

"CHURCH DISCIPLINE"

By Mike Burnham

For the anabaptists church discipline was a mark of the true church. It was essential because it was based on the word of God. Discipline is as necessary in the church as it is in a family and they who join themselves to a church thereby submit themselves to its discipline.

Discipline is not a favorite subject in the Lord's Church today and in most cases the church ignores the scripture teaching. We wish to follow the teaching of God's word, but where it makes us uncomfortable or uneasy the church tends to pass over the teaching as if it weren't there. I can certainly understand the churches' uneasiness and difficulty in carrying out discipline. We often don't have the clarity of insight that the apostles possessed in their practice of church discipline. Furthermore we are constantly aware that we too are only sinners saved by grace and that we can find ourselves in the same predicament that we are dealing with (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 6:1). In some cases, we also realize that except for the fact that our sins are hidden we too would be judged and disciplined, and that makes judging another brother or sister almost impossible and brings even more uncomfortableness and uneasiness.

Church discipline, however, should not be understood as an act of judgmental vengeance, but rather as an act of love for God, his church, and the individual or individuals, as the case may be. A love for God that we show by following his commandments (John 14:15), a love for his church that we can express by keeping her pure 1 Cor. 5:6-8, a love for the person or persons because we are willing to act in an area of uncomfortableness, unpleasantness and uneasiness to bring them to repentance and back into fellowship with God and his church (2 Cor. 2:4-10).

On the other hand, if a church disregards or is indifferent to scripture teaching

on discipline she is showing her lack of love for God, his church, and the person or persons. By not acting she is expressing also her condoning of sin and compromising with the present evil. She in turn compromises herself in her witness, faith, and teaching. How can the church be an influence on society if on the one hand she is presenting sin as okay and on the other hand teaching strongly against it? She is presenting double standards, one for the church and one for those outside the church. I imagine it's a very confusing picture to the lost.

I also see a danger that can arise with church discipline. A church can become dictatorial in the lives of its members. This happens when the church goes beyond what the scriptures teach. When the church adds to the guidelines laid out in scripture, she places upon herself restrictions that sometimes she is unable to bear and puts undue hurt upon herself and others. For instance, if members of the church move to a different state and go to a church that practices open or close communion the church excludes them. The church declares the other church unscriptural because of their practice of open or close communion while at the same time follow the lineage of the church back to Christ through churches that practiced the same communion and other practices that calls for non-fellowship today. On the one hand we accept the church as scriptural and on the other declare them unscriptural. This is inconsistent. We teach how important it is to go to church and how weak we become when we don't (like a brand out of the fire), and at the same time deny a member to go to a church in another city or state (or the same city) if the church doesn't believe exactly as we do, even though the other church practices the same things churches practiced in the church lineage. This too seems inconsistent to me. Where does the church get the authority to exclude brothers and sisters in Christ who determine to go to another church or disassociate themselves from us for reasons of their own? Hebrews 10:25 says not to forsake the fellowshiping of yourselves together. It or any place else that I know of does not say to exclude them for non-fellowship. Divorce is another area of inconsistency to me. Whether we realize it or not we practice Moses's law of a letter of divorcement (Mat. 19:7,8) for

some while excluding others. We exclude a member or past member for getting a divorce and marrying again, except for adultery, while at the same time we receive into our membership couples who were divorced and remarried without knowing or caring about the reasons for the divorce. They too may be adulterers that are received. The church says the only way out of its membership is by letter, by death, or by exclusion. Where does she find this teaching? Many use 1 John 2:19, but he is talking about those who were lost and believed lies, vv-18,21-23.

Church discipline is first of all to prevent offences, and only secondarily to abolish any that have arisen (1 Tim. 5:20; Deut. 13:10,11). Teaching is the first foundation of discipline, but people also need to know by the action of the church that sin is not ignored or regarded indifferently, nor are the scriptures, in the Lord's church. Any more than it was in Israel where people were cut off from the nation for some sins (Num. 15:31); and for some sins lesser discipline was used (Deut. 19:16-21); and for some the harshest discipline was used as we read in Deut. 13:10. God gave Israel guide-lines to follow in the discipline of his people to keep them from sinning and to keep the nation pure. He has also given his church guide-lines for the same reason. When Israel became indifferent and disregarded God's teaching god disciplined the whole nation. Would it be fair to assume that God might do the same to the church that has become indifferent to sin and disregards his teaching? (Rev. 2:18-20).

Discipline is the right and duty of every member of the church. The church has the responsibility of guiding its members and helping them to progress in sanctification. Preaching, pastoral counseling, teaching, and discipline, when properly understood, are seen to be closely linked and mutually interacting.

