

Matthew 18:1-14

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[0 : 00] to the book of Matthew, Matthew chapter 18, the gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 18. Our focus verses this morning will be verses 1 through 14 as we just continue to make our way through the gospel of Matthew.

We find ourselves in the 18th chapter and we're looking at the first 14 verses. We're in a very instrumental portion of the gospel of Matthew where all of it is very instrumental but we're in very right in the core of it.

In Matthew 16 we see the first mentioning of the church here in just a little while. We won't see it this morning but as the Lord allows us to tarry and we continue to make our way through the 18th chapter we will see the second mentioning of the church and everything between those two mentionings there are really connected to one another and we're just continuing to make our way through it.

So we are in Matthew 18 verses 1 through 14. If you are physically able and desire to do so I'm going to ask if you would join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God found in the gospel of Matthew starting in the 18th chapter in verse 1.

The word of God says, It would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

[1 : 33] Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks for it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes. If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble cut it off and throw it from you.

It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of my father who is in heaven. For the son of man has come to save that which was lost.

What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.

So it is not the will of your father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish. Let's pray. Lord we thank you so much for this day. God we are so thankful for the blessing and the benefit we have of gathering together as your church.

[2 : 47] Lord we thank you for the opportunity which we have had to lift up our voices in song. We thank you for the benefit of fellowship with other believers. But Lord now we pray that you would speak to us through your word.

Lord would the word of God penetrate to the very depth of our being. Would it draw us closer to you Lord? Would it correct us in areas in which we need correction? Would it guide us in the areas of our life in which we need guiding?

We pray that you would be glorified and honored through our understanding of it and that all things would bring you the rightful position in our lives which you so deserve. We ask it all in Christ's name.

Amen. You may be seated. As we have been making our way through the gospel of Matthew we have transitioned especially in the beginning passages of the 17th chapter about halfway through from the thought of who Christ is to what we do in light of that knowledge.

In the 16th chapter connected with the first mentioning of the church is Peter's confession of who Christ is when Jesus asks the question who do men say that I am and then he singles it down but who do you say that I am and we have the great confession of Peter and upon this confession

Jesus declares the establishment of the church and he begins to talk of all these truths and he begins to mention his suffering that would come in light of the confession that he is the Messiah. [4 : 11] We move into the 17th chapter. We see the transfiguration. We see the healing of the man's son with epilepsy. We see again this mentioning of Christ's suffering and then we go into a transition of no longer who he is but how we behave in light of who he is.

Last week when we gathered together we saw how this is true throughout all of scripture especially evident in the writing of Paul and Paul's writing so much of his letters are written with theology at the beginning of it that is how what we understand about God who we understand he is and the position of Christ and in light of all these great concepts and then we move to the practice of that of how we live in light of these great truths because understanding the truth of scripture without applying it in our daily living really is of no benefit to anyone.

The truth of scripture and the truth of who God is and who Christ is and the price which he has paid and the suffering that he endures for our sake really only brings benefit when it begins to change how we live our lives how we put those truths into practice.

Truth without application as we often say is just useless information because we can know a lot of things but if the things which we know never find application in our life then we have gained useless information.

We all have that in our life. Those useless information, those facts which really are of no benefit to us but yet we hold on to them. There are things that we understand and things that we know.

[5 : 44] When our boys were younger we gave them a book, A Boy's Ultimate Guide to Survival. It sounds really cool book to give boys and it tells you how to escape a charging rhinoceros, how to get away from a lion, what to do in case you ever find yourself tied up in the trunk of a car and all this other really cool stuff that boys just need to know.

You know, how to tie a knot that won't slip and how to avoid being eaten by a tiger and what if a snake starts eating you from your feet up? How do you get out of that? Our daughter and then some of their wives have looked at that and said, Why does this matter?

They say, Well, if a rhinoceros is ever charging me in war trace, I know exactly how to get away from it. I don't expect to ever be in that position but I may need to know that stuff at some point.

