



CHURCH AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE

Jesus gave the gospel commission to go and teach and baptize people around the world (Matthew 28:19, 20). As the disciples followed this command the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). The method by which they became members of the church was through baptism (Acts 2:41).

In a way the church is like the ark at the time of Noah. Those who did not enter into the ark perished. Peter makes this event a parallel to baptism and entering the church of Christ (1 Peter 3:20, 21). In this sense those who believe and are baptized; thus entering the body of Christ will be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 1:18).

As the gifts of the Spirit were given and the church grew offices such as deacons, elders, pastors, teachers, prophets, administrations, etc. were established that the organization might function effectually (Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:11-18; Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16; Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:3-7) and certain behavior was necessary of those in the church (1 Timothy 3:15).

As the church developed various problems would at time arise within congregations, but they knew exactly how to deal with these situations for Jesus had earlier given clear instructions. Any incidents that could not be settled between individuals, or church leadership, were to be brought before the entire church body and this body would pass judgement and the membership had to abide by that judgement (Matthew 18:15-18).

We also find much information in the New Testament on how the church was to relate to those whose life and teachings were contrary to the principles of God's word. The council is to turn away from those who love pleasure more than God, or simply have an outward show while denying the power of God (2 Timothy 3:4, 5).

The church is also told to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11) and to warn those who do not conduct themselves properly (1 Thessalonians 5:14). The Apostle Paul also gives a "command" "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" that the church is to "withdraw" themselves from those who walk "disorderly" or reject the teachings of Scripture; and to avoid them (2 Thessalonians 3:6; Romans 16:17). However, they should first try to show the person his error before rejecting him (Titus 3:10, 11).

1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 9-13 gives clear instruction on the church's responsibility and authority in these situations. The church is to sit in judgement of these cases and those who refuse to accept council or reject the judgement of the church are to be removed from the church and delivered unto Satan (1 Corinthians 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:20). Thus the church is to "have no company with him, that he may be ashamed"; but he is not to be treated as an enemy (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15).

Those who take the name of Christ and become a part of His church ought walk as Christ walked,

in the truth, seeking to please God, as befitting of the children of God (1 John 2:6; 3 John 1:3, 4; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; Ephesians 5:8, 9).

In Joshua 7:11-13 we find that when sin is tolerated in the midst of God's people He can not bless them and they can not prosper; they are cursed for they have become partakers of their sin (2 John 9-11). Ezekiel warned that as watchmen we must warn the people to turn from their evil and if we do not we will be held accountable (Ezekiel 33:7-11).

When Jesus returns it is to receive a pure, holy, spotless church, without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27). Not one harboring every form of iniquity imaginable. Therefore He has given clear instruction as to how those who are members of His body are to live while awaiting His return (Titus 2:11-15).