

Membership and Church Discipline 11-16-14

In I Corinthians Paul wrote to the church of Christ in Corinth and explained to them that they were not conducting themselves as a church ought to behave. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-28 he explained to them the vision of the church; a model that is purposefully designed with a part for all members, and the importance of membership.

In particular, he focused on the idea of Personal Membership (Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.- 1 Corinthians 12:27). We need to understand that membership is a conscious and calculated commitment, as seen by Paul in Acts 9:26.

What are the obligations of Membership?

- To assemble together – Hebrews 10:24-26
- To edify one another – Ephesians 4:16
- To admonish one another – Galatians 6:1-2
- To bear each other's burdens - ibid

We need to know that our Membership is linked to Fellowship. According to I John 1:3-7, fellowship is walking in the light (being obedience in our lifestyle). We only have fellowship through God with those who also walk in the light; fellowship is a right relationship with God. If we lose one, we lose the other; meaning, when we are out of fellowship, it should lead to being out of membership. This is seen in I Corinthians 5:4-11, when the man who was sinning was commanded to be removed from the assembly.

A big part of our relationship in Christ is to admonish one another. Admonish means warning each other of dangers that we engage in (Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16, 2 Thessalonians 3:15). But sometimes we do not listen to each other. The Bible provides a plan to handle such situations in Matthew 18:15-17 and Titus 3:10-11. If one refuses to live correctly, and insists on sustaining broken fellowship, we must withdraw from them. We are not "*dis-fellowshipping*" them, since they already broke fellowship by their conduct. We are refusing to participate in their sin.

Why are we doing this? First, we are doing this to save them because we do love them (Jude 23, I Corinthians 5:5). Second, we are also doing this to preserve ourselves from a contamination by sin (I Corinthians 5:6). Finally, we are doing this to show everyone that it matters how we live our life (Psalm 26:4-5). This ultimate discipline is NOT for punishment, since they will be punished eternally (Romans 6:23). It is not the work of the elders only, as seen in Corinth (I Corinthians 5:5). Finally, it is not the work of the church only, but it is up to each individual member to enforce this decision (I Corinthians 5:11).

So how is it done? The Bible tells us the following:

- Rom. 16:17 – Note them
- Titus 3:10 – Reject them
- I Cor. 5:5 – Deliver (Remove) them
- I Cor. 6:9, 2 Thess. 3:14 – Do not keep company
- I Cor. 6:11 – Do not eat with them
- 2 John 10 – Do not receive them

Conclusion: We are the house of God (Hebrews 3:6). The value of our house is tied directly to church discipline; church discipline is the way that membership means anything. Nothing is worth more than what it costs.