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Keystone **BAPTIST**

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If the Foundations Be Destroyed, What Shall the Righteous Do?

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There have been increasing occurrences of earthquakes around the world that have evoked speculation whether the end of the world is coming, but none of those physical eruptions can compare with the emotional and physical reactions to a deadly virus that threatens more than significant loss of life and livelihood. Many of the responses across the spectrum, from government leaders to medical personnel and ordinary citizens, have demonstrated desperation and determination in unprecedented efforts to overcome what could change the whole world as we know it.

In the process of marshaling all the forces at our disposal to combat this disease, however, we have been compelled to make concessions to government and science that have undermined basic Constitutional freedoms that impact our homes, our workplaces

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Church Discipline: Does It Matter?

By Evangelist Ken Lynch



INTRODUCTION

The subject of church discipline is not the most pleasant one to discuss when it comes to considering the ministry of the local church, its pastor, and other leaders, nor is it an easy subject to discuss. Many fundamental churches have in their Church Covenants have a statement that goes something like this, "We believe in the final authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practice." And yet, the matter of church discipline is far too often either under-emphasized, downplayed or, quite simply, ignored.

It should be remembered that the local church is a family in a very real sense. There has never been, and never will be, a family with children where some type of discipline does not have to be administered at some point. Sadly, we live in a day when so many homes are, in reality, dysfunctional. In many homes today there is no father image. In not a few cases, while there may be several children, none have the same father.

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A Wake-Up Call

The last several months have been historic and a tremendous challenge for all of us: our churches, our Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and our United States of America. It seems that a bug/virus (covid19),

much like the flu, made its way from Communist China around the world to the USA. It is no doubt alarming when a warning is sounded that a wave of death is coming that may reach 2.5 million lives here in our country – a worldwide pandemic. There was fear imposed upon the people.

As a result, our country was shut down and we were asked to stay home to prevent the spread of the virus. BUT there were some exceptions to that mandate for what was called “essential business”. Obviously, that meant everything else was tagged as “non-essential”. State Police were patrolling and citing businesses that remained open. Keep in mind that our governor allowed a cabinet factory, abortion clinics and liquor stores to be considered essential. BUT churches are not considered essential! Limitations were established first at a larger number and then down to fifty and then they declared that no more than ten people could gather together.

One of our fellowshipping churches in the PARBC had a state trooper car parked in front of the church one Wednesday making sure they were not “having church.” There were reports of police threats of arrest if a church were to have a worship service. That would burn an air of FEAR in one’s heart (perhaps more than

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From the
Parsonage Window 



What Time I Am Afraid...

My mother is 93--a remarkable 93--and she says emphatically, "I've never seen anything like

this pandemic." Her earliest memories start with the Great Depression. Unemployment hit 25%, and the global GDP dropped 27%. Her family lived on a farm and was fairly self sufficient. But, during that time, she was taught many life lessons that she still lives by such as stewardship of material possessions, gratitude for food and how precious life is. She learned that no matter how bad things get, the Lord can be trusted for the outcome.

World War II was yet another story for her. She can tell you the exact spot she stood when the radio announced Pearl Harbor. (She, by the way, still has that radio in working order.) Everyone was affected one way or another then and everyone sacrificed whatever was required. 75 million people would perish in the war plus six million in the Holocaust. Next came the Korean War with five million perishing. The Cuban Missile Crisis, which came next was almost the tipping point in the Cold War. That was an incredibly scary time because life on our planet, as we know it, could well have been annihilated. Our leaders were credited with

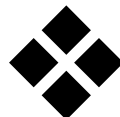
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and our churches. We have yet to see assurances that when this is all under control, we will see the full and unconditional restoration of all our God-given and Constitutional rights. There are already some government officials who have stated that the conditions they have been imposed upon us could continue “indefinitely.” There has already been so much done “just in case...” at extraordinary expense of money, time and freedom. Worse case scenarios have been a driving force, expanding fear and expenditures most of which, in hindsight, will prove unwarranted.

It seems ironical that all this fear of death and disease should coincide with the annual observance of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. An irony that seems all but completely lost on our government leaders and many people of America, as well as around the world. Since the founding of our nation, certainly throughout my lifetime, there has never been a suspension of the observance of Easter until now. We have been through several world wars, in colonial times there was Yellow Fever, yet I find no record where gathering for worship was prohibited by government authorities. Nevertheless, you will find the graves of Yellow Fever victims in the graveyard of Pennepack Baptist Church in Philadelphia.

