

## **Safety in Christ and Among His People**

*"This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."* **1 Timothy 1:18-20**

A paradigm of faith:

1. God is gloriously good and triune in his splendor.
2. God is a God of revelation; both in creation and His Word.
3. This eternal unchanging God desires his glory and our welfare.

In 1 Timothy, a group of the professing Christians in Ephesus had rejected a good conscience (which is heightened by the word of God) and had made shipwreck of their faith.

To make shipwreck of your faith, means that a professing Christ follower calls into question the reality of their salvation through doctrinal error, moral failure, or indifference which inevitably brings sorrow and pain to the life of the individual and the church.

Regarding shipwreck of faith:

1. When someone has made a shipwreck of their faith we do not know if they are truly a child of God or only a "temporary believer" (not truly saved)
2. We do not know if the shipwreck is going to be for a brief period of time or if it is permanent.
3. Shipwreck always involves destruction, pain, and sorrow; because sin breaks the joy and wonder that Abba Father brings to his people. Sin is both wrong and dumb.

*"Discipleship is the process of continuously learning from the Lord, as we constantly move from a place of bare obedience before "our Master" and move to a place of astonishment, wonder, and joy as we worship the Messiah Lord."* **Luke 5:4, 5, 8**

Corrective church discipline is the process of correcting sin in the life of the congregation and its members. This can mean correcting sin by private word of admonition or by formally removing an individual from membership. The purpose of church membership and discipline is to reclaim professing believers and to bring hope and joy to the life of the local body as well as to serve as warning regarding the serious nature of sin. Church discipline is not retributive but remedial.

*"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."* **Matthew 18:15-17**

Four Basic Steps:

1. If a sin problem can be resolved between 2 people by themselves, then the case is closed.
2. If it cannot be resolved, then the offended brother should bring 2 or 3 witnesses.  
Matthew 18:16, Deuteronomy 19:18

\*At ECBC this would involve an Elder and, if there is no repentance, eventually the Board of Elders.

3. If the 2 or 3 witnesses do not see a solution of repentance then we are instructed to tell it to the church. (verse 17) (this would happen at our monthly prayer gatherings on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month). At that point, the church would be in prayer for a specific individual and lovingly embrace and care for the one involved in sin by repeatedly pleading for his repentance.
4. The final step of church discipline is to exclude the individual from the fellowship and membership of the church, treating him as if he is a non-believer.

This involves exclusion from taking the Lord's Supper, and ongoing warnings and pleadings for repentance. Relationally this means that "not business as usual".

The individual is to be loved and prayed for and repeatedly warned, not shunned or abandoned.

When is sin in a believer (that is a part of a local church) pursued?

Answer: When the sin is outward, serious, and unrepentant.

Church discipline is always carried out with a desire for the living Christ to be glorified, with the understanding that sin destroys the harmony and joy that is ours because of the cross work of Christ, and with a sense of warning others about the serious nature of unrepentant sin.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Read Matthew 18:15-20, talk through the 4 steps regarding church discipline. When is church discipline appropriate?
2. What is the purpose of church discipline? i.e.: it is never to punish but it is always to reclaim and restore and also serve as a warning.
3. What are the "youthful lusts" of 2 Timothy 2:22?

4. Why is church discipline rarely addressed in today's culture?
5. Why is it vitally important to be a member of a local body of believers?

**Biblical verses to meditate on and memorize for the month of September:**

*"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."* Psalm 1:2-3

*"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17**