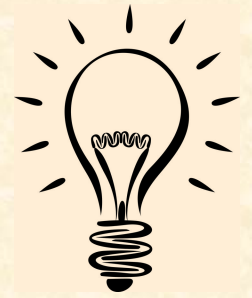


The Christian Light

Editor - Mitch Sparks



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

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CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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The world today is very topic sensitive. There are some subjects that if the truth is spoken, regarding the matter, those who speak the truth will be shunned by the world. Unfortunately, this idea of avoiding certain subject matter has been brought into the Church. We as Christians have the obligation to protect the body of Christ, for his body is the Church. We cannot sufficiently say that we are protectors of the body if we seek to avoid part of His counsel. Paul, as he speaks to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, says “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). We must seek to be like Paul, teaching the whole counsel of God. The whole counsel of God has not been declared when part of His counsel is avoided. The whole counsel of God has not been declared when part of His counsel to man has been changed. It is not advantageous in any way for us as Christians to avoid any part of the counsel of God.

One day we shall all be judged by God, and he is going to judge us according to the things written in the Bible. “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev 20:11-15). Church Discipline is without a doubt a part of the counsel of God; therefore, it must be declared.

Does the Bible speak of Church Discipline?

Church Discipline is certainly something that many would call “the forgotten commandment” because it seems to be a thing of old. Many congregations are not exercising this commandment, but that does not excuse us from the command. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every **brother** that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” (Romans 16:17). “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 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 idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (1 Cor. 5:9-13). “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**” (2 Thessalonians 3:14). In each of these passages, the text is talking about those who are in the body of Christ. Paul writing to the Corinthian brethren made that clear. If he was talking about the people of the world, it would be a necessity that we must leave this earth to follow this command.

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Why do we need Church Discipline?

In each of the passages we noted, the word “discipline” is not used but it is implied. Discipline is defined as “the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience”. In every successful nation or business, discipline is exercised. Without discipline things become unruly. Rules are in place to keep the nation or business pure for the purpose of which it was originally intended. The Church has commands that are to be obeyed. Therefore, discipline must be in place to keep the Church pure. Church discipline is both instructive and corrective. One must first be instructed, in hopes that corrective discipline does not become necessary. Church discipline is an act of love, to cause one who has erred from truth, to know the severity of their situation in hopes that they might repent and be restored to the fold. God holds Christians in high regard. Therefore, we shall receive the greater judgment. “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:21).

RESTORING THE RESTORED

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In the early 1800s, a group of men became frustrated with the false teachings and practices they witnessed occurring in the religious bodies of which they were a part. These men slowly developed an approach to the scriptures where they would renounce all denominational creeds, affiliations, and titles and become Christians only. They sought to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent. They called Bible things by Bible names, and did Bible things in Bible ways. Their desire was to restore the bride of Christ to the state of purity which she demands and deserves.

In the years since, our Brotherhood for the most part has lost the true essence of the church. We once prided ourselves on being the New Testament church, now at least three generations of Christians have come up not hearing lessons on the first principles of the faith and on the restoration plea to go back to the Bible.

No longer are we following the Lord’s command found in Jeremiah 6:16, Thus saith the LORD, “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein.” Worship has become either a highly choreographed production, or a stuffy boring setting of condemnation. Seldom do you find a congregation today who worships both in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Sermons have digressed to the point of being story time or watered-down pick me up talks. Too many so-called preachers today are ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16) and as a result do not preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Christ expects His church to be one body (Romans 12:4), but true brotherly fellowship is sadly a thing of the past. We have at least 13 major divisions and at least that many minor divisions in the Lord’s church today, and each one has established their own fellowship separate from the others. Many of the divisions which have occurred have done so as a result of the opinions or attitudes of men. We were at one time the fastest growing religious group in the country. Then division came and we dropped off the list. Sister congregations do not support each other anymore. Why do we expect everyone else to fellowship us and support our events, but we do not feel we have to return the favor? There was a time when gospel meetings drew packed houses from Christians and community members alike, but now we are lucky if we have half of the local church membership attend much less the lost from the community or visiting brethren!

Also, we have weak leadership in the church today. Too many men who are qualified to serve as elders refuse to serve out of fear. It should be the greatest honor that can be bestowed on a Christian man to serve a congregation as an elder. However, when these men have not prepared themselves adequately by studying God’s word and living the Christian life then they are not fit to serve. Older Christian men MUST start grooming young men as early as possible to serve as elders. This is the way God desires the church to be led. Yes, some congregations simply do not have qualified men. In that case they need to be working to prepare men to serve. Men must be willing to serve.

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On that same subject, elders are to be spiritual guides not a board of directors. They are not to position themselves as lords over the congregations demanding the members' respect and obedience. That is not the kind of Christian example that an elder is supposed to set.

Many congregations are also becoming too introverted. They only want to be a part of those things which they are either in charge of, or that are occurring at their building. When Peter, through inspiration, commands us to love the brotherhood (I Peter 2:17) he did not mean just the congregation which you worship with. The brotherhood is the body of Christ, the Lord's church. All faithful congregations are a part of our brotherhood. We are not showing them brotherly love if we exclude ourselves and our support from them.

All of this has led us to the point where we are today. The church needs to be restored! We have again stained the bride of Christ through our divisiveness, opinions, watered-down preaching, speaking where the Bible is silent, and especially by promoting false teachers and their teachings. We are commanded not to bid Godspeed to a false teacher (II John 1:11). In fact, we are told that if we do this then we become guilty of the same sins they are committing through their teachings. Paul wrote twice in Galatians 1:8-9, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Even though the Bible is very clear on this subject, we still have congregations who claim to be sound who give their support and bid Godspeed to promoters or such false teachings as instruments in worship, women leading worship, salvation by grace alone, etc?

The church of today in many places is a far cry from what God wants it to be. We must take the Bible as our one and only guide, and follow God's inspired plan for church growth: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. (Mat 28:19-20)

FROM THE EDITOR:

Thanks to all who have signed up for "**The Christian Light.**" I hope the content of the articles are beneficial to us all. Please share via email to any others who may not receive this publication. We want to grow this publication so it can eventually be sent via email worldwide.

In the coming months our goal is to start generating articles based on "Series of Lessons," that will help us grow closer to God.

Thank you to all who have written articles for this publication and the many more that will be produced in the coming months and throughout next year.

Also, if the congregation where you attend has an upcoming event, gospel meeting, lectureship, etc... please let us know and we will be glad to post them under NEWS & INFO in the publication.

Future Goal: By the start of the new year of 2022, our goal is to have at least or close to 1,000 subscribers.

The Christian light has a new email address: thechristianlight1@gmail.com



From the Editor: If you or the congregation where you attend would like to receive this publication, please send us an email to thechristianlight1@gmail.com and in the subject line "**Sign Up for The Christian Light.**" Thanks, Mitch Sparks