

Church Discipline Part 1

by Jeff Noblit

Church discipline is necessary to glorify God by obedience to His instruction, purify the Lord's Supper, and deny Satan any advantage in the church.

Duration: 50:55

Scripture: Jeremiah 6:14-16, Matthew 18:15-20, Acts 5:1-14

Topics: "Church Discipline", "Spiritual Accountability"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of church discipline and its various purposes. The first main sub point is the principle of ownership, emphasizing that if God considers something a big deal, the church must also take it seriously. The second main sub point highlights the reasons for church discipline, including purifying the spirit and message of the church, denying Satan any advantage, and proving that leaders love and care for the church. The speaker references biblical passages such as 2 Corinthians 2:11 and Jeremiah 6:14-15 to support these points. Additionally, the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 is used as an example of the consequences of not practicing church discipline.

Transcript

Jeremiah chapter 6, and in verses 14 and 15 of Jeremiah chapter 6, we have the state of the Evangelical Church. Here is the description of the Evangelical Church today, including most Baptists, the great majority of Baptists. Verses 14 and 15, They have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, saying, Peace, peace, but there is no peace.

The point of the prophet writing that is this, there is a serious sin and evil among the people of God, and the prophet comes in and says, it's not all that bad, it is something to be concerned about, but not as bad as you think, and it's easily fixed. It's a cancer that's killing them, and they put a little antiseptic on it, and a Band-Aid, and say, you're going to be fine. It's a serious malady, sin is a serious thing, because God is such a glorious and beautiful God, and him being sinned against it requires a very serious consequence.

Verse 15, were they ashamed because of the abominations they have done? We're not ashamed of anything anymore. I mean, it's just nothing, nothing shameful anymore. I'm telling you folks, 50, 60, 70 years ago, there were things that didn't happen in the culture that are now being cultivated in the church.

He says, they were not even ashamed at all. They did not even know how to blush. You know, of all of God's creatures, only man can blush.

We don't blush over anything anymore. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall. At the time that I punish them, they shall be cast down, says the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, do you realize that if you want to be biblical, you're going to be weird to most professing Christians? You're going to seem strange, you're going to seem way off base, you're going to seem uncouth. Verse 16, this is where I want First Baptist Muscle Shells to be, and I want to say this to you. I just don't have time for willful disobedience to the Word of God.

I struggle like you do. I fail like you do. But as a church family, I may have 20, possibly 30 years of ministry left, God willing.

I just don't have time to play around with superficiality and sentimentalities and culturally relevant schemes. We just don't have time. We need to get to the truth, be compassionate and humble, and strive for God's glory based on His truth and His church.

Verse 16, thus says the Lord, stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths. What a statement. Go back to the old paths where the good way is and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls.

But they said we will not walk in it. Well, biblical church discipline is the old path. Let me give you, first of all, well, let's cover a couple of texts real quick.

Look at Matthew chapter 18, if you would. Matthew chapter 18, verses 15 through 20, Matthew 18, verse 15. If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private.

If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven. And I think that's the good translation.

Whatever you bind on earth will be that you're finding out what heaven had already bound. And in this context, it means a person bound in sin. God did not grant them repentance.

Heaven decided that through the steps of discipline, you found out what heaven already decided. Did you hear that? If you follow these steps, you'll find out the ones heaven has left bound in sin. And you will also discover the contrary, if it's true.

Those that heaven has loosed and given the person repentance and can be restored back to fellowship in the church. Truly, whatever you, I say to you, whatever you ask on earth, verse 18, shall have been bound in heaven. Whatever you bind on earth, rather, shall have been bound in heaven.

And whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by my father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am, and they're mixed.

Now, you know, we see verses 19 and 20 all the time. But very seldom do you see verses 19 and 20 in their contextual setting. These verses have to do with church discipline.

And I think the point of the text is this is a difficult thing and it's a thing you struggle with and it's emotionally straining. And God says, I specially come to be with you and empower you when you're doing these things every week, almost without exception. I hear reports from the elder body, from small groups of them lovingly doing church discipline.

And by the way, church discipline is what you're getting right now. If I teach you God's truth and the spirit of God impresses you that you have an attitude or an action or behavior or motivation that's unbiblical. You say, oh, Lord, help me.

That's wrong. You were just corrected or disciplined. So we're all about discipline as long as we're in the body of Christ.

