



Growing into Church Discipline Pt1: The Definition and Importance of the Local Church

July 9, 2023

Holy Text: Matthew 16:13-19

Initial Pastoral Thoughts: Why this Series? Why a sobering and difficult topic like Church Discipline?

1. Because God loves you!

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.*

2. Because we cannot grow without discipline!

Hebrews 12:11 (KJV) *Now no chastening (paideia in Greek: instruction, correction, nurture) for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness (“harvest of right living,” NLT) unto them which are exercised thereby.*

3. Because grace doesn't mean grease!

Romans 6:15 (KJV) *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

4. Because Jesus is LORD of the Church and commands such through the apostles.

2 Timothy 1:13 (KJV) *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

1 Corinthians 11:1 (KJV) *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

5. Because God is holy, and wants a holy people.

1 Peter 1:13-16 (KJV) *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

6. Because unrepentant “sin in the camp” is defiling and can bring forth God’s judgment. God cares about the purity of the Church.

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 (KJV) *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

7. Because the Church is supposed to shine forth the love and light of Christ!

Matthew 5:13-16 (KJV) *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. 14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine*

before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Thoughts on our Text: What is the Church?

- The following is an overview of the Doctrine of the Church, also called *Ecclesiology*. The purpose of presenting this overview is to frame our discussions in light of who Christ has called His Church to be and what He has commanded us to do. May God shift and change us through this study according to His Word.
- *What is the Church?* This is an important question. It would be hard to grasp the need for Church Discipline without knowing the definition and mission of the Church!
- In Matthew 16:18 we read the first use of the Greek word *ekklēsia* in the NT, which is translated *church*. It literally means “a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church.” (Strong’s)
- **In our Text, we see both the nature of the church (called out, which includes separate, holy living apart from the world) and mission of the church (to advance on and push back the kingdom of darkness), which includes preaching the Gospel, making disciples, battling devils, and upholding and making great the Name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God!**

“Upon this Rock?” (v.18)

1. Verse 18 has been subject to lots of controversy for centuries.
2. Some say that Peter (Petros) is the rock (petra); others (including me) believe that Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built.
 - **1Corinthians 10:4** *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*
 - **1Corinthians 3:11** *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
3. The late theologian, Michael Heiser, put forth another possibility. Geographically, Christ was in Caesarea Philippi, which stood at the foot of Mount Hermon in the region of Bashan. To make a very long story short, this region was a center of the pagan worship of Baal (and later Pan), associated with the realm of the dead (hades), and according to Scripture and Jewish tradition, was the place where fallen angels descended in their rebellion against God, took human wives, and produced the Nephilim (giants, Gen 6:1-4, Josh 12:4-5).
4. In this view, the first century Jewish mind would understand that Christ was, in effect, declaring open war on “the gates of hell” right on the devil’s doorstep! It would be like saying, “On this “rock” where Satan now rules, I’ll build my church!”
5. Admittedly, the normal view is “safer,” but the implications here are staggering as it relates to spiritual warfare!
6. It’s also interesting that Jesus describes His Church in a “war, authority, and discipline” context.
 - Although I do not hold to Peter being the “rock,” that doesn’t diminish the authority given.
 - Peter (and thusly the Church through the apostles) was given “the keys to the kingdom of heaven.” At a minimum, this suggests the authority of opening and closing, allowing and disallowing, opening matters and settling matters.

- In my view, the binding and loosing mentioned here refers to the *apostolic authority* Christ granted the apostles to “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (Jer 1:10); in other words, to oversee the church.

“And I will give unto thee” (v.19)

1. Jesus makes clear that the Ekkēlsia belongs to Him. Therefore, any authority given to it also belongs to Him.
2. This is important: the authority stewarded and wielded by the church belongs to Christ, who holds the seven stars and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. (Rev 2:1)
3. Whether it is the Words of Scripture rightly preached or a righteous, Spirit-led admonition by an elder, it all belongs to the LORD.
4. Indeed, all true and truthful authority everywhere is Christ's: **Matthew 28:18 (KJV)** *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power (“authority” ESV, NLT) is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*
5. If you do not believe that Christ Himself is authoring and authorizing what is happening in your local church, it will be hard to worship and serve rightly. Can you see and sense Jesus and His Word in what is going on?

“The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” (v.19)

1. *Keys* is *kleis* in Greek: “An instrument for shutting or opening a lock.”¹ In our Text, it is used metaphorically.
2. Through Peter and the apostles, the church would be given the authority to “open and shut” the doors of the Kingdom. That is, the apostles would be commissioned to take message of the Gospel to the world, opening the door of salvation to all who would believe through their preaching and teaching. The church is commissioned to do the same.
3. Charles Spurgeon said:

For practical purposes the people of God would need discipline, and the power to receive, retain, or exclude members. Of these keys our Lord says to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Foremost among the apostles, Peter used those keys at Pentecost, when he let three thousand into the church; in Jerusalem, when he shut out Ananias and Sapphira; and at the house of Cornelius, when he admitted the Gentiles. Our Lord committed to his church power to rule within herself for him; not to set up doors, but to open or shut them: not to make laws, but to obey them and see them obeyed. Peter, and those for whom he spoke, became the stewards of the Lord Jesus in the church, and their acts were endorsed by their Lord.

4. **Through the apostles, the church has been given the authority to gather the LORD’s people, preach the Bible, receive and excommunicate members, and administer the ordinances of grace among other important duties.**
5. These things aren’t valued much among the general populace, but they greatly matter to the LORD of the Church who instituted them and Christians who embrace them.

