

Spiritual Accountability and Restoration



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INTRODUCTION

The general property of any magnet is that it has a positive and a negative pole. The magnetic lines of force between these two poles are what give the magnet its power.

Similarly, the Church is also positive and negative. It is positive toward holiness and negative toward sin. These two aspects give the Church its uniqueness and power. Take either away and its power is eliminated.

One of the negative ministries of the Church is the disciplining of wayward Christians who refuse to repent of their sin. It begins by privately encouraging them to turn from the sin and ends, if required, with a breaking of Christian fellowship. This last step is necessary only when they are determined not to repent.

Admittedly, church discipline is an unpleasant task that most of us would prefer to avoid. The Church, however, cannot maintain its positive power and ministry in the world without obeying the Word of God in every aspect - including the important ministry of church discipline.

As you read this booklet, we ask that you keep in mind the following two passages from the Bible. We have found them to be helpful in disciplining our hearts and minds to understand the will of God regarding the ministry of church discipline.

- **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts neither are you ways My ways,” declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your**

**ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
(Isaiah 55:8-9)**

- **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.” (Proverbs 3:5-7)**

CHAPTER ONE

THE PURPOSES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The Bible teaches three purposes for church discipline, giving each one equal emphasis. None should be over-emphasized at the expense of the others. They are all individually and equally important.

1. Restoring the individual to fellowship with God

One important purpose of church discipline is the winning of a wayward Christian back into fellowship with God. This is stated clearly in a number of passages in the New Testament:

- **“Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)**
- **“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and he will cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20)**
- **“And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” (Matthew 18:15)**

Unfortunately, misunderstandings have occurred regarding this key purpose of church discipline. As far back as the second century, Tertullian taught that the

church should not receive back an individual who needed to repent after a second offense. In his book, Penitence, he unwisely wrote that just one post-baptismal repentance was acceptable.

Among the Tontonac Indians of central Mexico, a different excess occurs. The elders of this Indian church have decided that if a serious sin is committed by a Christian, he has to remain outside the fellowship of the church for six months. Afterwards he can return - repentant or not. Also, if he should repent before his probation has ended, he still must remain outside the church until his six months are completed.

The problem with both of these views is that they perceive church discipline as punitive. The biblical goal of church discipline is not punishment but the restoration of the individual to fellowship with God. If he needs to be restored more than once, the church should encourage and co-operate with him as many times as needed. If he should repent shortly after being disciplined, he should be received back by the church with open arms immediately.

2. Protecting the church from the contamination of sin

A second purpose of church discipline is to protect the congregation from the eroding influence of sin. An unrepentant sinner operates like a cancer among the people of God. If he is left to remain in the church fellowship, his negative influence will certainly spread to others. Because of this threat, he must be removed until he has repented of his sin.

The Apostle Paul, while addressing the issue of church discipline to the Corinthian church, gave this illustration: “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened” (I Corinthians 5:6-7).

Paul also said, “But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene” (II Timothy 2:16-17). Again in I Corinthians 15:33 he wrote, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’”

Besides these verses from the writings of the Apostle Paul, the Book of Proverbs repeatedly teaches this truth:

- **“The righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Proverbs 12:26).**
- **“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Proverbs 13:20).**
- **“Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge” (Proverbs 14:7).**
- **“Do not associate with a man given to anger; or with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself” (Proverbs 22:24-25).**
- **“For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down. Like charcoal to hot embers**

and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife” (Proverbs 26:20-21).

Modern day illustrations of how unrepented sin can spread through a church body are not uncommon. In one church youth group, one of the teens sold illicit drugs. With time, a number of teens in the group were using drugs supplied by this one teen. The whole affair became a scandal in the community and a shock to the parents when the police raided one of the youth activities sponsored by the church and arrested several of the teens.

In another church, a number of teens organized private beer drinking parties. Rather than calling these teens to account and insisting on either repentance or expulsion from the church fellowship, the church leadership “looked the other way.” Years later, only two people from that church youth group were still walking with the Lord.

In a third church, two young women became pregnant out of wedlock. Rather than confess their sin, they continued in the church fellowship as if nothing improper had occurred. The church leadership permitted them to remain within the church and even used their musical talents in singing before the congregation during the worship services. With the example of these young women, the climate of holiness in that church drastically dropped. People’s commitment to the Lord was noticeably less as sin was not taken seriously.