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom of heaven to Peter. What do the keys represent? Keys are for opening and shutting something and since Peter wasn't given actual keys they must represent the power or the authority to open and shut something. The plural used of the keys indicates power

or authority over more than one thing. In Matthew 18:18 we find the same "binding and loosing" and there it is the church that has the power or authority (v-17). So Peter, in 16:19, represented the church as a whole. But why was Peter given the keys instead of one of the other apostles? Because he was the first to confess Christ (v-15,16), and he got his commission first, although he probably didn't know it at that time, but in Acts 2:14,32-41, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit used him to open the door of the gospel of Christ to the jews and then to the first gentile, Cornelius (Acts 10:44-47; 11:1; 15:7).

What is the "kingdom of heaven"? It is the invisible spiritual kingdom of Christ on earth made up of all living saved people with Christ as their king, (John 18:36,37; Col. 1:13; Rom. 14:17,18). The door to the kingdom is opened through the gospel (salvation). Since God only can open and shut up the kingdom, the power or authority that is given is in a declaratory sense. For instance, the church can declare the gospel and if it is believed can declare the forgiveness of sins (John 20:23). If not believed the church can declare the door shut to the kingdom and the retaining of sins. The church can declare to people, in God's name, and according to his word, what is good and what our lord requires of them.

In Matthew 18:18, the visible church also must have the keys since she has the power and the authority to bind and loose. What does it mean to bind and loose? Binding and loosing among the jews meant forbidding and allowing, refusing or granting, declaring unlawful or lawful, to tie or release. In Matthew 18:18 the binding has to do with discipline (v-17), which in this case was the shutting of the door to the church, so one of the keys is the power and authority of disciplining within the church. The church has the power and authority to declare, in God's name, and according to his word, what is lawful and what is unlawful. She can also declare what is forbidden and what is allowed, and she can declare the sentence (whatsoever) for trespassing what is declared. But the church needs to be very careful with this authority. It's interesting that secular society is similar to the church in this authority. A judge does not make the law, but only declares what is the law

given to him in the books. The church declares only the law given to her in the book, God's word. A judge does not make up sentences but has a guideline he is to follow in the books. The church also has a guideline to follow and it is in the book, God's word.

The church also has the power or authority to grant a person released from the sentence (whatsoever) formally imposed or refuse to release a person. If a church follows the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in what she declares in God's name, he will approve her declaration in heaven.

FROM ALL THAT I CAN FIND OUT FROM GREEK DICTIONARIES AND COMMENTATORS, THE CONSTRUCTION OF "SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN" INDICATES THAT THE ACTION HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE IN HEAVEN. IF THIS IS TRUE THAN THE CHURCH WOULD BE ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE. BUT IF WE TAKE IT AS IT IS WRITTEN THEN GOD ACTS WHEN THE CHURCH ACTS AND NOT BEFORE. THIS SEEMS TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH 1 CORINTHIANS 5:12,13. AS LONG AS THE CHURCH CONDONS THE SIN GOD DOESN'T WORK WITH THAT PERSON TO BRING THEM TO REPENTANCE BECAUSE HE JUDGES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH AND USES THE CHURCHES DISCIPLINE AND THE DEVILS REALM TO BRING THEM TO REPENTANCE. THE CHURCH HAS THE PRIVILEGE AND THE AUTHORITY TO TELL THE PERSON WHO IS THEN RESTORED THAT GOD HAS ALSO LOOSED HIM AND FORGIVEN HIM, WHICH APPEARS TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH JOHN 20:23. HERE THE MAIN CONTEXT IS THE CHURCHES PRIVILEGE AND AUTHORITY WHEN PREACHING THE GOSPEL (V-21) TO TELL OTHERS THEIR (WHOSE SOEVER) SINS WILL BE FORGIVEN THEM BY GOD UPON REPENTANCE AND FAITH AND THAT FORGIVENESS WILL BE WITHHELD BY GOD TO THE UNREPENTANT (WHOSE SOEVER), (ACTS 10:43; 1 JOHN 1:8-10). BUT I THINK THAT THIS WOULD ALSO PERTAIN TO THOSE WHO ARE DISCIPLINED AS FORGIVENESS IS ALSO PART OF MATTHEW 18.

