fix his position. I do not think I should be inclined to often expose myself to the fire of a battery across a plain where the shots were constantly flying. And I pray you young people, and old people, too, never to be afraid of being too precise, but to be afraid of being too lax. This is a day in which the stern regulations of the Puritans are cast overboard and, perhaps, rightly so, some of them—but let us not go to the opposite extreme, but rather when we feel that anything comes to be a temptation to us, let us away with it and away with it without a moment's hesitation—off with the right foot, the right foot, and out with the right eye!

One thing there is which I have often to preach a little sermon about to myself. There is a tendency in some of us, especially those of us to who have heavy constitutions, to have a love of ease—and we have to drive ourselves on with a whip to constant industry. But it must be done, we must do it! Whitfield used to call out against the gouty doctor. That

minister who takes things easily will be cursed of God at the last. I believe there is no man whose condemnation will be more dreadful than that of an easy-living minister. We are bound to be the best of men, to spend and be spent in the Master's cause. The love of ease is the temptation of many, many Christians. Their love of retirement is really indolence. They get into the back ranks of the Christian army and enjoy all the good things of the Church out of a love of self. I am sure many do. We, ourselves, like spiritual ease. We do not like being stirred up too much. We do not like a little self-examination. Are there not hundreds of Christians who do not dare to look at their own souls? They are obliged to live at secondhand, hoping it is all right, but as to a thorough ransacking of their spirits, they have not gone through that by the year together! It won't do, my Brothers and Sisters! We must cut off this easy kind of Christianity. The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and only the violent will win it! A heart-searching contention against sin—and revenge against iniquity in our own souls must be carried out—for men will not go to Heaven sleeping! These are not times in which you will be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. He that would win the heavenly race must run for it. He that would get to Heaven must fight for it. The Lord stir us up and deliver us from this right-hand sin of self-confidence and love of carnal ease! The Lord help us to work for His cause while we have any strength left, and to rest in the rest which He has prepared for us on the other side of Jordan! Now I come to a close.

#### IV. WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY THERE SHOULD BE A CUTTING OFF OF RIGHT HANDS?

I shall speak first to you unconverted people about the giving up of sin.

"It is not a very pleasant operation, that of cutting off the right hand," says one. "I cannot do it. I do not like that amputation." Listen awhile, Man! Did you never have a friend that had a broken leg? Did you never go to see him in the hospital? You recollect that the doctor told you that the leg would mortify, and when the man heard that, what did he say? Did he object to have it taken off just above where it was mortifying? He was told that if it were not taken off, the whole body would perish—and was he not very thankful, indeed, when the surgeons came and removed the diseased limb?

There may be some here who have even passed through that themselves—you were glad enough to lose the arm or leg to save your life. But, Man, that sin of yours is a mortified part of your soul, your spiritual manhood! It must be given up—it will send mortification through your whole self if it is not cut off. Is there anything cruel in Christ's demanding that it should be removed? No, it is the dictate of generous and kindly Wisdom. Submit yourself to it and ask the Holy Spirit to take away your darling sin and make it distasteful to you. You will soon die, and if you die with that sin un-repented of, you can have no question about where you will go! If you have any question about it, our Lord's words that I read to you told you three times over that you will be cast "into Hell fire, where their worm dies not and their

fire is not quenched." I am not going to dwell on those words by way of explaining them. What they mean I trust you never may know, but if you ever should begin to know, you will continue to know forever and ever—"where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched," as some say it is. Oh, beware lest you run that risk! Now Man, suppose you should keep your cups, keep your bad company, keep your lusts, keep your self-righteousness—and find yourself in Hell? It will be poor consolation to you! Ah, instead of consolation, it will be another tongue for remorse, another tooth for the adder of despair. What? Did you sell your soul for that little dance, for that night of revelry, for that week's debauchery? What? Would you sell your soul for that unchaste delight or for that wild maniac shriek of pleasure? Ah, how you will curse yourselves and tear your hair and wish that you had never been born, and played the fool so horribly with your immortal soul! Let the sin go! Let the sin go! If a man were drowning with a golden belt about his loins, and could not swim because the gold was heavy, how quickly would he seek to unbind the belt! How gladly would he feel it sink in the flood, and himself begin to strike out and swim. Man, may God's Grace help you to unbuckle that belt of sin, or, pleasure, or whatever it may be—and give up all, that you might swim for eternal life through Jesus Christ!

