

Church Discipline

1A Introduction:

- 1B The Bible has clear teaching on the difficult matter of church discipline; God has wisely informed us through His word, so that we might navigate the rocks and shoals of sinfulness in the church.
- 2B Careful conformance to the biblical set of instructions accomplishes two goals:
 - 1C It gives the sinner the absolute best and fairest opportunity to respond;
 - 2C It allows the church membership and leadership good conscience when final separation is necessary.
- 3B Methodology.
 - 1C The New Testament passages on church discipline will be covered, one by one.
 - 2C A collation of actions will result in a chart of prescribed action.

2A Passages.

- 1B A description of the disruptive believers, Romans 16:17-20, 17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on (skopein) those who cause dissensions and (skandala) hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away (ekklino) from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. 19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
 - 1C Two courses of action are given:
 - 1D Keep your eye on those who cause dissensions, examine them.
 - 2D Turn away from them, which means literally to shun them. The only other times *ekklino* is used in the New Testament is in urging believers to shun sin.
 - 3D Even as we shun sin, we are to shun those who willfully remain in sin
 - 2C The persons to be shunned are described as slaves of their own appetites who deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with flattering speech.
- 2B Here is a case study: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13
 - 1C The report of incestual immorality, v.1, 1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.
 - 2C The arrogant response of the Corinthian church, "2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.
 - 1D The normal course of action would have been to mourn (identify the wrong), and to remove the sinner from the midst.
 - 2D The verb to remove is *airo*, to snatch away, or take up, or just remove.
 - 3C The judgment in absentia, v.3, "3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.
 - 4C The call for an official assembly toward action, vv.4-5, "4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord

- Jesus, 5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
- 1D Paul calls for an assembly with three elements: himself in spirit if not body, the Corinthian church, and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 2D The purpose is to deliver the incestual person over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. This means removal from the assembly with an inevitable result – *olethros*, destruction, so that his spirit may be saved at the last judgment..
- 5C The illustration of leaven in the local assembly, and the necessary action, vv.6-7, “6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.
- 1D The leaven here is the immoral man. He is a sinner who is allowed to stay in the assembly; toleration of such behavior inevitably leads to influence the entire church in an awful way.
 - 2D They are called upon to clean out the person who is sinful leaven, removing him from the unleavened others there.
- 6C The necessity of an unleavened church at the communion feast, v. 8, “8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
- 7C The prior command regarding immoral people, v.9, “9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;
- 8C The clarification regarding witnessing, v.10, “10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.
- 9C The clarification regarding believers in the local assembly, v.11, “11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.
- 10C Clarifications concerning judgment inside and outside the church, vv.12-13, “12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.
- 3B The power of forgiveness, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11:
- 1C The impact of the sinner in a local church, v.5, 5 But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you.
 - 2C The sufficiency of the punishment leading to forgiveness, vv.6-7, “6 Sufficient for such a one is this recompense [epitimia] which was inflicted by the majority, 7 so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort [*parakaleo*] him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.
 - 3C The necessity to express love, v.8, “8 Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.
 - 4C The expression of love as a test of obedience, v.9, “9 For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

- 5C The reciprocal nature of forgiveness between Paul and the Corinthians, v.10, “10 But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,
- 6C The purpose of the forgiveness, v.11, “11 so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.
- 4B What to do when someone is caught, Galatians 6:1:
 - 1C This is a job for the “spiritual”, v.1, “1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore [katartizo] such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.
 - 2C The spiritual ones are to go, those who are mature in Christ. There is to be more than one who goes.
 - 3C The restoration is to be done with gentleness.
 - 4C The restoration is to be done with care so that temptation might not get the ones who are sent to restore.
- 5B Various commands regarding church order and discipline, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15:
 - 1C Disassociation from the unruly and undisciplined, v.6, “6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.
 - 1D Paul commands the Thessalonians to keep away from every brother who leads a certain kind of life.
 - 2D The descriptive word is *ataktos*, which means unruly, ungoverned by authority or any sense of order.
 - 3D That person is “leaven” in the sense that Paul communicated to the Corinthians.
 - 4D There is no reference to immorality here.
 - 2C Paul’s example, vv.7-9, “7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.
 - 3C The specific nature of the *ataktos*, vv.10-11, “10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.
 - 1D Not only are they idle, but they are busybodies.
 - 2D The idle mind is the devil’s workshop!
 - 4C The direct command to work, v.12, “12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.
 - 5C The command to not grow weary of doing good, v.13, “13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.
 - 6C The commands regarding treatment of those who do not take heed, vv.14-15, “14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person

