



PATHWAYS TO RECONCILIATION

Procedure to Settle Personal
Grievances and Un-Christian Conduct of
Church Members



Prepared by the Bylaws Committee of the
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The following is from “Testimonies”, vol. 7, pp. 260-264, entitled “Church Discipline” and “Desire of Ages”, p. 440, 441. Where other counsels are given, the reference is noted.

Introduction

Testimonies, Vol 7:

In dealing with erring church members, God’s people are carefully to follow the instruction given by the Saviour in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew.

Human beings are Christ’s property, purchased by Him at an infinite price, bound to Him by the love that He and His Father have manifested for them. How careful, then, we should be in our dealing with one another! Men have no right to surmise evil in regard to their fellow men. Church members have no right to follow their own impulses and inclinations in dealing with fellow members who have erred. They should not even express their prejudices regarding the erring, for thus they place in other minds the leaven of evil. Reports unfavorable to a brother or sister in the church are communicated from one to another of the church members. Mistakes are made and injustice is done because of an unwillingness on the part of someone to follow the directions given by the Lord Jesus.

Desire of Ages:

If one of these little ones shall be overcome, and commit a wrong against you, then it is your work to seek his restoration. Do not wait for him to make the first effort for reconciliation. “How think ye?” said Jesus; “if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” {DA 440.2}

Personal Approach

Testimonies, Vol 7:

“If thy brother shall trespass against thee,” Christ declared, “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” Matthew 18:15. Do not tell others of the wrong. One person is told, then another, and still another; and continually the report grows, and the evil increases, till the

whole church is made to suffer. Settle the matter “between thee and him alone.” This is God’s plan. “Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and discover not a secret to another.” Proverbs 25:8, 9. Do not suffer sin upon your brother; but do not expose him, and thus increase the difficulty, making the reproof seem like a revenge. Correct him in the way outlined in the word of God.

Desire of Ages:

In the spirit of meekness, “considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,” (Galatians 6:1), go to the erring one, and “tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” Do not put him to shame by exposing his fault to others, nor bring dishonor upon Christ by making public the sin or error of one who bears His name. Often the truth must be plainly spoken to the erring; he must be led to see his error, that he may reform. But you are not to judge or to condemn. Make no attempt at self-justification. Let all your effort be for his recovery. In treating the wounds of the soul, there is need of the most delicate touch, the finest sensibility. Only the love that flows from the Suffering One of Calvary can avail here. With pitying tenderness, let brother deal with brother, knowing that if you succeed, you will “save a soul from death,” and “hide a multitude of sins.” James 5:20. {DA 440.3}

Testimonies, Vol 7:

Do not suffer resentment to ripen into malice. Do not allow the wound to fester and break out in poisoned words, which taint the minds of those who hear. Do not allow bitter thoughts to continue to fill your mind and his. Go to your brother, and in humility and sincerity talk with him about the matter.

Whatever the character of the offense, this does not change the plan that God has made for the settlement of misunderstandings and personal injuries. Speaking alone and in the spirit of Christ to the one who is in fault will often remove the difficulty. Go to the erring one, with a heart filled with Christ’s love and sympathy, and seek to adjust the matter. Reason with him calmly and quietly. Let no angry words escape your lips. Speak in a way that will appeal to his better judgment. Remember the words: “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” James 5:20.

Take to your brother the remedy that will cure the disease of disaffection. Do your part to help him. For the sake of the peace and unity of the church, feel it a privilege as well as a duty to do this. If he will hear you, you have gained him as a friend.

All heaven is interested in the interview between the one who has been injured and the one who is in error. As the erring one accepts the reproof offered in the love of Christ, and acknowledges his wrong, asking forgiveness from God and from his brother, the sunshine of heaven fills his heart. The controversy is ended; friendship and confidence are restored. The oil of love removes the soreness caused by the wrong. The Spirit of God binds heart to heart, and there is music in heaven over the union brought about.

As those thus united in Christian fellowship offer prayer to God and pledge themselves to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, great blessing comes to them. If they have wronged others they continue the work of repentance, confession, and restitution, fully set to do good to one another. This is the fulfilling of the law of Christ.

