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Return Services Requested

Sunday Services: 9:00 a.m.
Bible Classes
Worship 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.
Bible Study

Readers' Response

"Dear bro. & sis. Pigg, We really missed you at the lectureship at Milestone this year. Due to Bob's health problems we were only able to attend a few times but we missed you. You both are in our prayers and hope your health will improve. In Christian love" — **Bob & Jackie Thompson, FL.** (*Thanks for your prayers and concern. We certainly missed being at the lectures, and seeing you and others we know and appreciate. Our prayers are with you that your health will improve. —Editor.*)

"I hope you are getting well these days. The Lord will surely help those who devote their lives for Him. Again, I am sad about your health. However, I congratulate you, in spiritual sense, because you can prepare more for eternal life. But, also, I am sad that brother like you can not work more for His glory. Just remember that I do treasure to have known you and the lessons I got from you through 'Banner of Truth.' They really enriched my ministry especially in evangelism and in contending for the Truth. Bro. Joe Spangler highly speaks of you. We were together for more than a week in Cebu City the other week. He plans to have a Bible School in that city and really we are so pleased for such a plan. My family is fine. Hope sis. Naomi too. Rest assured that you are always in my thought and prayer. In Christ" — **Jozel, Philippines.** (*It is so good to hear from you and we thank you for your kind remarks and the prayers you offer. I shall never forget my association with you and your good wife. I would like so much to see you, your wife and children. I am very pleased that brother Joe Spangler is planning to have a Bible School in Cebu City. He will do an excellent job and will be a great asset to the cause of Christ. I have informed Joe that I will try to assist him in finding the financial support that will be necessary. May the Lord richly bless you and your family, and the brethren there. In Christian love, Walter and Naomi.*)

Welcome, new readers of Banner of Truth. — Editor.

FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

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**Church Discipline — An Often
Forgotten Commandment**

When God created man "in his own image," he gave him dominion over the other creatures. He endowed man with a spiritual body or inner man. God's supreme love for man was demonstrated by the giving of His only begotten Son. This made possible the ultimate in spiritual blessings, to be enjoyed in this life, and eternally in the world that is yet to come. Receiving these blessings is contingent upon doing the Lord's will, the obeying of His commandments. Church Discipline is one of those commandments.

We have over the years often heard *church discipline* referred to as "The forgotten commandment." As sad as it is, this is too often true. Yet it is a commandment of God just the same as are the many other commandments, most of which we usually consider essential. Why this is so I do not profess to know. No doubt, there are a number of factors involved. In the following discussion we shall consider some of them.

Church Discipline Defined. A good place to start in a discussion of the above subject is to define it in accordance with how it will be used. It is often apparent that a great many members of the church do not fully understand what church discipline is all about. As evidence of this we hear people using such expressions as: "Throw them out of the church," or "Kick them out." This does not properly define the action which is taken in church discipline. If more people understood the

true nature and purpose of church discipline, perhaps we would see it exercised more often, in all its aspects, as taught in God's word.

The word *discipline* is not used in the KJV of the New Testament. It is used one time in the Old Testament: "He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity" (Job. 36:10). As used here it means "chastisement, instruction." This is the sense in which the word is often used now, and harmonizes with what is taught in the New Testament relative to church discipline. Webster gives several definitions of the word. Among those are: "1. training to act in accordance with rules.... 5. behavior in accord with rules of conduct. 9. to train by instruction and exercise... 11. to punish or penalize; correct; chastise." In the course of our discussion we shall note a number of instances in the New Testament where discipline is discussed. →

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Continued from Page 1

As noted by the above definitions, church discipline involves a variety of things. Some members of the church seem not to be aware of this, due to the way they speak. For example, it means to "train by instruction." Therefore, when God's word is being taught, that is a form of discipline. This is, indeed, an important matter. One who says he does not believe in church discipline, does not believe in teaching God's word, since this is discipline.

An integral part of the activity of the church is the "training to act in accordance with rules," the rules being set forth in God's word. These rules involve "behavior in accord with rules of conduct." Church discipline does include "to punish or penalize; correct; chastise." This does include the practice of withdrawing of fellowship from those who are in violation of God's word, who "transgress" the doctrine of Christ, and will not repent

of the sin. In the thinking of some, church discipline only involves the withdrawing of fellowship. As we have noted, this is included, but by no means is it limited to that. This is strong evidence of the need to study the teaching of God's word on this subject.

Other Misunderstandings of Church Discipline. The Catholic Church practices what they call "excommunication." This means that the person excommunicated is "cut off," and is no longer a member. A number of well known individuals were excommunicated by the Catholic Church. Some were even burned at the stake. The New Testament teaches that the church can, and in some instances should, withdraw fellowship from a person. But that person is still a member of the church, but is not to be fellowshiped. Our Lord's letter to the Laodiceans says not one good thing about them, but they are still the church.

It is my understanding that the Baptist Church votes people out of the Baptist Church. I have witnessed people being voted "in" the Baptist Church. But as is true with the Catholic Church, we find no mention of them in the New Testament. Therefore, if they assume the right to vote people "in," why not assume the right to vote them "out"?

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THE INCLUSION OF WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP AS CHURCH DISCIPLINE

We have pointed out that church discipline involves much more than the withdrawing of fellowship from offenders who will not repent. It is, however, the withdrawing of fellowship that is most fittingly called "the forgotten commandment." Since this is the case, our discussion will primarily deal with this aspect of discipline.