The Word of God recognizes that nobody is perfect - in our weakness we are all subject to sin and failure. Church discipline is not intended for those who are not perfect but for those who are not repentant. Since

unrepented sin contaminates the fellowship of believers, it is essential for the welfare of the entire church family

3. Preventing God's name from being blasphemed

A third purpose of church discipline is to prevent the name of God from being blasphemed by those who are outside the church. This blasphemy comes out in various forms. Many of us have heard expressions such as:

- **“Christians are nothing but hypocrites!”**
- **“The gospel isn't true. Christians live no better than anyone else”!**
- **“If the Christian God is so weak as to permit that kind of sin in the church, I want no part of it!”**

The Apostle Paul expressed this truth in Romans 2:21-24. “You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the Law, through your breaking of the Law, do you dishonor God? For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’”

The only way God's name can be preserved in holiness is for God's people to live in holiness. Church discipline is necessary because it is a declaration to the world that we believe in holiness and we will deal with sin in our midst.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROCEDURE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The procedure of church discipline is spelled out clearly in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. His statements in Matthew 18:15-20 point out our obligations step by step.

“And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 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. And if he refuses to listen to the, 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-gatherer. Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heave. again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may as, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.”

First Step: Determine if a sin has been committed

The procedure of church discipline is only conducted when a Christian has become willfully involved in a sinful behavior. Differences of opinion, culture, or political thought are never grounds for discipline. Only specific behavior which is directly contrary to the written moral will of God should be dealt with.

The Bible lists a number of sins that are grounds for discipline:

- **immorality** (I Corinthians 5:11)
- **covetousness** (I Corinthians 5:11)
- **idolatry** (I Corinthians 5:11)
- **abusive speaking** (I Corinthians 5:11)
- **drunkenness** (I Corinthians 5:11)
- **dishonesty** (I Corinthians 5:11)
- **gossip** (II Timothy 2:16-17)
- **stirring of dissension** (Romans 16:17)
- **false teaching** (II John 10)
- **refusal to seek gainful employment** (II Thessalonians 3:11-15)

In short, the Bible indicates that any sin that is willfully continued is grounds for church discipline.

Second Step: Go to the individual privately.

Matthew 18:15 says, “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

The word “go” in this verse is a command. The Word of God gives you no alternative. You must go. Your manner of going, though, is always to be gentle - not with an overbearing holier-than-thou attitude (see Galatians 6:1). As you talk, you should be open to the

other person's point-of-view and to his explanation, giving him every benefit of the doubt. Often, what is initially perceived to be a sin is nothing more than a misunderstanding.

If after talking with him you determine that a sin has been committed, with sensitivity and gentleness you must encourage him to turn away from his sin. Keep in mind that your goal is not to punish him, but to restore him to fellowship with a holy and loving God.

Third Step: Go to the individual plurally.

If he refuses to turn from his sin, you must return, bringing one or two witnesses with you. Matthew 18:16 says, "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."

Again, this is a command. You are instructed to bring one or two additional people with you to discuss the problem with the individual. These witnesses should clearly understand the purpose of their visit.

The first purpose is to determine what the facts are. They need to find out what was said and what was done. The word "confirmed" in this verse comes from a Greek word meaning "able to stand up straight." Only the truth can stand up straight.

The second purpose is to encourage the person (or people) who has sinned to repent (see Galatians 6:1). As they are encouraging repentance, they must take care not to treat him with contempt. Every opportunity must be used to show that the offense was only a temporary

fall into sin and that his walk with God can be fully restored.

Fourth Step: Notify the congregation of the sin.

If the individual is still unrepentant, his sin and his unrepentant attitude should be told to the church congregation. Matthew 18:17a says, “And if he refuses to listen to them [the witnesses], tell it to the church. . .”

The purpose in notifying the church is twofold. First, the congregation needs to be informed so that much prayer can be offered to God on behalf of this unrepentant Christian. This corporate prayer can assist in opening his heart to the Holy Spirit’s convicting power. “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:16b).

Second, as the congregation is publicly notified of his sin, he will be humbled. In addition to the corporate prayer, this humbling experience will also assist him in yielding himself to God. James 4:6 says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Fifth Step: Break all Christian fellowship with the individual.