Assisted Approach

Desire of Ages:

But even this effort may be unavailing. Then, said Jesus, “take with thee one or two more.” It may be that their united influence will prevail where that of the first was unsuccessful. Not being parties to the trouble, they will be more likely to act impartially, and this fact will give their counsel greater weight with the erring one. {DA 441.1}

Testimonies, Vol 7:

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Matthew 18:16. Take with you those who are spiritually minded, and talk with the one in error in regard to the wrong. He may yield to the united appeals of his brethren. As he sees their agreement in the matter, his mind may be enlightened.

Local Church Approach

Desire of Ages:

If he will not hear them, then, and not till then, the matter is to be brought before the whole body of believers. Let the members of the church, as the representatives of Christ, unite in prayer and loving entreaty that the offender may be restored. The Holy Spirit will speak through His servants, pleading with the wanderer to return to God. Paul the apostle, speaking

by inspiration, says, "As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20. He who rejects this united overture has broken the tie that binds him to Christ, and thus has severed himself from the fellowship of the church. Henceforth, said Jesus, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." But he is not to be regarded as cut off from the mercy of God. Let him not be despised or neglected by his former brethren, but be treated with tenderness and compassion, as one of the lost sheep that Christ is still seeking to bring to His fold. {DA 441.2}

Testimonies, Vol 7:

"And if he shall neglect to hear them," what then shall be done? Shall a few persons in a board meeting take upon themselves the responsibility of disfellowshipping the erring one? "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." Verse 17. Let the church take action in regard to its members.

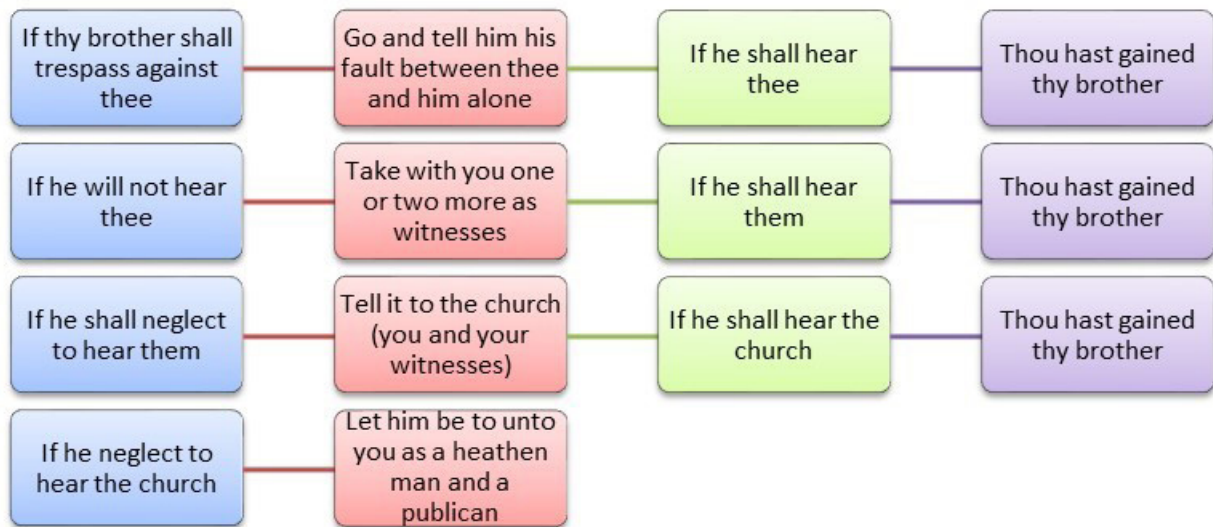
Applying Church Discipline

Testimonies, Vol 7:

"But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Verse 17. If he will not heed the voice of the church, if he refuses all the efforts made to reclaim him, upon the church rests the responsibility of separating him from fellowship. His name should then be stricken from the books.

No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrongdoer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this instruction has been followed, the church has cleared herself before God. The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread. The health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ's righteousness.