As this aspect of church discipline involves fellowship, it is in order to define the word fellowship. Within the past few decades there has been much controversy on the subject of

Will God Sell US?

Alton W. Fonville

We, in America, have been blessed of the Lord above measure. This great country has flourished in abundance longer than many countries of the world, and it has been attributed to the fact that we are a "Christian" nation. But, things have been changing rapidly here in the land of the free and home of the brave. We are fast pushing the Lord God of Heaven out of our lives and going about doing "what pleases us," rather than God.

Laws are being enacted to make it a crime to speak out against the truth which God has given us. already, laws are being used to remove any vestige of God and His Word from our schools and books, our government buildings and other public places, while permitting the teaching of a "theory" of evolution. Billions of dollars are being spent in the pursuit of the origin of the universe, while God's word which has told us, lies on the shelves of our homes collecting dust.

We use the age old excuses for not looking the Bible for our answers: "it is too archaic and out dated — we can't understand it." So, we hire modern age men to write a new bible in our language and tell us what we want to hear. Does this sound familiar? It should, if we look into bible history to see how our forefathers acted, to learn lessons from it.

When Moses talked with God, the people saw it as a "consuming fire" and requested that the Lord talk to them through Moses, not directly. God heard their request and said they had well spoken—BUT he wished that their hearts were in it and would fear Him and keep His commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children forever (Deut. 5:25-29).

It could have been a great world then, had they really had the heart which God knew they did not have. The history of God's people would have been completely different. Over and over again, God sold them into the hands of oppressors who taught them lessons which were soon forgotten, only to repeat again. This has been the cycle of human history since the beginning. And the question keeps ringing loud and clear—will God sell us into the same type of slavery for the same type of behavior? We know that God is a just God, a jealous God that is true to His word. "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto

me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:30-31).

We are fast becoming a people which is not a "Christian" nation. The influence of the ungodly world is having its effect upon us. Our permissive society is bowing its knee to every false god known to man. And in the church the backbone of so many has grown weak and will not resist the devil or his workers. It is becoming rare indeed to hear gospel preachers who will stand before an audience and declare "the whole counsel" of God, for fear of their jobs. It is rare to see God fearing elders stand up and proclaim "adultery will not be tolerated here." Instead, what ever seems to be popular at the moment, to bring in more members will be accepted and practiced.

Israel tried the patience of God and saw first hand just how far His longsuffering would go. They were ultimately and finally destroyed as a nation forever when God sold them into the hands of the Assyrians under the rule of Shalmaneser in 722 B.C. And, Judah did the same, doing that which was evil, and lasted only a few more years, until they were taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 17). Only a small remnant of them was ever permitted to return to their land, after seventy years (Ezra 1). Will we go the same route? "And the times of this ignorance, God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 7:30). Will we repent in time?

—337 Madison 4605, St. Paul, AR 72760

Back Issues of Banner of Truth

We have back issued for several years. We can mail 45 of these for \$2.15. We will even pay the postage, if you wish. We hate for these to go to waste when people could be using them. There are many different subjects discussed, and we put forth great effort to print them. If you are interested just let us know. The first pound costs us \$1.35, then it is 40 cents per pound. - Editor

Billy Graham's Daughter

The Paducah Sun, Sept. 30, 2005, carried an article on the "Religion" page, entitled "Life as Billy Graham's daughter." The daughter's name is Ruth Graham. The article was of interest in this area since it announced that "She will be in a women's conference from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday [Oct. 1] at Enon Baptist Church in Wingo. Only a few of the \$25 tickets remain..." Wingo is located in our area in West Kentucky.

I would have thought that most of the Baptist Churches in our part of the country would have been opposed to abortion, but evidently my thinking was wrong. Why so? The following paragraph from the above article speaks rather clearly:

Graham also speaks often at pregnancy care centers because of personal experiences. "My daughter became pregnant out of wedlock and she released the baby for adoption," she said. "I tell people we need to choose life, but we don't [need] to condemn those who don't."

There you have it. According to Ruth Graham, go along with those who choose life and go along with those who don't (abortion). In the first place, it doesn't speak well of a mother who is willing to give her own child away. But failure to condemn those who murder their child by abortion, is an outright act of opposing God's word on the subject of life. Yet, some were willing to pay \$25 to hear such error from a woman preacher.

More and more we are seeing people who claim to be Christians take positions which are at variance with the teaching of God's word. In some instances it amounts to "making merchandise" of what they claim to be the gospel.

The time was that many of the Baptist people took a strong stand on moral issues. They were never right in teaching that John the Baptist started the Baptist Church. God's word knows nothing about such an institution. But it is a sign of the times that many religious people are continuing to drift farther away from the only true source of religious authority, God's inspired word. When beliefs and practices fall into the hands of men, all manner of things can happen, and often does.

— Editor

A Medley of Matters from the Editor

A Personal Request. We are greatly in need of a tractor-feed printer (the old dot matrix type). We print labels for mailing more than 160 bundles of Banner of Truth. My printer of twelve years has given up the ghost. A new tractor-feed printer costs about \$400 dollars. If anyone has one not being used, it would be a great help to me. We have money in our BOT account to purchase a new one, but we try to be frugal. Brethren are so good to supply the necessary financial support, and we want to use it as wisely as possible.

