

# “Delivered To Satan”

**Introduction.** Church discipline is a topic that is taught throughout the New Testament, and yet it is a topic that is often misunderstood. Non-Christians think of church discipline as cultish and controlling. Denominations look at it as nothing more than a way to periodically empty the church roll of names of people who quit attending years ago. Even Christians can view discipline as arcane and outdated.

We stress His will regarding the one outside of Christ, and churches tend to ignore His will regarding the sinful Christian. It is just as important to follow the teaching regarding the discipline in the church as to follow the teaching regarding the terms of admission into the church.

No one craves disciplining members of the body of Christ. In some situations, keeping the church pure with business meetings and family ties is almost impossible. We are blessed to have elders who will make tough decisions. Paul had to say about discipline in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

## ***I. The Need For Discipline (vv. 1-2a)***

- A. This was presumably an illicit sexual relationship with this person’s stepmother. The language indicates the affair was continuous and open.
  - 1. This kind of sexual relationship was prohibited under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 18:8; Deuteronomy 22:30).
  - 2. Roman incest laws strictly prohibited intimate relations between relatives to the third degree and between a stepson and stepmother and between a stepdaughter and stepfather. The punishment was losing property, being exiled on an island, and losing social status.
- B. The testimony of the church at Corinth was severely hindered. Furthermore, whenever sin is not repented of and cleansed, it increases and spreads its infection (cp. 2 Corinthians 12:20-21). In describing the evil activity of God’s people, Paul uses the terms “unruly” (1 Thessalonians 5:14) and “disorderly” (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11). These words originally referred to the failure of a soldier to keep in rank or who was insubordinate.
- C. The attitude of church members to this activity had been all wrong. They were proud (cp. 4:6). Their view of their superior standing, rather than a righteous humility, had governed their behavior. Their arrogance blinded them to the clear truth of God’s standards.
- D. The church at Thyatira was in many ways a model church. It was strong and growing, but it tolerated a woman named Jezebel (Revelation 2:19-20). God takes the purity of His church seriously, and He commands His children to take it equally seriously. Christians are not to tolerate sin within the church any more than they are to tolerate it within their own lives (Ephesians 5:3, 11).

## ***II. The Method Of Discipline (vv. 2b-5)***

- A. Discipline is not inconsistent with love (Hebrews 12:6). If we truly love God and our brethren, we will exercise discipline.

- B. Paul, knowing the will of God, had in his inner spirit passed judgment on the sinning person and had affirmed the mandatory consequences. The Lord will always bless and empower what we truly do in His name (Matthew 18:15-20). Never is the church more in harmony with heaven and operating in perfect accord with her Lord than when dealing with sin to maintain purity.
- C. “Deliver” is a strong term indicating the judicial act of sentencing, of handing over for punishment. “Deliver to Satan” is a figurative expression meaning to leave them to serving Satan their father through their flesh, or their carnal desires (cp. John 19:16; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Peter 2:4).
  - 1. Paul showed that “the mind of the flesh” brings death (Romans 8:6). It is enmity against God, and it can’t be subject to the law of God (Romans 8:7).
  - 2. The Ephesians were reminded that the Jews had “conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Ephesians 2:3). Hopefully, by the withdrawal of all social contact and fellowship with the sinful one, godly sorrow may bring him to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- D. Perhaps the man did repent. He may be the one spoken of in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11. A disciplined brother is never to be despised, even when unrepentant (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). We who are spiritual should seek to restore them (Galatians 6:1-2).

### ***III. The Reason For Discipline (vv. 6-8)***

- A. Paul illustrates holiness and discipline by the Old Testament teaching that no yeast was allowed in the bread eaten at the Passover feast (Exodus 12:15).
- B. Withdrawal protects the church. Christ wants His church to be pure. His death, an act of love, was so the church would be sanctified and cleansed (Ephesians 5:26-27; cp. 2 Timothy 2:20-22).
- C. The leaven of wickedness can slowly but surely bring spiritual death to the whole congregation (Luke 12:1; Galatians 5:7-9). The glorying and pride of the Corinthians in the brother living with his father’s wife was not good.
- D. Paul concludes by urging them to “keep the feast” — that is, live in holy consecration to God (cp. Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 2:5). This means, he says, that we are to live not with the old yeast of malice and wickedness, but on the basis of the unleavened principles of sincerity and truth. Therefore, such sins as incestuous marriages cannot be tolerated or left undisciplined in the church.

### ***IV. The Sphere Of Discipline (vv. 9-13)***

- A. Several expressions are used to indicate what we are to do: “avoid” (Romans 16:17), “not to keep company” (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11), “withdraw yourselves” and “have no company” (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14), and “reject” (Titus 3:10).
- B. These expressions mean that we cease to have fellowship with them. We do not regard them as faithful brethren in Christ or members of the body of Christ.
  - 1. Exercising discipline is not just reading a letter or statement, but ceasing to have a social relationship with the erring one.

2. This “shunning” of a sinful brother is designed to make him realize he is in Satan’s grasp and control, and because he is, he no longer can have fellowship with the people of God.
  3. Because of the cessation of fellowship, we are not to do anything that implies we regard them as faithful (cp. John 4:9; Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 15:33).
- C. To one who longs for such bonds with brethren, and who has been excluded from that fellowship, the exclusion is intended to make him repent of his sin. Discipline should produce “affliction,” “anguish,” and “grief” (2 Corinthians 2:4-11). But it can’t produce this if we act like everything is fine. Such is its purpose, and, as one concludes from the second Corinthian letter, their subsequent “withdrawal” of the sinful brother produced its desired effect.
1. One of the most intimate activities that people do with one another showing fellowship and camaraderie is to sit around a table and share a meal.
    - a) In the home, mealtime is for family and close acquaintances.
    - b) Complete strangers are rarely included, except maybe as benevolence.
    - c) Enemies are usually not on the guest list.
  2. In the case of discipline, letting the disciplined one sit at your table with you implies to him that the discipline isn’t real, or that it isn’t serious, or that you don’t support it.

**Conclusion.** What we ignore doesn’t “just go away.” To ignore signs of disease in the body will not restore good health. The disease will spread further and bring death. So it was with the adulterous brother in Corinth. If they continued to ignore his sin, that same sin would soon speak to others and become nontreatable, and spiritual death would result. We dare not ignore such sins among us.

Brethren who are reluctant to apply these passages out of love are like gloating parents who pamper their children (Proverbs 13:24). If we are interested in saving the lost in the church, we will follow God’s plan for salvation and for discipline.

The Lord commanded discipline to ultimately produce the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11). Our responsibility is to support it and pray for its effectiveness. Ironically, no church will grow without consistent discipline. A congregation sometimes becomes stronger by becoming smaller in number. Furthermore, when people learn the importance of discipline, they will avoid sin, and therefore become stronger.

When discipline is practiced by all churches, the authority of Christ will be honored and maintained, the church will be kept pure, the world will respect us, and the souls of sinful brethren will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. May it be so.