We usually only think of the final step of discipline when a person has to be publicly excommunicated or removed from fellowship in the church, membership in the church. But there's all kinds of discipline. Acts chapter five.

Would you go there? Acts chapter five. We'll read this right quick. Verses one through 14.

The church is experiencing a once in a lifetime, unprecedented revival. Folks are being saved by the thousands. And God takes what comes out to be almost a chapter of scripture in the middle of this revival to show us church discipline.

Now, I would not have done that. If we're having unprecedented, once in a lifetime revival at First Baptist Muscle Shoals and you come to me and say, Pastor, so-and-so's in Sinai. Forget it, man.

This is glorious. We'll deal with that later. Not God.

God stops the whole thing. The revival of Pentecost deals with willful sin in the church, then cranks it back up again. I think God's telling us something.

I had a Southern Baptist magazine that I was reading just this afternoon, and I'm thankful for the good things that are part of the Southern Baptist Convention. You've got to be deaf, dumb, blind and spiritually reprobate to not see glaringly serious problems in our convention. Here God is taking time to make sure his church is pure.

Acts chapter five, beginning in verse one. But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property and kept back some of the price for himself with his wife's full knowledge. And bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land while it remained unsold? Ananias, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You've not lied to men, but to God. And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last. That means God killed him.

And great fear came upon all who heard of it. Now, the point, I think, of the text is that Ananias and Sapphira gave the outward parade that they, too, were giving everything they owned to the offering at the church. Because many people were doing that.

But they actually were not. They conceived the deed of giving some, maybe generously, but keeping back much of it. The point was the rank hypocrisy, using the church for their own promotion and glory.

God dealt with it. Verse 6, The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. Now there lapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

And Peter responded to her, Well, tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price. And she said, Yes, that was the price. Then Peter said to her, Why is it you've agreed together to put the spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well.

And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Verse 11, And great fear came over the whole church and over all who heard of these things.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine a church member coming in, one of the church elders publicly confronting them about the sin, and they fall dead right there in the service? Amazing. Verse 12, And at the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were taking place among the people, and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico, but none of the rest dared to associate with him. I'll get back to this in a minute.

You know what it means? But none of the rest there to associate with it means where numbers went down, their numbers went down. Sometimes it's God's will for the numbers to go down, especially if God's going to send a revival. However, the people held them in high esteem.

We're not going to hang out with that bunch there. God kills people during the service. But we do respect them.

That's kind of what the text is saying. Then verse 14, And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number. OK, Roman number one, Roman number one is the reason for church discipline.

The reason for church discipline, there are two main sub points under the second main sub point. There are 12 sub sub points. OK, and I'm not trying to be I'm just trying to give you a systematic overview here of this biblical principle.

First of all, under the reason for church discipline, you have a the principle of ownership. Roman number one is the reason for church discipline. Sub point A is the principle of ownership.

Acts 20:28 says the church was bought with his own blood. It's his. It's his.

It's not the pastor's church. It's not the deacon's church. It's not the elders church.

It's not the denominations church. It's his. I want to tell you, it's not even the Baptist church.

It's his Spurgeon, the greatest Baptist preacher of all time, said down, down, down with the name Baptist and up, up, up with the name of Christ, longest Baptist or what Baptist historically have stood for. I'm with them 110 percent. Once they drift away and what's become demeaned Baptist has left scripture, then I'm no longer a good Baptist, according to modern contemporary definitions.

Colossians 1:18 says he's the head and the church is his body. My body responds to my head. He's the head.

Second Corinthians 11:2 he's the groom. The church is his bride. No other person has any responsibilities or rights over my bride, but me.

So it is of his church. It's his building. He built it.

Matthew 16:18 upon this rock. I will build my church. He didn't say we would build his church and he did not say he would build our church.

He said, I will build my church. We had a group of folks who visited us one time. I noticed they were quite young, probably about 25 or 30 of them.

It's been many years ago. And as I left, I shook hands with some of them. I said, your group of folks here, what are you doing? I said, well, we've got together and we're starting to plan a church.

We're going to start a new church. We want to come visit your church. We heard about your church.

And they said, we're going to start a contemporary church. I said, well, we're trying to start one that looks 2000 years old. And that's true, striving for truth, according to Scripture.

So we're not trying to be contemporary. We're not trying to be traditional. We're trying to be true.

