

PLAIN SPEECH

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“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

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WHY LOCAL CHURCHES MUST RENDER DISCIPLINE

Church discipline; i.e. withdrawing from wayward Christians who will not repent, is a subject that is often ignored by members of so called local “churches” of Christ. Said discipline is ignored for various reasons: fear, respect of persons, etc. How sad. In this article I will cite six biblical reasons why local congregations must administer discipline when necessary.

REASON #1 – TO OBEY GOD

How’s that for a scholarly answer? Folks, God has made it clear via the pages of scripture that church discipline is not an option. Note well the following passages: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Mt. 18:15-17).* *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17).* *“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11).* *“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Th. 3:6).* *“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Th. 3:14).* Those who know church discipline needs to be enforced and fail to do so are turning up their noses to the Almighty. Pretty brave. Rather, pretty stupid.

REASON #2 – IT PROMOTES UNITY

Paul’s commandment (God’s commandment) was/is to withdraw from the disorderly. God’s will for both individual Christians and local churches is perfect unity (Jn. 17:20-23). When a local church has one in its ranks who is walking in an unruly manner; i.e. one who is going against the grain of God’s will, there is no way that true unity can ensue. However, when the disorderly one is cast out, order returns, and true unity can again flourish.

REASON #3 – TO HAVE A PROPER INFLUENCE ON OUTSIDERS

Local churches have an influence on the world (1 Tim. 3:15; Ax. 2:46-47). That influence is supposed to be a good one. But when a local church fails to practice church discipline, the influence they have is far from positive. Here is the straight dope: a church that tolerates those who walk in darkness sends a strong, but negative, message to the watching world. The message they are sending is that sin is okay and that it’s okay to be a sinner. God does not believe this (Ps. 5:5-6; 7:11; 1 Jn. 1:6; 2:4).

REASON #4 – TO SAVE THE ERRING BROTHER OR SISTER

The faithful few have often been accused of loving to administer church discipline because they are unloving and mean-spirited. However, such is not the case. Listen, church discipline is something that is done out of love of the souls of mankind. Church discipline is a soul-saving measure. Hear God’s Word: *“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:4-5).*

REASON #5 – IT KEEPS THE LOCAL CHURCH PURE

The human body can suffer great damage if infections are not dealt with. For instance, one reason the doctors did not try to save my right leg following the accident I was in was because they feared during the healing process that I might have gotten any one of several infections that would lead to greater harm, possibly end my life. Well, it is the same way with sin. Sin is infectious and it spreads rapidly if not dealt with (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9; 2:4-5). Sin must be purged (1 Cor. 5:7) from the ranks of local churches lest they suffer at the hand of God (Rev. 2:12-16).

REASON #6 – TO DETOUR OTHERS FROM SINNING

In the local church at Jerusalem, punishment (one much worse than withdrawing) was handed down to two individuals caught up in sin (Ax. 5:1-10). What was the result? It promoted a proper fear of God (Ax. 5:11). When people fear God they do not walk in sin (Ecc. 12:13). 1 Tim. 5:20 also teaches that dealing with the sinner head on detours others from sinning.