By the way, you cannot outrun them in a straight line but they can't make sharp turns either so you run in a zigzag pattern just in case you were wondering because a rhino will fall over, their mass is too big. You need to know this stuff, right?

It matters. And people look at that and say, Well, that's useless information. And while some of it, yeah, is kind of laughable and it does appear to be useless, the sad reality is that much of what men and women acquire from Scripture is treated the same way.

[6 : 58] We open up the Bible and we read it much like we would read such a book. And we see it as things which are cool to know but we really don't have to do anything in light of knowing them. And to that argument, the Word of God says that's absolutely not true because the facts that are revealed and the truths that are revealed to us, they come to us by way of revelation, not just a display of information, right?

The only reason we know who God is and the only reason we understand the suffering of Christ and the only reason we understand that He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the long-expected One is the revelation of God.

And the only reason God reveals these things to us is because He expects an application in our daily life. And at the end of the 17th chapter, we've seen the application of some of that is that we would live in such a manner that it would not even offend our enemies.

Shocking, really, in which Christ was called to pay the temple tax. And Matthew is the only one that records this. And in this calling to pay the temple tax, Jesus revealed the reality that the sons do not pay the tax but the strangers and the aliens.

And in saying that, since the temple is the house of God, and since He is the Son of God, He is excluded from the necessity of paying the tax that goes back to His own Father. Yet in spite of this, Jesus says, so that we do not offend them, He sends Peter out to cast a line into the sea and to pull up the first fish which He catches and to get the coin out of His mouth and to pay the tax.

[8 : 25] And our application is that our life ought to be lived in such a way, though we may be free from doing such things, sometimes we ought to do them so that we don't offend those who oppose us.

Living in such a way that we do not offend even our enemies. And now we come to a very familiar set of scripture in the 18th chapter, the first 14 verses.

Some of them have found really astounding applications. You read church history and you find those who take some of these passages literally, some of the early church fathers would literally mutilate themselves to keep themselves from sinning.

I know my mentor, Brother Billy Howell, came to Christ under his preaching. I answered the call of ministry under his preaching.

He also served, when he left First Baptist Normandy, he served as the Dean of Admissions at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College. I remember Brother Billy telling me of an individual who enrolled at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College with one hand.

[9 : 33] And this individual had come from overseas. And on questioning him, they asked him why he only had one hand. And he pointed to this passage and found that his hand was causing him to sin, so he had cut off his own hand.

He had taken the word of God literally. And had a very visible reminder in his life not to sin. And he had went to Clear Creek to learn the truths of scripture so that he could preach and proclaim the gospel.

That's application, right? Yeah, we don't take it that far because what we are seeing is the great truths of how these affect our lives.

And in this set of scripture, in the 14 verses which we have read, I want us to see what it looks like to determine to live humble. Determined to live humble.

Now that word humble is so important to this passage. And its literal meaning is to abase oneself or to lower one's position in society or to live with less self-worth than is natural.

[10 : 46] To determine to live at a lower position than really what one has to. Believe it or not, there was a time in which I was in middle school.

And I remember when I was in middle school, I was, this will even shock you even a little bit more, I was on the middle school basketball team. Not because I was talented, maybe because they were desperate. And someone needed to make sure that seat did not get up and go anywhere.

So I was the guy to hold the seat down on the basketball team. But on playing on the middle school basketball team, there was another gentleman who was on the team with me. And he introduced me for the very first time in the early stages of middle school to Christian music.

And he would listen to this and we would be there. And I always kind of thought he was one of these Jesus freaks guys. And he was a little bit strange and all this cool stuff. And we would listen to him. One of the first guys he ever introduced me to was Rich Mullins.

Rich Mullins really has a very peculiar place in the history of Christian music. Author of some of the greatest writer and composer and singer of some of the greatest hymns. Awesome God is probably one of his most popular.

[11 : 44] And Apostles Creed and all these other things. A lot of his songs have been re-sung and re-sung and re-sung. He was killed in a Jeep accident, really in the middle of his career, as he was on his way actually coming to Nashville, I think, for a concert.

