

The REFLECTOR

"Church Discipline"

By M.D. Norman

Many sermons have been preached and many volumes written on this most important subject and still there is much misunderstanding and failure to comply, in connection with it. This article is designed to help, not to hinder.

Often the first mention of this word conjures up thoughts of disfellowshipping misbehaving members. This should be a last resort tactic and a small part of discipline. Our English word means "to train by instruction; to teach to obey rules or accept authority; to punish or penalize." To discipline is to teach, train, educate or instruct. The word is found in later versions where the King James has "a sound mind." In the American Standard the word is used for "chastise," which is the translation of a Greek word which means to teach or train, with emphasis on the positive. Every sermon that is preached, every class that is taught, every private encouragement, exhortation or admonition should be to discipline, that is, to teach. Every song we sing should teach and admonish. All private meditation on the word of God should discipline us.

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The question is, "Am I responding to the discipline (teaching, training) available to me? Am I learning (as a disciple) what God wants of me and developing by means of public and private instruction? Am I submitting myself to the rules that Christ wants me to walk by? Am I correcting the flaws in my life as I learn about them? Do I respond positively when reproved?" Discipline is treatment

suited to be a disciple or learner. God has supplied through Christ the instructors for the equipping (perfecting) of the saints that we might grow up or mature to the stature and fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). Am I a disciple?

Of course there is the distasteful task of negative discipline. Paul told the saints at Corinth "to deliver such a one (fornicator) to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:5). The purpose was to teach the immoral man how he might be saved. Alexander was "delivered unto Satan that he might learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20). Too often such action is administered long after the subject has hardened himself and has left the Lord and the local church. Then such action does little more good than to salve the conscience of brethren, and the subject could care less.

Withdrawing from the ungodly also does good for the church. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). That which will have an adverse effect on the church is to be purged out. So often in "withdrawing" the offender has long been gone and the "discipline" is not discipline at all. The offender is "taught" too late.

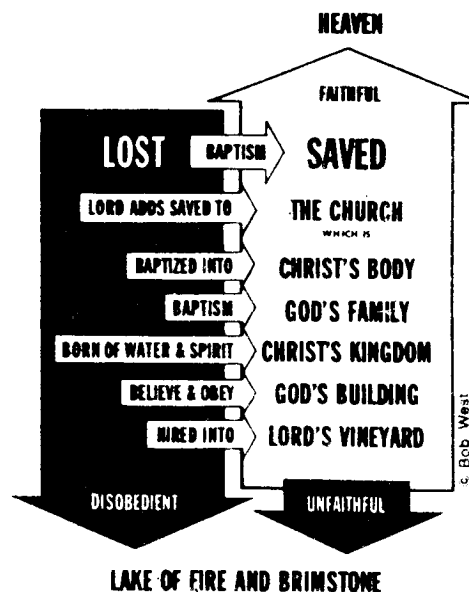
What should be done with those who leave us? First, quick action should be taken. Don't wait until next year to do what needs to be done NOW for the welfare of the digressor. We need local programs where the welfare of every saint is seen to so that one is not "gone" before we know about it. Next year the hardening process may have so set in that no instructing can be done, positively or negatively. It is a shame that so many leave the local church (and the Lord) and never a word is said to them or about them.

When all is done that can be done to renew their love for the Lord then some word should be given to the church about them. The condition of every saint ought to be the concern of every other saint. The whole congregation should know why they left, what their spiritual state is, how to treat them and how to instruct (discipline) them if they have opportunity. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;

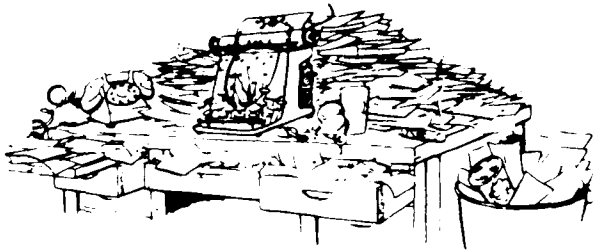
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considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

The one not responding to discipline should be marked as one that is not worthy of having company with, that he may be ashamed. The welfare of the disobedient and the purity of the church are both at stake. Withdraw from those whose bad influence is "leaven" to the church.



EDITOR'S DESK



THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

"...It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". -- I Cor. 1:21.