Mailing List Increase. In the past several months our mailing list has decreased somewhat. With many mailings of an issue of BOT we receive two or three dozen "returns." These returns are mostly instances where people have moved or changed their address and failed to notify us. We delete those names. If you know of people who would profit from the paper, we would appreciate having their names. We do suggest, however, that the names of those who are known to be liberal-minded not be sent; they're not apt to appreciate the gesture. Of course, we are always ready to add to our mailing list anyone who desires to receive BOT.

Health Update. Until two or three weeks ago I had made considerable progress, in that I was not coughing so much. But my improvement has since waned. I am still teaching my classes and preaching but I don't have much energy to spare. I have not been able to get this September issue out as soon as I intended. I am scheduled to see doctors at Vanderbilt in Nashville the 7th of October. If I don't learn anything from them, I plan to see another doctor somewhere. I do appreciate greatly the many prayers being offered in my behalf.

I had my 80th birthday September 19, but I am humbly counting on several more years of being able to carry on my work. We are in real need for more help with getting Banner of Truth in the mail. Whereas I used to put in twelve or fourteen, even sixteen hours in a day, I'm no longer able to do that. I used to print the paper in two days. It now takes three, at least.

fellowship. God's law on the subject has often been overlooked, and like the activist judges, some have made their own rules on the subject. But the subject of fellowship is one that can be treated in depth at some other time. For now, we are giving a definition of fellowship by Thayer, p. 352: "fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse." This is from the Greek work *koinonia*. An example of fellowship would be that of joint participation with a congregation which practices error. Another would be associating with a denominational body. On an individual basis it would include joint participation and association with a member of the church who is in error. A congregation cannot, with God's approval, continue in fellowship with members who are living in sin and will not repent.

Let us now note some of the teaching on fellowship as it pertains to church discipline. We begin with Paul's statement to the Romans: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Marking and avoiding would certainly rule out fellowship.

Paul again speaks on the subject: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (I Cor. 5:11).

What could be clearer than the following: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Works of darkness are evil works, works of sin. A congregation cannot uphold such works by fellowshiping the same, and still have God's approval.

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of

us" (2 Thess. 3:6). Paul goes on to say, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (vs. 14, 15). The association allowed in this case would limited to that wherein there is admonishing of the person "as a brother."

Other passages which rule out being in fellowship with those in sin who will not repent, include I John 1:7. We can have no fellowship with those who are not in fellowship with God. Fellowship demands "walking in the light," or in the light of truth. John points out the fact that if one transgresses and abides not "in the doctrine of Christ," that one does not have the approval of the Father and the Son. Furthermore, if one bids such a person "God speed" he is "partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).

THE PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE WHEN IT INVOLVES THE WITHDRAWING OF FELLOWSHIP

The way some brethren view this action, one might think they conceive of it as evil. They must have forgotten who ordained this activity, and the purposes behind it. Let's note a few.

To Save the Offender. Of the fornicator in I Cor. 5:5, Paul said, "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." The Thessalonians were told to "have no company" with any man who would not obey his word, "that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:14). This implies that the person might repent of sins and be restored. A great blessing.

It should be the desire of every Christian that when there is a withdrawal of fellowship, it would result in the saving of the offender by bringing him to repentance. However, if repentance is not produced, there are still reasons for the practice of church discipline. →

To Keep the Church Pure. Paul said, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened” (1 Cor. 5:7). It was said of Christ, to the Ephesians: “That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). When the church upholds or condones sin in its midst, it ceases to be the “glorious church” of which Paul speaks. Just like the removal of a diseased member of the physical body may result in saving the other members, so it is with the church. Even one diseased member may spread his disease to others. As one rotten apple may spoil a bushel, so it can be with the church.

To Deter Wrongdoing. One aspect of discipline is that of punishment. In Acts 1:1-10, we have the record of the first case of punitive punishment being meted out in the early days of the church. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, gave up the ghost because of lying. This had a positive influence upon the church. “And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (v. 11). Paul says of the man at Corinth, “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many” (2 Cor. 2:6). The brethren are told they should “confirm their love toward him” (v. 8). To one who treasures the love of his brethren, the breaking of fellowship with them would be severe punishment.

To Save People of the World. It is the responsibility of the church to take the gospel to the whole world. But if the church condones evil and doesn’t uphold the teaching of God’s word, its positive influence upon people of the world will be little. As Christians our influence should be as a light and not as darkness.

To Obey God’s Command. The bottom line as to the purpose of discipline by withdrawing of fellowship is because God has commanded it. We have noted a few obvious reasons why God has commanded it. If we would be consistent as ser-

vants of God, we would heed His commands and never make them a matter of option.

If we have the proper faith in God, we will not question whether or not we should obey Him. Furthermore, we know His instructions will accomplish profitable results when followed. Christ is the author of salvation to them that obey him, and this includes obeying God’s instructions with regard to church discipline.

WHY CHURCH DISCIPLINE, WHICH INVOLVES THE WITHDRAWING OF FELLOWSHIP, IS OFTEN FORGOTTEN

It will not work. It is difficult to understand why people with even a small knowledge of God’s word would make such a statement. This is saying in no uncertain terms that what God has commanded *will not work*. This is the position taken by many religious people, and especially those who have come up with their own plan of salvation. I remember a young preacher, speaking of church discipline, making a statement, “It will not always work.” It is true of course that it will not always bring a person to repentance, but this is not the only purpose of church discipline, as we have pointed out. If church discipline is carried out in accordance with God’s instructions and the correct motives, it will work. Some people say that baptism “will not work” in providing the forgiveness of sins. Yes, it will work, if done in accordance with God’s instructions. I have heard others say church discipline will not work. This shows a serious lack of belief in God’s word, and the doctrine of Christ.

