

Discipline –Purpose of Discipline -Part 1

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You might recall that we recently asked the elders and pastors from our sisters churches for advice regarding the discipline of 2 sisters in our church who are living unfaithful lives before the Lord. We asked the brothers if they thought we would be right to exclude them from our congregation for the sinful lives they have chosen to live. As we were going through this process, I realized that this was one area in which I have not preached about in detail. So I will, Lord willing, preach 5 sermons on this topic. Today and next week we will deal with the purpose of discipline, then we will deal with the order and nature of discipline, then the acceptance of discipline, and finally, the limits of discipline. So first, the purpose of discipline: Part 1.

Our headings are: Discipline is to Purify Christ's Church, Discipline is Necessary for Evangelism, and Discipline is necessary for the confidence of Believers in Christ.

Our goals are: That you will understand the need for discipline in the church of Christ, and that you might accept discipline if given to you, or advocate 拥护 for discipline for the unrepentant believer.

Discipline is to Purify Christ's Church

1. During the time of the Reformation 宗教改革 (16世纪), the Roman Catholic church had rules for everything – quite like the Pharisees. They made rules even for things for God did not require rules to be made. Some say in the RC church it was hard to lift a finger without breaking some kind of rule. After the Reformation, when many churches were freed from Roman Catholic tyranny 暴政, some Anabaptists 再洗礼派信徒 decided that they should throw out all rules. As a result, discipline largely disappeared. Here were two extremes. They were both wrong.

2. Jesus demanded that his church must be holy as he is holy – separated from sin. Therefore, any laws made must be for the purpose of procuring 获得 and preserving holiness. Part of preserving holiness is the need for discipline of those who wander away from orthodoxy – straight thinking.

1Peter 1: 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

A church that has an infection is a stench 臭气 in Christ's nose. Remember how strongly God demanded that any sacrifices offered to him be kept pure? Spotted animals were rejected. Sick animals were rejected. Those sacrifices pictured Jesus, and his holy nature demands that he be surrounded with those who are pure. Further, an impure church cannot prosper, as you would well remember when Achan kept secret sins in his heart. He had to be put out for his people to prosper. And Ishmael had to be put out for his wickedness of mocking the child of promise. One infected sheep infects the whole flock.

3. This essential need for a pure church is regularly illustrated in the Scriptures. Once Christ illustrated this was in the work of leaven. Remember his words: Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? You are called to purge 清除 old leaven, personally and communally (in the church) for the sake of maintaining the purity of Christ's church. This is often difficult to grasp, as we live with a high degree of tolerance for filthy living. The government, for example, allows so many maggot 一种双翅目昆虫的 eggs for so many kilograms of raisins...so much bacteria for fresh fruits and meat...so many living worms in kilograms of fruits for fruit juice, etc. And even though 70% of gas pumps and escalator rails have deadly bacteria, our bodies tolerate them. But that is not what he requires for the church. He demands purity.

4. This is not to say that anyone who is working hard at overcoming sin and staying pure must be disciplined. No, he must not be disciplined, but encouraged, supported, and prayed for. Christ is a very longsuffering Lord. He knows the depths of sin and he knows how long it can take to climb out from an overwhelming sin. But the man or woman who chooses to stay in the pit, and does not attempt to come out, must be disciplined for his and for Christ's sake.

5. Added to man's high tolerance for sins, you have another problems that destroy the holiness of Christ's church. Sin is insidious 诱人的. If it is let to grow, it will subtly 巧妙地 destroy. This is why sin is often called leaven. It is because it will grow and destroy without you realizing that it would grow.

Luke 12:1 In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

The Bible also describes sin as a cancer that spreads and destroys...just as if you have a lustful

pair of (small) eyes, it causes the whole body to be cast into hell. Lust enters and spreads through out the length and breath of your soul. And that is why Jesus called on men to (figuratively) pluck out their eyes so that their whole body is saved from hell. You might feign 假装 righteousness on the outside as the Pharisees did, but the spiritual cancer might be destroying your insides.

6. There is another problem that contributes to the impurity of the church. Most people tend to say that others are “not so bad” because they want to use that as an excuse for their own sins. But the church must labor to make sure that she is kept pure. After all, who wants a bride who contracted horrible diseases by loose living, a disease that would eventually ravage 毁灭 and destroy her?

