

The Principle of Two or Three

Matt 18:18-20

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

- I. Introduction
- A. Review: Consecration, Conscriptio, And Compassion
 1. Those of you who were at the fellowship service Friday night heard the message about Consecration, Conscriptio, and

Compassion. That is a three-step plan for the church to be the church.

2. I mentioned that Jesus established His church on some foundational truths that Peter had received by revelation: that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.
3. That made sense to the Jews of the first century, but to help you and I, that means that Jesus was God in flesh who had come to save the world from their sins.
4. So based on that foundation, the role of the church is to preach a message known as the gospel: that Jesus died for our sins and was buried, and that He rose again to life which meant He had paid the penalty for sin (death) and in that act of resurrection, also defeated the penalty of sin (death).
5. God in flesh had come to save the world from their sins. That is the gospel message.
6. And when the church was born on the Day of Pentecost, Peter taught that the way for people to obey the gospel and make it

apply to their own sins, was first to believe the gospel message, and demonstrate that believe by repenting of their sins, being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of those sins, and then receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

7. That is the foundational truth upon which the church was founded and which we must continue in.
8. But just knowing about this truth and keeping it inside of the walls of this building does not build the church that Jesus said the gates of hell will not prevail against.
9. For the church to be the church means we must have
 - a. (1) consecration: consecrate our lives to God by removing things that preoccupy us and keep us from the work of the kingdom;
 - b. (2) conscription: sign up for service in God's kingdom warfare where only the violent take it by force. And remember,

our enemy is not flesh and blood but principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places that has taken prisoners of our family, friends, neighbors with the strong shackles of sinful habits and addictions. And third,

c. (3) compassion: when we see someone suffering as a victim of their own sins, and their families suffering as victims as well, rather than facing them as their judge and condemning them, we see them with compassion, save them by fear, reaching out to them and pulling them out of the fire.

10. That is as we read in:

Jude 21-23

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

- B. The prayer of two or three
 - 1. The message this morning ties into that three-fold mission of consecration, conscription, and compassion
 - 2. One of the most important ways that the church can participate in spiritual warfare, is through prayer.
 - 3. I'm not talking about the 5-second prayer over a meal, or the 15-second prayer of "now I lay me down to sleep."
 - 4. I'm talking about the kind of prayer that reaches into the fires of hell, violently pulls a sinner out of the grasp of the kingdom of darkness and brings them to the kingdom of heaven.
 - 5. Jesus said the kingdom heaven suffers violence. The adversary is trying to steal what rightfully belongs to God, but the

church, as God's hell assault force, engages in a type of prayer that is violent, and conquers the forces of hell.

6. That is the kind of prayer that I'm talking about that accompanies our mission of consecration, conscription, and compassion.
 7. So I want to preach something I don't believe I have ever advocated for the church before, it is a form of prayer I feel we as a church need to start putting into practice and commit to based on The Principle of Two or Three.
- II. When two or three make a difference
- A. For you and me
 1. As I look at my life, and at you in this church, there are many stories of people who have come out of darkness into His marvelous light. And while your testimony is how you came to God and were set free

from sin's stronghold on you, you did not make that journey alone.

2. Yes, salvation is a one-to-one relationship between you and Jesus based on His Word, but for most of us, there were at least two or three others who helped us on that journey out of darkness into light.
3. They witnessed to you, they prayed for you, and when you came down to the altar to give your life to God, they were on either side of you praying for you as you repented, and praying for you when you received the Holy Ghost.
4. In fact, they were so much a part of your story, they probably had laid their hands on you during that important prayer.
5. Think about that for a moment. You can probably name those two or three right now.
6. Well if that is how many of us got in, is it likely that others will come in through that same principle of two or three who

influenced that most important transition of your life, your born again experience, your being pulled out of the fire through the compassion and intense prayer of two or three others.

7. Well by God's grace, I feel our next step in pursuing the treasures in the field, the much people in this city that He wants to bring in, is through the principle of two or three.
 8. I am convinced this is larger revelation than I currently realize, but by God's grace, we will see it at work doing the taking by force that Jesus spoke of.
- B. In the law
1. There was a principle set forth in the law of Moses that pertained to the power of a group of two or three people who could establish a testimony as a definite fact.
 2. For instance, if a group of two or three people were present and witnessed

someone breaking the law, that group of witnesses could come before the judge, and the joining together of those three individuals to testify of the same thing, was all that was needed to convince the judge of the certainty of the crime.

*Deut 19:15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, **shall the matter be established.***

3. The standard for a fact to be legally established, was that two or three had to relate a consistent testimony, and if they did, the judge could pronounce the testimony as a legal certainty.
4. The law could have said 15 or 16, but God, in his providence, established a great power and authority would be possessed by a small group that agreed on a testimony.
5. The power of that agreement of a few was so great, that even in serious crimes that

included the potential of a capital punishment sentence, the judge could be certain of the crime and the sentence by the significant weight and authority that was carried upon the agreeing testimony of two or three.

6. One single testimony did not meet the legal standard. Two or three were required:
Deut 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.
7. That principle was familiar even in the church age. The writer of Hebrews reminded the church about it:
Heb 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:
8. But notice the intense language that is invoked in that passage.