The ignorance of the significance of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection is an ignorance of what the Bible has to say about life and death, about salvation and condemnation. We see the extraordinary efforts made to preserve physical life, yet most of those same people give little or no thought to where they will spend eternity. They do not recognize that what we celebrate on Resurrection Sunday (the term we use at our church) is the ultimate solution to the problem literally every human being faces, not only physical death but spiritual death and judgment. Sin is a universal condemnation of mankind. We have all “contracted” it for generations, since Adam in whom we all die (I Corinthians 15:22a); and there is but one answer, one solution, dare I say “cure,” which is the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary and His resurrection from the dead on the third day. “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2). In a time where the world desperately needs to hear good news, there is nothing better than the Gospel, as Paul so well summarized for us in I Corinthians 15:3, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

The fear of death, so magnified by this present disease, is overcome by the blessed hope that believers have in Jesus Christ: “...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2b-3). The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not to be limited to just one day a year, i.e. Resurrection Sunday, but the observance of the it gives a unique opportunity to explain why the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us hope for eternity and makes all the difference between Heaven and Hell.



Such a background in life makes it doubly hard for one to understand Hebrews 12:9 where we read, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”

It is not easy for a parent to discipline a child, but it is an absolute necessity. There are at least six references in the book of Proverbs that deal explicitly with child discipline, in particular, corporeal punishment.¹ Likewise, it is not easy for local church leaders under the leadership of the pastor, to exercise discipline within the family. But there are times when it is necessary. To fail to do so allows a sinning Christian to continue to live in his (or her) sin without consequences. Such is not Biblical and fails to honor God.

During my tenure as an assistant pastor for eight years, our church went through four instances of church discipline that involved at least fourteen individuals. One instance was between two men who were at odds with each other in a serious and open way (disorderly brethren); one involved immorality and two individuals; a third involved heresy when three couples no longer held to our church’s doctrinal position; and a fourth involved two couples who were in open rebellion against the pastor and the leadership (disorderly). In each case, discipline was exercised after much counseling resulted in a refusal to do the right thing. We did not do it to be mean, but rather in obedience to the Word of God. I am happy to report that two of the cases involving four individuals actually had a happy ending with each of the individuals asking for forgiveness from each other as well as from the church. In both cases, the individuals were restored to the fellowship.

Let us take a brief look at the Purpose, the Procedure, and the Primary Reasons for church discipline.

First then, the Purpose. Before we consider what the purpose of church discipline is, we should note what its purpose is not. The purpose of church discipline is not a means of getting rid of an unpleasant church member. Nor is to be used to keep the church “perfect” for there are no perfect churches. In fact, the purpose of church discipline is not even the restoration of the one being disciplined! The fact that a problem has gone to the point of needing discipline is the result of the fact that the individual has refused to make things right and confess sin. The purpose of this difficult, but necessary, step is to maintain purity within the body in so far as it is possible. If, in the course of disciplinary action, the person under discipline gets right with the Lord, he should be accepted back into the membership and fellowship of the church. (See II Corinthians 2:4-7 for an example.)

It may be assumed (perhaps assuming too much here) that the steps of Matthew 18 have already been followed. In other words, church discipline is not to be entered into lightly, carelessly, or too hastily. It is an extremely serious matter before God and therefore His Word must be the guide.

Second, the Procedure. Following the steps of Matthew 18 may take a great deal of time. Moving too quickly can create more problems and potentially make the matter even worse. Here is the procedure as laid out in Matthew 18:15-17: “*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. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of*

1 Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13; 29:15, 17.

Churches Searching for Pastor

As of May 2020

Garden Heights Baptist Church – Erie
First Baptist Church – Corry
Grace Baptist Church – Hazleton
First Baptist Church – Roulette
Carmel Baptist Church – Saegertown
Tidioute Baptist Church – Tidioute
Calvary Baptist Church – Union City
Worthington Baptist Church – Worthington



Next Town Evangelism – Faith Baptist Church, Bradford

Pray for Pastor Gary Smith as he is in need of PARBC Churches supporting him and thus be able to receive matching funds from the PARBC for his support in his effort to build back up FBC.

