

How one ought to conduct himself in the household of God

by Hendrik Joubert

Merely claiming to be the Lord's church is not enough. It is important that those who do so place themselves under the control of the Head so they may be directed by Him. (**Ephesians 1:22-23**) This is true not only doctrinally, but also morally. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul writes: ***I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; ¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*** 1 Timothy 3:14-15.

The apostle, who writes *according to the wisdom given him* (**2 Peter 3:15**), considers the subject so important that he was not going to *delay* teaching on it until he could do so in person. Through the beatitudes the Lord not only gave us a progressively developing description of the characteristics and qualities of those God chose to save through his Son, but also the reason why every Christian should be that person. We are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

It is to the Ephesians that the Lord says through Paul: ***Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*** Ephesians 4:1-3.

The called out body of Christ become that when we answer the call of God. We are called to a high standard of morality and to a narrow road doctrinally. We have to live up to this call in order to be *the called* – the household of God who has the privilege to address Him as Father. Notice what the Lord says through Peter in this regard: ***If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*** 1 Peter 1:17-19

We may know what we ought to be by looking into *the perfect law of liberty* (**James 1:25**), by reading Paul's insight into the mystery of Christ revealed. (**Ephesians 3:1-7**) But what about those who have started off well, but will not continue their submission to God and His will in order to demonstrate their faith in Him? The Lord's called out body, the church, has the responsibility to deal with those who will not live up to the standard set by God.

The instructions from the Lord are not optional suggestions. Those who do not obey are to be disciplined. The degree of discipline varies according to the conduct and the attitude of the person involved. Through Jude the Lord teaches us: ***And have mercy on some, who are doubting; ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.*** Jude 22-23.

When we fail to attend to these problems in the body of Christ, we become disobedient and may expect to be disciplined by other congregations, or by the Lord Himself. We have to take care how we deal with these problems, varying in intensity as suggested by James. We should not be too severe when we are to be patient, but also not patient when we are to be severe. Notice what the Lord teaches us through the letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ***Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, ⁷ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*** 2 Corinthians 2:6-7

Notice that the judgment should be by the Lord's standard. We do not make our own rules, but should judge righteous judgment in these matters. **John 7:24**. The direct instruction: ***For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.*** 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. Failing to obey this command is judging the word of God, and rejecting it.