We won't ever arrive, by the way. But, you know, I found out through the years that there's two or three places, usually pastors and churches. They may be over here and just be completely off track.

Then there's another group that in their hearts and minds, they've learned truth and they really do desire for their church to get on track. But they're just not on track yet. They're not tracking.

They're not moving forward in what I would define as a true church, not perfection, but on track in the true church. So there's some that just often don't really know it. There's some that are gaining a heart and mind and desire to be true.

Then there's some who are on the tracks. They just hadn't gone anywhere. And brother, you'll get run over on the track if you don't move.

And there are very, very few who've gotten on track, biblically speaking, and are moving forward for God. I want us to be on track and moving forward for God, and I believe by his grace that is happening, but only by his grace. Well, the reason for church discipline is it's he is he owns it.

He says, do it. We don't have a vote in it. Period.

Secondly, the principle of stewardship. That's point B, the principle of stewardship. We have a stewardship entrusted to us.

I just just can I just honestly confess to you the environment that I experienced as a young Southern Baptist pastor, and I want to be benevolent. But it was so much a circus so often. That I just didn't really take seriously the stewardship of being a pastor of God's church.

And it was in my heart, but I went to some of the great super churches in our convention and don't get me wrong. There was some good stuff. There's some solid things, but there's also some extravagant worldliness that had nothing to do with God.

The beauty of Christ. Can I say something to you, brothers and sisters about Jesus Christ? We don't need to doctor him up, dress him up or make him attractive. He's beautiful just the way he is.

He don't need the worldly garb of culture to make him more appealing. We just need to proclaim him as he is. He'll draw all men unto himself and those he didn't draw.

He don't need it. You know, in effect, that's what we do when we bring in some former rock star, some former great athlete or some former great whatever. Some movie star gets saved.

Oh, let's hear their testimony as if Jesus needs that help. That's wonderful that they got saved, but no more wonderful than a 12 year old boy who's been up all night weeping before God, feeling his sins and coming to faith in Jesus Christ. By the way, Jesus has no trouble saving the rock star or the great athlete if he wants to stewardship.

First, Peter, five, two, says that we are as pastors to shepherd the flock of God according to the will of God, shepherd the flock of God according to the will of God. We cannot shepherd the flock of God according to what's working or what's best or what gets results or what appeals to the culture or the people. Matter of fact, you shouldn't be able to explain our church.

You should not be able to look at it and say, well, boy, that elder and that staff member and that pastor and that they're sharp. They did that and they're slick. They are.

Now we have some godly and smart men who are elders and who are on staff, who, by the way, I know would be very successful in the world. Some of them have very good businesses, but that's not you shouldn't be able to explain the church in modern management or marketing viewpoints, our strategies. They should be able to say that shouldn't work.

But God's doing something. We have a stewardship entrusted to us. We're not to do what we want.

What was it? The Old Testament prophet said he said the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests rule on their own authority, which means the priests devise the systems or ministries according to what they think is best instead of what God says is right. The priests rule on their own authority. And then the next phrase is, and my people love it.

So the people will clamor after that unless they're truly regenerate. Well, the reasons for church discipline, the first main point, the principle of ownership, the second main point, the principle of stewardship and our under stewardship. Let me give you twelve quick things.

You may not have time to write these down, but twelve quick things. One of the purposes or reasons for church discipline is to glorify God by obedience to his instruction. We're just here to glorify him by obeying it glorifies God when we humble ourselves, kick out our emotions if it contradicts his truth and say, you are wise, we are not.

We will follow your instructions in this area of discipline. Matthew 18, the text we looked at 15 through however far it goes, 20, Acts 5, 1 through 14, the illustration there, First Corinthians five, another

illustration. I think Second Thessalonians has a section that encourages church discipline.

It's just obeying his instructions in Second Corinthians to nine in relation to the young man in immorality in the Corinthian church that Paul commanded. They discipline. Paul says, but to this end, also, I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient and all things.

Paul is the apostle from a distance, writes to the church about a discipline issue. He said one of my purposes was to test you to see if you're going to be obedient and all things. Number two, another reason under the 12 that I will give you here is to sanctify the Lord's Supper.

Discipline ought to be enacted so that willful, open brazen sinners are not welcomed at the pure and holy supper of the Lord that we're to take together. Now, sinners come, but not people who are walking in willful, unrepentant of sin. I've heard somebody say, well, but the church is for sinners.

