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God's People Will Never Be Lost; Matt 18:10-14

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Introduction – The first section of Matt 18 is instruction. Jesus is teaching that we must humble ourselves like children are humble to enter the kingdom of heaven. We must repent from our self-sufficiency and realize our utter dependence upon God.

The second section is warning. Jesus mentions temptation in the first section, so He follows up in the second section with a stern and startling warning concerning temptation. The tempter stands under the judgement of God and in order to win against temptation, we must take drastic measures, life-altering measures in order to avoid being enslaved to sin and facing eternal ruin.

The third section answers a major question raised by the second section. If temptations are sure to come, and Jesus says they are in v7 and if we, even as believers, still sin at times – how will we escape eternal ruin? If the end of giving in to temptation is eternal ruin and we've all given in to temptation from time to time, will we be lost too?

The Bible answers that question in several ways. First, as we saw last week, Jesus teaches that true believers will eventually sever their ties to sin. That's a major difference between true belief and unbelief. Unbelief will embrace sin. True belief, having embraced the Savior, will not dwell in sin long before it repents and turns to God for forgiveness and restoration.

But the ultimate reason true believers will not be enslaved by sin is because God is keeping us. God is saving us. That's why we as Baptists have the doctrine of eternal security. That's why we believe in the perseverance of the saints. God's people will never be lost because God will never lose them! In our passage today Jesus answers the question what about believers who sin by pointing us to our Father who is in heaven.

- I. God's Care is All Encompassing (v10)
  - a. Do not despise one of these little ones. Again Jesus is using the language of children figuratively to speak of believers. Don't despise

believers, either because they are believers or because they are prone to stray at times. Don't look down on your brother or sister who sins with judgment or condemnation. In fact, the next section of Matt 18 Jesus gives instruction on how we are to respond to our brothers and sisters who sin.

- b. But do not despise them – “For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.”
  - i. The angels in heaven are the messengers of God. They worship God. They battle evil forces. They carry out God's will. And one of their primary duties is to keep watch over every one of God's little ones.
  - ii. Psalm 91:11 says – For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
  - iii. God's heavenly ambassadors are keeping watch over His people.
- c. The point in bringing up angels is not so we get enthralled with angelology. Every time in the Bible a believer thinks he should worship an angel, the angel is first to say – don't do that. Worship God only. We are not to get caught up in trying to figure everything out about demons and angels. That's the spiritual realm. God's got that covered.
- d. The point is – we can be assured that God's care for us as His people is all encompassing. He knows everything about us, even the number of hairs on our head. He sees everything about us, even down to the thoughts of our minds and intentions of our hearts. And He watches over us for our good, even to the point of dispatching the armies of heaven to surround us.
- e. You can be assured that you will never stray or drift too far from the Lord because He never loses sight of where you are. “Don't despise these little ones because my Father really loves them!” Which brings us to the parable Jesus now tells. When God's people are distracted by temptation, when God's people begin to drift from His will, what does He do?

## II. God's Grace is Unrelenting (vv12-13)

- a. He goes after His straying sheep and brings them back to His fold!  
Psalm 23:6 – Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
  - i. How do I know with absolute certainty that I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever? Because I know with equal certainty that goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!
- b. Hear the lesson from the human shepherd. A good shepherd will not lose a single sheep. Now a lazy shepherd might. A lazy shepherd might reason, “I still have 99. Losing 1 is not a big deal.” But as Psalm 23 reminds us – God is not a lazy shepherd! When He is our shepherd, we shall not want.
- c. This shepherd goes and searches and finds that straying sheep, and rejoices to bring it home.
- d. The Father is that kind of shepherd. And we are that kind of sheep. Oh, how we roam. Oh, how we think to find greener pastures. The hymn writer said it well – Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love!
- e. Sheep roam and sheep wander – but the Shepherd is unrelenting in His grace to never lost a single sheep.
- f. There is one difference between the human shepherd in the parable and God the Shepherd of His people. Jesus says, “If he finds it.” If he finds it. He’s human. He may search. He may try. But he may not find his straying sheep. Or he may find it too late after the wolves have had their feast.
- g. God, on the other hand, never fails to find His sheep.
  - i. John 10:26-30
- h. God, in His grace, will hunt His straying sheep down and bring them back rejoicing!
- i. We spoke of Adam and Eve last week when we talked about the nature of temptations. What did God do when Adam and Eve sinned? What did He do when they strayed from His will?
- j. Gen 3:8 says God came to them walking in the garden in the cool of the day. He went to find His straying sheep. And He called out to them because they were hiding from Him in their sin, “Where are you?”

- k. And v21 says God made for Adam and Eve garments of skin and clothed them to cover their nakedness.
  - l. The first time God's sheep strayed sin entered and so did death. Adam and Eve would now physically die, and they would lose so much because of their sin. The consequences of sin would remain. They would be cast out of the garden. And they spiritually fell and began to taste spiritual death, but God in His unrelenting grace, would make a way.
  - m. The sacrificial, substitutionary system was introduced. The first thing to die was an animal so that God might cover them in their sin. When Adam and Eve looked upon a dead carcass, it must have been shocking to see death for the first time and to realize Satan is a liar and sin comes with a price.
  - n. What God did there in the garden was a foreshadowing of what He would do in the fullness of time by sending His Son to be the perfect, final sacrifice for each and every one of His people. That we might be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. That our sin too might be covered. That we too, although deserving eternal death because of our sin, might live with God forever!
  - o. Oh, the grace of God, the good Shepherd, will not lose a single sheep.
- III. God's Will is Unchangeable (v14)
- a. So Jesus says the conclusion of this parable, the point of this parable is this: It is not the will of the Father in heaven that one of His little ones should perish!
  - b. For a believer to be eternally lost, for a believer to lose His salvation, the will of God would have to break! That doesn't happen!
  - c. God's will sustains you. God's will keeps you. God's will preserves you. God's will saves you! If you love Jesus and follow Jesus you cannot be lost – God is keeping you!
  - d. Rejoice, dear believer! Doubt not and fret not over your eternal state. You cannot be lost. But for the true believer, that knowledge is not a license to sin – Paul says in Romans 6 – shall we sin then that grace may abound, by no means!
    - i. That's how false professors respond to God's grace. Oh well, if I can't be lost, then I'll sin as much as I want. Because a false professor wants sin, not Christ.

- ii. The true believer hears of God's unrelenting grace and unchanging will to save him, a wretched sinner, and he responds by removing a hand, a foot, or an eye. He can't stand to sin against so gracious a Savior!

Conclusion – Dear believer – have assurance in your salvation, rejoice in your Savior, and make war on your sin!