2021 Activities for Our Fellowship

Fall Conference – September 14-16, 2020
Calvary Baptist Church, Jersey Shore
Hosts: Pastor Jeff Howell & Congregation

Youth Retreat and Talents for Christ
Calvary Baptist Church, Bloomsburg
Date in 2021 to be announced
See www.parbc.org (Teen Activities)

Spring Conference – April 12-13, 2021

Fall Conference – September 13-15, 2021

Future Dates for Conferences are on our website
www.parbc.org

two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

It will be note that there are four specific steps listed here in dealing with a problem within the church. **STEP ONE.** The offended one is to approach the one who has caused the offense in a sincere effort to resolve the problem. The spirit in which this meeting takes place should not be one of anger, etc., but one of heartfelt desire to fix the problem. Now, I realize that there are some people who are more easily “offended” than others. On the other hand, there are those who seem to be just naturally offensive, perhaps due to a rough edge than was never smoothed over by the Holy Spirit. No one has the right to say, knowing that an offense has been caused, “Well, that’s just the way I am! You have to take me for what I am.” No, that is not true. Those who have naturally “offensive” personalities need to work on that and change by God’s grace. II Cor. 5:17 still says that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” It is possible, at this point in the procedure, to make several individual personal attempts to find a solution. Only when that attempt(s) fail is the next step to be taken.

May I also state at this point that it is never proper, much less biblical, for the person offended to discuss the matter with anyone else except the one who has caused the offense. This cannot be stressed enough. Too often, a person who has been offended starts talking to everyone but the person who caused the offense. At this point no one needs to know about the problem outside of the two individuals involved! This is one of many ways that church splits begin. If you find yourself offended, your responsibility is to go the no one else about the problem. To talk to other people is wrong, it is gossip, it is ungodly, and it is sin!

STEP TWO. This second step is only to be taken when the offended party and the offender arrive at an impasse where there is an outright refusal to a) either admit that a wrong was caused, even if only in the mind of the offended party or b) an outright refusal to apologize or do anything to resolve the issue. At that point, the offended party is to find two or three godly Christians in the church to go with him as they make a second major attempt to resolve the problem. Many years ago as an assistant pastor, I had to go through this very process in dealing with an individual in our church who created a problem between the two of us. And, boy, was he a determined one! It was at that point that I took two of the men from our church with me to meet with him in his home.

It is most important when going through this kind of meeting to retain one’s composure being careful not to lose one’s temper, or even allow any display of “righteous” indignation or anger. The matter needs to be carefully, thoughtfully, and thoroughly discussed in as kind a tone as is possible. It is only when this second step fails that the next step is to be entered into.

STEP THREE. It is at this point that the matter is taken before the church. This step is, by far, the most difficult and should be entered into very prayerfully. There are two primary views as bringing a matter like this before the church. Each church will have to determine how the matter will be handled for there seems to be some biblical evidence supporting both views.

The first view, and the more common one by far, is that any case of discipline that is brought before the church must be voted on in a duly called congregational meeting (consisting of a quorum of members in good standing) specifically for that purpose. A recommendation that has already been approved by the church leaders (usually the pastor and deacons) is then presented to the congregation which is then asked to vote on the matter. If the congregation votes its approval on the recommendation, the discipline member is then removed from membership and all church

activities. Biblical support for this approach may be found in I Corinthians 5:1-7 where Paul states, “*It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. 2) And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3) For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4) 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. 6) Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? For even Christ, our passover is sacrificed for us: 7a) Purge out therefore the old leaven.*” This passage could seem to indicate that Paul was instructing the congregation to exercise the discipline on the man and put him out of the church.

There are two potential problems with this method that should be carefully considered. 1) In this scenario, the congregation is asked to cast a vote basically on the recommendation without knowing any of the reasons that caused the leadership to arrive at their decision. It seems that if one is asked to vote on such a matter, it would be well for him to have an idea what he is voting on. Opponents of this would argue that it is not necessary for the people to know all the details, it is enough for them to have enough confidence in the pastor and deacons to simply approve of their recommendation. 2) When this approach is taken, time must be allowed for questions from the floor. People do have a right to ask questions and this time needs to be taken seriously. It is up to the pastor (who, as the shepherd of the flock, should chair this kind of meeting) to maintain a proper spirit in both questions and answers. Answers should be frank and honest. This is where things can get ugly, especially when family members or friends of the one being disciplined come and make a big scene. Sometimes, there are even church “member” who have not been to a service in months (and who, themselves, should have either been removed or placed on an inactive list) who come to take advantage of an opportunity to oppose the pastor and deacons!