Should **TOU KERUGMATOS** ("of preaching") have the import of "preaching" (the act) or "the thing preached"? I am willing to leave that discussion up to those who know more about the Greek than I. I have an idea that an element of both concepts can be found in the phrase. The apostolic **message** and the apostolic **manner** of preaching are both foolishness to much of the world. In chapter 2:1, Paul reminds the Corinthians of **how** he preached and **what** he preached to them.

When Jesus sent the twelve to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel, He told them, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought **how** or **what** ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." (Matt. 10:19). We would do well to study and imitate their teaching in both **what** we **teach** and **how** we teach it. They are the real experts as to tact and tactics, as well as to the contents of preaching.

Many called Christians, even preachers, have lost faith in the apostolic message. It is foolishness to them. The events, commands and promises of the gospel have no appeal to them. The ideas of a virgin birth, an atonement for sin by His blood, and a raised savior from the dead are all ancient superstitions to these world-wise modernists. That "baptism doth now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21), is a joke to most protestants. An eternal existence in either heaven or hell depending on earthly conduct is foolishness to many in the pulpits of the world. If they cannot, by their own reasonings, validate these things then they just cannot be true to them. But, God fixed it so that man could not discover Him or His will by human wisdom, so that Diety might be glorified rather than man. (Read I Cor. 1:21-31).

Others, whose faith in the divine message is unshaken, seem to have lost faith in the effectiveness of the apostolic manner or tactics. The Corinthians were in danger of being unduly influenced by Greek philosophers as to **what** to preach.

We may be in danger of being unduly influenced by the commercial and social institutions of our age as to **how** to preach or teach. The teacher becomes a salesman, a recruiter or an advertising specialist. The sinner becomes a prospective buyer or recruit. Baptism becomes a closed deal.

The effective salesman, recruiter or ad man has learned from his training and experience that he can have more "closes" by accentuating the positive and minimizing the negative, if not completely eliminating it. Companies want men who, not only tell the story of their products or services, but who can skillfully manipulate (not necessarily in

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an unethical sense) the prospect into signing up. That's good business. I have taken sales training in the past, done some selling, and have admiration for the skill of a good salesman or recruiter. I also have a great deal of admiration for the reasoning power of great philosophers and intellectuals of this world, but their work is not suitable for the simple gospel of Christ.

It has been my conviction for a long time that a great deal of the "personal work" training among brethren has been geared to **canned sales pitches** cunningly devised to produce a commitment at the earliest possible moment. Much of our efforts in the community is patterned

after secular advertising. It's design is to get attention (even if it means catch phrases and showmanship stunts), show all the advantages and pleasant features of "our church" **WHILE SAYING AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE** (just enough to keep our consciences from being too bothersome) about what all of this is going to cost. All of this borders on using **cunningly devised methods** just as surely as some have used "**cunningly devised fables**" rather than the gospel story.

Paul said that his preaching was not "with excellence of speech" nor with "persuasive words of human wisdom" and shows that he made a deliberate effort to keep it from being. (1 Cor. 2:1-4) He ridiculed the idea of his being crafty or using guile (2 Cor. 12:16). He makes a point of denying any craftiness (cunningness) or deceit ("to lure, as by a bait; 'to ensnare'--Vine) in the handling of the truth (2 Cor. 4:2). His handling of was "by manifestation" (PHANEROSIS: "open to sight", "visible", "lay bare", "open", "outward".) He denied the use of guile and flattering words (1 Thess. 2:2,5). He was content to leave "smooth talk and flattery" (Rom. 16:18 NIV) to those who serve not our Lord.

Jesus was careful to lay the whole picture --advantages and disadvantages --before the minds of those who wanted to be his disciples. He wanted them to know the blessing of following him, but that discipleship was not without great cost. (Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33). His openness, frankness and lack of pressure tactics deterred some from becoming His disciples who might have otherwise done so -- at least for a time. (Cf. Matt. 19:22). His Cause did not depend of "selling a pig in the poke" --nor was such a tactic compatible with his perfect nature.

One who teaches the gospel to others needs to take heed how he builds (1 Cor. 3:10). He needs to be careful as to the kind of materials (souls) he tries to place into the building (church). He is interested, not only in quantity, but quality. His efforts are directed to producing enduring materials (gold, silver and precious stones), rather than that which will perish after a little while (wood, hay and stubble). The teacher can be saved in spite of the perishable nature of some of his works (converts) -- but he will suffer loss none the less. (1 Cor. 3:14-15).

