Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: August 28, 2016
Sermon Title: The Heartbeat of Church Discipline
Series Title: The Second Letter to the Corinthians
Text: 2 Cor. 2:5-11
Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©2016
Introduction:

"'What can I do for you?' the doctor smiled over his spectacles.
'It's my memory,' said the patient. 'I just can't remember things like I used to.'
'How long has this problem been going on?' asked the doctor?
The patient looked puzzled.
'What problem?' he replied.

The powers to remember and to forget are both assets and liabilities. This text speaks of forgiveness and the power to forget. Paul's language throughout speaks of a problem addressed in Corinth, but for the life of him he cannot remember the details of the situation. "This isn't absent-mindedness. It is part of a rigorous spiritual discipline. When Paul forgives, he also forgets."¹

Many would assume that the lack of church discipline leads a church to compromise. Paul, however, notes how carrying out church discipline improperly can also and equally compromise the gospel.

THE BIG PICTURE:

There is considerable debate among commentators as to the identity of this individual. The older commentaries (especially P. Hughes) insist that this is the incestuous man of 1 Cor. 5. More recent commentators argue that this is the person who opposed Paul and worked to undermine his apostolic authority. This man “may have been connected with the sexual aberrations in Corinth that involved a number of people and that appear to have necessitated Paul's recent unscheduled visit (12:21-13:2). It is quite possible that the man also supported the practice of ongoing attendance at temples in the city (6:14-7:1), despite Paul's warnings in the First Letter (1 Cor. 10:14-22). . . . Perhaps this man resisted Paul's admonitions to the Corinthians during his second visit and was himself the major reason that visit was so painful for Paul” (Barnett, 124).

Regardless of who this individual is, Paul wants the congregation, by the individual’s repentance and their forgiveness of it, to forget it and move on.

Outline:

I. The Principles behind Church Discipline - 2:5-8

One of the problems confronting us in our handling of a text like this is an attempt to "get it right." Nevertheless, when addressing the matter of Church Discipline, there are principles guiding the process, but the process is relational and not regimented. It is fertile and not sterile.
There are parts to the work that exist, but we must keep the larger ideas present. As we will see from this text, church discipline is necessary as a part of the gospel proclamation and as a means of protecting the gospel from Satan’s ongoing assault.

Let us begin.

A. Repent - Concerning the offending party (v. 5)

I have chosen to use the word repent because of its inseparable linked to biblical sorrow. You can be sorry without repentance, but you cannot have biblical sorrow without repentance. Thus, my word choice.

Of the eleven times the word “sorrow” occurs in the New Testament Letters, all but one (1 Pet. 1:6) are in Paul’s Letters. Of the ten times used by Paul, seven occur in 2 Corinthians (2:2, 4, 5; 6:10; 7:8, 9, 11 [cf. Rom. 14:15; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 4:13]).

The tone of 2 Corinthians comes from heartache and brokenness.

B. Rebuke - Concerning the disciplinary measures of the church (v. 6)

Church Discipline is severe.

“He had then instructed that the man should be dismissed from the Christian fellowship, put out into the dark world beyond the reach of grace – a strange and terrible notion, foreign to much of today’s Christianity, where moral standards have decline to the point where all kinds of deviant behavior are tolerated and even celebrated.”

“Punishment” epitimia, the only time in the NT. The verb occurs often and is rendered “rebuke” in (2 Tim. 4:2 and Jude 9). All other occurrences in the NT are found in the synoptic Gospels.

• “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

• “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 9)

Church Discipline has two parts making up the one story. First, there is rebuking. Second, there is restoration after repentance.

The Holy Spirit using the Word of God rebukes sin in the life of the believer. This is the first aspect of “Church Discipline.” When and if there is a rebuff by the sinning, God uses the corporate as a means of awakening the sinner to the problem. When the sinner awakens to their sin, they repent and restoration takes place. If non-repentance happens and it reaches the corporate through the Elders, the corporate is to remove the non-repenting sinner from their
fellowship. The pronouncement of the corporate and the weight of the removal are such as to treat the sinner as an unregenerate sinner.

However, the goal of the story is not removal, but restoration. Restoration means forgiving and forgetting the transgression.

“But none of this, in any case, is simply a matter of ‘getting things right’ in church life for the sake of order and tidiness. It has to do with a larger and darker issue. It is about the church’s stand against the accuser, the Satan.”

What is at stake in all of this? The gospel is at stake. The Church is God’s means of carrying out the gospel into the world for the reestablishment of His Garden over all the earth. Behind all of this is Satan’s assault against the woman’s seed.

