



Restoring a Brother or Sister

Brownsburg Church of Christ

by Edwin Crozier

July 15, 2012

AM Assembly



Introduction:

Do you want to be with God forever? Do you want me to? What about the brothers and sisters in Christ sitting around you? Of course you do. But there is someone who does not want us to go to heaven: Satan. According to **I Peter 5:8**, Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He wants us to go to hell, separated from God. He hurls his fiery darts continuously (**Ephesians 6:16**). We must take up our shield of faith to quench those darts. Regrettably, he sometimes succeeds. Our brother's guard is down and the dart drives home and he stumbles. The roaring lion devours his prey. This is what our enemy wants. He is attacking us. We are in a fight for the souls of our brothers and sisters. When we see his victories, we must not sit idly, but fight back. How do we wage this war?

Discussion:

I. First and foremost, we pray.

- A. **Ephesians 6:18** commands us to make supplication for the saints. **Philippians 4:6** says we should not get anxious but rather make supplication to God. No matter what else has been done or who has done it, prayer is always necessary to restore a brother or sister.
- B. We should pray individually. When we are with other Christians, pray together. We should pray in our assemblies. It is always right to pray and to ask for prayers on behalf of those who are struggling or even rebelling. The devil does not want us to pray. He wants us to be afraid that family members will be embarrassed. He wants us to think the battle is already over. He wants us to think there is nothing that can be done. He would rather we deal with this from human wisdom and strength. He does not want us to rely on God. But we must.

II. Address the brother or sister.

- A. **James 5:19-20** explains we are to turn the wanderer back to the truth. In **Galatians 6:1**, Paul charged the spiritual to restore those who are caught in sin. Satan wants us to leave the brother or sister alone. Satan wants us to excuse ourselves from responsibility. Satan wants us to ignore the sin, deny the sin, or justify the sin. Satan wants us to wait to see if the brother or sister will figure out their sin on their own. Satan wants us to wait and see if someone else will do something about it. Satan wants us to go talk to other people about it. Satan wants us to wait on the elders or the preacher to do something about it. Satan wants any and all of these actions, because the longer we wait to address a brother in sin, the greater hold Satan has.
- B. God wants us to go to the brother or sister and turn them away from their sin. In **Luke 17:3**, we are told to rebuke our brother or sister if they sin. In **Matthew 18:15**, we are told if our brother sins, we are to tell him his fault alone. We must do so in a spirit of gentleness (**Galatians 6:1**). We find it difficult to conceive a gentle rebuke. In our minds it is either a rebuke or it is gentle. A rebuke is not necessarily a harsh statement, but a direct and straightforward charge to perform some action, usually to perform some kind of change. When we go to our brother, we are to rebuke him, being straightforward, clear, and direct, but not hateful, mean-spirited, angry, vengeful, or arrogant. Rather, with self-control, kindness, and love we approach our brother in private. Remember this is about restoring a brother or sister, not rejecting them or putting them in their place. Keep in mind the end of **Galatians 6:1**. We must consider ourselves that we not be tempted. While this certainly includes making sure we are not tempted to commit the sin for which we are rebuking others, the main import is about our attitude. As **vs. 3** says, we must not think we are something when we are not. Rather, we recognize we have needed rebuke and will need it again in our lifetime.
- C. The Bible demonstrates a private meeting as the norm, but there is an exception in **Galatians 2:11-21**. Paul's rebuke was before all. Peter had led others to sin. This rebuke was intended to lead all who had followed Peter in sin to follow him in restoration as well.

III. If Satan has won the battle, the church must discipline.

- A. Regrettably, some do not repent, but refuse to hear the rebuke. God has not changed His law about sin in the congregation. **Ephesians 5:27** says Christ wants His church to be holy. In **Revelation 2:14-15, 20-23**, two churches were condemned for maintaining fellowship with sin.

