THE QUESTION

What counts as a sin against you (Matthew 18:15)?

Asked by a THF member on November 15, 2026 · published November 21, 2026 · 10 numbered quotations · the 28 early Christian passages and 114 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-counts-as-a-sin-against-you-matthew-18-15

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

A sin against you is a wrong that a fellow believer does to you personally. Tatian and the Didache describe it as one believer acting wrongly toward another. You go to him alone first, correct him in peace, and forgive him when he repents. Origen also lists everyday faults, like insults and lies, that people are often rebuked for.

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HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
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POINT 1 OF 6

It means a brother wronging you personally

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tatian's second-century gospel harmony words Matthew 18:15 as a brother who acts wrongly toward you. The Didache, which points readers to Matthew 18:15-17, speaks the same way of anyone who acts wrongly against another. Both describe a wrong that one person does to another person, which is then to be dealt with between them.

1 "And if your brother acts wrongly toward you, go and reprove him between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 27 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 6, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 "But if anyone acts wrongly against another, let no one speak to him, and let him hear nothing from you until he repents."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 6

Origen lists faults people are often rebuked for

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

In his comments on this verse, Origen names common faults that almost everyone has been rebuked for more than once: abusive speech that insults a neighbor, being carried away by anger, drinking too much, lying, and idle words. Some of these, like insults, are done to another person; others, like drinking, are not. He calls them common among the crowds.

3 "For I do not think anyone will easily be found who has not been rebuked three times for the same kind of sin, such as abusive speech, by which revilers insult their neighbors, or being carried away by anger, or excessive drinking, or lying, or idle words, or any of those things that are common among the crowds."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 13 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 16, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 6

Origen weighs whether every sin is meant

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen notes that the verse itself does not say which sins it covers. Some readers say limiting it to small sins goes against the kindness of Jesus. Others say a person living in grave sins is not truly a brother, even if he is called one. He sets out both readings.

4

"Whoever pays close attention to this statement, as proof of the surpassing kindness of Jesus, will say this: since the words do not suggest any difference among sins, people act in a strange way and against the goodness of Jesus when they add the idea that these words should be understood as limited only to lesser sins."

later in the same passage

"But another person, also paying close attention to the statement, and not wishing to bring in these outside ideas, yet not admitting that it speaks about every sin, will say that the man who commits those great sins is not a brother, even if he is called a brother."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 13 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 16, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 6

Correct him in private and in peace

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Didache tells believers to correct one another calmly, not in anger, as Matthew 18:15-17 teaches. The Apostolic Constitutions say sinners are to be corrected in private, and those who repent are to be welcomed back, following the Lord's rule.

5

"And correct one another, not in anger but in peace, as you have it in the Gospel"

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

6

"Sinners are to be corrected in private, and those who repent are to be received, according to the constitution of our Lord."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 21, page 7** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 5 OF 6

Forgive him when he repents, again and again

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria quotes Jesus: a brother who sins against you is to be rebuked, and forgiven if he repents, even seven times in a day. The Apostolic Constitutions say the Lord gives you authority to forgive the sins your brother has committed against you, up to seventy times seven.

7 “If your brother sins against you," it says, "rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and turns to you the seventh time and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.12 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 13, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

8 “For the Lord has given you authority to forgive those sins of your brother that he has committed against you, as far as seventy times seven, Matthew 18:22, that is, four hundred and ninety times.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 20, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 6

Do not hold on to the hurt

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Apostolic Constitutions warn that hidden anger between brothers, on either side, keeps God from hearing our prayers. Tertullian adds that God wants us not only to forgive an offense but to forget it.