No, it's not. The church is for repentant sinners. People who humble themselves and when they sin, they they're grieved and they want to do better.

And we have to do that every day for the person that brazenly and in a calloused heart walks in sin without repentance should not be allowed at the Lord's table. Purify the Lord's Supper to sanctify the Lord's Supper. Number three, to purify the spirit and the message of the church, to purify the spirit and message of the church.

First Corinthians chapter five or six. Paul, referring to a discipline issue, says a little leaven will leaven the whole lump of dough. A little undealt with sin contaminates your whole message and the whole body.

I'll say something to you, because I'm raising children and I've been in a church that's been willing to strive to practice this very principle. I would not raise my children in a church that couldn't remember the last time it removed a person for this for sin, because what you're doing, you're teaching your children by the very actions of the church that God's not really holy and sin's not really bad. You're 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 year old boys and girls, young people.

They know what's going on and they know when it's swept under the carpet and it's not a big deal. If God says it's a big deal, we must say it's a big deal to purify the spirit and the message of the church. Number four, fourth purpose, to deny Satan any advantage in the church.

There's a sense in which a wide open door is open for Satan to devour and destroy and ruin young people in marriages when known unrepentant of sin is not dealt with biblically in the church. The second Corinthians to 11, again, in the context of talking about church discipline, Paul refers to the fact that we don't want to be vulnerable to Satan schemes or open ourself up to Satan schemes. Number five, to prove that leaders love and care.

To prove that leaders love and care, if a pastor will not lead the people to exercise biblical discipline, he does not love the church. He's only loving himself. Now, let me say this about pastors.

I have the deepest sympathy and understanding why pastors can pastor a long time and barely get started on this. Because the church is in such a condition, it's terribly difficult. And we're no heroes because we've been doing this a while.

God just did some things and put us in situations and he he did these things here and we're a long way from being perfect at it. And we ought to have that kind of humble sympathy for pastors. But at the same time, lovingly encourage them to head in this direction for the good of God and the glory of God and the good of the church itself.

Paul said in Second Corinthians chapter seven, verses one through 13, that his love compelled him to deal firmly and even harshly with the sinful condition of the boy who was unrepentant in the church. A sixth purpose or reason of church discipline is to deter others from sin. First, Timothy 5:12 says some are to be rebuked publicly that the rest may be fearful of sinning, rebuke them publicly.

Not all the time. This is only in rare cases. But when something comes to the point that it has to be publicly exposed and rebuked, God says one of the purposes is that the rest may be fearful of sinning.

So I don't go to that church down there. They did so-and-so to so-and-so and they they brought so-and-so before the church while they might get me next. That's the point.

It purifies you. I don't know how you were raised, but my mama knew how to sling a belt. And sometimes my brother got it and I was fearful that it could happen to me next.

Brothers and sisters, this is wholesome and good and right. In the church, some Jezebel spirit, spirited, satanically inspired woman in your office or in your factory starts giving you the eye. And your temptation starts stirring.

Then you remember the last man you heard whose name was announced before the church and was dismissed for unrepentant of adultery. You say, oh, God, help me stay pure for the glory of God. Jeff Knoblet needs that now again.

Matters coming public are usually very rare. And scripture teaches in numerous places that every effort should be made to bring the person to repentance in the most private possible ways. But sometimes and we'll get to that in a moment.

Things have to be dealt with publicly before the body. And one of the purposes, the word says that the rest may be fearful of sinning. Number seven, to destroy fleshly lust in a believer.

First Corinthians five, five, the boy was removed from the church. Evidently, he would not repent of his sexual immoralities. And Paul says to remove him from the church that his flesh might be destroyed.

But his spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. There's the purpose of bringing a person, if you will, out from under the shelter of church sanctification. You see, there's a sanctifying element to being a part of the body of Christ.

There's a purifying principle in being in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you're set apart, then it's as if you're just let go to the full temptations of Satan, which always destroys. He kills, steals and destroys.

The wages of sin is death. And in that destruction of his flesh, he's brought to purification and repentance and hopefully restoration. Number eight, to cut emotional ties with unrepentant Christians, to cut emotional ties with unrepentant Christians.

If the church family affirms together that a brother or sister has habitually and openly and willfully walked in sin and all the efforts privately to call them into correction have failed, they're brazen, they're not

responsive at all. They want to do their own thing. Then it is sin for us to carry on an ongoing fellowship with those folks.