Now, Rich Mullins had a way of coming to concerts. And people would come with great expectations. But he would also come and he would offend a lot of people. He would offend them because he would show up with no shoes, no socks on his feet. He would usually look pretty ragged.

And he would challenge the Christianity of his days to the reality of their application. And the truth is that while he was very successful in his business, in the music enterprise, and many of his records really just sold an astounding amount and made a lot of money, Rich himself never became rich.

He chose rather to have every bit of the profits from the sales of his records go to his church, which was a very small local church, while he lived on an Indian reservation and ministered to the children of the Indian reservation.

And it was the church's responsibility to pay him a reasonable salary so that he could live and to give the rest of the money to the ministries in which he supported.

[13 : 00] He made a choice to live lower. And that choice quite often offended those he came into contact with.

But yet in this passage, we see what that looks like. Much of what we read in this passage resonates not only with the teachings that we've already seen in the Gospel of Matthew, but also

those recorded by Paul.

Paul says in Romans chapter 14, remember last week when we got together, we said there was this great transition in the book of Romans. Romans 12 begins the application. In Romans 14 verse 13, Paul makes this declaration, Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this, not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

It is to be so determined in our living that others are not offended, and especially not just our enemies anymore, other believers are not offended by our life.

This is where the rubber begins to hit the road and it begins to get real. And we see this worked out in three realities in our passage. Number one, there is the character to be desired.

[14 : 26] There is the character to be desired. It says that at this time or hour, the disciples came to Jesus and said, Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Now we have a way of throwing some of the apostles and disciples under the bus, but what we must understand is these are men just like us. And they come in light of everything which they have seen.

They understand that who Jesus is. Jesus is the Son of God, and being the Son of God, He is the long-awaited Messiah. And being the Messiah, as they understand it in Old Testament prophecy, He would set up a reign.

Remember how we introduced the Gospel of Matthew? We introduced the Gospel of Matthew going all the way back to the book of Isaiah. And remember in the book of Isaiah, in Isaiah 53 in particular, it begins to speak of a coming Messiah.

And also remember that Isaiah is speaking of a coming king, not just a coming Messiah. And this king, this coming king, the prophet of the soon coming king, would be a suffering servant.

[15 : 23] Sure, he would be a suffering king, but also the government of the world would rest upon His shoulders, right? And the keys of David would never depart from His hand. And He would sit upon the throne forever.

Now we understand these things on the other side of the cross, and the tomb, and the ascension. And we understand that these things are going to be. But they're looking at it before the cross and the tomb, and they're hearing Jesus speak about death, and suffering, and dying, and being raised on the third day.

But they're also very Jewish in their context and understanding. But Isaiah says, the government will rest upon His shoulders, and He will be a king over a kingdom. So they have this very practical question.

When the kingdom of heaven is fully realized, because you are the one who's ushering in it, who's the greatest? Since you're the king, who's going to be greatest? See, the concern of the disciples here is the concern of the world.

What does it look like to ascend to a position of greatness within your kingdom? What is it going to take? What must I do? How far must I go? What deeds must I accomplish?

[16 : 26] How much should I suffer? How much should I give? What does it look like to be great? We will read another account of this later on in the Gospel of Matthew, where James and John's mother comes and asks that her two sons would be granted permission, one to sit on his right and the other to sit on his left.

That's a position of greatness. Now, these are not just some weak. I know we get this picture of John. We want to make sure we got this great biblical picture, right? We get this picture of John, and unfortunately it's really visualized in the painting of the Last Supper that is so prominent in history, and John has this kind of childlike faith, and he has this kind of innocence about him. Also remember that they're referred to as the sons of thunder, right? They're the sons of thunder. They're men with power and authority and position, and their mom wants them to reign, and this is the concern of the world.

What does it look like to be great? What does it look like to be great? And the reality is that this is man's greatest desire.

I want to be great. You see it in every realm of humanity. What does it look like? What does it take to be great not only in the kingdom of this world, but what does it look like to be great in the kingdom of heaven?

