

Compromised Churches: It's Time to Remove People, Clean House

People are leading ministries and churches all while the Bible instructs us not to even eat with them. It's time for a housecleaning.

Facebook is a great, if unscientific, medium for discussions about culture and Scripture (and kittens, food, vacations and so forth). I've participated in many such discussions online, and I constantly find myself shaking my head when supposedly solid, Spirit-filled Christians flat out reject clear, simple truths found in the Bible. We have declined into a church that all too often employs human reasoning in favor of biblical principles.

As an example, when is the last time you heard a pastor teach on the issue of divorce? At best they may suggest it's negative and painful while fully ignoring what God himself has to say about it.

Right in the middle of Luke 16, we see the following:

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced by her husband commits adultery (Luke 16:18).

We have a bunch of people in our churches today who are living in adultery because they divorced and remarried without validation. We need a mass movement of repentance for wrongful divorce and remarriage. After getting remarried, there can be redemption and forgiveness, but that is a process that must be completed. Divorce rates in the church should be near zero. I say "near zero" because there are legitimate and approved

reasons to initiate a divorce. There are times when it's fully appropriate to get remarried as well. God is in the restoration business, but we must submit to his process and follow his protocol.

The point on divorce was simply one example as I begin this article on discipline in the church. We have to agree that Scripture rules. We must stop minimizing it, modifying it, ignoring it or rewriting it.

Before you attempt to crucify me for being cruel and unfeeling regarding divorce or the other issues I'll address in this article, I want to challenge you. First, my heart is broken over sin in the camp. Second, why do you presume you have the right to dismiss clear directives in Scripture? You don't. Neither do I. I believe it's an act of love and humility to trust God's wisdom as we deal directly with sin in the church. God has given us a measure of stewardship over his holy church, and we are failing, especially in regard to holiness.

It's Time to Clean House

Take a moment and let the following verse sink in:

I wrote to you in my letter not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I did not mean the sexually immoral people of this world, or the covetous and extortioners, or the idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But I have written to you not to keep company with any man who is called a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. Do not even eat with such a person.

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But God judges those who are outside. Therefore "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

Sin in the camp is defiling the house.

The above passage reveals that God judges the unsaved, the lost, those in the world. It also reveals that we have been mandated to judge those within the church. This, friend, rarely happens and that is a key reason revival is not near.

Please remember, we don't have the right to exercise mercy that's not endorsed by the Word of God. We don't have the freedom to let someone off the hook when God demands we deal with their situation.

You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little yeast leavens the whole batch.

One immoral person in a church can compromise the entire congregation.

Love Them Out the Door

It's time to express love, with tears in our eyes, by inviting people to leave our churches. Multiplied thousands of professing Christians must be shown the door—and fast.

If they profess Christ and are guilty of sin, we cannot even eat with them. This is severe, and it is necessary. It's also literal.

Are there any people attending church today who are greedy? We can't go grab coffee with them. Is anybody involved in porn? Do they get intoxicated? Do they have idols in their lives? Are they abusive? We must deal directly with them for the sake of their souls and those of everybody in the church! Why? Check out a verse that's strangely similar to what we read in 1 Corinthians 5 (it takes it to a whole other level):

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually

immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

While so many are welcoming these offenders into church services and functions every week, God has determined they will not be welcomed into heaven. We are celebrating the people God is rejecting. We are confirming those God is calling out.

Allow me to make this point very clear: If anyone who names the name of Christ is guilty of these sins, they must immediately repent while bearing fruit or they must be removed from fellowship. Period.

Yes, most youth groups will be wiped out. Elders in the church will have to go. Many pastors will have to relinquish their positions. Churches will decline significantly in number as they lose those guilty of sin and their sympathizers!

What will be left? A holy, remnant church that can finally move in power, unity and purity.

Turn Them Over to Satan

Sexual sin is especially destructive. If anybody tells you all sin is the same, don't believe them. It's not true. For example, one type of sin cannot be forgiven. Other sins are not unto death. Sexual sin is one that demands a more severe response. Again, the response is rooted in love, not revenge. It's to protect the church and to awaken the offender.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles, that a man has his father's wife. But you are arrogant. Instead you should have mourned, so that he who has done this deed might be removed from among you. For indeed,

though absent in body but present in spirit, I have already, as if I were present, judged him who has done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you are assembled, along with my spirit, in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch? Therefore purge out the old yeast, that you may be a new batch, since you are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:1-7).

The world has the right to accuse Christians of hypocrisy. When sin happens, it's swept under the rug. It's ignored. It's certainly not dealt with. It's rarely judged.

The instruction is clear and cannot be modified. The one who is guilty must be turned over to Satan. They must be excommunicated. They are a danger to themselves and to the church.

Restoration

The purpose of discipline is twofold:

1. The restoration of the person: God, in his wisdom, knows just what it will take to give people the greatest chance of restoration. Biblical discipline is a part of that process.
2. The protection of the body: A little leaven leavens the whole lump. We must insist on a holy church for the sake of the innocent and unsuspecting:

Deliver [this man] to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom he receives (Heb. 12:6).

For they indeed disciplined us for a short time according to their own judgment, but He does so for our profit, that we may partake of His holiness (Heb. 12:10).

When restoration works, the Bible tells us that we will win our brother. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work out the way we'd prefer, but it's imperative that we try as Scripture demands:

Now if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, then take with you one or two others, that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every word may be established. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (Matt. 18:15-17).

Keep in mind that severe church discipline must follow earlier attempts at restoration.

Now we exhort you, brothers, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, support the weak, and be patient toward everyone (1 Thess. 5:14).

The first step isn't removing them from fellowship. It's calling them higher, exhorting them to live righteously and patiently yet invasively, uncomfortably, demand they respond to the correction of the Lord. Walk the walk with them until their rebellion or repeated failures would cause you to violate the Word to maintain fellowship with them. That time comes sooner than we typically presume.

God Demands That His Church Be Holy

John L. Dagg said this: "When discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it."

Ichabod is posted above the doorposts as the presence of God vacates a once holy church that's inundated with immorality.

The question is simple: Do you want God to remain, or the unrepentant offender? You can't have both. {eoa}