If the erring one repents and submits to Christ's discipline, he is to be given another trial. And even if he does not repent, even if he stands outside the church, God's servants still have a work to do for him. They are to seek earnestly to win him to repentance. And, however aggravated may have been his offense, if he yields to the striving of the Holy Spirit and, by confessing and forsaking his sin, gives evidence of repentance, he is to be forgiven and welcomed to the fold again. His brethren are to encourage him in the right way, treating him as they would wish to be treated were they in his place, considering themselves lest they also be tempted.



1. Christ's Procedure for Dealing with Erring Church Members. Graphic courtesy of N. Tyler

Giving and Removing Censure

“Remitting sins or retaining applies to the church in her organized capacity. God has given directions to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. Censure is to be given. This censure is to be removed when the one in error repents and confesses his sin. This solemn commission is given to men who have in them the breath of the Holy Spirit, in whose lives the Christ-life is manifested. They are to be men who have spiritual eyesight, who can discern spiritual things, whose actions in dealing with the members of the church are such as can receive the indorsement of the great Head of the church. If this is not so, in their human judgment they will censure those who should be commended, and sustain those who are controlled by a power from beneath.” {RH, June 13, 1899 par. 10}

“The Roman Catholic Church directs its people to confess the secrets of their lives to the priest, and from him, acting in the place of Christ, to receive absolution from their sins. The Saviour taught that his is the only name given under Heaven whereby men shall be saved. Jesus, however, delegated to his church upon earth, in her organized capacity, the power to censure and to remove censure according to the rules prescribed by inspiration; but these acts were only to be done by men of good repute, who were consecrated by the great Head of the church, and who showed by their lives that they were earnestly seeking to follow the guidance of the Spirit of God.” {3SP 244.3}

General Counsels

Christ's Rules Prevent Unhappy Divisions

“Christ has laid down rules to prevent unhappy divisions, but how many in our churches have followed his directions? [Matthew 18:15-17 quoted.] If the instructions which Christ has given were followed out in the spirit that every true Christian should have--if each, when aggrieved, would go to the offending member, and seek in kindness to correct the wrong by privately telling him of his fault, many a grievous trial would be averted.” {HM, February 1, 1892 par. 11}

Responsibility of Church to Exclude Un-Christlike Conduct from Fellowship

Testimonies, Vol 7:

“Verily I say unto you,” Christ continued, “whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Verse 18.

This statement holds its force in all ages. On the church has been conferred the power to act in Christ's stead. It is God's instrumentality for the preservation of order and discipline among His people. To it the Lord has delegated the power to settle all questions respecting its prosperity, purity, and order. Upon it rests the responsibility of excluding from its fellowship those who are unworthy, who by their un-Christlike conduct would bring dishonor on the truth. Whatever the church does that is in accordance with the directions given in God's word will be ratified in heaven.

Matters of grave import come up for settlement by the church. God's ministers, ordained by Him as guides of His people, after doing their part are to submit the whole matter to the church, that there may be unity in the decision made.

The Lord desires His followers to exercise great care in dealing with one another. They are to lift up, to restore, to heal. But there is to be in the church no neglect of proper discipline. The members are to regard themselves as pupils in a school, learning how to form characters worthy of their high calling. In the church here below, God's children are to be prepared for the great reunion in the church above. Those who here live in harmony with Christ may look forward to an endless life in the family of the redeemed.

God's love for the fallen race is a peculiar manifestation of love--a love born of mercy, for human beings are all undeserving. Mercy implies imperfection of the object toward which it is shown. It is because of sin that mercy was brought into active exercise.

It may be that much work needs to be done in your character building, that you are a rough stone, which must be squared and polished before it can fill a place in God's temple. You need not be surprised if with hammer and chisel God cuts away the sharp corners of your character until you are prepared to fill the place He has for you. No human being can accomplish this work. Only by God can it be done. And be assured that He will not strike one useless blow. His every blow is struck in love, for your eternal happiness. He knows your infirmities and works to restore, not to destroy.