[17 : 43] They are taking world applications and transpiring them into the kingdom realities, right? They say, who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? This is the question of the disciples, and the reality is that this is the question of so many, because this is what resonates within our mind

and in our hearts.

I want to be great. I want to ascend. I want to grow. I want to promote. So what does it look like? And Jesus said to them, it's great to give them this visible representation, and he has this great decoration.

So he calls a small child, and he sets them in the midst of them or before them, and he puts this child, and look at what Christ says. Their question is, who is great?

And Jesus says, truly or amen, so be it. I say to you, unless you are converted, that is, turn, and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

So the first thing Christ affirms is, we must be sure that we're actually going to be there before we concern whether or not we're going to be great there. It's more important that we understand we're there than it is how good we're going to be when we're there.

[18 : 50] So many people get caught up on, well, where am I going to be in heaven? How great am I going to be in heaven? What position will I hold in heaven? Or what will I be able to do in heaven? The first concern that man must have is, am I going to be in the kingdom of heaven?

He says, unless you become like this child, you won't even be there. And then he goes on and defines greatness. And he says in verse 4, whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

So here we begin to see the character that is to be desired, the character that is to be desired in the believer. Now, this is important, stay with me, is the humility that is reflected in this child, this particular child which he is setting before them.

Now, children of that day had no position. They had no rank. They were paid very little attention to and really weren't really ever listened to. They knew their place in society, and they kept that place in society, especially in Jewish society, because remember the book of Leviticus?

You don't keep your place, you get stoned. That sounds pretty rough, right? Kind of keeps you in bounds. And we understand this. These are the same ones who spoke of sparing the rod, spalling the child.

[20 : 02] They knew it was to be disciplined, and all these things were there. And he puts this child of one complete dependence upon adults, complete innocence, and says, unless you're like this, you don't enter in, and unless you become like this, you're not going to be great.

So the chief character trait of the believer to be desired is humility, to humble oneself, that is, to lower one's position among others.

Stay with me on this, because the character to be desired shows us the life we are to live. It is not to be the one who accomplishes the most.

It is not to be the super saint, if you will. It is not to be the one who gives the most, who reads the most, who suffers the most. It is the one who humbles himself.

Now, humility does not mean weakness, right? Meekness also does not mean weakness. These are two words who are used to describe two men who are very strong in Scripture, humility and meek.

[21 : 14] They describe Moses and Christ. To be humble is to lower one's position intentionally for the sake of others.

And to be meek has been defined by so many people as strength under control. And we see this character trait that Christ is putting forward and says this is what it must have.

And since this is the character to be desired, he follows that with a caution to be taken. Now, we need to define something before we move on too far because this character trait is followed by a caution that every believer must adhere to.

He says, And whoever receives one such child, that's where we must stop. Whoever receives one such child. Now, the question we have to ask ourselves is, Jesus here referring to literal children or a specific child, or is he referring to something else?

And we need to define that because, just to be honest with you, many, many people have used this as a defense of, well, we need to make sure we're not doing anything to cause children to stumble. We need to make sure that if a child believes, we need to rush and do all this stuff.

[22 : 27] And we need to make sure that everything we're doing, it was for the sake of the children, for the sake of children. And while I agree with that, stay with me, because some of you are going to start casting those proverbial tomatoes at me, and don't do that quite yet, okay?

Because it is one thing not to offend a child, it's a whole other thing not to offend a believer of childlike faith. Because so unfortunately, many of us would be more than willing to live such a way in front of adults and never live such a way in front of children, because we don't want to cause those children to stumble.

What Christ is saying here is the one with childlike faith to stumble. That is the babe in Christ, or the new believer. One such child.

He is not literally referring to a specific child. He could have that application there as well. But the literal reference is to a believer of childlike faith. Now all of a sudden we're beginning to expand those whom we must be careful how we live around.

It is the believer who comes with such innocence. It is the believer who comes with such humility. It is the believer who comes with such naive faith.

[23 : 38] We see this in new believers. Do you understand that new churches baptize on average probably like five to seven times more people a year than existing churches?

