

“If Anyone Does Not Love the Lord, He Is To Be Accursed. Maranatha.”

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths © - pastorpat@waukeshabile.org

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This is a difficult text (1 Cor. 16:22), but one that warrants our attention. There are those within the church that must be met with stern warning. They do not love the Lord, and they are to be accursed. There is a biblical ministry of cursing those who would undermine the integrity of our Lord and His Church. This sounds foreign to our ears, and rightly so. However, in the absence of such a ministry, the local church will be overrun with unbelief, self-centered and self-serving rogues. There are several passages needing to be cited in order to put this idea in perspective and to assist in the facilitating of the charge.

Matthew 18:15-20

This passage has several salient features. First, the individual is addressed as a believer, but if non-repentance continues and there is a persistency in their pattern of sin, then they are to be treated as an unbeliever. This strongly suggests that repentance is a sign of new life in Christ. This same idea is present in 1 Corinthians 5:11 where the offender is labeled a “so-called” brother. Second, there appears a progression in approaching those who transgress. The severity of the confrontation increases as the sinner becomes more adamant in their attitude. “Such private reproof is hard to do, but it is the way of Christ.” (A.T. Robertson’s Word Pictures). Third, the leadership within the local church has authority to pronounce judgment on the individual. It is through the witness of two or three that confirm the sentence against the individual. Fourth, the intent is to gain your brother back into fellowship.

Romans 16:17, 18

The local church is to mark those who are divisive and produce obstacles to the growth and unity of the church. Such people as these are to be shunned. They are to be avoided.

2 Corinthians 13:1-6

Like Matthew 18, in this passage Paul recognizes that some who are causing division within the local church might not be believers. In an age of accommodation, it is difficult for local churches to stand against those who would bring disunity into the family. Notice also the similarity with the two or three witnesses. No one individual is to have the power to carry out the ministry of correction and reproof.

Galatians 2:11-14

Paul’s confrontation of Peter was public. I would assume he had taken the initial steps of seeking to correct the problem privately. I would also assume that the public confrontation was because of Peter’s position of leadership within the early church (See further 1 Timothy 5:19, 20). If people addressed issues privately and when they were small, then the occasions for a public denouncement would be greatly diminished.

Galatians 6:1, 2

Here it appears that believers are being addressed. This individual has been caught from behind. Although concession has been made and a window of opportunity provided, the temptation acted on has taken the individual farther than they desired to go, kept them longer than they wanted to stay, and has cost them more than they wished to pay. This person needs help extracting themselves from the pit of sin into which they have fallen and have become mired in. This person is out of joint and needs attention. Like the individual in 1 Thessalonians 5, restoration and repair are the goal.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-15

The context identifies the audience as believers. The word “unruly” speaks of being “unarranged” or “insubordinate.” This exact word is used only here in the New Testament. A “sibling” word is used by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11. A.T. Robertson notes how leadership is to “Put sense into the unruly mob who break ranks.” From the passage those admonished are beginning to “fall out of rank.” They are mis-stepping. They are to be cautioned, warned, confronted. It is as if they are drifting and need to be awakened to their condition.

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10-15

The word “unruly” is also used in verse 11. It comes from the same word used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. Again, it speaks of those who have broken rank. They are drifting away from following Christ. 2 Thessalonians 3:11 uses the word “undisciplined” to describe their life. There is a progression from what began in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 and what is happening here. If the unruly when approached do not repent, they are to be removed from the fellowship. It is safe to

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assume that the necessary steps as outlined in Matthew 18 have taken place. The this brother has been approached on several occasions and with each approach the hardening of heart has taken place. This person, in light of non-repentance, is to be considered as an unbeliever.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

The word correcting carries the idea of “schooling.” Those who set themselves against God, His church, and her leaders need to be “schooled” in appropriate behavior and responses. Notice the two qualifiers of “patient” and “gentleness” that mark the manner in which these dissenters are to be approached. It appears that their opposition is marked more by ignorance than calculated rebellion. The qualities of patience and gentleness are also seen in Galatians 6:1.

2 Timothy 3:1-9

In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the conduct or lifestyle of the individual is noted. Here in 2 Timothy, it is explained. The unruly or undisciplined are noted as lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God. The reason why these individuals need to be addressed is because of the damage they inflict on the local fellowship.

2 Timothy 4:2-4

Those who are not willing to obey Christ and openly follow Him are to be addressed through private communication and in the public proclamation of the Word.

Titus 1:9-14

Those who would oppose the truth of Scripture must be silenced. They must be severely reprovved in order that restoration might take place. All of this is to be understood in the larger context of the entire New Testament. If those who are speaking against the leadership and the church refuse to be silenced, then they are to be shunned and treated as unbelievers. The goal of all reproof is restoration to the faith and the family. Yet unity must not be maintained at the expense of truth.

Titus 3:9, 10

The word “factious” is our word “heretic.” The idea is that of being schismatic. This person brings schism to the local church. This person, after having gone through the process of Matthew 18, is to be rejected. The New Testament shows the rejecting of the non-repentant to be a part of body life. None of this is pleasant, but it is necessary.

2 John 10, 11

The elders are to be on guard against those who would disrupt the fellowship by bringing in teaching that is contrary to that of the New Testament. These people are not to be given a platform for the promotion of their error.

Where does this leave us?

1. The leadership and congregation must embrace the biblical necessity for this ministry.
2. Individuals must follow the pattern of Matthew 18 in communicating to the unruly their concerns in private.
3. The leadership must follow the pattern of Matthew 18.
4. The church must recognize the unrepentant and collectively shun them in order to secure their salvation or restoration to the family through repentance.
5. The church must work with other churches to keep the non-repentant from disrupting their fellowships. The severity of the action is in order to restore them to the faith.

Making it Personal (What’s the NEXT STEP? Let’s make it real practical)

1. Who do you know right now who is out of step and needs to be addressed?
2. Whether it involves a husband’s behavior toward his wife and/or child(ren), or his failure to work for a living, or an addiction to pornography, or substance abuse, or maybe he is no longer coming to church, this person needs to be addressed by their friends, in private, for the purpose of restoring him to the faith.
3. We must begin a process of being the body to one another, and this happens when we truly love the Lord and His church.