Unbelievers Have No Right to Knowledge of Church Matters

"First go tell your brother his fault between you and him alone. If this fail, next take with you one or two friends, and tell him in their presence. If these steps fail, then tell it to the church. Not an unbeliever is to be made acquainted with the slightest particular of the matter. Telling it to the church is the last step to be taken. Publish it not to the enemies of our faith. They have no right to the knowledge of church matters, lest the weakness and errors of Christ's followers be exposed." *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 54:2.

Do Not Listen to Complaints Unless Bible Rule is followed – Censure those who do not follow Bible Rule

"When any one comes to a minister or to men in positions of trust, with complaints about a brother or sister, let them ask the reporter, "Have you complied with the rules our Saviour has given?" and **if he has failed to carry out any particular of this instruction, do not listen to a word of his complaint.** Refuse to take up a report against your brother or sister in the faith. If members of the church go entirely contrary to these rules, they make **themselves subjects of church discipline** and **should be put under the censure of the church.** This matter, so plainly taught in the lessons of Christ, has been passed over with strange indifference. The church has either neglected her work entirely, or has done it with harshness and severity, wounding and bruising souls. Measures should be taken to correct this cruel spirit of criticism, of judging one another's motives, as though Christ had revealed to men the hearts of their brethren. The neglect of doing aright, with wisdom and grace, the work that ought to have been done, has left churches weak, inefficient, and almost Christless." {HM, February 1, 1892 par. 12}

Be Slow to Censure – Fully Obey Bible Rule to the Letter

“Jesus adds to the lesson these words: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” This assurance, **that after the rules of Christ have been followed to the letter, the decisions of the church will be ratified in heaven,** gives a solemn significance to the action of the church. **No hasty steps should be taken to cut off names from the church books, or to place a member under censure until the case has been investigated,** and the Bible rule **fully obeyed.** The word of Christ shows how necessary it is for church officers to be free from prejudice and selfish motives. Human minds and hearts, unless wholly sanctified, purified, and refined from partiality and prejudice, are liable to commit grave errors, to misjudge and deal unkindly and unjustly with souls that are the purchase of the blood of Christ. But the decision of an unjust judge will be of no account in the court of heaven. It will not make an innocent man guilty, nor change his character in the least before God. As surely as men in responsible positions become lifted up in their own esteem, and act as though they were to lord it over their brethren, they will render many decisions which heaven cannot ratify.” {HM, February 1, 1892 par. 13}

“It is not Christ’s follower that, with averted eyes, turns from the erring, leaving them unhindered to pursue their downward course. Those who are forward in accusing others, and zealous in bringing them to justice, are often in their own lives more guilty than they. Men hate the sinner, while they love the sin. Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein.” *Desire of Ages*, p. 461, 462.

When a Member Brings an Accusation against a Brother, Tell the Accuser to Go to the One who is Supposed to Be In Error

“‘Above all things,’ the apostle writes, ‘have fervent charity among yourselves.’ Do not listen to reports against a brother or a sister. Be very cautious how you take up a reproach against your neighbor. Ask the one who brings the accusation if he has obeyed the word of God in regard to this matter. Christ has left explicit directions as to what should be done. Go to your brother, and tell him his fault between him and you alone. Do not excuse yourself from this, saying, There is no personal grievance between the one who is accused and myself. The rules given by Christ are so definite, so explicit, that this excuse is not valid. Whether or not the grievance is between you and the one accused, the injunction of Christ is the same. Your

brother needs help. Tell him, not someone else, that reports are being circulated about him. Give him opportunity to explain. It is possible that the reports are false, and that the difficulties may be adjusted by some simple explanation. This treatment is due everyone supposed to be in error.” {18MR 335.1}