WHEN OFFENCES ARE NOT PREVENTED BY THE CONSTANT

APPLICATION OF THE WORD, THEN THE OTHER, NEGATIVE, PARTS OF DISCIPLINE MUST BE EMPLOYED. THESE VARIOUS TYPES OF DISCIPLINE I HAVE BROKEN DOWN INTO FIVE CLASSES THAT WE NEED TO INVESTAGATE: 1). QUIET, NON-PUBLIC ATTEMPTS RESERVED FOR OFFENSES AGAINST INDIVIDUALS (MAT. 18:15,16). THIS MAY ALSO APPLY TO THOSE WHOSE SIN HAS NOT BECOME PUBLIC (GAL. 6:1). THOSE WHO CAN BE REASONED OUT OF THEIR SINS, WILL NOT HAVE TO BE SHAMED OUT OF THEM. 2). PRIVATE AND PUBLIC WARNING, OR ADMONISHING (1 THES. 5:14; TITUS 3:10). 3). AVOIDANCE (ROM. 16:17; TIT. 3:10; 2 THES. 3:6,11,14,15). 4). PUBLIC REBUKING OR REPROVING (EPH. 5:11,13; 1 TIM. 5:20; TITUS 1:10-13; 2:15,1). 5). EXCLUSION (MAT. 18:17,18; 1 COR. 5:1,5,11; 1 TIM. 1:20 WITH 2 TIM. 2:16-18, 4:14,15; 2 JOHN 7-11).

A. "EXCLUSION" FROM "EK MESOS" (3319) MEANING "PUT OUT FROM THE MIDST, FROM AMONG, AWAY" AS USED IN MAT. 13:49; 1 COR. 5:2; 2 COR. 6:17; COL. 2:14. OFFENSES FOR EXCLUSION ARE: (1 COR. 5:1,11) 1) "FORNICATION" (4202)---ILLCIT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, V-1; PROSTITUTION (4205), V-9,11. 2) "COVETOUSNESS" (4123)---GREEDY OF GAIN, OF WHAT BELONGS TO OTHERS, IS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH IDOLATRY, GAL. 5:5; COL. 3:5; EPH. 5:5 3) "IDOLITER" (1496)---A SERVANT OR WORSHIPER OF IDOLS, A SLAVE TO THE DEPRAVED IDEAS ONE'S IDOLS REPRESENT. 4) "RAILER" OR "REVILE" (3060) TO SPEAK ABUSIVELY, BITTERLY, CONTEMPTUOUSLY TO OR ABOUT SOMEONE, CALL BAD NAMES, 1 PET. 2:23; 3:9. 5) "DRUNKARD" (3183)---TO BECOME INTOXECATED, A STATE OF BEING DRUNK. 6) "EXTORTIONER" (724)--ONE WHO ROBS OR PLUNDERS, SEIZE BY FORCE, GREEDILY SEARCHES FOR PREY, MAT. 7:15; LK. 11:39. 7) (2 JOHN 7-11) FALSE TEACHERS, DECEIVERS---THOSE WHO SHOW THEIR ANTI-CHRISTIAN BELIEFS THROUGH THEIR TEACHINGS OF CHRIST. 8) (1 TIM. 1:20) "BLASPHEMERS" (987)---THOSE WHO SPEAK CONTEMPTUOUSLY OF GOD, SACRED THINGS, OR OF DOCTRINES.

B. "REBUKE" (1651) MEANING TO REFUTE, EXPOSE, TELL ONE'S FAULT TO CONVICT OR CONVINCED THROUGH SHAME, 1 TIM. 5:20. 1) (TIT. 1:10-

14) "UNRULY" (506)---DISOBEDIENT OR NOT SUBJECT TO AUTHORITY. 2) "VAIN TALKERS" (3151)---SPEAKERS OF EMPTY WORDS, THAT ARE OF NO USE, WORTH, AND WITHOUT REASON, HAVING NO OBJECT OR END. 3) "DECEIVERS" (5423)---MIND DECEIVERS, ONE WHO MISLEADS ANOTHERS UNDERSTANDING.

C. "ADMONISH" (3560) MEANS TO WARN AND INSTRUCT, 1 COR. 4:14. WE ARE TO ADMONISH EACH OTHER, COL. 3:16. 1) (1 THES. 5:14) "UNRULY" (813)---TO BEHAVE IRREGULARLY OR OUT OF ORDER, TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS HOSPITALITY, 2 THES 3:11. 2) (TIT. 3:10) "HERETIC" (141)---ONE CAUSING DIVISIONS BY CHOOSING SECTS OR FACTIONS, 1 COR. 11:18,19.