"Making disciples" in the great commission of Jesus involves two things: (1) baptizing them, and (2) teaching them to observe all things commanded of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20). I am afraid that our evangelism has emphasized baptizing folks, but has fallen far short of impressing upon them that they must obey **all things** commanded of Jesus after their baptism. When they are made disciples they may not yet know very many of the things that Jesus has commanded beyond baptism -- but, they should know that **whatever** they find out that the Lord has commanded that they are committed to obeying it. They are babes. They must grow. But, from the very beginning they have to be taught that they will be expected by the Lord to obey every command of God. I am afraid that all too often we leave the impression

that baptism completes obedience and that if the one we are trying to baptize will just submit to that act then all of his problems will be solved and his ticket will be punched right into heaven. No wonder churches are filled with half-baked, half-converted, whinning and complaining people to gripe and balk at every duty pointed out to them from the Bible.

Now, let me "make myself perfectly clear". I am not suggesting that the Bible teaches that when one comes to be baptized that we should subject him to some sort of testing procedure to determine the sincerity of his desire nor the depth of his commitment. Nor should we assign him to a period of indoctrination to insure that he knows all the "right answers" before we baptize him. I understand that in some quarters that this is virtually what is done under the guise of securing a "total commitment".

We are always hearing of apparent successes of some churches and preachers in producing unusual amounts of "visible results". We hear reports that some churches have developed programs of work and worship that seem to be very effective in bringing folks in. If the results is the kind that the Lord wants we rejoice. We can learn from them. But, I am awfully afraid that we may all too often measure these results, successes and effectiveness by the standards we use to measure secular and worldly organizations.

Conventional wisdom says, "Look at the results", "Don't argue with success", or "if it works don't knock it". Most of us, who consider ourselves conservative, reject such wisdom when it comes to the innovations of the recent past into work and worship. Yet, I fear that we may not be as careful with our methods and tactics in trying to build up the church in numbers.

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individually and collectively, openly and frankly teach all things commanded of God, encourage each Christian to know what the Bible says, go out into his daily walk of life teaching openly, frankly and without concealment. Let gospel preachers completely reveal their designs and intents in speaking the gospel. Let them take care not to present a one-sided picture of the gospel in order to chalk up another response, nor try to increase their prospect's likelihood of acceptance by carefully maneuvering his mind away from considering the costs of discipleship. He should fully understand that Christ offers both a **cross** and a **crown**.

Another sales tactic that we see quite often is that of wearing down the sales resistance of the prospect by persistent pressure to act. This works in the business world. Why not? Maybe you might catch him at a weak moment and he will buy. He may even buy to get rid of you, to get you off his back. Or, he might become so impressed with your persistence and perseverance and buy more out of regard for **you** than for the product you are selling. Again, this may be good business. But, should this be a tactic used to convert people to Christ with the

gospel? I can find no such persistent pressure applied by New Testament preachers. Yet, I think I have seen people "baptized", or "restored", or respond in some other way just to get the preacher or someone else off their back. Or because they had developed such a high regard and respect for the worker that they responded more out of regard for the worker than to the message of the Christ that the worker was bringing. Let us magnify Christ to others and not ourselves. Let us offer men and women the opportunity to hear the gospel and be saved. Let us let them know that we want them to be saved above all else in the world. But, let's not think that we are either doing them, ourselves or our Lord any good by persistent pressure to act. If they cannot be moved to act from conviction produced by learning that Christ is Lord and that he wants them to obey him so that they can be saved -- all the moving of them by pressure tactics and power-packed emotional appeals will not move them in the direction that God wants them moved.

Our tactics and manner need not be cold, harsh, rude nor crude. In fact, we should be the very opposite of that. But, we should openly, frankly, kindly and lovingly present the truth to any who will listen. Discuss it with any who will discuss it -- without resorting to craftiness, subtlety or guile. We have nothing to hide, at least, we should not have -- nor should we seek to conceal any feature that might be objectionable. We should seek to change the wills of people through teaching that produces real convictions and not just to get some responses by undue pressure.