It doesn’t show love. Who is to say that it doesn’t? One who understands what the love, so often mentioned in the New Testament, means would not make such a statement. The love we are commanded to have for one another and for all men, is that which is concerned for the well-being of another. John says, “For this is the love of God that we keep his command- 1

The important thing to see here is that Guin assumes that Paul is talking about God’s Word in general.

As Lenski says,

By some the whole written Word is made “letter,” and “spirit” is made its opposite, something that is not bound to the written words but is a so-called inner, spiritual meaning at which one arrives by an immediate inward illumination of the Spirit. What the written Word *says* [the so-called Letter of the Law, AA] is thus set aside; to adhere to that as its real meaning “kills.” What the Word is said to *mean* [the so-called Spirit of the Law, AA] although it be contrary even to what its writing says, this alone “quickens.” To this we answer that the meaning of Scripture is one. *What the writing records, the Spirit means, that and that alone* [my emphasis, AA]...no double or multiple meaning exists...The writing is the one honest as well as adequate medium by which the Spirit speaks, and what he thus says is spirit and life (p. 922).

Much of what Paul wrote in 1&2 Corinthians takes to task some folks there who had been taking some “cheap shots” at Paul. The responses are brilliant; particularly, II Corinthians 3.

Verses 1-3. His detractors seem to have been saying something on the order of, *Where’s Paul’s letters, we have ours?* [reminds one of our self-promoters who feel the need to flaunt their academic “letters.”] Paul said, a) We have no need “again to commend ourselves,” and b) Nor like others do we need “epistles of commendation to you or from you.” The Christians at Corinth were Paul’s “epistle.”

Note that: a) They were at the same time an epistle, Paul said, “written in our hearts,” and also an “epistle of Christ,” with said epistle not being engraved as though on some stone monument; rather, on “hearts of flesh.” b) They were Christ’s epistle, yet the writing was “ministered,” Paul said, “by us.” c) Paul wrote this epistle on their hearts, “not with ink,” but “with the Spirit of the living God.”

Which raises the question: In what sense would Paul, a mortal, write or engrave such an epistle *using* the Holy Spirit? a) It was the Holy Spirit who had given Paul the “signs of an apostle [which] were

wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works.” [2Co 12.12] b) It was the Holy Spirit who “revealed,” not only the “things” of Paul’s “preaching,” but also gave Paul the very “words” by which he (Paul) spoke. [1Co 2.12,13] c) It was the Holy Spirit who, through Paul, [Rom 1.11] had given them “spiritual gifts” [1Co 12-14]. With no more apostles, apostles’ signs, nor spiritual gifts, the implication should be clear as to how Paul *yet* “with the Spirit of the living God” writes upon the hearts of men today — through the Spirit-through-Paul (and others)-produced Word.

Verses 4-6. Those who were carping at Paul were in no position to do so, because, as Paul said, “we are sufficient.” But, he was careful to acknowledge that “our sufficiency is from God.” God made them “sufficient,” in that he, as Paul said, “made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant...” The point is: God had *not* so chosen Paul’s detractors.

This “new covenant,” of which Paul was a minister was “not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Thus, *if the “new covenant” is matched together with “the spirit,” what then is matched together with “the letter”?*

Verses 7-18 answer the question; particularly, verse 14 which speaks of the “old covenant.” As great as was the work of Moses, greater still, because of its nature, was the work of Paul. Through Moses came the “old covenant” which is “*Gr.*, of letter,” whereas through Paul (and others) came the “new covenant” which is “*Gr.*, of spirit.”

This great chapter has so much to teach us about so many things. More needs to be said why the one is described as being “of letter,” and the other “of spirit.” [This we will do when we have finished looking at the other “letter/spirit” passages.] But, it should be clear that the “letter” and “spirit” of this passage has nothing to do with any levels of meaning regarding God’s Word or Law in general; rather, they have reference to a contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In short, there’s no Spirit of the Law and Letter of the Law in II Corinthians 3.

Be reminded, yet again, as to how easy it is to buy into “chimney corner scriptures” and even help give them life. [more to come]. —Assistant Editor



Spirit of the Law Versus Letter of the Law? (II)

What do you do when a *chimney corner scripture* has been assimilated into popular parlance and people naturally use it assuming all the while that it's from the Bible? That indeed is the predicament surrounding the adage: "That's the letter of the law, but it's not the spirit of the law." As we have already begun to see, though Scripture does juxtapose the terms: spirit, letter, and law, it does not indeed teach the idea that Divine law has two levels of meaning, import and application.

Who knows where it started, but somebody has taken the terms "spirit," "letter," and "law" from three particular passages of Scripture; they have missed the context of discussion, and thereby, the meaning of these terms in each case. They then proceeded to make out of whole cloth this notion of the Spirit of the Law, and The Letter of the Law.

This thing is so ingrained that some people justify blatantly ignoring what the Bible says on the grounds that the "spirit of the law," is different from and superior to the "letter of the law." As McGarvey has said,

If a man insists upon preserving some ordinance in the very form of its original appointment, such an ordinance as baptism or the Lord's Supper, for example, he is accused of contending for the letter...while the man who...changes the ordinance, claims that he is following the spirit...(Biblical Criticism, April 3, 1897).

