

“Protecting Doctrinal Integrity”
Titus 3:9-11
(Preached at Trinity, June 25, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to **Verse 9** Paul is preparing to bring his letter to a close. In **Verse 8** Paul concludes his instruction from **Verse 1**.
Titus 3:1 NAU - "to be ready for every good deed"
Titus 3:8 NAU - "I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds."
2. But, as I have pointed out often, the chief theme in this letter has been the importance of sound doctrine. The churches of Crete were being troubled by false teachers who were having a negative impact upon many. Paul left Titus in Crete to deal with this problem.
Titus 1:5 NAU - "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,"
Titus 1:10-11 NAU - "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain."
Titus 2:1 NAU - "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine."
3. In **Chapter 1** Paul stressed that it was essential that these false teachers be silenced.
Titus 1:10-11 NAU - "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families"
4. One way to stop their error was through the right application of the truth – by teaching sound doctrine.
Titus 1:13-14 NAU - "For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth."
5. If this failed the next recourse would be to put them out of the church – **Verses 9-11**. This verse is one of the passages that deals with the subject of church discipline. The others include Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5.
6. This morning I want to address this subject of Church Discipline or Excommunication. I'll set it before you asking three questions:
Why should we be willing to practice church discipline?
Who are the proper objects of church discipline?
How should church discipline be practiced?

- I. Why should we be willing to practice church discipline?
- A. The church must be protected from any assault upon her purity.
1. We must not fail to exercise discipline if necessary to maintain this purity.
 2. This is not an optional activity of the church. It is essential to our existence. Church discipline is one of the essential elements of a true church.
The Belgic Confession: Article 29
The true church can be recognized if it has the following marks:
The church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head. By these marks one can be assured of recognizing the true church-- and no one ought to be separated from it.
 3. J. L. Dagg - "The churches are not infallible judges, being unable to search the heart, but they owe it to the cause of Christ, and to the candidate himself, to exercise the best judgment of which they are capable. Churches are often criminally careless, both in the reception of members, and in the discipline of them when received... when discipline leaves the church, Christ goes with it."¹
 4. In the passage before us the church's purity was being threatened by false teachers spreading their heretical doctrines. They had to be dealt with.
 5. This is a weighty subject. It needs to be preached more often. Few churches today would even consider removing a member because of a doctrinal issue. You can believe and teach pretty much whatever you like. God says otherwise.
- B. This is where a historic confession like the London Baptist Confession is important in protecting the church from error.
1. Doctrinal purity is an essential element of maintaining unity within the church. The church must always be protected.
 2. Sam Waldron – "A confession is a useful means for the public affirmation and defense of truth. It is a useful tool for discriminating truth from error and for presenting in a small compass the central doctrines of the Bible in their integrity and due proportions. It serves as a public standard of fellowship and discipline."²
 3. Our Confession provides us with this standard.
Waldron: "In order to fulfil its role in guarding the purity of its membership, the church must have a doctrinal standard, and that standard must be published openly, for men have a right to know by what particulars they

¹ Dagg, J. L., *Manual of Church Order*, Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1990), page 269, 274.

² Samuel Waldron, *Exposition of the 1689 Confession*, Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1989), pages 16-17.

will be judged. To require the church to exercise discipline against doctrinal error without a published confession of faith is to require it to make bricks without straw. Nothing short of a confession of faith will satisfy the legitimate claims of a church and its members on one another.”³

- C. We are also motivated by love for the church and its members.
1. True love in our spiritual family demands that we care for each other’s spiritual wellbeing. We must care that all of us prosper spiritually.
1 Thes. 5:14 NAU - "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."
- II. Who are the proper objects of church discipline?
- A. There is only one reason a person may be excommunicated from the church. That reason is non-repentant sin. The various Biblical examples of excommunication all describe individuals who refuse to repent.
1. **Matthew 18** deals with a matter of a sin that has been committed by one member against another member in the church. How do we handle it when the offender refuses to repent?
Matthew 18:15-17 NAU - "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷ "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."
 2. **1 Corinthians 5** deals with a situation of moral sin. Again, the issue is a failure to repent. In this case, the church had been remiss in dealing with the sin.
1 Corinthians 5:1 NAU - "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife."
1 Corinthians 5:5 NAU - "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."
 3. The other passage is what we find here. In this case it is a matter of heretical doctrine.
 - a. Again, the issue is a failure to repent and turn away from the error.
Titus 3:10 NAU - "Reject a factious man after a first and .second warning"
This is consistent with Paul’s teaching in Romans
Romans 16:17 NAU - "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them."
 - b. The word for “factious” is ἀίρετικός from which we get our word “heretic.” This is the way the KJV translates it.