9 “If, therefore, you have anything against your brother, or he has anything against you, neither will your prayers be heard nor will your thanksgivings be accepted, because of that hidden anger.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 20, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
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10 “For His will is not only that you forgive an offense, but that you forget it.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *Against Marcion* 34 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 15, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not give a full list of the wrongs that count as a sin against you.
- They do not say whether an honest accident counts the same as a wrong done on purpose.
- They do not settle whether Matthew 18:15 covers grave sins as well as everyday faults.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 28 early Christian passages and 114 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–28, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 29–78, in Bible order), then 64 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *28 passages from 14 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) **Quotes 2, 5, pages 2, 3** “18:15-17 but to every one that acts amiss against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents… [continues online] **read ›**

Barnabas, *c. 70–132 AD · source 2*

2 *Epistle of Barnabas* (on point 6) “be peaceable. You shall tremble at the words you hear. You shall not hold grudges against your brother. You shall not doubt whether something will happen or not. You shall… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 3*

3 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 2) “believing it, you will also have something to say against your brother… [continues online] **read ›**

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Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 4–5*

4 *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English; on point 2) “sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Dialogue with Trypho* “of God, the Maker of all things, and the Almighty, is hidden from you. Therefore, out of sympathy for you, I am striving as much as possible for you to… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 6–7*

6 *Diatessaron* 27 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “17:3 Take heed within yourselves: if your brother sin, rebuke him… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Diatessaron* 9 (1885 English; on point 5) “Matthew 6:15 But if you forgive not men, neither will your Father pardon your wrong-doing… [continues online] **read ›**

Theophilus of Antioch, *c. 169–183 AD · source 8*

8 *To Autolycus* 12 (on point 6) “let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart, says the Lord Almighty." Zechariah 7:9-10… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 9–10*

9 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (on point 6) “Himself this way: “Therefore, when you offer your gift on the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go your… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) “he says, “And thy life shall be hanging before thine eyes, and thou wilt not believe thy life.” And again, “Has not this same one thy Father owned thee, and… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 11–14*

11 *Instructor* 1.9 (on point 4) “3:11-12 "For a man who is a sinner escapes reproof… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Instructor* 2.1 (1885 English; on point 1) “they that wound the conscience of the weak brethren sin against Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Instructor* 3.12 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “in respect to forbearance. If your brother, it is said, sin against you, rebuke him… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Stromata* 2.15 (on point 3) teaches the differences of sins in his larger Epistle, in these words: "If any man see his brother sin a sin that is not unto death, he shall ask, and… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 15*

15 *Against Marcion* 34 (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** “commands you to forgive your brother, should he trespass against you even seven times… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 16–17*

16 *Commentary on Matthew* 13 **Quotes 3, 4, pages 2, 3** “your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault between you and him alone.” Matthew 18:15 Whoever pays close attention to this statement, as proof of the… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (1885 English; on point 5) “came Peter and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 18–19*

18 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 4) “to instruct them when corrected by us, and reformed for the kingdom of heaven by celestial discipline… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 3) “was speaking of brethren, whether as walking disorderly and against the discipline of the Church, or as keeping the truth of the Gospel with the fear of God… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 20–23*

20 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quotes 8, 9, page 4** “shall not hate your brother in your mind… [continues online] **read ›**

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21 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** “Sinners are Privately to Be Reproved, and the Penitent to Be Received, According to the Constitution of Our Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 4) “shall not hate any man; you shall surely reprove your brother, and not become guilty on his account… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 4) “God is a God of mercy. Rebuke those that sin, admonish those that are not converted, exhort those that stand to persevere in their goodness, receive the penitent… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · sources 24–25*

24 *Writings* (1885 English; on point 6) “also ought you. Twice do you sin against God, if you extend strifes to your brother… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Writings* (on point 2) “course of the tormentor stirs you up to cry out against your brother… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 26–28*

26 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 4) “us receive correction, beloved, on account of which no one should feel displeased… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 2) “sittest, and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son… [continues online] **read ›**

28 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) “now reflect who those are that have perverted you, and lessened the renown of your far-famed brotherly love… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *50 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

29 **Exodus 22:24** and I will be angry with wrath, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children orphans. (Septuagint Exodus 22:23 (Exodus 22:24 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

