

- Note HOW this restoration is to be accomplished: through the written word of God and reliance upon the indwelling Holy Spirit to apply God's word to that individual's soul.
 - Note the MANNER in which this is to be accomplished: "in a spirit of gentleness", humility and Christlike love
4. The goal sought: that the local body of believers not be weakened through neglecting the discouraging effects of sin upon one another and through the lack of manifesting love for one another; but instead, be strengthened and united in being what God wants us to be – His clear and distinct light in this dark world in which we live

III. The Necessity – is manifested by the commands (the imperatives) that are given in these Scriptures considered.

IV. The Applications

- A. To Believers: Be diligent to Maintain Unity By Maintaining a Clear Conscience Before God and Men
1. Sin disrupts the individual believer's communion with God and can disrupt the unity in a local church
 2. Forgiveness is commanded of believers, when the offender repents and asks for forgiveness. Matt.18:21, 22
 3. Let us be "*imitators of God*" (Eph.5:1), who when "...we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins..." (I Jn.1:9) Lk.17:3-4 > "*Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 17:4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent, ' you shall forgive him.*"
 4. As we want God to forgive us, let us forgive those who sin against us – Matt.6:12, 14, 15; Mk.11:25, 26
- B. To unbelievers: BEFORE you can give yourself to MAINTAINING Biblical unity by MAINTAINING a clear conscience before God and men, you have to POSSESS a unity with God! This eternal unity with God is a gift of God. It cannot be earned or bought. It comes only through being born of God - Jn.1:12, 13 > "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 1:13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*"
- May you be born of God!

Maintaining Unity By Maintaining a Clear Conscience Before God and Men

Matt.5:23 & 24; 18:15-17; Gal.6:1

I. The Scriptures

- A. Matt.5:23, 24 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that **your brother has something against you**, 5:24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."
- B. Matt.18:15-17 "Moreover if **your brother sins against you**, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 15:16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that '*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*' 15:17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."
- C. Gal.6:1 "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."

II. The Mechanics – What to do and When to do it

- A. In the situation where you are the offending party, Matt.5:23, 24
1. The situation described is one of worshiping God. It is there, before the gift is offered, that the individual providentially remembers that he/she has offended another individual. An example: an angry, hateful or demeaning word spoken by you about another person > Matt.5:21 & 22.
 2. The importance of it (this Biblical confrontation) is seen in that the offending person's gift giving to God is to be stopped and the offense attended to (resolved) before acceptable gift giving to God is to be continued. In other words, this offense has interrupted that person's acceptable worship of God. It has interrupted that person's personal communion with God, Isa.59:1, 2
 3. The procedure to follow:
 - Leave, at the altar, the gift (sacrifice) that you were going to offer to God. In other words, hold back in offering the gift you had brought and were intending to give to God.
 - Go to the person that you have offended

- **Be reconciled**; that is, seek reconciliation with that person by acknowledging your sin against them and by asking for their forgiveness.
 - **Offer your gift**; that is, resume your intended gift giving to (worship of) God
4. **The goal sought**: a conscience clear of offense before God and before men; a resolved conflict (offense) and a restored unity and fellowship with that person In Acts 24:16 the apostle Paul states, “...I myself *always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*”
- Eph.4:1, 3 > “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to *walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,...4:3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

B. In the situation where you are the one being offended, Matt. 18:15-17

1. The situation described is one of you being disturbed in mind and heart by an offensive word spoken to you or about you, or by an offensive action done to you or against you. It is a sin that has been committed against you. Sin is any lack of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. An ex.: an angry, hateful, or demeaning word spoken by another person against you
2. The importance of it, is seen in the resulting disunity of mind and heart, and the severed communion between you and that offending person.
3. The procedure to follow:
 - a. **Step 1**: **go** to the offending individual, one on one, **and tell** the individual how he or she has offended you – make the sin known. If the fault is acknowledged and forgiveness is requested, then forgiveness is to be given. You have gained your brother. This is where the matter ends.
 - b. **Step 2**: **go** to the offending individual again, but this time **take with you one or two witnesses**, that every word and response may be established as actually having been said and done. Again make known the sin, seeking acknowledgement and resolution, through the asking for forgiveness by the offending party and the granting of forgiveness by the offended party. (Restitution may be

necessary also, depending upon the offense committed – such as something stolen or broken.) If such a resolution is achieved, the situation is resolved. This is where the matter ends.

- c. **Step 3**: **tell** it to the church. “*But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and tax collector.*” That is, love him as you would an enemy or love him as you would an unconverted neighbor; but do not love him as you would a brother or a sister in Christ.

4. **The goal sought**: the glory of God, the spiritual good of the church and the spiritual good of the offending individual. As believers in Christ Jesus, we are to be continually “*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” (Eph.4:3) – to be a local assembly of believers working in harmony and unity with one another, under the authority and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church

C. In the situation where you observe one being overtaken in a fault, Gal.6:1

1. The situation described is where one of the members of a local body of believers, is overtaken in any trespass, whether it is through a lack of the knowledge of God’s written word or through a lack of spiritual strength and maturity. All the members of a local body of believers (a local church) are to be looking out for one another, especially those who are the “spiritual” ones.
2. The importance of it, is seen in the defeated and weakened state of the overtaken believer, which in turn affects the overall strength of that whole, local body of believers.
3. The procedure to follow:
 - **Note WHO** is to carry out this directive (imperative). It is “*you who are spiritual*”. Those who are spiritually mature, well-grounded in the word of God, and consistently manifesting holiness in their daily lives
 - **Note WHAT** they are to do: “*Restore such a one*” –
 - This is what the LORD, our shepherd, does to and for each one of His sheep, Ps.23:3 > “*He restores my soul...*”
 - This is how the LORD restored Elijah in I Ki.19. It was the spoken word of God that restored Elijah’s soul.