D. "AVOIDANCE" SEVERAL DIFFERENT GREEK WORDS ARE USED TO DESCRIBE AVOIDANCE. 1) (TIT. 3:10) "REJECT" (3868) MEANING TO REFUSE, REJECT, AVOID. 2) (ROM. 16:17) "AVOID" (1578) MEANING TO TURN AWAY FROM. 3) (2 THES. 3:6) "WITHDRAW YOURSELVES" (4724) MEANS TO AVOID, SEND ONESELF AWAY FROM. 3) (2 THES. 3:14) "COMPANY WITH" (4874) IT MEANS TO MIX UP WITH, TO MINGLE. IT IS THE SAME AS 1 COR. 5:9,11.

1 COR. 5:1-5...CLEARLY PAUL SEES THE NEED FOR DISCIPLINE IN THIS MATTER. HE SAYS TO DELIVER SUCH AN ONE UNTO SATAN, THAT IS, EXPEL THE OFFENDER FROM THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH WHERE GOD RULES AND BLESSES, INTO THE WORLD, THE REALM WHERE SATAN RULES. IT'S AN EXPRESSION FOR THE LOSS OF ALL CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES. SUCH A ONE IS IN EFFECT TO BE HANDED OVER TO SATAN, EXCLUDED FROM THE FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S PEOPLE (V-2,7,13). "FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH", THIS I BELIEVE REFERS TO THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HARDSHIPS AND SICKNESS BECAUSE OF BEING OUTSIDE THE BLESSINGS AND COMFORT OF GOD. IN 1 TIM. 1:20 PAUL SPEAKS OF HAVING "DELIVERED HYMENAEUS AND ALEXANDER TO SATAN". HE SAYS THE PURPOSE OF DOING THIS IS SO THEY MAY "LEARN" NOT TO BLASPHEME. IN OTHER WORDS, THE PURPOSE IS FOR CORRECTION, AND ALSO IN VIEW IS A HOPE-FOR REPENTANCE AS WELL. ONLY THROUGH REPENTANCE AND

RESTORATION TO THE CHURCH WILL THE EXPRESSED PURPOSE THAT THEY LEARN NOT TO BLASPHEME BE FULFILLED. IT IS THE LACK OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND THE CHURCH AND THE BLESSINGS THEY BRING PLUS THE POSSIBILITY OF REPENTANCE, FORGIVENESS, AND RESTORATION THAT CAUSES THEM TO LEARN NOT TO BLASPHEME, FOR SATAN CERTAINLY WON'T TEACH THEM. HE WOULD ONLY GIVE THEM MORE FREEDOM TO DO MORE. BACK IN 1 COR. 5:5 THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH WOULD REFER TO THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS "WAY OF LIFE". "THAT THE SPIRIT MAY BE SAVED" I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS NOR HAVE I AN OPINION.

IN VERSES 6-8 PAUL SAYS THAT ANOTHER REASON FOR EXCLUDING SUCH A ONE IS TO KEEP THE CHURCH PURE. WHEN YOU PUT LEAVEN IN DOUGH AND SET IT IN A WARM PLACE IT BEGINS TO PUFF UP. WHEN IT REACHES A CERTAIN HEIGHT, THE BREAD IS PUT INTO AN OVEN. WHY? SO THE LEAVENING PROCESS WILL STOP. OTHERWISE THE DOUGH WOULD CONTINUE TO RISE AS THE LEAVENING PROCESS CONTINUED. IF SIN IS CONDONED IT WILL SOON INFEST THE WHOLE CHURCH AND MAKE HER UNEFFECTIVE, PARALYZED, BECAUSE OF HER DOUBLE STANDARD AND HER WALK. LEAVEN MUST BE PURGED, CLEANED OUT. THE DISEASED MEMBER MUST BE AMPUTATED TO SAVE THE BODY OR LIKE GANGRENE IT WILL SPREAD THOUGHOUT THE BODY AND IT WILL DIE.

IN VERSES 9-13 PAUL NAMES OTHER SINS THAT ARE CAUSE FOR EXCLUSION. PAUL ISN'T JUDGING THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH, THAT'S GOD'S BUSINESS, BUT IT'S THE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH TO JUDGE THOSE WITHIN (V-12,13).

