

## When One Breaks Rank

### *Church Discipline: HIS Doctrine, OUR Responsibility (Part 2)*

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)

- Introduction:
1. Because the topic of church discipline has largely been ignored, it's perfectly normal for people to have questions, and work through the implications of this doctrine.
  2. Therefore, tonight I want to address some questions that are sometimes asked concerning this topic.

#### **I. How Can We Possibly Say This Is Loving & Effective?**

- A. It is what God commanded (Acts 5:29).
- B. To understand, we cannot divorce the action from the motive.
- C. It does work! (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8).
- D. Also, remember discipline has more than one purpose.
  1. Save the soul of the sinner (1 Cor. 5:5).
  2. Save the church (1 Cor. 5:6).
  3. Save the world (Matt. 5:16).

#### **II. Since We're All Sinners, How Can We Judge Another?**

- A. Paul called himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), yet he, by inspiration, commanded the practice of church discipline.
- B. There is a difference in one who stumbles into sin and repents and one who rebelliously persists in sin.

#### **III. Won't It Do More Harm Than Good?**

- A. No one is denying that discipline is painful (Hebrews 12:11).
- B. But, dare we pit our wisdom against the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:27-28)?
- C. Have we weighed the harm that would result if discipline is not practiced?
- D. How much "harm" can you do to one who is already lost and in the grips of Satan? The maximum harm has already been done by himself. We can't harm him any worse than he has already harmed himself.

#### **IV. Can A Church Wait Too Long And Do Too Little?**

- A. Yes! and in such cases we fail the sinner, the church, and the world.
- B. But also, remember this:
  1. Time is often allowed, not for the sake of neglect, but due to patience and hope.
  2. The fact that you don't see efforts to restore one doesn't mean they aren't taking place.

**V. Should We Discipline Those Who Leave Us?**

- A. This question can be answered by noting two important truths.
  - 1. Christianity is "family" (and not a "job.")
    - a. One can quit a job and walk away.
    - b. One cannot "unbirth" themselves from their family.
  - 2. One can walk "disorderly" in the ranks as well as outside the ranks.
    - a. A soldier can be out-of-step (disorderly) while marching along side his fellow soldiers.
    - b. A soldier can also be out-of-step (disorderly) by walking away from his fellow soldiers.
- B. Imagine a shepherd who claimed no obligation to restore a sheep because the sheep left the flock and wandered to another hillside.
- C. The actions of the persistently sinning brother or sister, do not dictate or trump what the Lord instructed faithful brethren to do.

**VI. What If The Person Being Disciplined Is Family?**

- A. Then to you, especially, do what the Bible instructs you to do!
  - 1. You have the best hopes of turning this person around.
  - 2. The lack of your fellowship may be too painful for them to endure and cause them to rethink the course of their life.
- B. (Matthew 10:34-39).
- C. "But what if a woman's husband, son, or daughter, falls from grace, is entangled in and overcome by the world, goes back to wallowing in the mire, must she refuse to eat with members of her own family? Paul made no exceptions. I know of no other inspired writer who made any exception to this rule. I dare not usurp the authority of an apostle or a prophet of the Lord and make one to lighten the load or to make smooth the road for me or for anybody else" (Roy Lanier Sr., *20 Years of the Problem Page*, Vol. 1, pp. 135-137).

**VII. What If Someone Persists in Sin, But The Church Won't Practice Discipline?**

- A. It is possible that an eldership will not lead the church in the discipline of an impenitent brother or sister.
- B. If so, what should faithful brethren do?
- C. I believe the answer to this question is summed up in Acts 5:29.
- D. Consider what should be done in the following situations.
  - 1. What if an eldership won't oppose a variety of errors? Does their lack of action excuse you from obeying God?
  - 2. Or what if an eldership won't lead the church in showing hospitality or engaging in evangelism?
- E. Does the failure of proper leadership excuse the individuals of the church from obeying God's commands.

- F. While elders should lead the church in discipline, as in any spiritual matter, their failure doesn't excuse disobedience among the Christians in the flock.

- Conclusion:
1. I hope that answering some of these questions will be informative and helpful.
  2. There are many more questions that could be asked, and if you have them, ask me later.
  3. Remember, some of God's commands may be difficult to obey, but none of them are arbitrary or burdensome (1 John 5:3).
  4. The purpose of discipline is to save souls.
  5. We must decide whether we are content to just know God's commandments, or if we also possess the desire to do them.
  6. (James 1:22).