And now, Christians, this word to you. I have hinted that there are some things that you will have to give up in order that you may grow in Grace and serve your Master. I will not keep you, but there are two or three things I have to say to you. Remember, that what you ever have to give up for Christ, it will be sweet to give up, and His precious society and approval will be a perfect recompense! No man ever lost by Christ in the long run. No, talk of giving up—are not those things most our own that we give up to Him? Have we not felt it to be far sweeter to drink the gall-cup than to drink the wine-cup if we have made the exchange to glorify His name? Ah, if the love is right, sacrifice will be the truest gain!

Besides, reflect—Christians are losers to be gainers. The farmer loses his wheat as he scatters it abroad upon the soil, but then he expects the harvest. The money that is invested and put out, the merchant has it not, but then it is making gain for him and he expects to receive it with its interest! So whatever we give up for Christ will come back to us with blessed interest in that land where to have been maimed for Christ will be nobility, where to have suffered for Christ will enroll us among the peerage of the skies, where to have died for Christ will make us brightest of the bright, amidst the fair ones, fairest of the fair! Oh, never stand questioning and parleying about anything in which Christ is concerned, but pray the Holy Spirit to keep you, from this day forward, close at the heels of the Master, casting aside every weight and every sin that besets you, and every earthly thing that attracts you—only desiring His name to be sweet upon your tongue, and His praise to be reflected in your whole character! God grant it may be so with you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, until Christ comes. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 18:1-22.



Verse 1. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? The question we have sometimes heard asked in other forms, "Which is the highest office—which form of service shall have the greatest honor?" As if we were courtiers and were to take our positions according to precedent.

2. And Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them. They all wondered what He was going to do. The little child was, no doubt, pleased to find itself in such happy company.

3. And said, Verily I say unto you— "And said, Verily I say unto you"—to you men or women who think no small things of yourselves and are wanting to know which is greatest—implying that you, each one, think yourself pretty good as it is.

3. Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Someone said to me this morning, "This is a growing day." "Ah," I said, "I hope we shall all grow spiritually." "Which way?" he asked, "smaller or larger?" Let it be smaller, Brothers and Sisters—that will certainly be the surest way of growth! If we can become much less, today, we shall be growing. We have grown up, as we call it— today let us grow down and become as little children, or else we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!

4. Whoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. The lower down, the higher up! In a certain sense the way to Heaven is downward in our own esteem. "He must increase. I must decrease." And when that straight-backed letter, "I," which often becomes so prominent, vanishes altogether, till there is not an iota of it left, then we shall become like our Lord!

5. And whoever shall receive one such little child in My name, receives Me. The humblest and the least in the family of Divine Love, if received, brings with that reception the same blessing as the reception of Christ.

6. But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me—It does not mean put him out of temper by his taking his silly offense—but shall cause him to sin, shall make him stumble, shall scandalize him—whoever shall do that.

6. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. If you have the revised version, you will see in the margin that it is a donkey millstone—not a common millstone which women used to turn—but a bigger stone which was turned by a donkey in a mill which thus was of a larger kind altogether. The very heaviest conceivable doom were better than to be a stumbling block in the way of the very least of God's people. Yet I have known some say, "Well, the thing is lawful, and if a weak Brother does not like it, I cannot help it—he should not be so weak." No, my dear Brother, but that is not the way Christ would have you talk! You must consider the weakness of your Brother—all things may be lawful to you, but all things are not expedient—and if meat offends your Brother—eat no meat while the world stands! Remember,

we must, after all, measure the pace which the flock can travel by the weakest in the flock—or else we shall have to leave behind us many of the sheep of Christ! The pace at which a company must go, must depend upon how fast the weak and the sick can travel—is it not so? Unless we are willing to part company with them, which I trust we are not willing to do. So let us take care that we cause not even the weakest to stumble by anything that we can do without harm to ourselves, but which would bring harm to them! But I am not sure if it would harm the weakest, whether it would not harm us, also, because we are not as strong as we think we are. And, perhaps, if we took a better measure, we might put ourselves among the weakest, too!

7. 8. Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offenses come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut them off and cast them from you. Get rid of that which is most useful to you, most necessary to you, rather than be led astray by it and made to sin!

8. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. Remember those are the Words of Jesus—"everlasting fire"—not the words of some of those coarse, cruel theologians that you hear a great deal about now-a-days, but the Words of Jesus Christ, the Master Himself! You cannot be more tender than He! To pretend to be so will only prove us to be very foolish!

9. And if your eye causes you to sin. So necessary to your pleasure, to your knowledge and to your guidance, yet if it make you sin—

9. Pluck it out and cast it from you: it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire. Better to be but a maimed Believer than to be an accomplished unbeliever! Better to be an uncultured saint than a cultured modern thinker! Better that you lose an eye, or lose a hand, than lose your faith in God and His Word—and so lose your soul and be cast into Hell fire!

10. Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones. So apt to do so, when a man appears to have no perfect knowledge, no large pretentions, we are so apt to think, "Oh, he is a nobody!"

10. For I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven. There is an angel to watch over each child of God! The heirs of Heaven have those holy spirits to keep watch and ward over them. These sacred intelligences who watch over the people of God, do at the same time, behold God's face! They do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word and beholding His face all the while. And if these little ones are thus honorably attended by the angels of God, never despise them! They may be dressed in fustian, they may wear the very poorest of print, but they are attended like princes—therefore treat them as such.

11. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. Another reason why you must not despise them. "What do you think?" Put on your considering cap and think a minute.

12-14. What do you think? If a man has an hundred sheep, and one of them is gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray? And if he finds it, verily I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father who is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. Nor shall they! Christ has come on purpose that He may find them—and find them He will! And having an hundred whom his Father gave Him, He will not be satisfied with ninety-and-nine, but the whole hundred shall be there. Now, as if to show us that we are not to despise the very least in the family, nor even the most erring, He brings it personally home to us.

15. Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he shall hear you, you have gained your brother. Do not say, "You must come to me." Go to him—he has trespassed against you. It is a personal affair—go and seek him. It is useless to expect the person who does the injury to try and make peace. It is the injured one who always has to forgive, though he has nothing to be forgiven! It always comes to that and it is the injured one who should, if he is of the mind of Christ, be the one to commence the reconciliation.

16, 17. But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglects to hear the Church, let him be unto you as an heathen and a publican. Quit his company. He has despised the last tribunal. Now you must leave him. Be not angry with him. Freely forgive him, but leave him.

18. Verily I say unto you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. Where the Church acts rightly, it has the solemn sanction of God. This lesser tribunal on earth shall have its decrease sanctioned by the great tribunal above. Hence it becomes a very serious matter, this binding and loosing which Christ has given to His Church.

19-20. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. It is not a large Church, therefore, that is girded with the wonderful power of prayer, but even two or three! Christ will not have us despise one. He will not have us despise two or three. Who has despised the day of small things? On the contrary, measure by quality rather than by quantity—and even if the quality fails—measure by love rather than by some rule of justice that you have set up!

21. Then came Peter to Him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times? He thought he had opened his mouth very wide when he said that.

22. Jesus said unto him, I say not unto you, Until seven times, but, Unto seventy times seven. I do not wonder that we read in another place that the disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith." For it needs much faith to have so much patience and to still continue to forgive.