



## Growing into Church Discipline Pt 10: Prerequisites, Process, and Changes at CRC

Putting it All Together

September 10, 2023

### **Holy Text: 1 Corinthians 11:28-32; 1 Peter 4:17**

1. We've talked much of Corinth lately. Given their cultural surroundings, and sin infiltration and celebration, their need to self examine was off the scale.
2. In the context of the administering the LORD's Table properly, Paul encourages them to "examine" and "judge" themselves to avoid greater judgment from the LORD. (vv.28, 31)
3. The consequences of taking the LORD's Table lightly were and are serious (vv.29-30)

- Damnation: some form of chastisement. Not eternal hell, but temporal judgment.
- Physical weakness
- Sickness
- Possibly even death

4. Importantly, Paul said, "we should judge OURSELVES." It was personal and for all saints. (v.31)
5. John Gill said such self-examination meant to:

*...try, and prove ourselves as above directed, before we eat and drink; or condemn ourselves, by confessing, acknowledging, and mourning over sin, and by repentance for it; or separate ourselves from the company of profane sinners, come out from among them, and touch not their unclean things; or join with them in their unfruitful works of darkness, (that) we should not be judged; by the Lord; he would not inflict these diseases, sicknesses, and death.*

6. **Our point today is that every Biblical Church must, as a part of its functioning, discipline itself and be disciplined. This is normal and should be normative.**
7. Peter taught similarly. The context of 1 Peter is significantly about encouraging suffering and persecuted Christians.
8. 1 Peter 4:17 implies that God Himself will use suffering as discipline in order to "judge" or bring about needed changes in His church. Peter isn't preaching condemnation, but edification though trial. MacArthur writes:

*Not condemnation, but the purging, chastening, and purifying of the church by the loving hand of God. It is far better and more important to kingdom work to endure suffering as the Lord purges and strengthens the church, than to endure the eternal sufferings of the unbeliever in the lake of fire. And, if God so strongly and painfully judges His church which He loves, what will be His fury on the ungodly?*

9. If things are to change and if the saints are to be strengthened, the house of God must be "judged" or held to God's standards.
10. The greater context of 1 Peter 4:17 is packed with encouragement. God's judging of the house doesn't always feel good. But God is faithful! Let us commit our lives to Him!

**1 Peter 4:16-19 (KJV)** *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not*

*the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

### **Review:**

Throughout this series, we have prayerfully examined:

- The Nature and Mission of the Church: Called out to Glorify Christ and advance on the Kingdom of Darkness, and how such an entity must be protected!
- The Nature of Biblical Discipline: Biblical Discipline is a way that God maintains His reverence, His awe, and His Majesty among His people. It is designed so that God's name is not taken lightly. Also, Biblical Discipline is used by God to instruct, correct, and sanctify His people. The Nature of Biblical Discipline is ultimately **redemptive** for God's people, as He treats us like sons and daughters and not illegitimate children! (Heb 12:3-13)
- How Biblical Discipline (God's correction) began at the Fall (leaving the garden, curses, death), intensified at the Flood, and continued through the Tower of Babel. After God called Abraham, it took on a more "congregational" feel because God had called a unique people for Himself.
- The Old Testament Narratives of God's Discipline, including Israel's being Overthrown in the Wilderness (1 Cor 10:5, Numbers 13-14), The Rebellion at Sinai (1 Cor 10:7; Exodus 32), The Incident at Peor (1 Cor 10:8, Numbers 25:1-9), the Tempting of "Christ" (1 Cor 10:9; Numbers 21:4-9), and Murmuring among God's people (1 Cor 10:10; Numbers 16).
- We also looked took a week and examined Discipline in Joshua, some of the Kings that led Israel into idolatry, and God's punishment by sending His people away into captivity.
- From our LORD's instruction in Matthew 18, to God's discipline in Acts (remember Ananias and Sapphira?), to various instances and commands concerning discipline in the Epistles (including Revelation), were are convinced that:
  1. Christ sees all within His churches.
  2. Christ cares about the purity of His church.
  3. Christ's sheep should condemn rather than celebrate sin.
  4. Christ, through the apostles and their doctrine, calls for, at times, correction, shunning, and excommunication due to false doctrine and unrepentant sin.
  5. Christ's goals in discipline are His own glory and His people's redemption and reconciliation.