You know why that is? It is because they are new. You know why it is because we need new churches? No, it is because they are new and they are not being bogged down by tradition or the way it has always been. I mean just to be honest with you.

They are doing something new. Right? And they are on fire. And they are excited. And when we get a new believer and they are on fire and they are excited. One of the first things I ever tell a new believer, especially an older and an adult that comes to Christ and man they get on fire and say don't let anybody throw water on your fire.

Why would we have to say that, right? Don't let anybody calm you down. Don't let anybody put you out.

Don't get bogged down in all these things because right now in your innocence and in your, you know, you're just really unobstructed mind. You don't know how church does and you don't know all the ins and outs of church.

[24 : 43] All you know is Jesus Christ is your Savior and Messiah. He redeems you and that's enough to set you on fire. Stay there. Stay there. Because if you ever want to get bogged down in the faith, come with me and I'll take you to a great old pastor's meeting full of, you know, 10,000 pastors and I can get you bogged down really quick.

Right? And you hear 10,000 pastors argue about some of the most minute stuff of whether or not Moses' hair was really great. I mean, I'm joking. I've never heard that, okay? But, you know, we can go there and we can figure these things out and you're just getting bogged down in it but you want to fan the flames, right?

You don't want to do any of these things. We want to understand the innocence of the new childlike faith. And here's the caution because this is who Christ is.

It is the young, new, innocent believer. Not just the child, even the adult. By the way, Romans 14, verse 13, in context, Paul is speaking to the weaker, or he's speaking in reference to the weaker brethren, not to the children.

He's telling the stronger brothers and sisters in Christ to live in such a way that they do not offend the weaker brothers and sisters in Christ. And unfortunately, we as stronger brothers and sisters in Christ sometimes say, well, they just need to grow up and get over it.

[26 : 01] Paul says, no, we need to choose to go down to them and make sure we build them up. Right? And this is what Christ, what Paul is doing here is he is reflecting what Christ is teaching us in Matthew 18.

The caution to be taken by the believer. To live in such a way that they do not offend other believers in any area. He says, whoever receives one such child or one new believer in my name receives me.

He said, well, okay, I can get that, but they need to grow up and understand things. And he goes on, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble.

Again, this is a believer. It would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Here we begin to see the severity of what we're talking about.

Up to this point, we've understood what we're supposed to be humble. Now we begin to understand how much this character trait must resonate within us. Just to be clear, this is what Christ is saying.

[27 : 17] Anyone that causes others who believe in him to stumble, it would be better for that person to have a millstone hung around his neck. By the way, that heavy millstone is the big stone

which a donkey was used to turn around and around, not the lower stone.

It is to have that big stone tied around his neck and thrown into the bottom of the sea. That's the severity. One of the sad realities in which we find is that most people leave the church because of the church.

you say, well, what's wrong with our building? The building's not the church. It's us. Most people leave because of something that was done to them.

Sometimes it's petty. I understand that. Sometimes it's their own choice to sin. I get that. But this is where we have to do self-examination.

Have my actions caused any believer to stumble? If so, the reality is Christ says it would be better for me to have a heavy millstone tied around my neck and be cast into the bottom of the sea.

[28 : 40] And if Christ is the head of the church and he is, then he has the right to tell us what needs to take place in his church. And this is where it starts getting real because here's the caution.

He says, look at this in verse 7, woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks for it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come. Now let's just stop right there and let's go ahead and admit this.

There is reason to stumble in the faith in the world all around us. You accept Christ as your Lord and Savior. You're going to try to set your life in such a way that there's nothing around you that would cause you to backslide or to stumble or to falter or to mess up and you want to live in such a way that you're pleasing to him.

The reality is this. Friend, listen to me. It is inevitable in this world that causes for stumbling will come upon you. It's going to happen. And the reason is the keys of this realm have been handed over to our enemy and as long as our enemy is in control he's going to have things that cause us to stumble.

It's inevitable. Until this world becomes the footstool of our king causes for stumbling will be prevalent. It's going to happen. Don't be bent out of shape because there are a lot of things in this world that cause you to stumble.

