

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

INTRODUCTION:

1. Church Discipline is not a pleasant subject.
2. It is a Bible subject, and one that is worthy of our attention.
3. The precise words "Church Discipline" are not found in the New Testament, BUT the action is authorized.
4. Because of the emotions involved, many congregations do not carry out discipline to its fullest, and some don't practice it at all !
5. Discipline is a very much misunderstood subject.
6. The word "Discipline" means: Teaching; instruction; that which is taught to pupils; training which corrects, molds, strengthens, or perfects; ALSO Punishment or Chastisement.
7. From this definition we can see that there are 2 kinds of discipline -- INSTRUCTIVE and CORRECTIVE.
8. The Bible teaches INSTRUCTIVE discipline: Titus 2: 11 -12
9. THIS LESSON HAS TO DO WITH CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE !

I. GOD HAS ALWAYS USED DISCIPLINE

1. When men did not respond to the instruction or teaching of God, then God used punishment or discipline.
2. Adam and Eve disobeyed and were driven from the garden -- Gen. 2: 16 - 17; 3:23
3. When the world became desperately wicked, God purged out the wicked by a flood -- Gen. 6:7
4. God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah -- Gen. 19: 24 - 29.
5. In the New Testament God took the lives of Ananias and his wife Sapphira for being covetous, lying, and seeking the praise of men -- Acts 5: 1 - 11.

II. THINGS NOT ACHIEVED BY CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. Not to get Revenge
 - (1) It is not to vent bitterness against a brother -- Eph. 4: 31 - 32
 - (2) There is to be no joy that this has had to happen -- "*Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.*" -- Prov. 24:17
2. Not to drive someone away
 - (1) We are not trying to "get rid of" someone
 - (2) We are trying to save their souls!
3. It is not to let the elders flex their muscles
 - (1) The eldership is not trying to show who is boss.
 - (2) They are directing the church into Disciplinary Action to SAVE A LOST SOUL!
4. Not to HURT someone who has disgraced the church.
 - (1) Sin disgraces the sinner and the church -- II Sam. 12:14 "*How-be-it because of this deed, thou has given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord, to blaspheme.*"
 - (2) But, discipline is not to be used in the spirit of vengeance.
 - (3) A sinner cannot be saved if his brethren seek to harm him rather than help him.
 - (4) The church must strive to do what is right and best to save the sinner with the RIGHT ATTITUDE.
5. Not to put the church on the "map".
 - (1) Not to build a reputation as a church that "withdraws" from people.
 - (2) The church must not take pride in the number of people that it has withdrawn from.
 - (3) Withdrawing is a SAD thing -- not something to enjoy and take pride in.

III. WHY DISCIPLINE? (The New Testament gives several reasons for practicing discipline.)

1. Reason number one for practicing discipline is -- God said Do It -- II Thess. 3:6; I Cor. 5: 1 - 5
 - (1) All of the objections offered by men will not remove the fact that God said DO IT!
2. Discipline should be practiced to make people ashamed of their ungodly lives -- II Thess. 3:14
 - (1) Christians who are in sin should feel shame for their sins.
 1. Their conscience should bother them to the point of repentance.
3. It is done to bring the sinner to REPENTANCE -- I Cor. 5: 9 & 11
 - (1) No act or association is to be done that would indicate a social recognition on our part.
 - (2) Such association would encourage him to continue in his sinful life.
 - (3) No common meals with such a person.
 - (4) WE ARE NOT to mix and mingle socially with a brother or sister that has been withdrawn from.
 - (5) The intention of such action toward the unfaithful is not to manifest a self-righteous attitude.
 - (6) It is to bring the sinner to repentance.
 - (7) The sinner is disciplined to remove his carnal conduct.
 - (8) The fornicating brother in Corinth needed to have his "work of the flesh" (sin) destroyed !
 - (9) Hymaneus and Alexander were "delivered unto Satan" that they might learn not to blaspheme -
- I Tim. 1: 19 - 20 (treated as sinners).
 - (10) It is for the destruction of their evil ways.
 - (11) It is done that the spirit may be saved in the Day of Judgment.
 - (12) When a Christian is disciplined, THIS ACTION MUST BE TAKEN ON THE PART OF EVERY FAITHFUL MEMBER OF THE CHURCH !
 - (13) To refuse to take action is to be disloyal to Christ.
4. Discipline has SALVATION as its MAIN PURPOSE.
 - (1) James 5: 19 - 20
 - (2) It is to prevent other from being infected -- I Cor. 5:6; I Cor. 15:33
 - (3) This was part of the function of Old Testament punishment -- Deut. 13: 10 - 11
 - (4) If one is allowed to sin without consequences, others will be led into sin.
5. Discipline projects a good influence before the world.
 - (1) The death of Ananias and Sapphira had a profound effect upon the entire community -- Acts 5:11.
 - (2) The unbeliever is turned away from the truth when he sees the church coddling within its ranks the things that it condemns without.
 - (3) A Godly Church will lead men to Christ -- Matt 5:16 -- "*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*"
 - (4) Impure, neglectful churches cause men to turn from the truth!
 - (5) It is God's intention that the church be kept pure.
 - (6) When discipline is NOT practiced, people lose respect for the will of the Lord.