That thing we do as a gathered and then dispersed community is part of a much larger Story. We getting it right isn’t about tidiness or comfort, but about the gospel and God’s overarching Story.

These two aspects of the community [i.e. rebuke and restoration] must be held in balance/tension. “Somehow the church must steer the course between these two, with a touch on the tiller first this way and then that. If it doesn’t, it will simply go round in circles. And worst.”

We know of churches where discipline is the note struck and they are harsh and mean spirited in defense of the gospel. Others are marked by an immoral tolerance that is inclusive and non-descriptive. Both disgrace the gospel and impede the biblical narrative. In either case, Satan wins.

C. Restore - Concerning the repentance and restoration of the offender (vv. 7-8)

I have wrapped up all three words into one word, “Restore.” Let us note the three actions of the church.

“How should Christians treat a fellow believer who has sinned? The way we have been treated by Christ. Forgiveness is offered as the unexpected means of breaking the cycle of sin and ‘un-grace.’”

1. We are to forgive him (v. 7a)

Again, we have one of my favorite New Testament words. The word for forgiveness is charizomai. It comes from the word charis, grace. It occurs four times in two verses (vv. 7, 10).

“A heart that has been forgiven much is a heart that forgives much (Matt. 18:21-35).”
Forgiveness is one thing, absolution is another. Absolution is the authoritative declaration of forgiveness. When Christ said, ‘Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee,’ He did not forgive him; he was forgiven already, but He declared his forgiveness. Now the case before us is a distinct instance of ecclesiastical absolution. St. Paul says, ‘I forgive.’ This is absolution; man's declaration of God's forgiveness — man speaking in God's stead. Consider the use of absolution. It was to save from remorse, and is here considered as a ‘comfort.’ This absolution was representative — (1) Of the forgiveness of God. St. Paul forgave the sinner ‘in the person,’ that is in the stead ‘of Christ.’ Thus, as the punishment of man is representative of the punishment and wrath of God, so the absolution of man is representative of the forgiveness of God. (2) Of the Christian congregation: ‘for your sakes.’ Every member, therefore, of that congregation was forgiving the sinner; it was his right to do so, and it was in his name that St. Paul spoke; nay, because each member had forgiven, St. Paul forgave. Absolution therefore is not a priestly prerogative. It belongs to man, and to the minister because he stands as the representative of purified humanity. Who does not know how the unforgivingness of society in branding men and women as outcasts makes their case hopeless? Men bind his sins — her crimes — on earth, and they remain bound. Now every man has this power individually. For years the thought of his deceit, and the dread of his brother, had weighed on Jacob's heart, and when Esau forgave him, it was as if he ‘had seen the face of God.’ When we treat the guilty with tenderness, hope rises in them towards God; their hearts say, ‘They love us; will not God forgive and love us too?’

2. We are to comfort him (v. 7a)

Here, like forgiveness, we have one of those beautiful words we noted earlier in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 [parakaleō]. Why are we to comfort the offender (v. 7b)? Lest perhaps, by some unforeseen happening, the individual confronted is overwhelmed by their grief and shame.

“Overwhelmed” [Katapino] means, “To drink down, i.e. gulp entire (literally or figuratively):—devour, drown, swallow (up).” It is a graphic word used strikingly in the New Testament.

Jesus uses the word when denouncing the religious establishment in Matthew 23:23, “Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” Paul uses the word to describe the victory of Christ in swallowing up death (1 Cor. 15:54). He uses the same word with the same reference in 2 Corinthians 5:4, “That mortality might be swallowed up of life.” The author of Hebrews uses the word to describing the “swallowing up/drowning” of the Egyptians in Hebrews 11:29. Peter describes the devil’s activities as wanting to “swallow up” believers (1 Pet. 5:8). The apostle John uses the word to describe the earth swallowing the flood waters sent by the dragon to destroy the woman’s seed (Rev. 12:16).

The intrinsic demerit of sin causes the punishment. Church discipline seeks to acknowledge the gospel against the failure of individuals. The gospel endeavors to do what it does, “admonishes the unruly, encourages the fainthearted, helps the weak, and is patient with everyone” (1 Thess. 5:14).
The gospel . . .

- PREACH GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR.
- PROCLAIMS RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND
- RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
- SETS FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, (Lk. 4:18)

Why? Because this is what Jesus would do and this is what Jesus did (Matt. 11:28-30).