You're to cut those emotional ties. First Corinthians 5:11 says not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be immoral or drunkard. I think he mentions other things.

He says not even to eat with such a one. He was such a one. That doesn't mean that you're cruel or are harsh with them, but you very lovingly when you see them, encourage them to get their hearts right with God and you can't go to the movies and hang out at the at the ballgame and go out to dinner with them because you would be seen as affirming them in their sin.

That's why Paul gives that instruction. Once my church family affirms this is the step, then I'm responsible to reach out with love, yes, but not to hang out and support them in their rebellion. By the way, you support a man in rebellion.

You support the ruining of his life. The wages of sin is death. It's not always immediately physical death.

It may be death to a marriage or death to their financial stability or death to their emotional stability or death to the relationship with their children. Death comes where sin is not repented of. And we don't be seen as supporting that, but reversing that that deadly process.

Number nine, to protect scripture from perversion and error. There are times when some teach in the church things that are not biblically sound, and that is a strong charge to elders to guard sound doctrine. That's the biblical phrase guard sound doctrine.

If we had a small group leader, perhaps, and they begin teaching something that wasn't a matter of things that are not clear in scripture, they were making some dogmatic positions that were truly against the core doctrines of the faith. And we lovingly appealed to them and they refused. Then there would be a place where we would say you must be removed if you do not stop teaching these doctrines always lovingly, always compassionately, always humbly.

But that's part of the calling in Titus chapter one, verses 10 through 15. Titus Paul is instructing Titus how to deal with these issues. And in that context, he says you must silence false teachers.

They must be removed. Number 10. Another reason is to shame a brother to repentance.

The shame of brother to repentance could be a sister to repentance. Second Thessalonians chapter three, verse 14. Paul says don't associate with those who are walking in willful sin.

And I think the understanding there is the church has acted on their sin. It's known it's not. You know, we sometimes wonder what's going on in people's lives and marriages and we don't run an FBI agency.

We don't stake out and do that kind of nonsense. But when God exposed it, God's God's very able to expose things, by the way. If he wants something dealt with, he can expose it.

And then it has it must be dealt with if we're going to shepherd the flock of God according to the will of God. And then when it's dealt with and they do not repent, then he says in second Thessalonians 3, 14, do not associate with that brother that he may be put to shame. You don't run with them, fellowship with them, because if so, you're prompting propping them up and promoting them in their sin.

You need to let them know that this sin is serious and we can't hang out with you if you commit this sin without repentance. Number 11, this was sort of the summarizing purpose of all of them to restore repentant believers, the restoration of repentant believers. And we have had many, many folks over the last 18 years restored to fellowship who have told us publicly and personally that the steps of discipline were the means God used to bring them to their senses.

And bring them back to fellowship in God's church, Galatians, six, one speaks of restoring folks with gentleness and with the spirit of humility, considering ourselves, brethren, if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each one looking to yourself so that you too will not be tempted. Every effort of humility and compassion should be in our spirit in doing this and how glorious it is when God's word and God's way works in restoring an unrepentant brother or sister. Number 12, there is a 12th purpose, though, and that is to expose and remove the unregenerate.

Many people are dealt with and are removed from the church because they're not God's. That's why they don't respond to repentance. That's why they don't they're not put to shame.

That's why they just go somewhere and talk bad about you for the next 20 years. Because they just aren't God, Dr. Jimmy Millican, my theology professor at Mid-America, uses this illustration, he said, you know, if you take a pen of sheep. And you take one of the sheep and you put it outside that pen.

A sheep will roam around a little bit, but in a little while, sheep want to be with sheep. It'll be back at the gate going back. It won't back in.

He said, it's interesting, you can take a goat out of a sheep pen and it'll wander off and never come back again. What is it? First, John tells us first John chapter two, verse 19. I can roughly quote it, but let me look it up.

So I'll get it right. First, John 2, 19 says they went out from us, but they were not really of us. For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us.

But they went out so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. Well, how does the church stay pure and holy and regenerate if they're always going to be some tears among the weak? God has a process whereby they're exposed and often it's through unrepentant of sin. The church takes the biblical required steps and they're ultimately removed from fellowship and they never come back and they never seek restoration.

They never seek to get things right. And the word of God teaches that means they're a goat, not sheep. And that's one of God's purposes.