- and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.
- 1D The first part of the command is to take special note, to literally mark him down.
 - 2D The second part is to disassociate from him. The person is to be put to shame.
 - 3D The third part is to not regard him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother; the ultimate objective is restoration..
- 6B Pastoral leadership of those in opposition, 2 Timothy 2:23-26:
- 1C Avoidance of foolish speculations, v.23, “23 But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.
 - 2C The demeanor of the pastor, “24 The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness [*praus*] correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
 - 1D Corrections are to be gentle, appropriate to each one in opposition, with the objective of restoration.
 - 2D *Paideuo* is the verb for correcting, which really means to instruct a child, an elementary school student.
- 7B The two warning system, Titus 3:10-11, 10 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.
- 1C “Factious” is *hairetikos*, from which we get our word heretic.
 - 2C A factious man is one who causes divisions over doctrine.
 - 3C This man is to be given one or two warnings about his behavior, and then rejected, removed from the assembly.
- 8B A warning about associating with those who don’t abide in the teaching of Christ, 2 John 9-11, 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.
- 9B Arrogant discipline deserves discipline in turn, 3 John 9-10, 9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.
- 10B The procedure for elders, 1 Timothy 5:19-21:
- 1C Proper judicial procedure, “19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.
 - 2C The unspoken private meeting, then public rebuke, v.20, “20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.
 - 3C The need for objectivity, v.21, “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.

11B Authority to judge in civil matters, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8:

- 1C** The hazard of the judgment of unbelievers, v.1, 1 Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?
- 2C** The superior judgment of the saints, part one, v.2, 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?
- 3C** The superior judgment of the saints, part two, v.3, 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?
- 4C** The proper appointment of judges in the church, v.4, 4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?
- 5C** The shame of the Corinthians, vv.5-6, 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, 6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?
- 6C** The preference of wrong and defraud, vv.7-8, 7 Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

3A Summary and Review:

1B Individual responsibilities:

- 1C** Keep your eye on disruptive stumbling blocks and shun them if necessary, Romans 16; 2 Thessalonians 3.
- 2C** Keep matters of personal sin private as a first priority. Only make it an issue of church authority if the individual is insistent on no acknowledgment of sin, Matthew 18.
- 3C** Admonish others as a brother, not an enemy, 2 Thessalonians 3:15.
- 4C** Express forgiveness, love, comfort to the one who has repented, 2 Corinthians 2.
- 5C** Do not welcome heretics into your home, 2 John 9-11

2B Corporate Responsibilities:

- 1C** "Spiritual ones" are to make an effort to restore the sinner, Galatians 5:1.
- 2C** Restoration is to be done in gentleness with the aim of repentance, Galatians 5:1; 2 Timothy 2.
- 3C** Command the sinner to live right, 2 Thessalonians 3:12.
- 4C** Pray, consult with other leaders in the church, recognize the backing of Christ, only function within the boundaries of Scripture, Matthew 18.
- 5C** Remove the unrepentant after an official assembly, 1 Corinthians 5.
- 6C** Sufficient dues or recompense are legitimate, 2 Corinthians 2:6, *epitimia*.
- 7C** Reject heretics after two warnings, Titus 3:10-11.
- 8C** Discipline those who abuse authority, 3 John 9-10.
- 9C** The two eyewitness system applies to elders as well, 1 Timothy 5:19-21.