

What Do You Say Concerning Transgressions of Others?

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Introduction

Character, consistency and personal purity are prerequisites if we are to effectively help others with their trials and temptations, sins and shortcomings (Psa. 51:10-13; Matt. 7:1-5).

Psalm 51:10-13 (NASB95) — 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You.

Matthew 7:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2 “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

Relevant Admonitions

Old Testament

The Law of Moses offered sound advice on helping others in times of spiritual need (Lev. 19:17; Psa. 141:5; Prov. 9:7-12; 19:25; 25:12; 27:5-6).

Leviticus 19:17 (NASB95) — 17 ‘You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.

Psalm 141:5 (NASB95) — 5 Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it, For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.

Proverbs 9:7-12 (NASB95) — 7 He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, And he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself. 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you. 9 Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning. 10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. 11 For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you. 12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

Proverbs 19:25 (NASB95) — 25 Strike a scoffer and the naive may become shrewd, But reprove one who has understanding and he will gain knowledge.

Proverbs 25:12 (NASB95) — 12 Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprover to a listening ear.

Proverbs 27:5-6 (NASB95) — 5 Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

New Testament

The Gospel of Christ contains similar exhortations on helping a brother who has fallen into sin (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:1-4; Gal. 6:1-5; Eph. 5:11-14; 1 Tim. 5:19-21; James 5:19-20).

Matthew 18:15-17 (NASB95) — 15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 “But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Luke 17:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 He said to His disciples, “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! 2 “It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 “And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

Galatians 6:1-5 (NASB95) — 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. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one will bear his own load.

Ephesians 5:11-14 (NASB95) — 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 14 For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.”

1 Timothy 5:19-21 (NASB95) — 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. 20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. 21 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

James 5:19-20 (NASB95) — 19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Relevant Examples

Old Testament

King David responded positively to the rebuke of Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 12:7-15).

2 Samuel 12:7-15 (NASB95) — 7 Nathan then said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 ‘I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! 9 ‘Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. 10 ‘Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ 11 “Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. 12 ‘Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’ ” 13 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. 14 “However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.” 15 So Nathan went to his house. Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s widow bore to David, so that he was very sick.

King Asa was unreceptive to the criticism of Hanani the Seer (1 Kings 15:8-15; 2 Chron. 16:7-10).

1 Kings 15:8-15 (NASB95) — 8 And Abijam slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son became king in his place. 9 So in the twentieth year of Jeroboam the king of Israel, Asa began to reign as king of Judah. 10 He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother’s name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. 11 Asa did what was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father. 12 He also put away the male cult prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols which his fathers had made. 13 He also removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and

burned it at the brook Kidron. 14 But the high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to the Lord all his days. 15 He brought into the house of the Lord the dedicated things of his father and his own dedicated things: silver and gold and utensils.

2 Chronicles 16:7-10 (NASB95) — 7 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, “Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand. 8 “Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand. 9 “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.” 10 Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.

New Testament

The apostle Peter rebuked Simon the Magician, who sought to purchase the gift of God (Acts 8:9-24).

Acts 8:9-24 (NASB95) — 9 Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; 10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, “This man is what is called the Great Power of God.” 11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. 13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. 14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, “Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” 20 But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 “You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 “Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 “For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.” 24 But Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

The apostle Paul denounced Elymas because he sought to turn Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, away from the faith (Acts 13:4-12).

Acts 13:4-12 (NASB95) — 4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. 6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, 10 and said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 “Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.” And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

Leading Apollos to a fuller understanding of the truth, Aquila and Priscilla pursued a gentler approach, taking him aside and explaining to him the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:24-28).

Acts 18:24-28 (NASB95) — 24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Paul publically rebuked Peter, when he acted hypocritically and unbrotherly toward Gentile disciples (Gal. 2:11-14).

Galatians 2:11-14 (NASB95) — 11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Conclusion

Cultivating the qualities of love, let us seek the highest good of our brethren – reproving, rebuking and exhorting them with patience and Biblical instruction (1 Cor. 13:4-7; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Pet. 4:7-11; Rev. 3:19-22).

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NASB95) — 4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

1 Peter 4:7-11 (NASB95) — 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 3:19-22 (NASB95) — 19 ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”