¹ Webster 1828 Dictionary

Binding and Loosing on earth and in heaven (v.19)

1. *Bind/Bound* and *Loose/Loosed* refer to opening and closing, tying and untying. These are also metaphors that refer to spiritual things.
2. This section of the verse is subject to many views. There are a few orthodox ways to understand it:
 - Church Discipline. The church has the authority, based on God's Word, to render spiritual judgments in the church which would be ratified by Heaven.
 - Apostolic Authority. The apostles alone would be able to bind devils and miraculously loose infirmities. There is a debate as to how far this authority extended.
 - Spiritual Warfare. Based on the context ("gates of hell" in verse 18, and the warfare spiritual warfare motif embedded in Matthew), binding and loosing refer to the church's authority over principalities and powers: limiting their work (binding) and casting them out (loosing).
 1. One take here is as the church made advancements against the "gates of hell" (v18), Heaven would confirm and empower such. The church would "bind" evil powers through the preaching of the Gospel, prayer, and intercession, and "loose" souls from the snare of the devil.
 2. Another variation on this view is in addition to Gospel preaching and making disciples, the church (not just the apostles) would also, when necessary, directly confront hellish powers, binding the strongman (Matt 12:29) and casting out devils. "Heaven" might refer to the "heavenliness" or the spiritual realm.
3. Regardless of one's view, it is amazing our LORD has given such authority, in whatever form, to His people. "On earth and in heaven" is a humbling phrase! What we do within the church matters for time and for eternity! Heaven is watching!
4. Oh how such authority must be used with grace, love, patience, self-examination, prayer, accountability, and biblical precision!²

Caution and Conclusion from our Text:

Although leaders subsequent to the apostles should be wary of assuming commensurate jurisdiction, *real* authority has in fact been given to those following apostolic doctrine in a duly formed and called out body of believers. Such a church would be governed, through the eldership, by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Bible.

Bottom line: there is true, divine authority granted to the LORD's church and that authority is delegated to and humbly administered, via the Scriptures, by its duly qualified leaders.

Metaphors and Relevant Verses:

- Many metaphors are used in the NT to describe the LORD's church:
 1. A Body (Christ's)
 2. A Building
 3. An Army (because it has soldiers)

² <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2021/7/the-authority-of-the-church>

4. A House (of prayer) and God's Household
5. A Spiritual House
6. A Kingdom of Kings and Priests

Ephesians 2:19-22 sums of much of NT theology concerning the church:

- **Ephesians 2:19-22** *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*
- **Together we are citizens of God's household (His family!), following Christ and His apostles; we are to grow into a holy temple, together being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.**

Peter wrote:

- **1Peter 2:5** *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*
- **1Peter 2:9-11** *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*
- **A lively (or living) group of stones (which suggests stability and steadfastness); a spiritual (not carnal), holy house filled with priests designed to show forth God's praises to a lost world!**

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Filled with Spirit

Acts 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Love for One Another

John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Led by Qualified Men

1Timothy 3:1-13 *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with*

pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. **8** Likewise must the deacons *be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;* **9** Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. **10** And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. **11** Even so must their wives *be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.* **12** Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. **13** For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Assembling Together

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: **25** Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Working definition from all the above:

The (local) Church is a group of born-again, Spirit-filled, baptized believers in Jesus Christ who gather on the LORD's Day for biblical worship and who are committed to obeying Scripture and personal holiness. It is led by the Holy Spirit through specific elders and deacons, governed by the Scriptures, and, collectively, is passionate about covenant love one to another, advancing the Gospel, making disciples, and being a light in the midst of the culture.

The Importance and Blessings of the Local Church

The meeting of the LORD's Church on the LORD's Day was designed to be a blessing for His chosen and redeemed children, who alone can enter by the blood of Jesus!

It is meant to provide salve for our wounds, refreshment for our souls, a reset for our weary bodies, and be a vessel of the oil of gladness. It is designed to undergird our faith in Christ and belief in His Gospel!

The ministry of the Local Church on LORD's Day is filled with wonderful things that remind us of the LORD's sacrifice, provision, communion, holiness, love, and gift of eternal life!

1. We Gather Together on the LORD's Day!
2. We Pray Together!
3. We Exhort One Another!
4. We Sing Together!
5. We Greet One Another!
6. We Involve and Bless the Children!
7. We Welcome New Members!
8. We Hear God's Word being Preached!
9. We Call One Another to Respond to the Word in Repentance and Faith!
10. We Experience the LORD's Table Together!
11. We Rejoice with the Baptized!
12. We Pronounce God's Blessings upon One Another!

13. We Fellowship and Break Bread Together!³

Final thought for today.

Everything we discussed today speaks to the vital and precious nature of the local church to God and to man. This truth must be established if we are to perceive church discipline with the right heart.

Indeed, “The LORD’s Day Service is a celebratory feast...a banquet overflowing! It consists of biblical elements designed to give glory and honor to Christ and to bless His people! It foreshadows heaven and makes us long for eternity with our LORD!”

Like a Biblically Healthy Household, the Local Church and her mission **must be protected, for God’s own glory and for the good of His flock.** We believe this is God’s goal concerning the administration of loving discipline.

May we learn of and receive such discipline with eagerness and humility.

Amen.

³ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2021/12/the-blessings-of-the-lords-day-service>