[30 : 06] It's just there. Our Lord and Savior himself said that's inevitable. But he says this. But woe to that man through whom the stumbling blocks come.

Now he's speaking to believers here. It says reference to the church. So let's just bring it to this application. We cannot control the reality that this world causes believers to stumble.

But I am the one who is responsible to ensure that I do not cause believers to stumble. while I cannot control what is found in this world I am absolutely responsible for what takes place in my life. You say well I'm just a sinner saved by grace. Absolutely you are. Well I'm just redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Amen. Well I am forgiven and set free.

Yes you are. But Paul looked at the most wicked church in all of Scripture the church of Corinth and called them saints. You are saved by grace but you are saints by calling. And so am I.

[31 : 25] And Jesus also said that he has empowered us with the ability to overcome that which causes others to stumble. That is the Holy Spirit. We have been given the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin it says in the Gospel of John.

And the first place he convicts is inside of me. And he does that and he breaks me and he reveals that to me and to highlight these realities to me. And the Bible also says greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world.

And then he also tells me not to suppress or to push down the Holy Spirit. So the reality is that anything in me that is rising up and causing others to stumble is not a result of my weakness but is a result of my suppression.

I'm pushing it down because he has empowered me with the ability to overcome these things though and sometimes in the flesh I would rather not. He says but whoa I knew it would be quiet this morning because it's uncomfortable and that's why I'm thankful that I preach through books of scripture that way you can't say well pastor you're picking on me I'm going to say the Lord brought you here he's picking on you take it up with him in prayer we'll see what happens right I mean I knew I was going to be here the whole time and I knew it was coming you get it in an hour on Sunday morning I get it for a week okay you got to get the overflow and I'm sorry not really I'm not sorry at all I have to tell you I have the responsibility but he says whoa to me I cannot stop the stumbling blocks that the world throws in the way of believers but I absolutely can stop the stumbling blocks that I'll throw in their way you know when I say this joke I told a group of brothers right here last Sunday and I say it laughing and joking

I've had people leave church because I didn't stop and shake their hand not here I had people leave I had a whole family leave church one time because I was coaching a junior pro basketball game in which my daughter was playing and they walked behind me and I didn't shake their hand that's the truth they told me I didn't shake their hand I didn't show them any intentions so I must not have thought they were important so they left the church I said well that's petty might be but you know what my responsibility is now if I see you in public I'm going to shake your hand I may have to knock you know time out I got to shake somebody's hand because now that's my responsibility because now that I know my responsibility I can either say well they need to get over it or I could say maybe I need to pay attention see the difference if I'm going to choose to live lower then maybe I need to meet them where they're at instead of them expecting to be where

[34 : 10] I'm at it's a choice you say well that's just not right it also wasn't right did Christ suffer for my sins that my chastisement he took that his beard was plucked while mine stays in place that his face was marred and his back was beaten while I haven't had any of that that's not fair either we're not here to talk about fairness we're here to talk about choices he says woe to that man through whom the stumbling blocks come and he begins to get a little personal and starts talking about your hand and your foot and your eye this is where we saw that direct application and really this is here just to give us the caution to be taken if there is anything in me that would cause others to stumble in the faith there is no measure to extreme to be taken to ensure that it never happens again that's a choice I have to make now the question is not and I know I'm going a little alone but this is very important the question is not do

I have the freedom in Christ to do this you say well pastor you're beginning to meddle because in Christ I am free and you are and you say well I have the freedom to do blank that is not the question because if we ever ask the question is can I do this or according to Christ can I do this you know the problem there is I is always in the middle of that and as long as I am in the middle then that's wrong the question is if I do this could others stumble by me doing this would others falter in the faith if someone saw me doing X would it cause them to stumble and if I by the power and the presence of the spirit honestly answer that could cause someone to stumble now all of a sudden I have to make a choice because see no measures too extreme to be taken to ensure no one stumbles you say but in