Well, that's the reason for church discipline. Let me quickly give you the range of church discipline, the range of churches. Of course, there are different approaches.

The scripture gives us four different situations. Now, hurriedly, sub point one, there is when there is private sin, it receives private rebuke. And that's what Matthew 18, verse 15 says.

Private sin receives private rebuke, he says in Matthew 18, 15, if your brother sins, go show him his fault in private. You do not have the freedom to discuss it with others. Now, there are some cases where perhaps you need clarification from a brother who perhaps is in leadership, maybe leadership of the small group, maybe a church elder.

But most of the time when we discuss someone else's sin, we're involved ourselves in the sin of strife, spreading gossip or tailbearing, you know, tailbearing, God forbid in the Old Testament law, his people from being a tailbearer and a tailbearer means you tell the truth, but you have no business telling people the truth about that brother or sister. It's tailbearing. You go in private and lovingly and humbly appeal to them in private.

Of course, the scripture says if they listen to you, it means they say, man, you're right. That's so wrong. Thank you for bringing that to my attention.

Pray with me. I want to have repentance in my heart. You know what you do? You put your arms around them and you love them.

You say, brother, it might be me next week. Thank you for responding this way. I want you to come to me with this kind of love if I need it later.

Don't leave me to sin. Sin destroys. We get dulled and calloused and hardened in sin.

Thank you for coming to me. And it's over. Nobody else need know about it.

It's over. We had a lady in a small group years ago and she had come to know Christ. Best we discern, she was baptized in the church and we found out that she was still living with the person that she was living with before she was converted, a man she was not married to.

And the ladies of that small group found out about it. And one of them says, I'm going to go talk with her. And she went and talked with her.

And it turned out that it was not the sexual promiscuity that was the stronghold in her life. It was the financial end. She needed a place to live.

And the lady said, we'll try to help you find a place to live. But ended up they didn't have to. The girl's father said, I'll get you an apartment.

And she moved out of that situation. She faithfully served the Lord here for many, many years. As far as I know, nobody but that class knows of that situation.

That's the way it ought to be. Because there was repentance. Now, sometimes sexual sin in itself demands public rebuke.

And I'll be honest, I don't know exactly how to do that. The Bible didn't tell me. But every effort should be made to bring restoration privately.

Unless we're convinced the sin is of such a nature that it requires public exposure. Well, private sin receives private review. Secondly, be under the range of church discipline.

Public sin receives public rebuke. Now, a sin can be public in various ways. First of all, it could be a private sin that one brother went and the person refused to repent.

Then, according to Matthew 18, one or two others went and they all appealed to this brother or sister and said, please repent of this. You know, this is wrong. We're here to love you and help you.

We're not here in a spirit of judgment, but restoration. And then they still refuse to repent. And then the text says, tell it to the church.

And I follow John MacArthur's teaching here in a large church. That doesn't mean necessarily tell it to a thousand people. It could be the Sunday school class or Sunday school division.

You tell it to a number of people who will all write cards, letters, call, visit and appeal to them to repent. And if they still refuse to repent, of course, then it's made public. They're brought to the church.

And in the old days, you can read it, you can find this out by reading a lot of Baptist history. They just call a church meeting and the pastors would bring the case against the brother. Brother would come to the pope and explain himself and the church would vote.

You know, you know, it's weird today. Very often we start dealing with a person and they're the CIA can't find them. They won't answer the door.

They don't answer the phone. They'll move locations. Seriously, our elders have burned up untold hours and hours just trying to get a meeting with a person.

Not just I do want to say this. There's been an uncanny consistency of families leaving the church only to find out a great number of them getting divorced after they leave here. I can't help but believe that they know that there won't be accountability in other places.

So when they're getting close to knowing they're going to leave their spouse, they go move their letter because God told them to move. And lo and behold, in one or two or three years, a big bunch of them already divorced. God helped the pastor in the church.

Who is a safe haven for folks who want to rebel against God. So when private sin is not responded to after compassionate, humble appeals are made according to the standards of Scripture, then ultimately it is brought to the church for removal or clarification and maybe the person can be restored. Sometimes a sin has such a public nature, it is so open and it's scandalous that it's generally known and public rebuke is necessary.

For example, maybe somebody is involved in some criminal activity. It's in the papers. It's just generally known.