If after a period of corporate prayer the person is still unrepentant, Christian fellowship must be broken. Difficult as it may be, this severance should continue until he publicly repents. Matthew 18:17b teaches, “. . . and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.”

By describing this individual as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer, Jesus was saying two things. First, He was

saying that this individual should be considered as an unsaved person. The word “gentile” was a term that referred to an unsaved person (see I Thessalonians 4:5). Second, He was saying that this individual should be considered as an exceptionally wicked person. The word “tax-gatherer” was a term which in that culture referred to a very evil person, a traitor to God and to God’s people (see Matthew 21:31).

The Bible teaches the importance of breaking fellowship with this individual in several passages of Scripture. First Corinthians 5:11-13 says, “But I actually wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler- not even to eat with such a one. . . Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.” Second Thessalonians 3:14 teaches, “Take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame.”

The breaking of Christian fellowship has the following implications:

- **He is not to be included in any social activities among the brethren**
- **He is not to partake of the Lord’s Supper**
- **He is not to serve in any spiritual ministry**
- **He is not to be invited to eat among the brethren**

The Christian community should be careful, though, to maintain the following positive responses to the individual:

- **He should not be treated as an enemy, but admonished as a brother** (in other words, he should be treated just as politely as any other person - see II Thessalonians 3:15)
- **He should still be cared for by his natural family.** (Scripture is silent of this point, but it seems to be suggested in I Timothy 5:8)

These five steps of church discipline are only to be used when a **believer** sins and refuses to repent. Church discipline is a family matter. Only those who belong to the family of God are to be disciplined in this fashion.

The Apostle Paul was careful to explain this in I Corinthians 5:9-12. "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?"

CHAPTER THREE

WHEN PUBLIC CONFESSION OF SIN IS NECESSARY

Our behavior as Christians greatly affects our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as the unsaved. If we sin, and others know of it, a number of negative results can occur. We can cause others to stumble in their Christian walk (I Corinthians 8:9-13). We can cause others to be tempted to sin with the result of sin spreading in the church (I Corinthians 5:6). We can cause others to be wounded in their consciences (I Corinthians 10:32). We can cause them to be troubled in their hearts (I Corinthians 12:25-26). When our sin is known in the community, we can cause the unsaved to respond by blaspheming the name of God (Romans 2:21-24).

A public confession of sin is required when one of the two following conditions exist:

1. If the sin is publicly known

Because of its impact on others, we should confess our sin as publicly as it is publicly known. Whenever a sin is known by another, the heart is wounded. Unholiness always has this effect on those around us. Because we have wronged God and His people, we need to confess our sin to those who know of it. Jesus taught this in Matthew 5:23-24. “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

If a person outside of the church knows of the sin, the sin must be confessed to him. This is to prevent him from assuming that our unholiness is acceptable Christian behavior. A failure to confess the sin will cause people outside the church to blaspheme the name of God and reject spiritual things (see Romans 2:21-24).

If people inside of the church know of the sin, our sin must be confessed to them also. These people know that unrepented sin can spread inside the church like leaven (see I Corinthians 5:6). They need to be reassured that we have repented and to hear us share a heart-felt confession. If the sin is widely known in the congregation, we should confess our sin before the whole body.¹

If such a confession is not given, a natural barrier will be established. They will have a tendency to avoid us in order to prevent the effects of our unrepented sin from penetrating them or their families. Also, their souls will be grieved and they will find it difficult to communicate freely with us.

A failure to confess our sin publicly will also have an adverse affect on our own spiritual growth. God will not look favorably on our acts of worship; in fact, He would prefer that we did not offer any worship to Him at all until we have obeyed Him. Jesus said this in Matthew 5:25, “Leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way. . .” The prophet Samuel also spoke this important truth in I Samuel 15:22, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. . .”

1 Some cases may arise where it could be acceptable for the person to repent before a representative group from the congregation (such as the Elder Board) and for that group to present a report of the repentance to the congregation.

Until we make reconciliation with the people who know of the sin, our whole Christian walk will be seriously stunted. We will find ourselves lacking in power, leaving ourselves open to temptation and further sin.

What we need to do is to humble ourselves and genuinely repent. We need to become more concerned for the name of God and the welfare of other people than our own reputation. We need to possess that disposition of spirit when we are willing to go to whatever lengths necessary to right our wrong.