Christ I'm free right but in Christ you're bound to first Peter we are living stones connected to one another joined to one another being built up into a spiritual house what I have found is not every rock is created equal some of them are a little weaker than others sometimes the stronger rocks have to hold up the weaker rocks and that's okay you can't say well that's your fault you shouldn't have that crack in there you shouldn't have that you should have been a bigger rock than I am you know that's your fault that's not that's not how it works if you're the big stone you bear the load they call that a cornerstone so we see the caution to be taken the concern to be shown is the third and final thing because this caution is a direct reflection of our concern he says see that you do not despise one of these little ones that is if you have to take extreme measures to make sure that no believer stumbles if you have to radically alter your life and live in such a way that is even unpleasant to you and unwelcome towards you if you have to give up things you wish you never had to give up if you had to surrender things you wish you never had to surrender if you had to change your life that you wish you never had to change and even though you think you're free to do those things all of a sudden you don't do them because other believers could stumble if they saw you doing even if you have to do that don't despise them don't despise them see that you don't despise them don't say well you know if they would get over that

I'd be okay he says see that you don't for I say to you there are angels in heaven continually see the face of my father who is in heaven now some have used this text to say that every child has a guardian angel well we understand that the angels according to scripture all we know is that there are angels who oversee realms and kingdoms there are angels who are servants of the believers and we also know that the angels in heaven rejoice over anyone that comes to Christ how much more will their heart be broken the proverbial heart will they be downcast for those who come to Christ are caused to stumble because of us and he begins to flesh out this concern by the way verse 11 is more than likely a scribal addition to the text doesn't mean we don't have to read it it just means as I pass over it here it's not you can get any disservice verse 12 it says what do you think we have this parable of the lost lamb or the lost sheep Jesus told this parable twice one time he tells it in reference to seeking that which is lost the lost believer the unbeliever here he tells the

parable in reference to a church member because this is in church context what do you think if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray will he not leave the 99 on the mountain and go and search for the one that is straying here we see the concern that we have for the body of Christ and that if there are those missing we're seeking for them if there are those who are not present we're making sure that it's not us and if there are those who are straying that we make sure that we we make peace with them as much as possible i've had to do this a number of times to humble myself and to call others and have i offended you and when i find out that i'm the cause for offense to in all actuality work out and be reconciled and live peaceably now if scripture offends then scripture offends but if my life offends then that's my responsibility to repent of that and i understand these things i've lived these out on a daily basis i've had to pursue people that got mad even before i was a pastor and left church because i was a church member and did something wrong and i've had to ask for forgiveness of things that i didn't think that i was wrong on but i know it caused them to stumble so therefore the fault relies with me and i've had to go and ask their forgiveness for those matters now they didn't extend that forgiveness and that's their responsibility but i know that i'm free of it because it does not say that we will always find them it says if it turns out that he finds it if it turns out the reality is is just because we have a concern for those and we try to be reconciled with those and we try to go after those who are strange not every one of them will because the enemy of our souls is really at work if it turns out that he finds it truly i say to you he rejoices over it more than over the 99 which have not gone astray it's living out of concern living out of concern for other believers so it is not the will of your father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish here's a direct application when we determine to live humbly we're no longer concerned about how great are we going to be in heaven but rather we're concerned about living out the principles of heaven on earth and since it is not the father's concern that any that he draws to him would stumble we need to ensure that it is the concern of our life to ensure that nothing in us would cause those which the father draws to himself to stumble and you say well pastor i wish that you would give me direct application tell me if i need to stop doing this this this or this the reality is my friend listen the spirit inside of you can speak to you more than i can and you know beyond a shadow of your doubt what it is god is saying this needs to be changed i know it in my life and you know it in yours the only question we ask ourselves is are we going to choose to see that our freedoms are more important or are we going to see humility as the greatest character traits for the believer and the choice is ours and he puts it before us and it's asked us to ensure that we don't cause any to stumble let's pray lord thank you for this day thank you for your word we pray that your word would resonate within our hearts and minds that the truth of scripture would captivate us and that it would draw us closer to you in every step of the way and we ask it all in jesus name amen you you you you you you you

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