

The Effects Of No Church Discipline

Failure to carry out any command of God is a serious failure. The New Testament emphasizes the duties of the individual, but there are certain responsibilities assigned to groups of Christians (churches) because we are to work together as a family or body under Christ, our Chief Shepherd (Romans 16:16; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

First, no discipline causes men to be lost. God does not want any to perish because every soul is precious to Him (Matthew 16:26; 2 Peter 3:9). If a brother sins, he endangers his own soul. Any Christian near him should seek to convert or restore him to God (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). If efforts of this type fail, the important task of rescuing this one from perishing falls upon the church. Let every member be aware of the fact that the effort is to save the sinner as well as to protect the reputation of the church (1 Corinthians 5:4-8). We must admonish the sinner as a brother because we are interested in his spiritual welfare. We want him to be ashamed of his sinful way, so we withdraw from him (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15).

Second, no discipline allows leaven's wickedness to enter the lump. The church at Corinth was "puffed up" with its own wisdom rather than depending on the counsel of God concerning the member who was a fornicator. Allowing one couple to live in violation of the law was a way of letting the leaven of wickedness to enter the "lump." It was true then as it is now that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). If the church closes its eyes to one case, there will likely soon be another and then others.

Third, no discipline will keep men from enduring sound doctrine. Timothy was charged to "preach, reprove, rebuke and exhort" in an urgent way, if he would push off the day when they would not endure sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:1-5). The mouths of those who speak unsound doctrine should be stopped but who will do this, if the people like the perverted pattern (Titus 1:10-14; 2 Peter 2:1-3)? Timothy was urged to be forceful and faithful in his preaching, and the churches were taught to mark, avoid, and reject false teachers. They were to purge out the leaven of wickedness and disorder to avoid the evil day when they would not endure sound doctrine (Acts 20:29-31; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-10).

Fourth, no discipline encourages the worldly. If a church looks the other way and refuses to notice when more and more members become ungodly, that church will become a gathering place for the worldly. It will also lose the respect of the community. Its zeal for Christ will vanish, so it will fall into the same condition that had come to Israel when Isaiah and Jeremiah lived. God was displeased with a church that tolerated doctrine and practices that were contrary to His will (Revelation 2:14-15).

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