2. If a person has been disciplined by the church

If the congregation has been notified that church discipline has been implemented against an individual, it is not satisfactory for him to confess his sin only to God and expect his fellowship with the brethren to be restored. He needs to also confess his sin before the congregation. A failure to confess his sin publicly will cause the congregation to question his spiritual condition and wonder if perhaps church discipline is still warranted.

Once he has humbly confessed his sin before God and the congregation, he should immediately be welcomed back into full fellowship. Thus, the purpose of church discipline has been accomplished - the wayward Christian has been restored to fellowship with God and His people.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS

As a congregation undertakes church discipline, questions and objections invariably arise from the members of the congregation and from the community at large. What are some of these questions and objections? How are we to respond? What does the Word of God have to say?

1. “It’s none of our business. What he does is between himself and the Lord.”

The truth of the matter is that it is our business. When a Christian sins, the church should become involved because sin hurts the whole body. Also, to not become involved would be in direct disobedience to the Word of God.

The Corinthian Church failed to discipline a member who was involved in a sexual sin and refused to repent. They believed that by not acting, they were demonstrating the mercy and grace of God. Then they compounded the problem by boasting about their great patience.

The Apostle Paul was not pleased, though. He responded to them saying, “And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst. . . Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?” (I Corinthians 5:2,6).

In chapter six of this same epistle, Paul underscores the responsibility of the church to make judgments among the saints (see I Corinthians 6:1-5). He clearly understood the necessity of the church's involvement in the resolution of sin within the body.

2. “We don’t want to offend her and drive her off. She might become embittered and then how can we help her?”

Church discipline is not intended to be punitive, but is intended to help. It will help her face the seriousness of her sin. It will help her recognize that her fellowship with God is broken, as well as her fellowship with the saints.

Before the final step of church discipline is undertaken, considerable efforts have been made to help her face her sin and repent. Once her heart becomes hardened and she is determined to continue in her sin, the only way the church can continue to help her is to obey God by applying church discipline (see I Corinthians 5:5).

3. “He’s my friend and I know that he’ll come around if we just don’t push.”

Why hasn’t he obeyed God up to this point? Who will he hurt in the mean time? Is this really the way God says is the best way to help him?

This kind of patience is not good. The Apostle Paul made this point very clear when he said, “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?” (I Corinthians 5:6).

4. “But she just can’t help herself.”

This objection is raised when, for example, a woman is in love with a married man. “She just can’t help herself,” they say. “Love is a very powerful emotion.”

It is still sin. The Word of God never gives us a free license to sin if we find that we cannot control our emotions. We are to obey God regardless of how we feel about it. As we obey God, our emotions will eventually calm down and become settled again.

We must call her to accountability before God and not allow her to abandon herself to her emotions. God promises to provide the power for victory over sin to those who turn to Him (I Corinthians 10:13 and Galations 5:16).

5. “But it is not loving.”

A loving God does discipline! True love is always willing to confront and to discipline. The Scriptures bear this out many times.

The writer to the Hebrews says, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons: for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. . . He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness” (Hebrews 12:5-8, 10).

“This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13).

“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently” (Proverbs 13:24).

From Genesis to Revelation we find God disciplining His children. Obvious illustrations from the Bible are Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), the children of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 14), David (II Samuel 12), the captivity of Israel (II Kings 17), and the captivity of Judah (II Kings 24 and 25).

If we are to love as God loves, we will also obediently discipline as He disciplines. Our loving God directs us to be His agents in this matter.

6. “Aren’t we supposed to be a spiritual hospital?”

Yes, but we can only help those who want to be healed and will submit to treatment. They must submit to God, the Spiritual Surgeon, before they can be helped. It is our job to encourage them to seek treatment.

7. “Doesn’t this make the church the only army that shoots its wounded?”

We don’t shoot the wounded. We are seeking to lovingly save them from spiritual suicide. God says that church discipline is the best way to do it. It is not the wounded but the rebellious that church discipline is dealing with.

8. “But I’m his friend. I’m not going to turn my back on him.”

If expulsion is necessary, God says that all fellowship is to be broken (I Corinthians 5:11-13). By maintaining fellowship with him, you are tacitly encouraging his rebellious behavior. You will be interpreted as giving a non-verbal consent to his lifestyle. Also, your fellowship could actually prolong his rebellion - delaying his repentance and return to the Lord and causing him to suffer additional hardships. Do you wish that upon your friend?