30 **Exodus 23:4** And if you meet your enemy’s ox or his beast of burden going astray, you shall turn them back and return them to him. **read ›**

31 **Leviticus 5:5** then he shall confess the sin concerning the things in which he has sinned by that sin. **read ›**

32 **Leviticus 19:17** You shall not hate your brother in your mind. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and you shall not bear sin because of him. **read ›**

33 **Leviticus 25:35** If your brother who is with you becomes poor and his hands fail beside you, you shall help him as a resident foreigner and a temporary resident, and your brother shall live with you. **read ›**

34 **Leviticus 25:39** If your brother beside you becomes poor and is sold to you, he shall not serve you with the service of a household slave. **read ›**

35 **Leviticus 26:37** Brother shall disregard brother as in war, though no one is attacking; and you shall not be able to stand against your enemies. **read ›**

36 **Numbers 5:7** shall confess the sin that he has committed, and shall repay what he owes for the wrong: he shall repay the principal and add its fifth part to it, and shall repay it to the one against whom he trespassed. **read ›**

37 **Numbers 32:23** But if you do not do so, you will sin before the Lord; and you shall know your sin when evils overtake you. **read ›**

38 **Deuteronomy 15:3** From a foreigner you may demand back whatever he has of yours, but to your brother you shall make a release of your debt. **read ›**

39 **Deuteronomy 19:19** then you shall do to him as he wickedly planned to do against his brother, and you shall remove the evil from among yourselves. **read ›**

40 **Deuteronomy 22:1** When you see your brother’s calf or his sheep straying on the road, you shall not ignore them; you shall surely turn them back to your brother and give them back to him. **read ›**

41 **Deuteronomy 22:2** And if your brother is not near you, and you do not know him, you shall gather it into your house, and it shall be with you until your brother looks for them, and you shall give them back to him. **read ›**

42 **Deuteronomy 22:3** So you shall do with his donkey, and so you shall do with his garment, and so you shall do with anything your brother loses. Whatever he has lost and you find, you must not ignore. **read ›**

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43 **Deuteronomy 25:2** then if the ungodly man deserves lashes, you shall lay him down before the judges, and they shall whip him before them according to his ungodliness. **read ›**

44 **Deuteronomy 25:3** They shall whip him with forty lashes by number; they shall not add more. For if you add more lashes than these, your brother will be disgraced before you. **read ›**

45 **1 Samuel 2:25** If a man surely sins against a man, then they will pray for him to the Lord; but if he sins against the Lord, who will pray for him?" But they did not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord surely willed to destroy them. **read ›**

46 **Proverbs 27:5** Open rebukes are better than hidden friendship. **read ›**

47 **Isaiah 14:3** And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will give you rest from your anguish and your anger, and from your hard slavery, in which you served them. **read ›**

48 **Jeremiah 49:20** Therefore hear the counsel of the Lord, which he has counseled against Idumea, and his plan, which he has planned against those who dwell in Teman: surely the least of the sheep will be swept away; surely their dwelling place will be made desolate against them; (Septuagint Jeremiah 30:14 (Jeremiah 49:20 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

49 **Jeremiah 50:6** My people have become lost sheep; their shepherds drove them out, they led them astray on the mountains; they went from mountain to hill, they forgot their resting place. (Septuagint Jeremiah 27:6 (Jeremiah 50:6 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

50 **Ezekiel 35:6** therefore, as I live, says the Lord God, surely you have sinned to the point of blood, and blood shall pursue you. **read ›**

51 **Daniel 3:12** There are certain Jews whom you appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who have not obeyed your decree, O king; they do not serve your gods, and they do not worship the golden image that you have set up." **read ›**

52 **Jonah 2:3** you cast me into the depths of the heart of the sea, and rivers surrounded me; all your surges and your waves passed over me. (Septuagint Jonah 2:4 (Jonah 2:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

53 **Zephaniah 1:10** And there shall be in that day," says the Lord, "the sound of a cry from the gate of those who pierce, and wailing from the second gate, and a great crashing from the hills. **read ›**