Our intent in this series is to show 1) Divine Law simply says what it says. There is no antagonism between, or greater importance attached to, following one supposed *level* of meaning as opposed to another; and, 2), it is our intent to show that the passages wherein the key terms of: spirit, letter, and law, are brought together most certainly say nothing about any *levels* of meaning where Divine Law is concerned.

Consider the abused passages. More detail will follow; but, surface comparison will warrant the conclusion that the contrast between "spirit" and "letter" in these passages has to do with the *contrast between the New Testament and the Old Testament, and not, as is commonly supposed, a contrast between different levels of meaning and application of God's Word in general.*

Rom 2:27-29	Rom 7:6	2Co 3:6
...uncircumcision [shall] judge thee, who with the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law...he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter...	... we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.	[He] also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

DOES 2 CORINTHIANS 3:6 TEACH THE IDEA OF A "LETTER OF THE LAW" AND A "SPIRIT OF THE LAW"? True: It uses the words "letter" and "spirit," and equally so that whatever they mean in this passage there's a definite distinction between the two: the former "killeth," and the latter "giveth life." A good dose of slow reading and context should disabuse anyone from thinking that Paul is here talking about two relatively important levels of Divine law.

One relatively recent Lipcomb graduate believes [Guin, Jay. *Holy Spirit and Revolutionary Grace*] the passage is talking about "...a very big difference between God's Word acting alone and God's Spirit..." (p. 16). In the same vein, speaking of the "indwelling Spirit," he says,

It saves us and empowers us. It is not just the Word. The Word is of critical importance, but by itself it only kills" (p. 44). †

ments..." (I John 5:3). Christ said, "If a man love me he will keep my words..." (John 14:23). If one loves the Lord he will listen to Him, in all that He says, even about withdrawing fellowship.

It Would Hurt One's Feelings. It is designed to make one ashamed, to fear God, and repent of sins in order to be saved. It is strange that people are quite often more concerned about the feelings of some person, even one in sin, than about the Lord's feelings with regard to those who refuse to do His will. "The kingdom of God and his righteousness" are to come first, even before friends are loved ones (Matt. 6:33).

It Will Run Some Off. By this is meant that if fellowship is withdrawn from someone, friends or relatives may "quit the church," as we some times say. It is sometimes true that when God's will is carried out, with respect to withdrawing of fellowship, friends and/or relatives of the disciplined person may stop attending services; thus, they themselves become guilty in upholding of error rather than accepting God's teaching to withdraw from it. The very idea that one would reject what God's word teaches on a matter because it would affect some friend or relative is to show that God is not going to be first place in that person's life.

It will cause one to be lost. In the first place, if God's law on church discipline is observed, the one from whom fellowship is withdrawn may indeed be saved by the action. If that is not the outcome, the one in error is no more lost than before the action was taken. Those who are out of fellowship with God are already in a lost condition, regardless of what is done or not done. Sins of which one has not repented are what causes people to be lost, not church discipline.

All of us have some error. It is true that none of us can live above sin in a perfect manner (I Jno. 1:8-10). But that does not rule out the obedience to God's word with regard to the fellowship of those in error as pointed out by such passages as: (Rom. 16:17-18; I Cor. 5; Eph. 5:11; 2 Thess.

3:6-15; 2 Jno. 9-11; Titus 3:10-11). Those who "walk in the light, as he is in the light" have the continued cleansing power for sin (I Jno. 1:7), whereas those who live in open rebellion to God without repenting are subject to dying in their sins. It is hard to understand why some cannot see the difference.

To Withdraw Fellowship Is Judging. It is no less than amazing to see the number of people who go to Matthew 7:1, without considering the rest of the passage, and exclaim, "It is wrong to judge." Verses 2 – 5 show clearly the type of judging that is condemned. And that does not include the carrying out of God's will with respect to the withdrawing of fellowship. Some will pit God's word against itself, as if it were somehow contradictory. Jesus teaches that we are to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). In the matter of church discipline, God's will is either respected and carried out, or it is ignored, which is usually the case.

We Might Be Sued. Intimidation is not a valid reason for failure to do God's will. The "one talent" man was "afraid" and hid his lord's talent rather than putting it to use (Matt. 25:25). The apostle Peter, on his way to Jesus on the water, as "afraid" and began to sink, and indication of a lack of faith in the Lord to save.

Several years ago Marian Guinn, in Collinsville, Oklahoma, sued the elders of a congregation because she had been disciplined. The court awarded her \$390,000. For a while some brethren were running scared, saying that we would be sued if we withdrew from anyone. But the matter of the fact is, we just don't respect God's will in the matter of discipline. Just think: If every congregation which withdrew fellowship from someone was sued, just how many cases would there be?

When Peter and John were jailed for preaching Jesus, and then "threatened" by the council "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" they didn't stop. They said, "Whether it be →

right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4). Their conclusion was, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

When all things are considered, it is a sad matter of fact that church discipline is an “often forgotten commandment.” There is no reason for us to be so remiss in this respect. Will God not hold us accountable in this matter, as well as in others, where He has commanded things which we ignore?

ARE WE NOT INCONSISTENT IN THIS HIGHLY IMPORTANT MATTER?

In the following we shall point out for consideration a number of New Testament passages. Claiming to be Christians, we are averring our belief God’s in word, and that we are responsible for obeying its commandments. In view of this we ask that the following scriptures be reflected upon in a serious manner.

