

The Commands of Christ

Sermon # 25

“Despise Not”

Matthew 18:10-14

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. (11) "For the Son of man has come to save that which was lost. (12) "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? (13) "And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. (14) "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

To understand the context of this story we have to go to the ninth chapter of the book of Mark. Peter, James and John have just come down off of the mount of transfiguration (9:1-13). They have had a spiritual experience that the other disciples have had. We are then told (9:33) that the disciples get into a little discussion (read argument) among themselves as to who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus knowing their hearts asked them "What are you arguing about?" (9:33) and like a bunch of children they immediately clam up. So it is in this setting that Jesus calls a child to come, perhaps taking him in his arms and putting him on His lap he used the child as an illustration.

It is tempting perhaps to understand the Lord's word about "*little ones*" (v. 10) to apply only to children. But it better to understand his words here as applying not just to those who are physically children. As He held a child in his arms they were a visual illustration of God's spiritual children.

The command is found in the phrase in (v. 10) "*see that you do not despise.*" It is a warning expressed as a negative command, "*see that you do not.*" "*Despise*" is word that literally means to "*think down,*" and is reflective of looking down on someone as being inferior or not worthy of consideration. The command then really has do do with how we treat other believer's.

Dr. John MacArthur in his commentary lists seven ways that we can despise other believer's

First, Christians "*Despise*" One Another When We Flaunt Our Freedom.

It is pretty easy for us to get on a spiritual high horse and look down on everyone who does not do everything the way we do. To come to the point that we think that if someone believes

other than way we do or practices their faith a bit differently they are not as spiritual as I we are.

From what the Apostle Paul says in the book of Romans (14:3-10) the church in Rome must have been having some problems with this. He wrote, *“Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. (4) Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. (5) One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. (6) He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. (7) For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. (8) For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. (9) For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (10) But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

Paul’s words here are stark warning against the dangers of legalism. Legalism is the belief that what we do or do not do makes us more accept-able in the LORD’s sight. He reminds the believer in verse 10, that it will be enough give and account of just for our own lives, when we stand to give an account of our lives at the judgment seat of Christ that we are responsible for yourself.

Second, Christians *“Despise”* One Another When We Playing Favorites . (James 2:1-4)

The truth is that in just about any church people who are well dressed and nice groomed will receive a much warmer welcome than someone who is poorly or unsuitably dressed.

James says (James 2:1-4) *“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. (2) For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, (3) and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," (4) have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”*

Third, Christians *“Despise”* One Another When We Withhold Help From Those In Need.

The Apostle Paul chastised the church at Corinth for their failure to share with those in need. He said, (1 Cor 11:20-22) (NLT) *“It’s not the Lord’s Supper you are concerned about when you come together. (21) For I am told that some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while other get drunk. (22) What?*

Is this true Don't you have homes for eating and drinking? Or do really want to disgrace the church and shame the poor?..."

This was practice of the early church called a "love feast" and would be comparable to a church today having a potluck prior to a celebration of the Lord's Supper with those who had brought food eating it all and not sharing with those who had none. To do such a thing demonstrates a contempt for the house of God and for his poorer children.

We are reminded in James 2:15-16, *"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?"*

The Apostle John wrote in his first letter, (1 John 3:17-18), *"But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."*

Fourth, Christians "*Despise*" One Another Is By Ridiculing Their Physical Appearance.

Apparently the even the Apostle Paul was subjected to this kind of treatment for we read in (2 Cor 10:10) *"For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."*

Some of the members of the church at Corinth mocked Paul's physical appearance. Even though they admitted that his teaching was sound, even powerful, they had the audacity to mock him because of his physical looks.

"During one of Dwight L Moody's British campaigns he was repeatedly mocked in the press for his lack of proper English and his homey style. When asked to speak at Cambridge University, the epitome of British intellectualism and sophistication. Moody apparently decided to capitalize on that image in order to gain the attention of the audience. His comment no doubt also had the effect of pointing up the superficiality and irrelevance of the criticism of his grammar. He opened his message with the words, 'Don't let nobody never tell you God don't love you, cause He do.'" [John MacArthur. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 16-28. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988) p. 117]

Fifth, Christians "*Despise*" One Another When We Write Them Off As Hopeless Because They Have Stumbled Or Fallen. (Gal 6:1-2)

When a brother or sister sins and especially when it is a public and well known sin, there is a temptation to write them off, saying in effect, "Well they knew what they were doing now they will just have to live with the consequences." But Paul's advice in Galatians 6:1-2) was, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a

spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (2) Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (NKJV)

Sixth, Christians "*Despise*" One Another When We Resent A Believer Who Confronts Us.

When we sin either deliberately or unconsciously and a brother or sister lovingly confronts us, it is easy to be resentful of them. We all need loving reproof and correction from time to time. When it happens to you, be thankful that someone cares enough to confront you. Paul had to warn the church at Corinth not to resent and despise Timothy when he came to them (1 Cor 16:10-11).

Seventh, Christians "*Despise*" One Another When We Take Advantage Of One Another For Personal Gain.

In 1 Thess 4:6 Paul warns "*that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.*"

Paul's admonishment to never take advantage of a fellow believer in anyway – socially, financially or any other way.

We are to love one another, to serve one another, to pray for one another, to help one another, to encourage one another, but never, never are we to take advantage of one another.

Remember the context of the command, it was the fact that the disciples were bickering among themselves over who was the greatest that prompted this whole teaching. In their selfish ambition to climb to the top, they more than willing to put each other down.

[John MacArthur. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 16-28. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988) pp. 115-117]

Some good reasons we should not "*despise*" one another.

1. They are important enough to be serviced by angels. (10b) "... for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven."

2. They are cared for by the Chief Shepherd (11-13) "For the Son of man has come to save that which was lost. (12) "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? (13) "And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray."

3. They the Lord does not to lose any of them.(v. 14) "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."