Discipline is Necessary for evangelizing

1. If the church does not discipline sinning members it cannot command the respect of the world, the world would reject Christ...and Christ would be robbed of his glory. Consider a church!
1Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned 哀悼, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.
2. It was so bad in the church in Corinth that even Gentiles (non-Christians) did not accept such illicit 违法的 behavior. This certainly affected the church's ability to evangelize the Corinthians. Corinth itself was known to be a very evil city. "Corinthianized" was an expression that meant to live in "sexual shamelessness." Aphrodite 阿芙罗狄蒂(Venus)维纳斯 stood with a thousand priestesses 女祭司 who were religious prostitutes in a gigantic 巨大的 brothel 妓院. Having sexual relations was done in the name of their religion – and was part of worship. So with this worse perversion in the church, how could she evangelize 传福音? The non-believing Corinthians could see few visible differences between the Christians and the Corinthians! Further, the Corinthians were so full of themselves (arrogant) they did not mourn this great sin. And this sin of ignoring sin was worse **than the incestuous man's sin.** The Corinthians lost the ability to blush 脸红 at sin. They had no shame. No wonder they could not mourn when such great sins were committed.
3. So the church is not be “broad-minded” 思想开放 or “open-minded” regarding discipline – for it is not up to you to decide how HIS church is governed, taught, or disciplined.
4. Practically, one of the most common things you hear from non-believers whom you are trying to evangelize is the sinfulness of Christian church members. Now you cannot say to them that the church is perfect in obedience; that would be a lie. But you should be able to say that those who persistently refuse to submit to God's law are regularly being disciplined in Christ's church: They are rebuked, excluded from the Holy Sacraments, and eventually excluded from the assembly and treated as non-believers.

Discipline is Necessary for the Confidence of Believers in Christ

1. If the church does not discipline sinning members it cannot keep the confidence of those who are members. (Just like children might appear to want total freedom, but when given total freedom they lose trust in their parents.) How could a Christian know if he is living well if sin is not punished by the elders? How can they confidently trust the advice and counseling of their elders? Wasn't this what Peter was all concerned about when he had to deal with Ananias and Shapphira?
Acts 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 "While it remained, was it not your own? And after

it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

Achan had to be put out...and executed – and was a warning to those who would live in sin. Ishmael had to be expelled from the covenant people because he mocked the child of promise. Of course God is not teaching you that the church must kill the wicked, as it was God who ordered the execution of Achan and it was God who killed Ananias and his wife. The point was that you must see how seriously God takes the purity of the church and that other could have confidence in him at the same time. If piety and purity were not demanded by the Lord of his church, how could they have a proper view of the holiness of God, and so serve him better?

2. If the church does not discipline sinning members, that would give an open license for other members to live however they want. Members have to be mutually accountable to each other.
3. Imagine how this would have affected the young people of at the time of Ishmael or in the time of Achan or in the time of Paul at Corinth! Wouldn't Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 5, have been a motivation for them to live holily before the Lord? At Corinth the Corinthian Christians tolerated a man living in adultery with his close relative! Imagine what kind of example that was to the young people in that congregation!
4. Because discipline helps to instill (put) confidence of the believer in Jesus Christ, it is necessary for one congregation to recognize the proper discipline of other congregations. A church that does not recognize the proper discipline of other churches is contributing to the delinquency 违法行为 of that person under discipline, to delinquency of their confidence in Christ, and hinders non-believers from coming into the kingdom of God. Ever more practically, if a church does not discipline it can lead to a break up – schisms - of the church.

Conclusion:

Ecclesiastical 教会的 discipline is necessary for the church, the Bride of Christ, to be kept pure. Ecclesiastical discipline is necessary for proper evangelization to take place. Ecclesiastical discipline is necessary for Christians to have confidence in the earthly and heavenly leadership in the church.

Brothers and sisters: Does it bother you when someone who has the name of Christ goes and sins in gross 恶劣 ways against the Lord and refuse to repent after repeated attempts to speak to them... encouraging them...and praying for them? Doesn't it make you sad? It should trouble you so much that you would want that person disciplined by Christ if he would not repent. (Wouldn't you want this for your child...so should God want this for his children?) You see, non-activity is not acceptable action against gross 恶劣的 sins. At the same time, the church today needs to remember that ecclesiastical discipline is a gift of God to save the soul of the unrepentant by making him come to his senses, and that discipline is a means by which the church is kept pure from sinful infections 感染. Thank God for this good thing that keeps the church of Christ.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, this lesson today still applies to you also. Salvation is only within the bounds of the church. If you have not been declared freed from the Devil – as is done at baptism and membership vows – you are still under his control. My prayer is that you will come out from your sins and be joined to the church of Jesus Christ – for your good and for Christ's glory.