FAITH (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24)

REPENTANCE (Acts 17:30; Lk. 13:3)

CONFESSION (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37)

BAPTISM (Acts 2:38; 22:16)

WORSHIP (John 4:24)

“HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP” (Eph. 5:11)

“WITHDRAW YOURSELVES” (2 Thess. 3:6)

“MARK THEM” (Rom. 16:17-18)

“PURGE OUT” (I Cor. 5:7)

“AN HERETIC...REJECT” (Titus 3:10)

Now, a question: Which of the above groups, top or bottom, do we wholeheartedly accept? Another question: Which passages should we accept? Would some say “We accept them all”? There is no doubt but that would be true for some, but with just how many?

In the group at top we find FAITH. We don’t

hesitate to quote Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please him...” We don’t quibble on that statement. Why? We know it is true, because God says so.

Next in the top group is REPENTANCE. The fact that God’s word says, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30), is sufficient evidence for us to conclude that salvation does not come without repentance. Though men may find it hard to repent, it is still necessary.

CONFESSION of faith in Christ is another step that people must take in the process of conversion. God’s word clearly says: “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). The eunuch said to Philip, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). I can’t think of any of us who would say that confessing our faith in Christ is not a matter of importance. Why? God’s word says it is, and we believe it.

BAPTISM is a commandment which we have upheld as necessary to salvation; we have contended with many in the denominational world over this commandment. We believe it to be so because the people on the day of Pentecost asked, “what shall we do?” “Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:37-38). Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mk. 16:16). On the basis of these inspired statements, we and others, if they truly believe God’s word, readily agree that baptism for remission of sins is a command which must be obeyed.

WORSHIP is defined as acts of reverence paid to God by man. When Christ said, “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), He set forth the conditions of acceptable worship. That is, it is from the heart and according to the truth as

Lessons to be Learned from Katrina and Rita

Two powerful hurricanes recently slammed into the Gulf Coast. Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas suffered greatly with the damage being more extensive in Louisiana. About a thousand lives were lost, and property loss amounted to dozens of billions of dollars. There is no way to measure the physical pain and mental suffering.

When disasters such as the above occur, as has been the case a number of times in our country, the hearts of caring people go out to the victims. This is as it should be. As sad as it is that such calamities often bring death, suffering and destruction upon many, there are often lessons to be learned, which can in the future be of great value.

While we do not want to minimize in any way the tragedy suffered by any of the states hit by Katrina and Rita, Louisiana had by far the greatest number of deaths. The city of New Orleans suffered more than other parts of the state in loss of life and destruction of houses and other property. Since this is the case, some of the Lessons to be Learned will have to do with New Orleans in particular.

News sources are not always reliable. For several days there was almost continuous news coverage of the hurricanes. Some of it was according to fact, while far too much was not factual. While conditions in New Orleans were tragic from the standpoint of murders, robberies, looting, rapes, and such like, many of the pictures painted by the news media were darker than reality. Much of the news was very biased, placing unjustified blame for political purposes, while ignoring some who were at fault.

A great outpouring of concern. People should be concerned about their fellowmen. This was demonstrated in a remarkable way by massive amounts of money given and help contributed by thousands of workers. Many people took others into their homes. Religious people went all out in sending money and needed items to those displaced. This is certainly to be commended. As great as this has been, it demonstrates that which is foremost in our thinking. That is, we are ready to help with physical needs, as indeed we ought,

but how great it would be if we had the same urgency with regard to the realm of spiritual things. If the same concern for spiritual needs had been shown in ages gone by, perhaps the conditions in New Orleans would have been quite different, even to the point of lives and property lost.

New Orleans a moral example that should not be followed. For many years gone by this city could have been correctly labeled “sin city.” Some expressed concern about the heritage of New Orleans being lost. In some ways that would be a blessing. George Will is quoted as saying that 76 percent of Louisiana’s African-American births are to unmarried women. In New Orleans that figure is thought to be 80 percent. Studies have shown this condition contributes greatly to criminal activity. Will is quoted as saying, relative to this condition: “That translates into a large and constantly renewed cohort of lightly parented adolescent males, and that translates into chaos, in neighborhoods and schools, come rain or shine.” Many of those lost in New Orleans were black women and children, not those who fathered the children. They were missing.

Don’t depend upon government to take care of us. One source said that 25 percent of those in New Orleans were on welfare. When tragedy struck evidently many of those who perished just waited for the government to take care of them. New Orleans’ mayor and the state’s governor did virtually nothing to help, nor had the government done much to encourage the people to move up to the responsibility of working and earning a living. People are not likely to turn loose of a sugar teat as long as the sugar is still coming. Responsibility for our well-being begins at home, not with government.

It is sensible to heed serious warnings. Evidently little effort was made to get people out of New Orleans when it was known danger was coming. Hundreds of school buses and city busses were never moved. Many who had automobiles didn’t choose to leave. This is likely to happen when people have been conditioned to expect others to do for them that which they could do for themselves. Our heart goes out to those who could not do for themselves, and were neglected by those who could have helped but chose not to do so.

God’s word has many spiritual warnings. The calamity to be avoided is much worse than a hurricane, it is eternal condemnation.

—Editor

and the rest we have utterly destroyed” (I Sam. 15:15).