Those who Hear a Complaint from Unbelievers are to Approach the Accused

“The world is not a friend to truth, and the servants of God must not allow themselves to be affected by the accusations of worldlings against those who love the truth. Let all the believers study the lessons that Christ has given. If complaints are made against a brother or a sister, **let those who hear the report** follow the Saviour’s instruction, and go to the accused alone, and see if the matter cannot be explained. If there is real wrong existing, and he will not hear you, then take two or three others, and in the spirit of love and meekness, seeking God for wisdom, try to restore such a one. If this method does not succeed in winning him from his evil ways, bring his case before the church. Unbelievers have no part to act in any of these dealings. They could not discern the motives or principles that believers are to follow in caring for their brethren, nor understand the relation that exists between those of like faith. As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we are under obligation to be true to one another. The followers of Christ are to keep step with their Leader, and never utter a complaint against a brother to an enemy of truth. Let there be no betrayal of sacred trusts. Give not the enemies of Christ cause to triumph or to take advantage of God’s servants. Let the counsel of the people of God be with their own company. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.”” {RH, February 26, 1895 par. 8}

Bear the Infirmities of the Weak – Lord Bears with Grave Sins in Brethren

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself.” As Christ has pitied and helped us in our weakness and sinfulness, so should we pity and help others. Many are perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ’s stead, can be as a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon God. Oh, this is a blessed work! Let not pride and selfishness prevent us from doing the good which we may do if we will work in Christ’s name and with a loving, tender spirit. {5T 245.3}

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Here, again, our duty is plainly set before us. How can

the professed followers of Christ so lightly regard these inspired injunctions? Not long since I received a letter describing a circumstance in which a brother had manifested indiscretion. Although it occurred years ago, and was a very small matter, hardly worthy of a second thought, the writer stated that it had forever destroyed her confidence in that brother. If that sister's life should show upon review no greater errors, it would be indeed a marvel, for human nature is very weak. I have been and am still fellowshipping as brethren and sisters those who have been guilty of grave sins and who even now do not see their sins as God sees them. But the Lord bears with these persons, and why should not I? He will yet cause His Spirit so to impress their hearts that sin will appear to them as it appeared to Paul, exceedingly sinful. {5T 246.1}

A Second Trial is of No Avail for Persistent Undue Familiarity

“A second trial would be of no avail to those whose moral sense is so perverted that they cannot see their danger. If after they have long held the truth, its sanctifying power has not established the character in piety, virtue and purity, let them be disconnected with the missions without delay: for through these Satan will insinuate the same lax sentiments in the minds of those who ought to have an example of virtue and moral dignity. Anything that approaches lovesick sentimentalism, any intimation of commonness, should be decidedly rebuked. One who is guilty of encouraging this improper familiarity should not only be relieved of responsibilities which he was unworthy to bear, but should be placed under censure of the church, and that censure should remain upon him, until he give evidence in spirit and deportment, that he sees his sinfulness and heart corruption, and repents, like any other guilty sinner, and is converted. Then God for Christ's sake will heal him of his transgression.” {GCDB, February 6, 1893 par. 9}

Not to Criticize Church When Censure is Applied

“Let none speak lightly of the duty of the church to administer censure and rebuke; neither let them criticize the action of the church when this painful task becomes necessary. Christ has given plain instruction regarding the duty of the church toward those who, while professing to be loyal members, are bringing dishonor to the cause of God by their course of action. “Every plant, which my Heavenly Father hath not planted,” he says, “shall be rooted up.” God has commanded that those who prove themselves unworthy of church-fellowship shall be separated from his body. Those who speak against the exercise of this authority, speak against the authority of Christ.” {RH, March 19, 1908 par. 15}

MR No. 720 - Discipline of SDA Church Members

Those who had a ruling influence in the church [at Ligonier, Indiana] were not right in heart themselves, notwithstanding they made high profession of faith. The outside was apparently right, as far as belief and profession were concerned, while the inward work of the heart--the grace of God in the life developing characters--was very much at fault. They had not the Spirit of Christ, and they labored with another spirit exhibiting self. Strong feelings would rise up under contradiction, or, if others differed with them in both their ideas or opinions, their own hearts being controlled by selfishness, they sought to exalt themselves, and censure and judge their brethren--a work God had not given them at all. {9MR 193.1}