### **Putting it all Together!**

Today, our heart, by the grace of God, is to attempt to synthesize all we've learned into a humble but Spirit-filled plan for greater love and greater sanctification within our church body. First, we must examine ourselves; there are growth prerequisites to doing this right:

### **Prerequisites for Church Discipline**

1. Be a Biblically-organized Church (1 Tim 3)
2. Have the Right View of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17)
3. Possess a Deep love for Christ and Christ's Sheep (Mk 12:29-31; 1 Pet 5:1-2)
4. Have an Iron-clad Commitment to Prayer (1 Tim 2:1-3; Jam 5:16)
5. All things done unto edifying, decently and in order (1 Cor 14:26, 40)
6. Leaders honored but Accountable (1 Tim 5:17-20)
7. Understand the Biblical Purposes of Church Discipline (Heb 12:5-11)

**Hebrews 12:5-6 (KJV)** *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

Based on what we have learned, we have laid out a basic, Scriptural template...

### **Church Discipline Basic Process**

#### **1. Personal conviction by the Holy Spirit:**

**Romans 6:2 (KJV)** *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

**Romans 8:8-9 (KJV)** *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

**Romans 8:13-14 (KJV)** *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

**Romans 8:16 (KJV)** *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

- Every member of the local body should self-govern. Every member of the local body should be led by the Spirit. Every member of the local body should recognize and hate his/her own sin and repent quickly before their King.
- If this sort of “self-discipline” is present, the need for corporate discipline collapses.

#### **2. Verbal love and correction by brothers and sisters**

**Matthew 18:15-16 (KJV)** *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

- Despite our desire to be led by the Spirit, sometimes we sin. As members of the church, we must love enough to engage.
- Note: when the trespass isn’t “against thee,” begin to pray for them and about your next steps. (1 John 5:16) God may move you to speak with them, or a church leader concerning them.

#### **3. Verbal love and correction by church leaders**

**Matthew 18:17a (KJV)** *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church...*

**Titus 1:13 (KJV)** *This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;*

**2 Timothy 4:2 (KJV)** *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

- The pastors, elders and deacons of this church must love enough to engage as well. May we always do so with patience, grace, truth, and humility.
- But going forward, I'd like to see our leadership team be more forthright not just in encouraging, but also in gentle, heartfelt, and self-effacing correction.

#### **4. Sad but necessary Shunning by brothers and sisters**

**Romans 16:17 (KJV)** *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

**1 Corinthians 5:11 (KJV)** *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 (KJV)** *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. **15** Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

- If for some reason a brother or sister is refusing to hear what the Spirit saith unto the church via the Scriptures, and is walking not in confusion but rebellion, the saints must apply this gentle but firm discipline.
- This is particularly necessary if someone is not only refusing to hear the Scriptures, but is actively working against God's Word.
- Of note, we aren't talking about debatable matters like eschatology, preferences, or secondary issues like views about gifts or modes of baptism.
- However, issues concerning the nature of God, the nature of Christ, the way of salvation, life, family, holiness and sin, and clearly stated precepts concerning the LORD's worship are another matter.

#### **5. Withholding of the LORD's Table by church leaders**

**1 Corinthians 11:29 (KJV)** *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

- One area of escalated discipline is the withholding of the Table. This indicates that a member is not in good standing and is an act of love by elders towards them.
- A member of the LORD's church can personally withhold if they find themselves unworthy.

#### **6. Verbal public discipline**

**1 Timothy 5:20 (KJV)** *Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*

- Public rebuke seems to be reserved for elders according to 1 Tim 5:17-19.
- Our view is that other than an announcement to the body of an excommunication or a false teaching/teacher that has infiltrated the church, this very embarrassing and shaming is step is for pastors/elders only.

## 7. Excommunication, in the hope of repentance.

**1 Corinthians 5:4-5 (KJV)** *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

**1 Corinthians 5:13 (KJV)** *But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

- This is the final and the most harsh step in Biblical Church Discipline. The rebelling offender is expelled from the body and all the protection thereof. The hope is that such an action would shake and wake the person in question and cause them to repent.
- However, once it gets to this step, whatever sin they are committing would greatly damage body if left unchecked.

Beloved, this series should change us at least in the following ways...

### **How CRC can and should change going forward**

1. We must passionately obey Scripture, for God's glory and our own good! (Jam 1:22-25)
2. We should grow in our understanding of the importance of the local assembly. There is more going on here than most realize. (Matt 16:18-19)
3. We must prayerfully examine our own hearts and lives before God. (Ps 139:23-24)
4. We must realize that our actions impact the Body. (Josh 7:13)
5. We must refuse to ignore the struggles and sins of our brothers and sisters. (1 Thes 5:14; 1 John 5:16)
6. We must be more accepting of gentle correction when/if it happens. (Heb 12:7, 9)
7. We must repent and forgive quickly. (Rev 3:19; Matt 6:14, Col 3:13)

CRC, this process may still need refinement in the future. We must always continue to reform according to the Word of God.

But our prayer is that this church will move more quickly to obey God, heed godly counsel, accept loving correction, and grow in love and sanctification thereby, unto the glory of Christ Jesus our LORD.

Amen.