God did not accept the excuses of Adam and Eve, and Saul and neither will He accept Men’s excuses today for doing wrong and seeking to blame others. Mark this truth down — other people are not responsible for your sins. Each person chooses to sin when he is tempted and then “is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15). One cannot evade being responsible for his actions. The Bible clearly states that “each one shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). When people begin blaming others for their sins the devil knows it is a recipe for failure.

The second essential ingredient — compromise with the world and those who desire to do evil. Pilate is a classic example to avoid in this area. He knew Jesus was innocent and he also “knew that for envy they [the Jews] had delivered him up” (Matt. 27:18). However, Pilate seeks to compromise by having an innocent man “chastised” and then released (Lk. 23:16). Pilate desired to satisfy both what was right and the envious crowd, and such cannot be done.

People today want to go to Heaven while holding to the world. They participate in what they know to be worldly activities, dress like the world, talk like the world, and act like the world. Some want to worship (?) God while being entertained. Others profess their love for God while making it clear that they will not worship and serve Jehovah with all their heart (cf. Matt. 22:37). One can never “give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27) and glorify God.

The third essential ingredient — straddle the fence and wash your hands of the situation. The majority of folks today probably believe they are not against Christ even though they refuse to be obedient to His will. Yet, the Lord says, “He that is not with me is against me...” (Matt. 12:30). When Pilate saw that he could not appease the crowd by releasing Jesus instead of Barabbas (Matt. 27:17, 21) and “that a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it” (Matt. 27:24), Pilate was destitute in moral courage while refusing to participate in the battle. A Christian must put on the Christian armor (Eph. 6:11-

18) and go to war against the devil and the world. To know to do good and do otherwise is sin (Jas. 4:17)

Do not partake of the devil’s recipe for failure.

—5810 Liberty Grove Rd., Rowlett, TX 75030

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—Editor

revealed by God. This doesn’t allow the use of mechanical instruments of music, or acts of entertainment, as worship. Like many in man-made churches, some of our brethren no longer have the proper respect for God’s word in this area. But that doesn’t change the truth.

Now that we have considered the top group of passages, which we have upheld as the truth and believed to be essential, let us take a look at the passages in the bottom group.

Let us bear in mind that the passages in both the top and bottom group are authentic, being true and from the same source of inspiration. Consistency demands that if we believe the one group we should, by the same token, believe the other group. We are some times critical, and rightly so, of those religious people who simply pick and choose what portions of God’s word they are going to believe, or ignore. We begin by considering the passages in the bottom group, which have to do with our subject of discussion, church discipline, an “often forgotten commandment.”

FELLOWSHIP. From the pen of the apostle Paul we have this command: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Vine’s says “darkness” means “evil works.” We know that evil works are things which God does not approve. This means that we are not to be partakers in such. But do we really believe this? If so, why are more and more of our brethren disobeying this divine command?

WITHDRAW YOURSELVES. It is not difficult to understand what it means to “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). Yet, how many are willing to withdraw fellowship from anyone, regardless of how “disorderly” they may be?

MARK THEM is the command of Paul when he said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ye have learned; and avoid them”

(Rom. 16:17). To “mark” means to take note and to “avoid them” means just that. It seems, however, that some believe it just should not be done. By why? That is, if we believe what God says.

PURGE OUT has reference to that “old leaven” of the fornicator as mentioned in I Cor. 5:7. It was Paul’s command for the brethren when they were “gathered together” 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” (vv. 4-5). Paul goes on to say that if a brother is a “fornicator,” or a number of other things, “with such an one no not to eat” (v. 11). Just how much “purging out” is going on within the church today? Is it because there is no need for “purging,” or is it because we just will not do it, in spite of what God’s word says?

HERETICK is the term used to describe one who is guilty of heresy. That is, one who causes divisions and has lack of proper respect for God’s word. Paul’s command with respect to the heretick is stated as follows: “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11). To “reject” means just that, to withhold fellowship from him.

When we emphasize some of God’s word and ignore or show disregard for other parts of it we are showing ourselves to be highly inconsistent. If we think those outside the church do not see our inconsistencies we are kidding ourselves, to say nothing of how the Lord looks upon us for such. We believe that baptism is necessary to salvation, and rightly so, since it is clearly taught. But when we “harp upon baptism” as some wrongfully accuse us of doing, and then fail to heed God’s word relative to church discipline, people have a right to criticize, though it doesn’t make their error right.

Church discipline, including withdrawal of fellowship, will not have a bad influence →

upon the church, but to the contrary. God would not authorize and command that which would do injury to the institution purchased by the blood of his Son. When people of the world see the church abiding by the will of God in all that God has commanded, their respect for the church will be increased, that is, if they are truly interested in abiding by the will of God.

The Lord knows that we should not boast when withdrawal of fellowship is practiced, but at the same time let us not be apologetic for carrying out God's plan. Let it not be hidden as though it were something of a disgrace. It is when sin is allowed to reign within the church that we are hurting its image. When Paul penned his first letter to the church at Corinth, wherein he commanded the withdrawing of fellowship (chapter 5), he was giving information about the church for the whole world to see. People outside the church know when wrongdoing is upheld in the church. By analogy, think about all the news of sexual perversion within the Catholic Church "priesthood," especially in their trying to cover it all up.