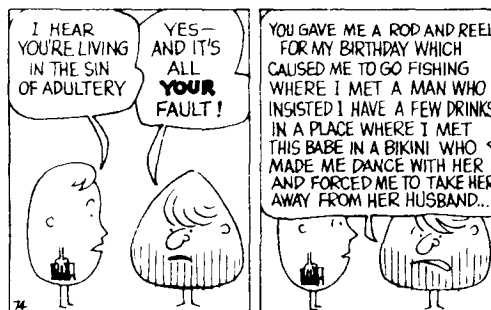
When will we learn that measuring success in the kingdom of God is not by the same rule as measuring success in the institutions of men? Indeed, the preaching of the Cross is foolishness to the world, both in its **matter** and its **manner**.

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Are we really qualified to measure the real results and success that God wants, any more than we are qualified to determine what God's will is as the things we are to do? Do we not need to look to God's word for instructions as to tactics as well as the contents of our message? Why not preach the gospel that the apostles preached as the apostles preached it and leave the increase (results) to God?

It may be foolishness to the worldly-wise business man, to the quota-oriented salesman, or the results-minded recruiter --but there is no substitute for declaring the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing that is profitable (even if it is a bit unpleasant), warning every man night and day -- both publicly and from house to house. (Read Acts 20: 17-33) Let us,

THEOPHILUS



Planting And Watering

By Robert C. Welch

Which is the more important, planting the seed or cultivating the crop? Which is more important, converting a person or teaching him to live soberly, righteously and godly after his conversion? Maybe those are the wrong questions. Who is more important, the teacher who teaches the gospel that people become Christians or the teacher who teaches Christians how to live? There is no such thing as one being more important than the other. Such thinking is based on rivalry, envy, jealousy, or other fleshly impulses. It is God who gave the word, and saves the person who obeys, and blesses with every spiritual blessing those who come to him. This is the theme of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians who had begun to follow men (I Cor. 1:12). He puts men in the proper relationship with one another and with God in the following:

"I planted, Apollos watered; But God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."
[I Cor. 3:6-8]

It takes both planting and watering to produce a crop. The purpose is the same for both the planter and the waterer, produce a harvest. It takes the preaching of the first principles and the preaching of the duties, obligations and opportunities of Christians to bring the person to eternal life. Thus the first principle preacher and the one who edifies the church have the same purpose. They are one, as was taught by Paul in the above passage.

That does not mean that God will take their combined efforts into consideration in the judgment. Each man will be judged according to his own labor; how heartily, how trustworthy, how true to the Lord's will (2 Cor. 5:10). This judgment will not be based on how effective or how productive was his labor. God gives the increase, not man. And, "it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not." (2 Cor. 8:12).

"Let not the man who preaches in gospel meetings and the man who daily speaks to the congregation begin to think, each of himself, as more important than the other. And let not the congregation be led into thinking that one is more important than the other. It will destroy the church."

There is a grievous tendency for men to think of one kind of preaching as more important than another. But if it is God's word there is no such thing as one being more important than the other. Along with this there is the tendency to think of the proclaimer of some parts of the word as worthy of greater esteem than others. This is divisive in its very nature. They think of the man as an evangelist who goes from place to place preaching the first principles. But the man who stays to water, cultivate and edify is thought of as nothing more than a hireling. It is as divisive and sectarian as were the saints at Corinth. On the other hand the denominations have elevated their "pastors" to the position of priest for them, and have relegated the man who comes for "revivals" as secondary. This, too, is putting one man above another. The Lord's teaching is that they are one, and that it is God who is to be given supreme position. Let not the man who preaches in gospel meetings and the man who daily speaks to the congregation begin to think, each of himself, as more important than the other. And let not the congregation be led into thinking that one is more important than the other. It will destroy the church.

There is too much tendency for men to think more highly of themselves than they ought (Rom. 12:3). One man thinks that if it were not for his watchful warning the church would have died or drowned in apostasy. Another thinks that he is the perfect example meeting preaching or sermon making. Another thinks that he exercises flawless oversight as an elder of the flock. Another thinks that he is the perfect father, or the woman that she is the perfect mother. All of us need to get down to the serious business of serving the Lord with all humility, recognizing that without the Lord we are nothing and can do nothing. We need to have the disposition expressed by the Lord: "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." (Luke 17:10).

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