

Jesus Hard Saying on Church Discipline 3-1-20 AM

Matthew 18 begins with Jesus proclaiming that a childlike mindset is necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven. He declares that we must be willing to part with whatever is necessary to enter that kingdom. Finally, He describes for us the discipline of the church. Matthew 18:15-17 is Jesus' law on the discipline of the church.

- 1) Go to him or her
- 2) Take one or two more
- 3) Take it to the church
- 4) Remove their membership (withdrawal)

There are some exceptions or variations found later in the New Testament. When it is a leader of the church, we see in Galatians 2:14, 1 Timothy 5:20 that their sins are addressed publically. Likewise, in a sin of a well-known nature (as in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5) we see a different approach to sin.

How does the church handle discipline? Discipline (in the church) has three parts: preventative in teaching; corrective in admonition; and as a last-resort, rejection.

Why is this a hard saying? For one thing, it is HARD to confront people. As well, it is HARD to withdraw from people. But we are told that it must be done. First, it must be done because we must love one another, enough to turn someone around (Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20, 1 Corinthians 5:5). We need to say that we cannot bear that they will be lost. Second, we must love the church enough to fear it being damaged by sinful behavior (1 Corinthians 5:6, 2 Timothy 2:17). Third, we must be done because we must love Christ enough to "hate" those who hate Him (Psalm 139:21, James 4:1-3). If you are God's friend, what are His enemies? Finally, it is because we must love the lost and we cannot let them believe sin is acceptable (Romans 2:24).

How do we handle "withdrawal"? The passages tell us the following:

"And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."

Matthew 18:17

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep companyBut now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person.

1 Corinthians 5:9a, 11

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

These passages provide a generic image. We are to treat them as one who is lost; we are not to keep company with them (an example is not to eat with them). Finally, we are to admonish them as a brother. These commandments are given to the congregation, and carried out by the congregation. But we personally must follow through with these things.

Hard sayings often lead to hard questions. One of them is what if they were not "withdrawn from"? In other words, no congregation ever disciplined someone? We have said that withdrawal is a work of the

church, not an individual work. We need to be careful to exercise it personally, but we still need to personally acknowledge those who are lost (Rom. 16:17) and those who are in error (2 John 10).

Second, what do we do when we have personal relationships (family, work, etc.)? Being withdrawn from does not end those relationships, nor does it remove our obligations. Husbands and wives are still partners in their marriage. Parents still must provide direction for their children, and children must still honor their parents and elders (1 Tim. 5). At the same time, we cannot use these responsibilities as excuses not to obey God's rules. We must exercise EXTREME caution, as Jesus point was not to put family before Him. We must do SOMETHING to acknowledge that they are not faithful, and that something might not be the same as it is for everyone else. But it needs to reflect that they are not right with God (1) to them, (2) to others.

When we are not dedicated to church disciples we risk causing stumbling blocks to the fallen, to the lost, and to those who are trying to do what is right

"Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life."

Ezekiel 13:22