

The Effect Of Liberalism On Church Discipline

Intro: Liberalism has had its effect in every area of life: political, social, and even within the Lord's church. As we look at this subject, we need to get an idea of what we are discussing.

I. DEFINITIONS:

A. Liberalism

1. Liberalism is a loosing of what God has bound..
2. Thomas B. Warren's definition: "Liberalism, in the sense in which we are using the term here, can take either one of two forms: (1) it can hold that no one is under obligation to have Biblical authority for what he does in religion or (2) it can take the form of holding that while one must, to be pleasing to God, have Biblical authority for what he does in religion, one may hold that some belief/practice is authorized by the Bible when such is not actually the case."
3. Liberalism is essentially a disrespect for what God has said

B. Discipline

1. We often think of discipline just from the corrective aspect.
2. Oxford dictionary defines it: "1 the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior. 2 controlled behavior resulting from such training....verb: 1 train in obedience or self-control by punishment or imposing rules. 2 punish or rebuke formally for an offense."
3. It includes both training and correction

II. LIBERALISM'S EFFECT ON TEACHING

A. We are to grow in our knowledge of God's Word.

1. 1 Pet. 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"
2. 2 Pet. 3:18 "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen."
3. 2 Tim. 2:15 "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

B. Liberalism denigrates the Bible and thus a knowledge of it.

1. "The idea of adhering to the Written Word is noble, but it is fraught with as many problems as there are people viewing the Word" (James Woodroof, *The Church In Transition*, p. 36).
2. The New Hermeneutic.
3. A denial of any pattern within God's Word.
 - a. "We reject a rigid 'pattern theology'" (*The Second Incarnation* p. 31).
 - b. "It (Scripture - mh) certainly does not present an absolute blueprint for building a church" (*The Second Incarnation* p. 36).
4. "Plugging into any part of the scriptures, except the Gospels, expecting there to find power, is like plugging an electric motor into a reflection of a power outlet" (James Woodroof, *The Church In Transition*, p. 34).

C. Instead of boldly preaching God's Word, there is a move away from book, chapter, and verse preaching.

1. We have moved to moralizing stories and nice after dinner speeches.

2. We have those who refuse to speak what needs to be spoken.
 - a. Jer. 6:14 “They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.”
 - b. Eph. 6:19-20 “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,²⁰For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

III. GOD PRACTICES CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE.

- A. **Heb. 12:5-11** “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. ⁹Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised [trained—NKJV] thereby.”
- B. **God does it for our good.**

IV. GOD COMMANDS THE CHURCH TO PRACTICE CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

- A. **Regarding false teachers**
 1. Rom. 16:17 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”
 2. 2 John 9-11 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”
- B. **Regarding those divisive; Tit. 3:10-11** “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; ¹¹Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”
- C. **Regarding those immoral**
 1. 1 Cor. 5
 2. Eph. 5:11 “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.”
- D. **Anyone not walking according to the Scriptures.**
 1. 2 The. 3:6 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”
 2. 2 The. 3:14 “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

V. LIBERALISM’S EFFECT ON PUNISHMENT

- A. **We observe it regarding spanking children.**
 1. The Dr. Spock syndrome.
 2. Murray Straus a sociologist at the University of New Hampshire claims “that decreasing the amount of spanking in society will actually reduce the amount of violence” (“Archives Of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine,” *American Family Association Journal*, Oct. 1997, p. 15).

3. The effect of the lack of corrective discipline has been seen in the disrespect and wickedness in society in general (the rise of lawlessness).
- B. We observe it in dealing with false teachers.**
1. We do not mark and avoid them.
 2. Preachers will speak on lectureships with them and invite them to speak.
 3. The result is that the false teacher is emboldened to continue and error abounds.
- C. We observe it in the local congregations failing to follow God's Word in withdrawal of fellowship.**
1. Some have said it is the forgotten command; when in reality it is the ignored command.
 2. Some will come up with any excuse to not do what God says.
 3. When God's Word is respected and obeyed, some will get mad and leave, or deliberately fellowship those withdrawn.
- D. Ecc. 8:11** "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."
1. When we fail to practice corrective church discipline, evil increases.
 - a. 1 Cor. 5:6 "Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"
 - b. 1 Cor. 15:33 "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."
 2. The church fails to grow.
 - a. There is a correlation between church growth and corrective discipline.
 - (1) After the death of Ananias and Sapphira.
 - (2) Acts 5:14 "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)"
 - b. Why would those we are trying to convert, obey the Gospel when they think they are better morally than those who are members of the church?

Conclusion: When we do things God's way, the church will prosper, however when we fail to do what God says, then the church will soon lose the distinctiveness which God demands and no longer be pleasing to Him.