The second view is not as common. It involves the need for disciplinary action being discussed among the pastor and his deacons. It may even involve a time of questioning the individual in a final attempt to resolve the matter in a Christ-like manner. If no such meeting is possible or if the individual simply remains unmoveable, the pastor and deacons have to make their own decision. Their final decision being made, whatever it is, and whatever it involves, the person being disciplined is informed, by registered letter of the decision to remove them from the membership of the church. The next step is to inform the congregation of the decision made by the pastor and deacons, and to share with them what their biblical response and future actions should be in regard to the disciplined member.

The seem to be a number of scriptures that would lend more support for this method.

Permit me to list some of them.

- 1) I Corinthians 5:3-5 “For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4) 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.” In this passage that has often been used for a congregation decision, it is clear that the Paul had already made his decision and was informing the congregation what to do.
- 2) I Timothy 1:20 “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”
- 3) Titus 3:10 “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.” The word heretick is used only in this verse and it literally means schismatic (Strong’s G140). Here again, it is clear that Paul has made his decision and informing the people. It does not have the tone of a recommendation. This verse also validates the steps of Matthew 18.

STEP FOUR. According to Matthew 18, the fourth step involves the removal of the person from the membership of the church. AT this point the congregation needs to understand that they are not to have normal fellowship with this person (dinners together, outings together, etc.). They are to be treated with kindness but within an extremely limited fellowship. The one disciplined needs to understand that there are consequences to his actions. It may be that the cutting off from fellowship may be the very thing that will ultimately be used to bring his back to the Lord and the church fellowship. That is one reason wrote II Corinthians, to encourage the Corinthian church to receive back into fellowship a man broken over his sin. But it took the church’s disciplinary action to bring that about.

Third, primary reasons for discipline. There are four primary reasons for exercising church discipline. I will simply list them with an accompanying scripture. 1) heresy or false doctrine - Romans 16:17; 2) immorality – I Corinthians 5:1-7; 3) schismatics or those who are divisive – Titus 3:10; 4) those disorderly brethren who continue to live in unrepentant sin – (II Thessalonians 3:6.

CONCLUSION. While church discipline is never easy, it is sometimes necessary. Since it is a Biblical injunction, it should be respected by the people within the local church as well as by the pastors and peoples of other churches. It is a far too common, yet unbiblical, practice for pastors and churches to ignore a sister church’s discipline and take into their membership such an individual. In so doing, they are 1) helping to sear the conscience of the one under discipline and 2) bringing a potential problem into their own congregation. Never should a pastor receive a fellow pastor’s discipline member. It is ungodly and unbiblical to do so. May God help us to practice this matter firmly, yet compassionately, with a sincere prayer that such a member will ultimately be right with the Lord.

the virus itself). It was reported that in one state the police dumped nails on the road to prevent a church from gathering on Easter Sunday. This causes me to have some real concern First of all, I see this as a definite conflict with both the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States of America constitutions

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Constitution states:

3. Religious freedom.

All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences; no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent; no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience, and no preference shall ever be given by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution says:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The privilege we have to gather to worship freely is very special and unique. It is something that we should stand up and guard/defend. Our nation's founders took risks – big risks to establish this Land of the Free. That is a part of our heritage. Some may say this issue should not involve we Christians. Try telling that to our country's founding Fathers – some of them being Baptist pastors. We must never set aside the constitutions, or parts thereof, of our country and commonwealth. It has been said long ago that if you don't defend your freedom you will lose your freedom. Seems to me we have a **wake-up call**.

Second of all, we should not allow the COVID19 fear that is all around us AND BEING OVERLY STRESSED/PROMOTED BY THE MEDIA to have its devastating effect on us. It breaks my heart to see all our churches struggling to be open and those that are reopening have restrictions on them. Some may have to close permanently. The Word of God gives us explicit instruction when it comes to fear. Just let your heart meditate on the following verses:

*For God hath not given us the spirit of **fear**; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (II Timothy 1:7) And we know that **all things work** together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to **fear**; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:15) So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not **fear** what man shall do unto me. (Hebrews 13:6)*

So, you see we are given this situation to promote the Gospel of Christ. “And we know that **all things work** together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) Even in an historic national shout-down there are different venues to minister and share God's Word.