- 28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)

"Grk ‘comfort him, lest somehow such a person be swallowed up by excessive grief, an idiom for a person being so overcome with grief as to despair or give up completely (L&N 25.285). In this context of excessive grief or regret for past sins, ‘overwhelmed’ is a good translation since contemporary English idiom speaks of someone ‘overwhelmed by grief.’ Because of the length of the Greek sentence and the difficulty of expressing a negative purpose/result clause in English, a new sentence was started here in the translation.”

3. We are to love him (v. 8)

The tendency of human nature is to hold the offender at arm's length, to forgive but not forget, to say “I receive you back” but to treat the person like a leper. Philip Hughes reminds us that “discipline which is so inflexible as to leave no place for repentance and reconciliation has ceased to be truly Christian; for it is no less a scandal to cut off the penitent sinner from all hope of re-entry into the comfort and security of the fellowship of the redeemed community than it is to permit flagrant wickedness to continue unpunished in the Body of Christ” (66-67).

"Reaffirm" is κυροο, from the same as κυρίος [i.e. lord]; to make authoritative, i.e. ratify:--confirm.” Used only two times in the NT and both are by Paul.

- “Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him” (2 Cor. 2:8).
- “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto” (Gal. 3:15).

The feeling of the word is legislation. Church Discipline is a judicial act carried out by the Elders on behalf of the corporate. Just as you have taken formal action against the sinning, so now take formal action in receiving the back into the church family.

II. The Purpose of Paul’s Letter - 2:9-11

A. His purpose was to test them - v. 9

Paul uses the preposition for purpose (Hina).
“Grk ‘to know the proof of you,’ that is, to know if the Corinthians’ obedience to Paul as an apostle was genuine (L&N 72.7).”

The word for obey is to hear attentively. Paul wants to know if they are listening to him and they were.

**dokime**, test (abstractly or concretely); by implication, trustiness:--experience(-riment), proof, trial.

Paul uses all six occurrences of the word in the New Testament. Of the six occurrences, four are in 2 Corinthians (2:9; 8:2; 9:13; 13:3 [Rom. 5:4; Phil. 2:22]). He uses the noun form in 2 Corinthians 10:18 and 13:7. The verb form of the word occurs in 2 Corinthians 10:9; 11:6 and 12:19.

The intent is to validate authenticity or if something is genuine. The proving happens through testing.

Notice how Paul brings his actions back to the Messiah (v. 10). Remember in our previous passage (1:12-2:4) how the gospel drove Paul? He strikes that note one more time. It is also of interest to note the phrase, “For your sakes.” Personally, as a pastor of a fellowship judging my motives can become complicated as to what I do for personal preservation and what I do “for your sakes.” But I do know that God’s good providence to us as a congregation is the knitting of hearts so that we are able to glorify God with one passion, one mind, and one voice. Thus, what I do is “for your sakes.”

**B. His purpose was to thwart Satan - vv. 10-11**

Paul uses the preposition for purpose (**Hina me**).

“In keeping with his Jewish contemporaries and unlike most moderns, Paul is acutely aware of Satan’s intrigues and of the influence of the demonic realm on human affairs.”

“Or ‘be taken advantage of.’” The Greek is **pleonekteo**. It can mean “to be covetous, i.e. (by implication) to over-reach:--get an advantage, defraud, make a gain.” Of the five occurrences in the NT, all are used by Paul and four occur in 2 Corinthians (2:11; 7:2; 12:17, 18 [cf. 1 Thess. 4:6]).

The noun form of the word occurs four times in the NT, all by Paul and three of the four occur in 1 Corinthians (5:10, 11; 6:10 [cf. Eph. 5:5]).

The unwillingness of the congregation to either rebuke or restore “would render them unwitting participants in the schemes of the enemy. The estrangement of a fallen saint is the victory of Satan, and the first line of defense for the believing community is to become aware of the enemy’s designs.”
Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. We must view church discipline as part of our gospel saturated, gospel celebrating approach to loving Christ and His Church.
2. Everything we do, even when difficult, must be for the defense of and celebration of the gospel.
3. Let all of our actions be marked by forgiveness, comfort, and love.

---

1 Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians, 18.
2 Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians, 20.
3 Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone, 2 Corinthians, 21.
4 Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone, 2 Corinthians, 21.
7 (F. W. Robertson, M. A.) http://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/robertson/christian_punishment_and_absolution.htm
8 http://classic.net.bible.org/search.php?search=sentence&in=notes&page=38
9 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+2
10 Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, 3:205.
11 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+2
12 Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, 3:205.