How can one say that withdrawing of fellowship will not work, even to the point of bringing some lost souls to repentance? At one place where I preached, the withdrawing of fellowship occurred on two occasions. In one instance a married man and another man's wife had an "affair" going. We talked to these two members of the church. When they would not come to repentance, we publicly withdrew our fellowship from them. The "married man" never came to repentance, but it was made known that the church did not uphold him in his sin. The "wife" told me, after she repented and came back to the fellowship of the congregation, that if we, the congregation, had not withdrawn from her that she might never have repented.

Satan attacks God's people within the church. He already has those outside the blood-purchased body of Christ. His "wiles" and "devices" are employed to find our weaknesses, and all too often he is successful. As our society becomes more and more tolerant of God-condemned sin, we face a

greater danger within the church. I firmly believe that one of our current weaknesses is that of failing to exercise church discipline, when it is clearly commanded by God's word. Not only can our souls be lost, but we can cause others to be lost.

If we truly love our Lord we will do his bidding. Not only did the Lord say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jno. 14:15), He also said, If a man love me he will keep my words" (John 14:23).

—*Editor*

The Implications of a Recommendation

Webster defines "recommend" as: "1. to present as worthy of confidence, acceptance, or use; commend. 2. to urge or suggest as appropriate, satisfying, or beneficial."

Various organizations are often recommended by those who are not members of the organizations. In this instance we are using a church as an example. When one church recommends another, it is understood that those doing the recommending have a favorable view of the one which is recommended. But on what is the favorable view based? Is it not implied that the recommended also has a favorable view of the recommender? Is it not implied that the favorable view is mutual?

It is not likely that a church would recommend another church which is seriously opposed to its teachings and practices. A case in point of one church recommending another is found in *The Quarterly Newsletter of Coldwater United Methodist Church*. This Methodist Church building is located at Coldwater, KY, a few miles west of Murray, KY.

The front page of the above newsletter has the following information in the left column:

"Come Worship With Us! However, if you don't feel that our church meets your spiritual needs, we encourage you to find one that does."

Under the above is listed the following churches: "First United Methodist Church, Memorial Baptist Church, University Church of Christ, Hope Harbor Church, Christian Community Church, Locust Grove Baptist Church, United Methodist Church

of Calloway County, Glendale Road Church of Christ, First Baptist Church of Murray, St. Leo Catholic Church, New Concord Church of Christ." (Emphasis mine, Editor).

It is not surprising that the Coldwater Methodist Church would recommend other churches. Over the years the Methodist Church has been known for standing for less, relative to teaching and practice, than any of the major denominations.

A question which comes to my mind is this: Would this Methodist Church have recommended all those churches if they thought those churches had an unfavorable view of them, the Coldwater Methodist Church? Would they have recommended any church which is known to vigorously oppose their teaching and practice?

Now you decide. Three of the churches recommended by the Coldwater Methodist were: University church of Christ, Glendale Road church of Christ, New Concord church of Christ. Why do you suppose the Methodist Church did not recommend the Coldwater church of Christ, which is right there in Coldwater? What do you think is the correct answer? I can't say that I know absolutely, but I do roll it over in my mind.

I should be more qualified than many Banner of Truth readers to understand what the true answer is. Why? I have known the Lord's church at Coldwater for well over thirty years. I know something about what the congregation stands for. Not a single one her preachers I have known would have agreed with the teaching and practice of the Methodist Church. I know very well the current preacher of the Coldwater congregation, our brother Richard Guill. He has been there for a number of years, and he is a man who stands up for the truth of God and he is a defender of "the faith."

I noted that the Dexter church of Christ, where I have preached for a few years now, was not recommended by the Coldwater Methodist Church, as were the three congregations mentioned above. The Dexter congregation is not as large as the three recommended, we are less than a hundred, but I believe there was some other reason. Anyway, I'm thankful that the Dexter and Coldwater congregations were not in the recommended list. After a serious consideration of the matter, from various angles, **I have decided** on that aspect of it.

—*Editor*

A Recipe For Failure

Marvin L. Weir

God has done everything that is possible for men to succeed in this life and enjoy an eternal home in Heaven. He "so loved" that He gave "his only begotten Son" (Jno. 3:16). Christ proved his love for lost humanity by dying on Calvary's cross and shedding His blood so that men might have forgiveness of their sins and "redemption through his blood" (Rom. 5:8-9; Eph. 1:7). The grace of God has been freely offered, but men must obediently respond to God's will to be recipients of His marvelous grace (Matt. 7:21).

The Devil, on the other hand, "as a roaring lion" seeks to wreak havoc with people's happiness in this world and destroy souls for eternity (1 Pet. 5:8; Matt. 25:41). One can resist the devil and the broad way that leads to destruction if he so chooses (Jas. 4:7; Matt. 7:13), but such a choice requires determination, repentance, sacrifice, obedience, and continued effort. It is a sad commentary on today's society, but these five ingredients are lacking in the majority of people.

Although the Devil has many recipes designed to doom the souls of men, there is one recipe that is tremendously successful among both the young and the old. Let us make sure that we understand and avoid parking of this favorite recipe of the devil.

The first essential ingredient — always blame someone else for your sins. Satan will see that it is convenient and easy to blame others for your sins. When God queried Adam about eating of the forbidden tree he replied, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). God next asks Eve, "What is this thou has done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13). God told King Saul to kill Amalek "utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. 15:3). King Saul did not obey God although he boasted that he did (1 Sam. 15:11, 13). When asked by Samuel about the "bleating of the sheep... and the lowing of the oxen" (1 Sam. 15:14), Saul sought to excuse himself and blame others. He said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God; →