

## STRAYING SHEEP

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Matthew 18:10-14

1. Jesus is talking to His disciples about believers.
  2. He had been asked a question by the disciples concerning greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven.
  3. His response teaches us a great deal about how the church, the family of God, is to function.
  4. We could put all the messages on this chapter in a folder titled, "Handle With Care."
  5. Jesus had already pointed out:
    - a. That we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless we are converted and become like children.
    - c. That He is intimately identified with all of God's children and takes personally how they are treated or mistreated.
  6. Here Jesus warned His disciples that they had better not despise even one of His little ones.
  7. He then went on to explain the reasons why.
- NOTE: Remember that as Jesus spoke there was a young boy standing beside Him who was dependent upon a loving and caring family.

### I. The warning.

- A. "See that you do not..."
  1. Make sure that you do not.
  2. Watch out that you do not.
- B. "...despise one of these little ones..."
  1. To think against.
  2. To fail to esteem or value.
  3. To think nothing or nothing of.
- C. Remember that these words were being spoken to men who were preoccupied with which one of them was greater than the others.
- D. The Bible clearly teaches that we are to love and value one another the same way, and to the same degree, that God does.
  1. John 13:34-35  
"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
  2. Gal 6:9-10  
Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.
- E. There are many ways that we can despise others.
  1. By showing personal favoritism. James 2:1  
My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.
  2. By closing our hearts. 1 John 3:16-18  
We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in

need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

3. By ridiculing or looking down on someone because of their appearance, demeanor or limitations. 2 Corinthians 10:10

For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."

4. By not seeking to restore those who have sinned. Galatians 6:1

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

5. By not respecting those God sends to us. 1 Corinthians 16:10-11

Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. 11 So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.

6. By judging others who do not see non-essentials exactly the way we do. Rom 14:1-4

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

## II. The reason.

A. The angels of God stand ready to come to the aid of God's little ones.

1. Speaking of angels Hebrews 1:14 asks, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"

2. The question is are we constantly beholding the face of our Father in Heaven, and do we stand ready to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

NOTE: We will deal with verse 11 when we look at Luke 19.

B. God does not write off His little ones that stray, and we shouldn't either.

1. Jesus used the same illustration in Luke 15:1-7 in reference to lost people, but here He is talking about children of God who, like sheep, have strayed from the Shepherd.

a. Jesus actively seeks His straying sheep.

b. Jesus wants restoration to take place.

c. There is rejoicing in Heaven when the one who has gone astray is returned to the flock (the church).

C. God is not willing for one of His little ones perish.

1. The Greek word translated perish here was used by Paul in Romans 14:15 and 1 Corinthians 8:11 in reference to destroying or ruining another Christian's life by our setting a wrong example.

2. As a family of God we can confidently seek those who have gone astray because we know God will give us success.

NOTE: No true child of God can perish or lose his or her salvation. John 10:27-30

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 "I and the Father are one."

## **APPLICATION**

1. As children of God there are some questions we might ask ourselves.

- a. Am I growing in maturity and usefulness to God and the church?
- b. Do I place the same value on my brothers and sisters in Christ that God does?
- c. What is my attitude towards those who have gone astray?
- d. Am I subject to straying?

2. My prayer is that PHBC will fulfill the intent of 1 Corinthians 12:24-27

But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.