54 **Wisdom of Solomon 12:26** But those who were not corrected by playful rebukes will experience a judgment worthy of God. **read ›**

55 **Wisdom of Sirach 8:5** Do not insult a man who turns from sin; remember that we are all under penalty. **read ›**

56 **Wisdom of Sirach 19:13** Question a friend; perhaps he did not do it; and if he did anything, so that he will not do it again. **read ›**

57 **Wisdom of Sirach 20:1** There is a rebuke that is not fitting, and there is one who keeps silent, and he is of sound judgment. **read ›**

58 **Wisdom of Sirach 20:2** How much better it is to rebuke than to be angry, **read ›**

59 **Wisdom of Sirach 20:3** and he who confesses will be kept from loss. **read ›**

60 **Wisdom of Sirach 21:1** My child, have you sinned? Do not do so again, and pray concerning your former sins. **read ›**

61 **Wisdom of Sirach 21:6** He who hates correction is in the footsteps of the sinner, but he who fears the Lord will turn back in his heart. **read ›**

62 **Wisdom of Sirach 22:22** If you have opened your mouth against a friend, do not be afraid, for there is reconciliation— except for insults and pride, the revealing of a secret, and a treacherous blow; because of these things any friend will flee. **read ›**

63 **Wisdom of Sirach 27:21** For a wound can be bound up, and after reviling there is reconciliation; but he who has revealed secrets is without hope. **read ›**

64 **Wisdom of Sirach 28:2** Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then, when you pray, your sins will be released. **read ›**

65 **Wisdom of Sirach 41:18** of a trespass before a judge and a ruler, of lawlessness before a congregation and a people, of unrighteousness before a partner and a friend, and of theft before the place where you live; **read ›**

66 **2 Maccabees 8:29** When they had done this, they made a common plea and begged the merciful Lord to be fully reconciled with his slaves. **read ›**

67 **4 Maccabees 13:23** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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68 **4 Maccabees 14:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

69 **Matthew 5:23** “If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, **read ›**

70 **Matthew 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. **read ›**

71 **Matthew 18:15** “If your brother sins against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained back your brother. **read ›**

72 **Matthew 18:17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. **read ›**

73 **Matthew 18:22** Jesus said to him, “I do not tell you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. **read ›**

74 **Luke 3:2** during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. **read ›**

75 **Luke 17:3** Be careful. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him. **read ›**

76 **1 Corinthians 8:12** Thus, sinning against the brothers, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **read ›**

77 **Galatians 6:1** Brothers, even if a man is caught in some fault, you who are spiritual must restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, looking to yourself so that you also are not tempted. **read ›**

78 **2 Thessalonians 3:15** Do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *64 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Exodus 20:7

Psalms 118:22

Proverbs 3:11 · 11:13

Isaiah 1:4

Jeremiah 2:12

Amos 6:1

Matthew 5:22 · 5:28 · 5:42 · 5:45 · 7:1 · 7:2 · 18:3 · 22:38 · 25:19 · 26:3 · 26:63

Luke 4:27 · 6:30 · 16:16 · 17:1 · 17:4 · 17:11 · 17:14 · 17:15 · 17:17 · 17:19 · 17:20 · 17:21 · 17:26 · 17:32 · 22:67 · 23:34

John 4:12 · 4:22 · 5:16

Romans 4:7 · 6:14 · 8:29 · 12:8 · 12:9 · 14:3 · 14:6 · 14:20 · 14:21

1 Corinthians 4:5 · 5:11 · 8:6 · 8:13 · 9:4 · 9:14 · 10:4 · 11:21 · 11:33

Ephesians 4:26 · 6:9

1 Timothy 3:4

2 Timothy 3:2

Titus 3:2

James 1:8

1 Peter 2:24 · 4:8

1 John 5:16

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What counts as a sin against you (Matthew 18:15)?” on November 15, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 21, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY