

Treatment of Excluded Brethren

Introduction:

1. We have recently had church discipline in excluding some sinners, and we need this review.
2. God drowned the world and killed N.T. church members for sin; we must stand against it!
3. Most of this material and more detail is here: <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/church-discipline.pdf>
4. Review of I Cor 5 and II Thes 3 is here: <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/review-church-discipline.pdf>
5. Though this was preached 16 months ago (12/25/05), we have new members, and we forget.
6. We must steer between the compromise of sentimentality and cruelty of self-righteousness.
7. You cannot improve upon the word of God by being gentler or harsher than Holy Scripture.
8. At each point in our church or Christian life like this, we must carefully define Scripture only.
9. The highest probability of success is doing things God's way, without adding to or taking away from scripture, and without turning to the left hand or the right hand.
10. You cannot impart repentance by any action of your own; it is a gift of God (II Tim 2:24-26).
11. Though results do not prove a doctrine's validity, we have glorious results of our practice.
12. Our children need to see a clear picture that God hates sin and we cannot compromise with it.

What Is Exclusion?

- A. It is (1) publicly identifying a sinner and his/her sin, (2) turning him over to God's judgment by Satan, (3) putting him out of the church membership, (4) ending his access to the Lord's Table, and (5) ending ordinary socializing with him, by unanimous corporate action by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor 5:1-13).
- B. It is most fully described in I Corinthians 5:1-13, where Paul instructed the church at Corinth to exclude the incestuous fornicator they were protecting.
 1. The fornicator and his sin are first identified so Corinth knows the matter (5:1-2).
 2. He is to be turned over to Satan in the name of Jesus to destroy his flesh (5:3-5).
 3. He is to be removed from membership of the body and the Lord's Table (5:6-8).
 4. He is to be withdrawn and separated from as to eating and socializing (5:9-11).
 5. It is unanimous corporate church action that is to make the difference (5:12-13).
- C. It is further described by the terms of separation found in several other passages.
 1. Rebellious sinners are to be treated as heathen men and publicans (Mat 18:15-17).
 2. Heretics and other offenders are to be marked and avoided, especially false teachers, as dangerous belly worshippers and enemies of Christ (Rom 16:17-18).
 3. Those rejecting apostolic tradition were to be withdrawn from (II Thess 3:6).
 4. They were to be noted, avoided for company, and shamed (II Thess 3:14-15).
- D. It is putting a man outside the spiritual body of the church, where God will judge him.
 1. A church is not a building or an assembly: this is important for understanding.
 2. A church is a body of believers, who have covenanted together under the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are bound together by the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:12-27).
 3. The spiritual body of a church is far more important than a building or assembly.
 4. God implants members in the body (I Cor 12:18), which has nothing to do with a building or assembly, for it is describing the various members of the organism of the church, which is a living body under Christ's headship, activated by the Spirit.
 5. A church assembles, or comes together into one place (I Cor 11:20); but an assembly is not a church, for unbelieving children, strangers, and visitors also assemble (I Cor 14:23); they are not part of the church or among the church.

6. A church becomes a dead carcass or merely an assembly, when Jesus Christ removes the Holy Spirit; but until then, it is an invisible spiritual body (Rev 2:5).
 7. The focal point of the spiritual body is at the Lord's Table (I Cor 10:15-17).
 8. A church is a spiritual building of living stones that make a temple for the Holy Ghost (Eph 2:22; 4:11-16; I Peter 2:5; I Cor 3:16-17; I Tim 3:14-15).
 9. Members of one church are part of a spiritual union in that one body (Col 4:9,12).
 10. What a church binds or looses on earth is bound or loosed in heaven, for there is a spiritual connection between the true church and God in heaven (Matt 18:18).
 11. There is nothing said in the New Testament about not allowing him in assemblies.
 12. The New Testament does not hire bouncers to restrict entry to church assemblies.
- E. It is turning him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh – his carnal lusts, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus – Jesus Christ at His coming.
 - F. Its primary intent is the purity of the Lord's body at the communion table; it's secondary intent is the salvation of the sinning brother.
 - G. It is a punishment inflicted by many – the whole of the congregation (II Cor 2:6).
 - H. It is not a vote, since the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of the church, has already determined what sins are allowed and what sins are not allowed.
 - I. The pastor cannot exclude anyone, as it is a congregational action. The pastor should direct the congregation to their duty, but it is the church that must exclude.
 - J. If a church does not do this, then they implicitly condone the sin (II John 1:10-11).
 - K. However, in aspects and details not covered by scripture, pastors make holy judgment, and the church is to follow (I Tim 5:17; Heb 13:7,17; Ezek 44:23-24; etc.).

How Are Excluded Brethren Treated?

- A. We clearly identify them and their sin (I Cor 5:1-2; Romans 16:17; II Thess 3:14).
- B. We are to *withdraw* from them, which we see primarily as membership (II Thess 3:6).
- C. We *avoid* them, which means not pursuing them, especially teachers (Rom 16:17-18).
- D. We are to avoid normal social activity i.e. eating with them (II Thessalonians 3:14).
- E. We are not to *keep company* with them, which we understand to be unnecessary socializing based on the parallel case of worldlings (I Corinthians 5:9-11).
- F. We are not to *eat meals* with them as in ordinary socializing (I Cor 5:9-11 cp 10:27).
- G. They are as *heathen men and publicans*, without fellowship or love (Matthew 18:17).
- H. Our treatment of avoiding them must leave them *ashamed* (II Thessalonians 3:14).
- I. Our treatment is a *punishment* inflicted by the many members (II Corinthians 2:6).
- J. It does not include *forgiveness, comfort, or love* until restoration (II Cor 2:7-8).
- K. If a person is repentant, the treatment is such as might overwhelm them (II Cor 2:7).
- L. However, our treatment must not be cruel or vindictive – it is not a complete cutting off as in the case of an enemy for whom there is no more concern (II Thess 3:15).
- M. Our treatment must include *brotherly* admonition for their salvation (II Thess 3:15).
- N. Necessary relationships outside the church such as marriage, family, or employment are not made void, so there are differences in treatment from one person to another.
- O. Further differences should be shown based on the degree of repentance and wisdom manifested. If a man persists in his folly in a scornful way against God, then he should be dealt with as a fool and scorner (Proverbs 9:6-9; 14:7; 22:10; Matt 7:6).

- P. Exclusion does not keep a person from attending assemblies or entering a building.
1. We do not run to unscriptural excesses of Mennonite or J.W. “shunning.”
 2. We do not appoint bouncers to refuse anyone from the public worship of God.
 3. The within or without of I Cor 5:12-13 is not buildings or assemblies, but rather membership in the church body or outside the body with the world (I Cor 5:9-11).
 4. This protective hedge is not around the building or assembly, but rather the body!
 5. “From among yourselves,” was stated in several aspects already, where the focal point of membership is seen at the Lord’s Table (I Cor 5:1-11 cp 10:15-17).
 6. Paul’s “therefore” in I Cor 5:13 sums up the 12 verses describing exclusion; he is not introducing something new, but rather telling the church to do what he stated.
 7. The recovery passage in II Cor 2:6-8 says nothing about buildings or assemblies; and it is limited to the church showing forgiveness, comfort, and love once again.
 8. The Old Testament has no help for N.T. church procedure; because the church and state were the same under the O.T. – the fornicator would have been stoned!
 9. The Old Testament was merely punitive; the N.T. is mercifully remedial!
 10. The Holy Spirit knows how to inspire specific words about assemblies or staying home, but He did not in this situation (I Cor 5:4; 11:18,22,34; 14:23; Heb 10:25).
 11. The Holy Spirit inspired specific words such as “company” (socializing) or “eating” in the context (I Cor 5:9-11), but nothing of buildings or assemblies.
 12. Visitors in our building or our assemblies are not fully, truly, or spiritually of us, within us, or among us, which the Lord’s Table visibly indicates to all.
 13. Our unity is specifically identified by partaking of the one bread (I Cor 10:15-17).
 14. Sitting at home without preaching or singing would be counterproductive to the salvation of a sinner, for it is by such means that we are all brought to conviction.
 15. Excluded brethren need the reading of God’s word, preaching of God’s word, public prayers, and congregational singing – for these are means of repentance.
 16. Excluded brethren see their spiritual shame most visibly at the Lord’s Table.
 17. How would they be ashamed, if they were never around us at any assembly?
 18. Repentant sinners should show their zeal by careful attendance at all assemblies.
 19. This way the whole church partakes in their repentance and fruits of godliness.
 20. Attendance at assemblies gives things for soul benefit but denies the pleasures!
 21. They are not to be treated cruelly as an enemy, and we gladly let heathens and publicans and unbelievers attend our assemblies (Matt 18:15-17; I Cor 14:23-24).
 22. We should not company with the world’s fornicators, and yet they may enter our building or assembly from time to time without any overt response on our part.
 23. How, when, and where do you admonish, if not at assemblies, especially if you are being consistent about literal avoiding, companying, and withdrawing?
 24. By God’s grace we have had these practices for the 27-year history of this church, and we have trophies of grace sitting among us that are precious results of them.

What Is Restoration?

- A. It is restoring an excluded member to full fellowship, forgiveness, affection, and comfort, after they have cleared themselves from their sin by godly repentance. It is the opposite of exclusion. It is the end of their time of punishment outside the church. It is the receiving of an excluded sinner back into the communion of the church and

the baptism of their soul by the Spirit once again into the body. It includes all the actions and consequences occurring at original membership.

- B. It is most fully described in II Corinthians 2:6-8, where Paul instructs the church at Corinth to restore the excluded fornicator from I Corinthians 5:1-13. Contrary to the way they had been treating him (shunning and admonishing), they were now to receive him again and console and encourage him with affection and forgiveness.
- C. Restoration is a congregational action directed by the pastor. As exclusion was the action of the many (II Cor 2:6), so restoration is the action of the many; it is a congregational ordinance. The pastor must bear responsibility for the judgment as to when this occurs and lead the church to the godly action, but it is the unanimous action of the whole church that restores a member.
- D. It is not a vote, for the whole congregation should be agreed that the offender has cleared himself completely. God has determined what offences require exclusion, and He has recorded them in great detail for us. He has also very clearly defined repentance for us. He has also determined His appointed ambassador – the bishop, and he is able to discern by the Spirit and Word when a man should be recovered.
- E. In order to mirror the celebration in heaven (Luke 15:7,10), it is certainly appropriate to show this confirmation of love, forgiveness, and comfort with a godly celebration (II Cor 2:7-8). Can any forbid a fatted calf, robe, or ring to such persons, that we might appear as spiritually minded as our Lord and those in heaven?

When Does Restoration Occur?

- A. When the punishment has been sufficient to destroy the flesh, prove godly repentance, and has potential of harming a person with grief is the time to restore a brother to the congregation (II Corinthians 2:6-8).
- B. Godly repentance unto salvation indicating the possibility of restoration is extreme, obvious, and altogether clears one (II Corinthians 7:10-11; Job 33:27-28; Luke 19:1-10). Such godly sorrow and repentance are not easy; they are gifts of God.
- C. The key is II Cor 2:7 and the words “overmuch sorrow.” The minimum duration is determined by the word “sorrow,” which Paul defines as conduct clearing one from the charge of wrongdoing (7:11). The maximum duration is determined by the word “overmuch,” which Paul defines as potentially swallowing a man in excessive grief.
- D. Every father has sufficient wisdom for applying similar discipline at home. He should punish the children sufficiently to drive the foolishness from them (Pr 22:15; 23:13-14); and yet he must limit the punishment to avoid provoking or discouraging them (Ep 6:4; Col 3:21). Ministers pastor churches as fathers care for their children.
- E. Church discipline must be severe enough to work the salvation of godly sorrow (I Cor 5:5; II Cor 7:10-11); and yet it must be limited enough to avoid destroying a man for whom Christ died (II Cor 10:8; 13:10).
- F. The pastor, as Christ’s ruler in the congregation, directs the church to restore an excluded member, when he judges Christ’s standards have been met. This is not so different from receiving a public sinner upon repentance as a first time member. Jerusalem had trouble with Paul, but accepted ministerial judgment (Acts 9:26-28).
- G. The arbitrary and superstitious minimum of a year is neither Scriptural nor wise. Some sinners could be cleared in less than a year (like Zacchaeus), and others may require decades depending on their zeal and the nature of their sin. Whether there is

one year or five years between the Corinthian epistles or whether the fornicator repented for one month or five years cannot be proven from Scripture. To establish a hard and fast rule from these unnatural connections creates an artificial standard for church discipline and a precedent for speculative interpretations.

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "[Church Discipline](#)," covers the subject in great detail with case studies.
2. The sermon outline, "Review of Church Discipline" covers I Corinthians 5 and II Thess 3.
3. The sermon outline, "I Corinthians 5," for verse-by-verse review of this exclusion chapter.
4. The sermon outline, "II Corinthians 2," for verse-by-verse review of this recovery chapter.
5. The sermon outline, "II Thessalonians 3," for verse-by-verse review of this discipline chapter.