

Church Discipline

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 12:3-11

1 Cor 5:4-5 *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

* Godly instruction (love) * Discipline of Self (love) * Discipline of children (love)

Introduction:

1. **This instruction pertaining to Church discipline is probably the most neglected of all.**
2. **God has a plan for the salvation of the alien sinner; He also has a plan for the erring brother.**
 - A. **We stress His will concerning the alien, and often ignore His will concerning the erring brother.**
3. **It is equally important to follow the teaching concerning the discipline in the church as to follow the teaching concerning the terms of admission into the church.**
 - A. In both cases we do so because we love them!
4. **We will ask and answer four basic questions concerning discipline:**
 - A. ***Is the church responsible?***
 - B. ***Who are the subjects for discipline?***
 - C. ***What manner of action should be taken?***
 - D. ***What is to be done after the withdrawal is made?***

Is the Church Obligated to Practice Discipline?

1. The church in Corinth was to discipline the one who was guilty of fornication. **1 Cor. 5**
 - A. The expression, "**when you are gathered together**" in verse 4 shows that Paul is commanding church action.
 - B. The purpose of the action is seen in the expression, "**that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.**" (vs. 5)
 - 1) Discipline is the Biblical way of letting the fallen brother know that he is considered in the same way God considers him--**out of fellowship** and in need of repentance.
 - 2) It is desired that the sinner may realize his condition and "may be ashamed" and lead to repentance.

II Th 3:14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

- 3) When disciplinary action is viewed properly, as the divine plan for saving the erring, one cannot keep from urging that it be done.
2. In the book of Revelation the church at Pergamos was told to repent because it had those who held to false doctrines.
Revelation 2:14-16
 - A. Please notice that the whole church was told to "**repent.**"
 - B. All were responsible for allowing such to remain in their midst, and **their repentance** would **involve** some immediate disciplinary action.
 - C. This passage in Revelation is another which teaches **the church is responsible.**

3. In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus showed that the church is responsible in discipline.

Matthew 18:15-17

A. First, all private matters should be dealt with privately.

B. Most problems can be corrected in this manner.

1) One who reveals the faults of another without first discussing them with that person, becomes a backbiter and talebearer.

Prov. 11:13; Psalm 15:1-3; 2 Cor. 12:20

C. Some hate to admit their sin and may not be convinced by your word alone.

D. Jesus shows that **witnesses** are to be taken to establish the truth in the matter.

E. If that does not bring him to repentance, Jesus said, "**tell it to the church.**"

1) The church must then deal with the problem. The **church** is to cause the offender to hear.

a) **Not the preacher, not a certain individual**

2) If he will not listen to the church, he is to be counted as a **heathen** and **publican** (tax collector).

HEATHEN: *The non-Jewish peoples of the world. Hebrews kept separate from the sinful ways of the surrounding nations <Lev. 18:24>. While the heathen often persecuted the Jews, the Jews generally had contempt for the heathen.*

TAX COLLECTOR: *As a class, the tax collectors were despised by their fellow Jews. They were classified generally as "sinners" <Matt. 9:10-11>*

4. When Paul dealt with the wicked man in the church in Corinth, he said, "**Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?**" 1 Cor. 5:6
- A. In the next verse, he said, "**Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump...**"
 - B. He concluded the chapter by saying, "**Therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person.**" 1 Cor. 5:13
 - C. The leaven of ungodliness and wickedness will eventually destroy the entire congregation.
 - 1) If sin is looked upon lightly, it will make it easier for the weak and babes in Christ to fall.
 - 2) However, if they know they are subject to stern rebuke, they will fear.
 - 3) **1 Tim. 5:20** -- The command here in the light of other passages is, "**Those who sin before all, rebuke before all.**"
 - a) Timothy had **a duty** to help keep the church pure
 - D. Open sin in the church cannot be overlooked. As soon as it is known it must be dealt with.
 - 1) **SIN is SIN** in God's sight. No matter what man may choose to call it or deal with it – God calls it what it is and expects His people to deal with it according to His instructions.

