

256. Brotherly Admonition.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Gal. 6, 1.

If a Christian sees a brother sin, a fellow-Christian belonging to the same church, or if he does some wrong to him, what shall he do? Hate him? No; Lev. 19,17 God says: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him." Instead of hating him, he should show him brotherly love by telling him his fault, for the purpose of gaining him, that is, of bringing him to repentance with love and patience, in a friendly, brotherly way, and induce him to amend his ways. Is it not your sacred duty, if you are a Christian, to restore such a one? If you see great bodily danger threatening him, you warn him. Why? Because he may lose his life. If you see him sinning, you know that he is in danger of losing life eternal, – and you do not care to warn him? Is that acting toward him in a brotherly manner? Is not eternal life worth infinitely more than temporal life?

Matt. 18 the Lord says: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him *alone*; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." The Lord says: "Go and tell him his fault." Convince him of his sin, so that, by the grace of God, he will repent of it. Do it in a spirit of love with a view to gaining him.

But if he does not hear you? The Lord says: "If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more that in the mouth of two or three *witnesses* every word may be established." If you do not succeed in gaining the erring brother, you are to take one or two brethren as witnesses, and jointly with these you are to admonish him again. Wisdom and love dictates the selection of friends of the erring brother for this purpose. And these friends are not only to be reliable witnesses of what is said and done, but they, too, should add their earnest exhortations and entreaties. If, nevertheless, he persists in his sin and neither hears the witnesses, what is to be done then? The Lord says: "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the *church*." The whole local congregation shall admonish and warn him.

Prayer.

O Lord Jesus, dearest Savior, when Satan attacks us, stand by us; when the world persecutes us, take us into Thy protecting arms; when flesh and blood overpower us, strengthen us in spirit; when we err, bring us back to Thy fold; when we fall, raise us by Thy hand; when we become weak and weary in the performance of our duties, refresh us; when our Christian brethren admonish and warn us, grant us grace to listen to them, and open Thou our eyes, so that we may see the error of our ways; when the whole local congregation exhorts and entreats us, let us not neglect to hear this voice lest it be said of us: "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Comfort us with Thy grace, and may Thy joyful Spirit uphold us. Amen.

To find a goodly human soul is gain;
To keep it does great pains and labor cost;
Most difficult the task – it oft seems vain –
To save the soul that was already lost.

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