They had left the anxious work of taking care, lest they should fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness spring up, whereby many should be defiled. They turned their eyes outward to watch, lest others' characters should not be right, when their eyes should have been turned inward to close searching of their own motives, scanning and criticizing their own characters, their own feelings; and emptying from the heart love of self, envy, evil surmisings, jealousy, malice, unkindness, and self-esteem. {9MR 193.2}

Young Churches Should Confer with Conference President

When they do this, they will esteem others better than themselves, and will not be climbing upon the judgment seat to pronounce sentence upon others. This has caused all the difficulties in the church. **Young churches** may have leaders in elders and deacons chosen to have a burden and care for the prosperity of the church, yet these men should not feel at liberty in their own judgment and responsibility to cut off names from the church. They should not have so much zeal as to make decisive moves of so grave a character. {9MR 193.3}

They should communicate with the one who has been **appointed as president of their conference**, and confer with him. At some appointed time have the matter particularly considered, and with great wisdom and in the fear of God, with much humility and earnest humble prayer, should erring ones be dealt with. {9MR 194.1}

The matter should be thoroughly investigated. What is the charge brought against the erring one? Has he willfully transgressed the law of God? Has the offender been dishonest in his deal or trade with his brethren or the world? Has he been untruthful? Has he practiced deception? Has he been licentious? Has he been severe, overbearing, and abusive in his family, with his neighbors, with his brethren, or worldlings? Has he shown a spirit of penuriousness,

selfishness, covetousness; of questioning doubts, of faultfinding, of talebearing, of talking of his brethren's faults, magnifying their wrongs, having a spirit of bitterness against them? All these things are grave matters, and deserving of consideration. {9MR 194.2}

Bible Rules to Be Followed to the Letter

But the next question is: What course has been pursued toward the erring? **Have the Bible rules been followed to the letter?** Read before them the rules given by their Captain. Have they obeyed orders like faithful soldiers in the army? To go contrary to the positive orders of the Captain of our salvation is deserving of severest censure. {9MR 194.3}

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:15-18). {9MR 194.4}

Jesus is united to His people by a love far greater and more enduring than ever bound human kindred hearts together, and this love, so deep, so unchanging, is a continual assurance, a guarantee of this faithfulness to you. Oh, wondrous love that should lead the Son of God in order to secure us to Himself, and ensure our eternal salvation, to yield up His honor, His glory, His royal throne, and royal court, and for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich. . . . {9MR 195.1}

Bearing Long with Person's Personal Vices

Some have taken a position that those who use tobacco should be dealt with and turned out of the church. In all of our experience for many years not a case of this kind has thus been treated by us. We have borne with them and labored with and prayed with them for years, and if after a time they did not reform, they became lax in other things and causes of a grievous character occurred which required an action on the part of the church, but then the responsibility was not assumed by merely the resident elder, the deacon, or any church member, but the church waited in patience for help, for wise counselors, and then moved with the greatest caution. These hasty movements in such cases tend to ruin a church. It shows a self-sufficient, self-important, bigoted spirit, which if indulged will ruin any church. . . . {9MR 195.2}

Dr. _____ has not pursued that meek and Christlike course which the Bible requires, but those who have condemned him have pursued a course far more objectionable in the sight of God than that pursued by him, and they are answerable for their influence upon the doctor. {9MR 195.3}

God calls upon Doctor _____ to come near to Him by faith and obedience. The grace of God can subdue, sanctify, and refine, and make him an honor to the cause and a chosen vessel fit for the Master's use. The natural heart may be transformed by the grace of God.--Manuscript 1, 1880, pp. 1-3, 12-14. ("Church Difficulties," February 18, 1880.) {9MR 196.1}

Patience and Forbearance Needed

At the conference at Sylvan I saw the necessity of the messengers dwelling on the preparation more than they have done. Souls are not prepared for what is coming on the earth and unless they speedily get ready they will be weighed in the balance and found wanting. I saw that Brother _____ had moved too fast in some cases, that there had not been that patience and forbearance with individuals that there ought to have been. Others of the brethren had moved too fast. {9MR 196.2}