9. The testimony of the two or three was all that was necessary to cause a person who was guilty of a capital crime, like murder
 - a. —to establish the crime as a fact, and
 - b. —to cause the murderer to face the death penalty without mercy even being considered.
10. Remember that point. The availability of mercy was either present or absent at the hands of two or three.
11. We'll come back to that point later but just to restate again—mercy was available or not available based on the witness of two or three agreeing individuals.
 - c. In church discipline
 1. So let's move the principle of two or three out of the court of the dispensation of law into the church age.
 2. Jesus said the principle of two or three even applied even in matters of church discipline.

3. If two people in the church were to have a dispute they could not settle between them, then then bring in two or three other witnesses to establish a basis for resolving the dispute.

Matt 18:16 But 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.

4. That is significant. Jesus said disputes among brothers and sisters can be resolved by two or three coming together in agreement on a solution, and their agreement can dissolve a disagreement.
 5. How does that happen? It is sort of a legal warfare that the power of agreement can win against a powerful dispute.
- D. In spiritual warfare
1. But the principle of two or three reaches beyond one-on-one interactions between individuals, it reaches into the spiritual

realm. And that is where I believe the church needs to be more engaged in order to take the kingdom by violence.

2. Listen to how just two verses later, how Jesus expanded the principle of two or three to reach beyond just a dispute between individuals, to disputes between heaven and earth.

Matt 18:18-20

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

3. When there is a battle over a soul on earth, as the church is trying to, as we read in Jude

23, pull that soul out of the fire, there can be an agreement between two or three as touching this thing.

4. And in that prayer, do as Jesus did when taking authority over the devil and casting him out:

Mark 3:27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

5. In our prayer over that soul we are pulling out of the fire, two or three can agree together on binding the power of darkness, and on loosing the individual from the devil's grip.
6. The kind of prayer I believe the Lord is pressing us toward is kingdom warfare prayer where that group of two or three see themselves as the Army's Green Berets or Delta Force, or the Navy Seals—God's special forces, who have been tasked with a dangerous hostage rescue mission to pull

them out of the grip of a strong man who shackled them to a fiery destruction.

- E. By enforcing Jesus' victory
- 1. The difference here is that the real danger of this confrontation was faced already in a previous battle between that strong man and One stronger than him:
*Luke 11:22 But when a **stronger than he** shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*
- 2. So our prayer warfare does not have to look as dangerous and dramatic as the Navy Seals taking out Osama Bin Laden, because Jesus was the stronger than he who defeated the devil by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Jesus put satan to open shame by this defeat.
- 3. However, people take on the shackles of the devil when they falling for his deceitful

traps of temptations, that lead to sin, which leads to spiritual death.

4. And the real tragedy of that kind of trap that satan uses to hold his victims, is that sometimes the people do not realize they have been trapped until much later.
 5. But at some point, when they have reached the rock bottom of desperation, then they begin to cry out for deliverance but seem to be unable to break free by themselves.
- F. Through prayer warfare
1. That is when the principle of two or three comes in. There is a tremendous power to bind and loose that is given to two or three when they agree:
Matt 18:16 But 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.
 2. That was Matt 18:16 that established the power over disputes when two or three

agree, but look at Matt 16:18 for how that principle was applied to the church in binding and losing in battles with hell:

Matt 16:18-19

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

3. The two or three who agree together in prayer can be God's special forces team, a task force who is not tasked with defeating the devil—Jesus already did that. But with enforcing the truth of the Word by using the authority provided to the church to use Jesus' victory by applying it to that individual who needs to be loosed.

4. In that intercessory prayer of the two or three, we can use the principle of two or three and bind the adversary with shackles that Jesus forged for him, and then loose that one who has been shackled with the deception of the devil.

5. We march into that prison cell, we pull them out of the fire without fear of being burned because:

Luke 10:19-20

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

6. I exercise Jesus' authority and put the enemy in his place, and then pull that soul into Jesus' place, and then rejoice as their

names are written heaven in the Lambs Book of Life!

III. Conclusion

1. Earlier I said there was a verse I wanted to come back to consider:

Heb 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

2. This was a reminder to the church how that the connection to mercy was established by the testimony of two or three.
3. In other words, those two or three had the power to testify of the sins of that individual, which meant they would die without mercy, or they had the power to testify of their innocence, which meant they would live with mercy.
4. So using the principle of two or three, those 2 or 3 prayer warriors can testify, or I will say, pray on behalf of that soul who had One who was willing to pay the penalty of

their sins by dying for them on the cross and then rising from the grave alive and victorious over sin and death.

5. When the church learns how to come together in that type of prayer warfare, His Word assures us of the liberty that comes when that prayer is answered and that soul repents of their sin, is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and is filled with the Holy Ghost.

6. Then the last verse of Hebrews chapter 10, states how that at the hands of two or three witnesses, mercy was found and the soul was saved:

Heb 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

7. The application of the principle of two or three is that the church needs to initiate a regular practice of joining in these little prayer teams with large power to bind and loose in heaven and earth.