True love confronts. Withholding your fellowship from him could be one of the most loving things you can do. It will help him face his sin and come to terms with his rebellion.

By maintaining fellowship with him, you are also sinning yourself by disobeying God (II Thessalonians 3:14-15). You will find that a tendency will exist for you to excuse sin and lower your own standards of holiness. God will respond to you with direct judgment.

An additional hardship you will face is deception. Because he is in open rebellion, it is not beyond him to lie even to his friends. One sin begets another. He will try to engender sympathy from you by slanting the truth or outright lying (see Proverbs 12:15). He will do this because he is desperate to gain support and to justify his actions. Sin, however, is never justifiable. A refusal to repent is never condoned by God.

9. “I know of a situation in the past where the church seemingly did nothing. It doesn’t seem right for us to pick on this person.”

Before you compare one situation with another, you need to be careful that you have all the facts. Are you

sure the situations are the same? Are you sure that the church did nothing?

It is unfortunate that not all churches are totally consistent when it comes to church discipline. Inconsistencies are regrettable, but just because a church has been inconsistent in the past, is it right to continue in the inconsistency? If you make mistakes with your first child, do you then have to ignore the same sins in your other children?

10. “Coming before a person or a group of people and confessing sin can be a very humbling experience. Why can we not accept less?”

A public confession to those who are aware of the sin is necessary. If we fail to insist that he confess his sin to those who are aware of it, we will commit a number of serious disservices.

First, we will commit a serious disservice to the person who has sinned. If he fails to humble himself and confess to those who know of the sin, he reveals that a spirit of pride has taken root in his heart. This spirit of pride will not only damage his future efforts at developing a spiritual walk with God, but it will also cause his personal repentance before God to be suspect. A failure of the church to hold him to account will just encourage his carnal lifestyle.

We will also fail him by not holding him accountable to the Body of Christ. This absence of accountability will damage his walk by fostering an independent and unsubmitive spirit.

In addition, we will fail him by leaving him the impression that God will accept his future acts of

worship. The truth of the matter is that God will not accept his worship and that his spiritual development will consequently become stunted. The reason why God will reject his worship is that the public knowledge of his sin has had a wounding affect on others. God insists that he be reconciled to these people before He will accept his gifts of worship (see Matthew 5:23-24 and I Corinthians 8:11-12).

Second, we will commit a serious disservice to the congregation. If he does not repent publicly, people will not know if the sin has been dealt with. Assumptions will begin to develop within the congregation that a believer can commit whatever sin he wishes, not repent, and yet still fellowship and maintain a spiritual ministry in the church. The entire moral climate in the church will drastically drop if this is assumed within the congregation. Also, other believers will be tempted to follow his example of sin (see I Corinthians 5:6).

Third, we will commit a serious disservice to the name of God. Those people outside of the church who know of the sin will blaspheme God and the church if no knowledge of the repentance is known. They will comment negatively on what they perceive as hypocrisy.

When a sin is publicly known, we cannot accept anything less than a public confession. If we accept less, we will fail the person who has sinned, the congregation, and the name of God.

11. “What authority do we have to pass judgment?”

God has granted the church the authority to make judgments when it comes to sin within the church. A very strong statement of the authority God has given the

church in these matters is found in Matthew 18:18.
“Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

A PRAYER

Gracious Lord, the desire of our heart is for the body of Christ, Your Church, to grow in holiness.

As we pray, though, we know that at times we all fail you. We ask for the courage to face our sin honestly and to quickly confess them to You and to whoever else might know of them. We do not wish anyone to think that our unholiness is acceptable Christian behavior. Our sins should not once be named among the saints and we want others to know that.

We also pray on behalf of those brothers and sisters in Christ who have fallen into sin and possess no desire to repent. You know how our deep desire is to put our arms around them and encourage them in their walk with You. You know how we wish to help them. Yet their unrepentant spirits have placed a wall between them and us. We cannot fellowship with them as we wish. We cannot worship together in unity. Lord, our spirits are heavy.

We ask that Your Spirit would break down their resistant will. We pray that You would bring them to that blessed place of humility. Also, Lord we ask that You would grant us a meek and gentle spirit so that we can be Your agents in encouraging them to repent. Help us remember that we too are prone to wander and are always needful of Your grace.

This we pray so that Your Church would remain unspotted in the world and that Your name would be glorified. In Jesus' name, Amen.