³ Ibid., page 18.

Titus 3:10 KJV - "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;"

- c. The idea is a person who is stirring up division within the body through his persistent teaching of false doctrine. This person must be admonished.

B. Paul says those who persist in sin are “perverted”

1. The word in **Verse 11** means “to turn inside out.” It means “distorted,” “twisted.”
2. The false teacher is not given to clear thinking, right understanding.

III. How should church discipline be practiced?

A. First of all, we should recognize the importance of formative discipline. In other words, we should carefully guard who we receive as members.

1. Mark Dever writes: “So when we’re taking in new members, we have to consider whether those who are under consideration are known to be living Christ honoring lives. Do we understand the seriousness of the commitment we are making to them when they join the church, and have we communicated to them the seriousness of the commitment that they are making to us? If we are more careful about how we recognize and receive new members, we will have less occasion to practice corrective church discipline later.”⁴
2. Our New Member’s Class is helpful in explaining clearly the doctrines to which we hold.
3. In spite of our best efforts, it is possible for us to make a mistake in evaluating a person’s salvation.
 - a. Simon the sorcerer professed Christ and was baptized by Philip and continued for a season.
Acts 8:13 NAU - "Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip"
 - b. Simon later proved himself to be unconverted.
Peter declared to him:
Acts 8:23 NAU - "I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."
 - c. Church Discipline is God’s answer to our lack of perfect discernment. A better word here would be excommunication.

B. When discipline is necessary it should be practiced in a spirit of love.

1. Our goal is always to bring the offender to repentance.
2. The disciplinary procedure should be pervaded over with gentleness.
Galatians 6:1 NAU - "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."
3. There must be time to allow for repentance.
Titus 3:10 NAU - "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,"

⁴ Dever, Mark. *Nine Marks of a Health Church*, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004, Page 171.

4. When the offense is false doctrine they must be patiently instructed. Only when they refuse receive the truth do we proceed with discipline. In **Chapter 1:9** Paul said the elders must be able to "exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

C. Church Discipline is a private affair

1. Private sins should be kept private if at all possible
Matthew 18:15 NAU - "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."
2. In personal offenses we should guard our hearts against gossip or letting others know about the offense.
3. It is also private in the sense that it is under the direction of the particular local church to which the person belongs.

D. The end of Church Discipline – Excommunication

1. Excommunication is the removal of the member from the communion of the saints. The church is a body. It enjoys a fellowship that must be protected.
2. In **Verse 10** the word for “reject” is *παραιτέομαι*. It literally means “to have nothing to do with.”
3. The offender is declared to be outside the faith
Matthew 18:17 NAU - "if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."
 - a. In the Jewish mind there was no one more vile than a Gentile. There was no one more wretched than a traitorous tax collector.
 - b. It is simply the church’s recognition of what Christ has known the whole time.
Matthew 18:18 NAU - "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."
4. Excommunication is being delivered over to the jurisdiction of Satan
1 Corinthians 5:5 NAU - "to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh,"
 - a. The world outside the church is considered the sphere of Satan. To deliver over to Satan is a statement by the church that this person is no longer considered a brother but has been delivered back to Satan.
 - b. He is removed from the fellowship of the church. The first place of removal is the Lord’s Table. This is one reason fencing the Table is important. It is inconsistent to remove and offending member from the Table but allow all others.

Conclusion:

1. One of the seven distinctives of our church is sound doctrine. We must always be careful who we enlist as teachers.

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2. We must maintain purity in what we teach.