IV. THE MANNER OF DISCIPLINE

1. Discipline should be done in the manner designed to accomplish its objective: that being to "restore such a one".
 - (1) Gal. 6:1
 - (2) To gain a brother.
 - (3) That the Spirit might be saved.
 - (4) The action must be taken in a spirit of kindness and love -- John 13: 34 - 35

- (5) The one being disciplined must be able to recognize that it is out of love.
- 2. Discipline should be practiced according to the Law of Christ.
 - (1) Diotrophes did not go by the Law of Christ -- III John 9 - 10
- 3. Corrective discipline should be practiced steadily, consistently, and constantly.
 - (1) God NEVER INTENDED that a congregation PUT OFF case after case until they have so many cases that they don't know where to start.
- 4. Elders are to take the lead in Discipline.
 - (1) The elders are to oversee all the work of the congregation -- Acts 20:28
 - (2) Every member should know what the guilty has done, and should agree in the action that has to be taken -- Matt. 18 talks of this.
- 5. When we practice Discipline we MUST do it without partiality -- I Tim. 5: 20 - 22

V. THE SCRIPTURAL COURSE TO PURSUE

- 1. Matt. 18: 15 - 17
- 2. The guilt of the accused MUST BE ESTABLISHED -- Matt. 18:16
- 3. The disorderly must be warned and have vividly impressed upon them the wrong, or sin, that they are guilty of -- Luke 17:3
- 4. WE MUST try to convert and restore them.
- 5. THERE MUST be sufficient, sincere, diligent, longsuffering effort on our part to restore.
- 6. AS A LAST RESORT (when all else has failed) if they will not repent the church MUST withdraw from them.

VI. FROM WHOM SHOULD THE CHURCH WITHDRAW?

- 1. Those who refuse to correct personal offences against brethren -- Matt. 18: 15 - 18
- 2. Those who cause divisions contrary to the Gospel -- Rom. 16: 17 - 18
 - (1) This would be a False Teacher.
 - (2) To teach false doctrine is an evil deed.
 - (3) This would include a factious person, or one who is divisive.
- 3. Those who are guilty of sins of the flesh
 - (1) Gal. 5: 19 - 21
 - (2) A Fornicator -- I Cor. 5: 1 - 5, 9
 - 1. Fornication includes all sexual sins.
 - (1) The unmarried who have illicit relationships
 - (2) The married who are living in adultery -- Matt. 19:9
 - (3) The homosexuals
 - (3) The Drunkard
 - (4) Drug abusers
 - (5) The idle, gossip, backbiter, the meddler and talebearer -- II Thess. 3:6 - 7
- 4. Those who have quit the assemblies of the church -- Heb. 10:25

VII. CAN THE CHURCH WITHDRAW FROM THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY QUIT ASSEMBLING?

- 1. It is said that the church can only withdraw from those who are AMONG YOU -- I Cor. 5:2
- 2. The basis of this position is the idea that one is not AMONG YOU if he or she has quit attending the services.
- 3. We read plain instruction for the church to withdraw from ungodly members.

4. We do not read where a church is relieved of its responsibilities to a member simply because of that member's desire to quit the assemblies of the saints!
 - (1) We still have a responsibility to restore.
 - (2) To try to get to repent.
 - (3) Nothing relieves us of that obligation.

VIII. THE EXPRESSION "AMONG YOU" IS NOT TO BE EQUATED WITH NON-ATTENDANCE !

1. When one joins himself to a local work he is:
 - (1) Within -- I Cor. 5: 12
 - (2) Among -- I Cor. 5:2
 - (3) In the church at that place -- Acts 13:1
 - (4) He is a part of that local work or congregation
2. A relationship has been established (fellowship).
 - (1) When a member quits assembling he is still among, within, a part of that fellowship.
3. One quitting the assemblies does not in any way relieve our responsibilities to them !

IX. WE MUST PRACTICE DISCIPLINE !

1. God Commands it!
2. It produces spiritual life.
3. It helps recover one from sin.
4. It enforces lessons that can be derived in NO OTHER WAY!

CONCLUSION:

1. Our attitude towards those withdrawn from:
 - (1) We must have no company with them -- II Thess. 3:14
 - (2) We are NOT to count them as an enemy -- II Thess. 3:15
 - (3) We are to ADMONISH them as a BROTHER -- II Thess. 3:15
 - (4) We MUST BE WILLING to FORGIVE them and RECEIVE them back with open arms when they repent -- II Cor. 2: 6 - 8

INVITATION:

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