I've had people call me, pastors call me because they hear that we've dealt with some things and tell me that man, the whole community knows about this guy and my deacons won't let me do anything. I mean, where the lack is, listen to me, folks, I'll tell you, if you're not going to be pure as a church, you ought to quit preaching the gospel, because what you're actually saying, if knowingly and openly you allow people in your membership to stay there who are living unholy lives, blatantly unholy lives, you're preaching that the gospel is of no effect. You're left with only a part of the gospel, which is not the true gospel, and that is that the gospel is only to keep you out of hell, not to change you to a holy life.

And that's the gospel we have today, is it not the gospel you hear just about all the time is just miss hell, miss hell, miss hell, miss hell. That's true. But if you don't take the balance of the gospel, the gospel changes you.

You have a new heart, a new quest for God, love for God, treasure for God, devotion to God, and in justification, he's taking your punishment. You do miss hell. It's not one or the other.

It's not a buffet line salvation. It's the whole package. See how these things affect each other.

I want you to get that. You may go to church. You may say that pastor is a powerful Bible preacher and they love souls and they're trying to win souls.

But then you should ask, is there a real commitment to purity based on practicing church discipline? If there's not, their gospel will not be effective for the glory of God. I'm not saying God never saves anyone. I'm not saying that.

But I'm saying slowly over time, listen to what I'm saying, slowly over time, what they're preaching and teaching because of who they are is not the gospel at all. It's a twisted, shaved down, narrowed, dumbed down, unbiblical thing. It's not the gospel.

The purity of the church affects the power of the gospel. It makes me tremble. It makes me tremble.

Because despite our best efforts, there's always issues we don't get to and we don't we don't deal with them best, the best we probably could have when we look back over our shoulders. But I can promise you we're doing the best we know to do. What really troubles me is when we've gone through seasons, when divisive people have caused discord in the body and we do all the leadership has to do all they can just to maintain and keep the body going.

And while we're chasing and trying to fix these discord issues, people fall into sin and there's not the time and energy to deal with it. And we found that in the last year, year and a half, we found a number of situations that we were just behind on as elders. And these brothers have worked hard, you don't know about it, you don't need to know about it, but you ought to appreciate men who get in their cars and drive to other cities to find church members to try to save a marriage and the reputation of Christ.

It's not the easiest thing in the world to do. So sometimes the scene is public and scandalous and it needs to be dealt with publicly. We had a fellow in our church years ago who was converted out of a partying lifestyle, young, single fellow, and all of a sudden we found out he's back in the club scene.

And it was dealt with, it went to the level of his whole small group, and he was in a very large, small group, a number of guys. Boy, he got mad and he lashed back out. And it wasn't two or three Sundays after the whole class started reaching out to him, he came running down the aisle of the church at the end of the service with a repentant heart, said, I'm wrong and I want to be restored back to the church.

He's moved away years ago. But what a glorious thing that was. He told me something about clubs, he said, you know, it's interesting.

I don't know. Twelve o'clock, two o'clock, they have to close those places used to anyway, just years ago. He said when they when when it's time to close down and they turn the lights on, it's like roaches running for the corner.

It's amazing the way they'll conduct themselves in the dark when the light comes on, they all scurry and run because he was a bouncer in one of those things. The sin of forsaking church when a person just abandons the church for no reason at all, they're no longer faithful, they don't even show up. That's public.

It's it's seen, it's known, it's it's the kind of sin that ought to be dealt with publicly. Well, the Bible has strong warnings against those who sow discord and cause factions in the church. And we've sure been through some of that, you know, when they come up and say, well, what do you think about what the elders are doing right here? When they should be calling an elder saying, brother, explain this to me.

And pretty soon you get three or four others. All of a sudden you got your group that think if you were elders, you'd do a better job than they are. And it's it's it's the causing factions, the Bible said the Bible warns to remove a factious man after two warnings, two warnings.

You don't even go to Matthew 18 with three to the point is you better get to that quick because it's destructive in the church of God. And I have personally and on behalf of the elders asked this church to forgive us because we failed in this area several times. We let factions go and didn't deal with it properly and quickly.

And that's why we did the whole peacemakers training, because we're committed to not let that happen. And by the way, any of you could become factious. I mean, something happened to you 20 years ago and you don't even know you've got a bitter root about it.

