

The Covenantal Life: Being the Church
Week 8 - Dealing With Sin in the Body: Part 1
Matthew 18:15-17

- Covenantal unity within the local church is essential (John 17:23, Eph. 4:3)
 - This requirement can tempt us to deal with sin timidly, or not at all, in the name of “keeping the peace”
 - There can be no peace when sin is not checked (Jas. 1:15) - a church that does not confront sin will eventually decay
 - Peace is a fruit of obedience - we are covenantally obligated to confront sin
- Two components of church discipline
 - Rebuke (exhortation, confrontation) - duty of all members
 - Should be an ordinary, fairly routine part of life (both giving and receiving)
 - Prov. 27:5-6 - genuine love means we will confront sin when necessary; true humility means graciously receiving correction
 - Formal discipline (suspension from sacraments, excommunication) - under the elders
 - Only after accusations have been established by multiple witnesses and multiple attempts have been made to get the sinner to repent
 - Vast majority of discipline should never reach this stage
- What sins must we confront?
 - Scripture doesn't list “serious” sins that require confrontation and “mild” sins which don't - sins that we perceive as big or small are worthy of being confronted
 - Balanced with our obligation to “bear with one another in love” and cover a multitude of sins with love (Eph. 4:2, 1 Pet. 4:8)
 - Must avoid exasperating each other with constant confrontation and lack of patience
 - Confrontations are with a “brother” - a professing Christian
 - Not for us to base confrontation on our opinion of the state of a person's heart
 - We should confront “any action forbidden in Scripture that cannot be overlooked” (*Life in the Father's House*, 137)
 - Only may confront actual sins as defined by Scripture; not:
 - Behavior that violates tradition or preferences
 - Attitudes we think we perceive but not borne out in sinful actions
 - Uninspired application of biblical principles
 - Just because something is actually sinful doesn't necessarily mean it must be confronted (Prov. 19:11); what “cannot be overlooked?”
 - Sin that creates an unreconciled relationship (Matt. 5:23-24)

- If you're not confident the brother is regularly confessing sin, making himself accountable, and growing in sanctification (2 Pet. 1:5-10, Jas 5:16, 19-20)
 - If the sin will clearly have harmful consequences to others
 - Consider - if discipline needs to be brought to the next step (bringing in other witnesses), would multiple sober-minded, mature Christians agree with your assessment of the sin and its scope?
- How are we to confront?
 - Quickly (Matt. 5:25) - as soon as you have settled it must be done, waste no time
 - Privately (Matt. 18:15) - do not spread the news, do not confront in a public setting
 - With humility and self-examination (Matt. 7:3-5, Gal. 6:1)
 - Examine your behavior - are you guilty of the same sin?
 - If you're caught in the same kind of sin, you may not be qualified to confront
 - Examine your motives - is it personal? Would you confront the same sin in another?
 - Recognize your own propensity to sin - resist any temptation to pride and self-righteousness
 - Out of love, with grace and gentleness
 - The aim is repentance and reconciliation, not scolding or trying to make someone feel guilty - only the Spirit can bring conviction
 - If they acknowledge the sin and repent, drop it and don't bring it up again
 - Have the kind of mercy and charity you would want others to show you when you need to be confronted