- B. If a brother or sister refuses to be restored, the church must act. Satan does not want this. He does not want us to do anything. He wants us to back off and be worried about whether or not the sinner will get mad. He wants us to worry about whether or not the sinner will sue the church. He wants us to be so concerned about our friendship with the sinner and his or her family that we just drop the whole matter. He wants us to complain about why the elders have not done anything. He wants us to call the preacher and ask him to preach on the topic hoping the sinner will hear and repent on his own. Satan does not want the church to do anything. Because if the church does nothing, Satan wins not only the one soul, but those of all who allow sin to go unaddressed.
- C. But the church may not act based simply on the testimony of an individual. Notice in **Matthew 18:16**, if the brother does not repent, we are to take others with us in order to establish every fact on the testimony of multiple witnesses. Jesus refers to **Deuteronomy 19:15**. Read the context of **Deuteronomy 19:15-21** and we find that the testimony was to be carefully examined by the priests and judges before the congregational action was taken. No doubt, we must do this as well. The two or three witnesses will bring the sin before the elders and they will make inquiry to determine the truth of the testimony. Hopefully, we will not need the testimony. Hopefully, the brother or sister will hear these brethren. If not, the congregation must act.
- D. Before we discuss the congregation's collective action, there is one point of technicality to note in **Matthew 18:17**, which speaks of the brother refusing to listen. It seems as though some want to protect themselves from congregational discipline. To do so, they refuse to meet with or listen to their brethren. They avoid contact. They do not show up for assemblies. They claim they cannot talk when called and do not return calls. "Refuses to listen" translates the Greek word "parakouo". According to Strong's Enhanced Lexicon and to Zodhiates' Word Study Dictionary, this term covers both neglecting to hear and paying no regard to what was heard. If someone refuses even to listen to brethren, that is a testimony to their error and sin.
- E. In **Matthew 18:17b** the text says, "And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (ESV). In other words, based on the testimony of two or three witnesses the church must now do something that either the sinner will hear or refuse to hear. What is that action? **I Corinthians 5** explains. In **I Corinthians 5:1-2** we find a situation where a brother's sin is known and confirmed by two or three witnesses. In fact, all the members of the church know it. And the church has done nothing about it. They have made no announcements. They have sent no representatives to rebuke and restore the brother. They have only been puffed up. What was Paul's command? In **I Corinthians 5:4-5**, he commanded the church to deliver such a one to Satan when they next assembled. Once the sin and lack of repentance is confirmed, the church is to withdraw from the unrepentant sinner.
- F. If the sinner refuses to hear the rebuke of individuals and that of the church, then we are not to keep company with him. Jesus said it this way in **Matthew 18:17**, "... let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." And in **I Corinthians 5:11**, Paul explains that we are not even to eat with him. In **II Thessalonians 3:14-15**, Paul explains that even at this point though we are still trying to restore him. We do not count him as an enemy. Rather, we admonish him as a brother.

IV. When they do hear, what do we do?

- A. Our hope and prayer is that we win the battle. In many cases, our brother will hear the rebuke of the individual, the witnesses, or the congregation. When he does, what are we to do? **Luke 17:3** says we are to forgive them. **II Corinthians 2:6-11** says we are to comfort them, reaffirming our love. **Luke 15:1-7** demonstrates we are to rejoice. **James 5:16** says we are to pray with them.
- B. Satan does not want us doing any of this. Satan wants us to hold a grudge. Satan would prefer we hold them at arm's length as though testing them to see if we really believe their confession to us. Satan wants us to treat them like a second-class Christian. Satan wants us to continue to call into question their motives for every forthcoming action. Why? Because that will give Satan room to attack again. Paul makes this very point in **II Corinthians 2:6-11**. We must respond properly to the lost sheep who have been found and restored to the fold or Satan will win the victory.

Conclusion:

We are in a war. Satan is the enemy and he is attacking. We must win the fight. We must stand up and not allow him to capture a single one of our brethren. We must work to restore any that are fallen. If you have sinned and a brother or sister joins in the fray against Satan, do not count them as your enemy, but as your friends when they gently rebuke you. Heed the admonition and repent, returning to fellowship with Christ. When we maintain faithfulness, a crown of life awaits us (**Revelation 2:10**).