I saw that great caution should be used and the church will have to bear some with individuals who do not always understand the movings of the Spirit of God, and always have some errors. And, if these individuals were disfellowshipped, they would be brought more closely in connection with an unholy influence and the possibility of saving them be lost. But, if they were still retained in the fellowship of the church, they will be where the church can have some influence over them, and may, by moving judiciously and carefully, win them to all the truth, which will discover to them their errors, and cause them to yield them up and be fully united to the church. {9MR 196.3}

Not All Cases to be Treated Alike

I saw that the messengers and the church must have compassion with some, making a difference. Now the messengers of God must seek wisdom and know how to treat each individual case. Not all must be treated alike. By close examination it will be seen that individual cases differ. Some are to be borne with longer than others, but if one is living in disobedience to the commandments of God, the church must act and must separate them from them. And for other sins it will often be necessary to disfellowship souls if they continue in their sins; yet great care should be used and great patience and forbearance exercised. {9MR 196.4}

I saw that Brother_____had tried to do right and just as well as he knew how, yet he has failed at times. I saw that judgment and caution must be used. The messengers must all move out unitedly and with decision and energy, yet they must have meekness and patience, and in love for souls fulfill their duty. They must all go among the people with the power and Spirit of God with them, and must have energy that will arouse the stupid and those who are off their watch and cause them to awake and get ready. {9MR 197.1}

Prepare! Prepare! should be sounded in the ears of the people. For the great day of God's wrath is coming, and who shall be able to stand; and while messengers cry to God to prepare and get ready, they must be awake and have energy themselves and let it tell to all that hear them that they are standing between the living and the dead. Preachers and people who believe the third angel's message should set a holy, lively example. Their conversation and actions should show that they are looking for the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.--Manuscript 1, 1855, pp. 1,2. (Untitled, undated.)

Place of Public Rebuke

Seventh Commandment

"Suspension From the Church for Adulterers. **Those who break the seventh commandment should be suspended from the church, and not have its fellowship nor the privileges of the house of God. Said the angel, "This is not a sin of ignorance. It is a knowing sin and will receive the awful visitation of God, whether he who commits it be old or young."** {TSB 248.4}

High-handed, Deliberate Sinning.

"Never was this sin regarded by God as being so exceedingly sinful as at the present time. Why? Because God is purifying unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. It is at the very time when God is purifying this peculiar people unto Himself that [unsanctified] individuals step in among us. Notwithstanding the straight truths they have heard--the terrors of the Word of God set before them, and all the blazing truth for these last days calculated to arouse Israel--**they sin with a high hand, give way to all the loose passions of the carnal heart, gratify their animal propensities, disgrace the cause of God, and then confess they have sinned and are sorry!** {TSB 249.1}

Where Prosperity of Church and Cause is Threatened “1 Timothy 5:20” Applies

“The next morning, as we were about to leave for the house of worship to engage in the arduous labors of the day, a sister for whom I had a testimony that she lacked discretion and caution, and did not fully control her words and actions, came in with her husband and manifested feelings of great unreconciliation and agitation. She commenced to talk and to weep. She murmured a little, and confessed a little, and justified self considerably. She had a wrong idea of many things I had stated to her. Her pride was touched as I brought out her faults in so public a manner. Here was evidently the main difficulty. But why should she feel thus? The brethren and sisters knew these things were so, therefore I was not informing them of anything new. But I doubt not that it was new to the sister herself. She did not know herself, and could not properly judge of her own words and acts. This is in a degree true of nearly all, hence the necessity of faithful reproofs in the church and the cultivation by all its members of love for the plain testimony. {2T 14.3}

“Her husband seemed to feel unreconciled to my bringing out her faults before the church and stated that if Sister White had followed the directions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 he should not have felt hurt: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” {2T 15.1}

“My husband then stated that he should understand that these words of our Lord had reference to cases of personal trespass, and could not be applied in the case of this sister. She had not trespassed against Sister White. But that which had been reproved publicly was public wrongs which threatened the prosperity of the church and the cause. Here, said my husband, is a text applicable to the case: 1 Timothy 5:20: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”