And then the church elders do something that's kind of like that thing that happened to you 20 years ago. And you get to be in your bonnet. You get a bird under your saddle and for a second, you talk three or four or five of your friends.

All of a sudden you've got you the power because of the party spirit, your parties meeting together when the right thing to have done was to not talk to anybody, never dishonor the God ordained authority of elders, not because those men are better, but because of the office God's put them in and go lovingly and humbly to those elders or an elder and say, brother, help me understand this. I want to make sure my heart's right here. And if it's a clear, blatant violation of scripture, call the elder with respect into repentance and correction.

But if it's a subjective opinion, you forget it and go on. Have you learned that? Is it objective biblically or is it just subjective in a matter of style and personality and opinion? I've been in mediation meetings where we've had people accuse us over and over and over again, only for the mediator to say after hours of accusations against the elders, brother, there's no biblical violation here. These are all personal, subjective ideas.

And you'd approached it differently, but it's not right or wrong biblically. Don't sweat those issues. But the Bible warns in cases of factions and divisions and discord causing strife, spreaders, quick discipline is.

Appropriate and most often public, the Bible takes a strong stand on scandalous sin in the life of leader. Now, the Bible does say a leader can sin and be corrected and still be a leader. But there's some dimensions, adulteries and other things that if a man in the office falls into those sins, it's highly, it's extremely unlikely that they should serve in that office anymore or even ever again.

And again, these things have to be looked at case by case. You know what we're seeing today on the public scene? We're seeing people fall into open, heinous sexual immoralities. We're not talking about looking at something dirty one time and repenting.

We're talking about homosexualities, prostitutes. I mean, and then they go to something and they get healed. And within weeks, they're back in the ministry, we ought to have higher standards for the

pastorate than that.

Well, John Dagg, the first writing Baptist theologian in America, say first writing. He's the first one who wrote a systematic theology among Americans. So he's kind of John Dagg, sort of the rock from which we Baptist are hewn.

John Dagg said, when discipline leaves the church, Christ goes with it. That's a powerful statement. When discipline leaves the church, Christ goes with it.

Now, don't sit out there nervous looking at me. I'm nervous, too. I mean, I might need to go to my house and deal with me first.

I'm not hiding anything there, you know, that I know of. But I'm just saying we're not talking about nitpicking subjectively checking on everybody all the time. You just go on for God, the stuff that needs to be dealt with.

He'll make it glaringly clear. And those are the ones, you know, the church at Corinth is a good example. Corinth had the church at Corinth had a lot of problems.

But Paul really bore down on the young man in sexual immorality with probably his stepmother. Now, what was the issue there? Paul said, go after the glaring and most scandalous first. And the others very likely take care of themselves.

And a lot of times they do. We have two or three families, even now that there's been some struggles. But I'm happy to report to you that our elders did persevere with one person in particular.

We went to the point of sending a letter that said, if you don't respond and meet with us, we will bring you before the church. And we're happy to report that there was some response. The couple's back together and things are hopefully heading in the right direction.

So we've seen some good result. But here's a thing I want to pray. I want you to pray with us about.

The Bible says, and I don't have time to read the scripture. The Bible says to submit to your church elders, hold them in high esteem. Honor them and obey them.

No, love them, submit, hold them in high esteem, honor them and love them. Here's my point. We're not able to serve these people when they get in rebellion, if they won't answer the phones and they won't make a meeting, they won't return the phone calls, they won't answer our letters.

And these brothers, most of our elders have jobs. It's not right for them to spend hours in the evenings away from their families chasing somebody almost. We need to make good hearted, humble efforts to reach out and then send two or three letters and lovingly and compassionately say, if you're not willing to meet with us after these efforts, then we will bring you to the church for not submitting to the authority of the church elders.

Because we're your agents, we go in your place. And that, folks, if you're not going to honor the elders of the church, you don't need to belong to it. You just don't need to go find your church where you think the elders are worthy, I guess.

And so that's I want you to pray with us about taking that step, because we have seen it happen. We have seen. And so we need to go another step and say, well, then the biblical responsibility to honor the elders of your church is there.

And I promise you, these men come with humility and compassion, never hard spirited and judgmental. So I think that's a step we need to go to. And I didn't even get to Acts chapter five, and maybe I can do that next time.

So it's been a long, long time since we looked at these truths. If you're newer in our church, this is not a new thing. And we've seen God honored and blessed many, many times.

And we praise the Lord for that.

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