Who Are the Subjects for Discipline? (SEE CHART "Subjects for Discipline")

1. To my knowledge the chart gives all that are specifically mentioned in the N.T. as subjects for discipline.

- A. However, are those who are guilty of those sins the only ones that can be withdrawn from?
- B. Wouldn't liars, thieves and murderers also be included?
2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6
- C. The word "**disorderly**" (2 Thess. 3:6) means "**unruly, insubordinate, out of rank**" and includes any brother who persists in sin and refuses to repent.
 - 1) It includes those who wilfully neglect the assemblies of the saints and will not repent.
---- **(Example: AWOL in Military)**
 - 2) They are deviating from the order set forth in **Heb. 10:25**.
 - 3) Members of the church should visit and encourage those who are unfaithful in attendance.
 - a. If the weak show signs of repentance, indicating they will try to do better, this is all that needs to be done at the present time.
 - b. The encouragement should be continued as long as they are willing to receive it and as long as they are improving.
 - c. However, if one has a **rebellious attitude** and indicate they **will never** improve, or they **will never** return, discipline from the church is necessary.

2. Many churches are neglecting their responsibility in this matter in a terrible way.

- A. For example, members through weakness began forsaking the services only once in a while and as time continues they began forsaking often.
- B. Still later, as they become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they completely forsake all the services and their apostasy becomes complete.
 - 1) Sadly, far too often, nothing is said or done.
 - 2) Their name is simply removed from the church directory and they are forgotten.
- C. It is true that sinners are responsible for their own actions, but the church is responsible as well.
 - 1) If these weak members were dealt with in the beginning as they should have been, many souls could have been saved from death.

3. Who are the subjects for discipline? All who sin and will not repent are subjects for discipline.

TONIGHT:

- 1. What manner of action should be taken?**
- 2. What is to be done AFTER withdrawal is made?**

What Manner of Action Should Be Taken?

1. The law of Christ mentions several things which must be done in dealing with the erring brother.

- A. We should apply the best wisdom, our past experiences and study can provide when dealing with the erring.
- B. We must keep our main purpose before us.

James 5:20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

1 Cor 5:5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

- C. A brother's sin may require rebuke or strong teaching; yet, it must be done in the spirit of kindness and love.

Galatians 6:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:24-26

- 1) At no time should the unfaithful be given reason to think that his brethren are prompted by any other motive than a sincere love for his soul.

2. As we have already shown, any private matter should be dealt with privately. Matt. 18:15-17

3. Some sins become evident before the church, e.g., a fornicator, or a drunkard, and must be handled by the church.

- A. If a church has elders, they should attend to the problem. They are watchmen in behalf of souls and shepherd the flock. **Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3.**

- B. If a church does not have elders, these matters must be dealt with by the men of the local congregation.
- 1) The question arises, "How often should they go and see those whose sins are before the church?"
 - a. With the heretics or factious **(those divisive)** we should go no more than twice (**Titus 3:10**), but with others we should be more longsuffering.
 - 2) After told to the church, the church should give the sinful brother some time to repent; Good judgment should be exercised.
 - 3) After all of this effort, if the brother **will not repent**, or indicates he **will not repent**, then the church must withdraw from him. Consider again **1 Cor. 5:4-5**.
 - a. He must then be marked or identified.

Rom 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, **note those** who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

II Th 3:14 And if anyone **does not obey our word** in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

- b. His name should be mentioned as shown by Paul's example. **1 Tim. 1:19-20**

1 Tim 1:19-20 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

- 4) In other words, a public announcement should be made so that there is no misunderstanding as to what the church is doing.

What Is to Be Done after Withdrawal Is Made?
(SEE CHART “After Withdrawal is Made”)

1. After the withdrawal is made, each individual member of the church has the following responsibilities toward those who have been withdrawn from.
2. The purpose for this action is clearly disclosed in 2 Thess. 3:14.

II Th 3:14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

- A. This is the only means we have of restoring those who refuse to repent.
- B. The Scriptures do not suggest nor allow any other means of punishment or censure ship to cause them to be ashamed of their sin.

Conclusion:

1. If the Scriptural procedures are carefully administered it will accomplish good.

A. The sinful man that was mentioned in **1 Cor. 5** repented when proper action was taken. **2 Cor. 5:6-7**

B. This shows that the Lord's plan will work.

2. Let no one say that discipline will not do any good and let no one be opposed to it.

A. It may not lead every sinner to repentance, but it frees the faithful from their blood.

Ezek 3:18 "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

Acts 20:26-27 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men." "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

3. When those who are withdrawn from repent, we are to forgive and confirm our love toward them.

A. In all this we prove that we are obedient to the Lord in all things
2 Corinthians 2:8-9