I have been encouraged by the ways some pastors and churches are using a variety way to minister: the phone, letters in the mail and emails to communicate to the dear souls in their churches. And some are venturing out into this electronic age and investing in live streaming, zoom (and others), and yes even old YOUTUBE to make available church services and messages for all. Some pastors have said they are Now reaching hundreds and thousands more souls. For many of use there has been a comfort zone, almost taking for granted the privilege of assembling ourselves together. All of a sudden, we were not allowed to do just that. No doubt this coronavirus situation has been a real **WAKE-UP CALL**.

Next Town Evangelism Program Needs Your Help & Prayers

Greetings, brothers and sisters! We are Pastor Gary and Elaine Smith from the “foreign” land of Bradford, Pa. We are located in the northern most area of McKean County. The land is great for the outdoor activity, wonderful rolling mountains, and the beautiful Allegheny National Forest. The city itself has a rich history and is home to an oil refinery, rich timberland, and the headquarters for Zippo lighters and Case knives.

As great as this area is, the need is greater. The people here have the need to have the inner beauty of Christ. The ugliest of sin through drugs, homelessness and poverty allows Satan to have a grip on the area that must be broken by the freedom in Christ. The call for us as His disciples is to reach out to these dear ones with His love and forgiveness, so they can be transformed from this world into the wonderful beauty of a new creature in Christ.

We serve Him at Faith Baptist Church. This ministry has been faithful to our Lord, and the proclaiming of His Word, for over thirty-five years. As you know, many churches have had times of struggle. We are currently in such a time and believe God will still use us in this area. We have and will continue to use community events and parades to reach out. We used a program, “New Movers Evangelism”, to reach those new to the area. We are starting our new program, “Love Your Neighbor”, which is inviting those of our block in for coffee to share the Gospel, as well as starting possible Bible studies, evangelism meetings, and concerts to proclaim our Lord Jesus.

We are in the program provided by the P.A.R.B.C. called Next Town Evangelism. This allows contributions to be matched from your gifts, to be given to small ministries for a short term, to help them to grow and be self-supporting. Our request to you is that you join us as “Philippians Partners”. This group of believers gave to Paul support so he could continue on with his ministry. Any amount, one time, or \$10 (or more) a month will be of great help; as the saying goes, “many hands make light work”.

The most important part is to pray, asking God what He would have you do. Only if He leads you, send a gift to the P.A.R.B.C. and mark it “Bradford”. May His richest blessings be with you as we work together to see His beauty shine through the souls, we reach for Him.

Serving Him together,

Gary and Elaine Smith



“Doubling Down on the D’s”

Despite the devil’s delusionary dreams he distorts our desires with, don’t dabble in the dainties he deliberately dangles deceitfully or directly in our domain, dropped as diets dressed in dignified or dramatic dividends dispersed in diverse dimensions which are designed to destroy or deter our determination to deny the Destroyer his dictates or domination to do differently than our Deity demands during the days until our demise, due to our deserved eternal death and doom.

Detect, detest, denounce, and depart from developments and dispositions defying, displacing, deteriorating, disrupting, or distracting your devotion and discipleship to the Divine.

Delight and dive into Doctrine as demanded by our Designer, instead of drowning in defilement, drowsing as drones, or drifting as dried driftwood discovered dislodged in the din of dialogue with dukes and dames doubting the dynamo. (David Ekblad, Phoenix, AZ)

What Time—Continued

preventing that from happening but we all know, as my mother says, "It was the Lord."

Next would come Vietnam, Dessert Storm and Afghanistan. And even though my mother says she's never seen anything like this time, through these previous life experiences, God has given her the strength to not give into the fear of the outcome.

She has taught me what my favorite verse says, "*What time I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord*" (*Psalms-56:3*). That doesn't mean we aren't afraid, but it does mean to me, and with my mother's example, no matter what life experiences we have, each one is different and without fail, they increase our faith in the Lord. I also think of *Psalms 37:25* "*I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*" And, of that I am sure...