IN VERSE 11 PAUL SAYS "NOT TO KEEP COMPANY", THE WORD "COMPANY" MEANS "TO MINGLE", TO MIX UP WITH", "TO MIX". IF A PERSON WITHIN THE CHURCH FALLS UNDER ANY OF THE CATEGORIES MENTIONED IN V-11 THE CHURCH IS NOT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM, THEY ARE NOT TO MINGLE WITH THEM, THEY ARE TO BE EXCLUDED, PURGED OUT, OF THE CHURCH

AS LEAVEN WAS IN THE HOUSES OF THE ISRAELITES DURING PASSOVER. SOMEONE MIGHT ASK, "HOW CAN WE HELP A PERSON UNLESS WE ARE IN TOUCH WITH HIM? HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH A MAN OF WHOSE CONDUCT WE DISAPPROVE, IF WE DO NOT HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM?" THIS MAY SEEM LIKE A DIFFICULT PROBLEM, BUT IT IS NOT NEARLY AS DIFFICULT AS IT MAY SEEM. WE DO SUCH THINGS EVERY DAY. FOR EXAMPLE, SUPPOSE A CHILD COMES TO SCHOOL WITH SMALLPOX. WOULD A GOOD TEACHER TOLERATE THE CHILD WITH SMALLPOX IN HER CLASSROOM? NO, THE TEACHER WOULD IMMEDIATELY SEPARATE THAT CHILD FROM THE OTHER CHILDREN AND TAKE HIM TO THE HOSPITAL. NO ONE WOULD SAY, "OH, HOW CRUEL, TO TAKE THE CHILD AWAY FROM HIS CLASSES AND INTERFERE WITH HIS LIFE." IN REALITY THE TEACHER INTERFERED WITH HIS LIFE TO SAVE IT AND THE LIVES OF THE OTHER CHILDREN. IF SUCH A CHILD CAME TO SCHOOL, WE WOULD NOT WHIP HIM; WE WOULD TREAT HIM AS IF HE HAD SMALLPOX. WE WOULD SEPARATE HIM FROM THE OTHERS. WE CERTAINLY WOULD NOT HELP ANY CHILD BY LETTING HIM COME TO SCHOOL WITH THE MEASLES OR SMALLPOX.

IN A SENSE SUCH ACTIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THE ISSUES PAUL SET BEFORE THE CORINTHIANS. THOSE WHO SERVE THE LORD MUST ABSTAIN FROM THE SLIGHTEST APPROVAL OF THOSE WHO DO NOT HONOR THE LORD OR HIS GOSPEL. A PERSON WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE THINGS MENTIONED IS LIKE THE CHILD WITH SMALLPOX, HE HAS A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE, VERSE 6, AND HE OR SHE MUST BE TREATED AS SUCH. THAT PERSON MUST BE SEPARATED FROM THE REST OF THE CHURCH AND SENT WHERE HELP CAN BE OBTAINED, V-2,5. SYMPATHY WHEN CORRECTION IS NEEDED WILL NOT HELP ANY WRONGDOER. IT IS ONLY AS THEY ARE DISCIPLINED THAT THEY MAY COME TO REPENTANCE.

PAUL ALSO SAYS, "WITH SUCH AN ONE NO NOT TO EAT." THE GREEK WORD FOR EAT IS "SUNESTHIO" (4906). IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE THERE ARE THREE WORDS THAT MAY BE TRANSLATED BY THE ENGLISH WORD "WITH." THERE IS THE WORD "SUN"(4862), FROM WHICH WE DERIVE THE PREFIX "SYN"--

(AS IN SYNTHESIS, SYNAGOGUE, SYNCHRONIZE). WHEN WE SYNCHRONIZE OUR WATCHES, WE MATCH THEIR TIMES TOGETHER "WITH" ONE ANOTHER. THE WORD "SYNAGOGUE" USES THIS PREFIX TO INDICATE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE GATHER TOGETHER TO BE "WITH" EACH OTHER, COMPANIONSHIP.

THE SECOND GREEK WORD IS THE WORD "META"(3326). THIS IS USUALLY TRANSLATED TO MEAN "WITH" IN THE SENSE OF BEING "ALONGSIDE OF". WHEN YOU WALK DOWN THE STREET BESIDE YOUR WIFE OR GIRLFRIEND, HOLDING HANDS, YOU ARE "WITH" HER IN THE SENSE OF "META".

THE THIRD WORD IS THE MOST INTIMATE OF THE THREE. IT IS THE GREEK WORD "PROS" (4314). THE IMPLIED SENSE OF "PROS" IS TO BE WITH SOMEONE IN A FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIP. IT IS USED IN JOHN 1:1.

THE WORD "SUN" USED AS A PREFIX IN OUR WORD "EAT" INDICATES THAT WE ARE NOT TO HAVE ANY FORM OF COMPANIONSHIP WITH SUCH A ONE, EVEN SITTING AT THE SAME TABLE. IT IS USED IN ACTS 10:41; 11:3; GAL. 2:12. EXCLUSION APPEARS TO BE THE DISCIPLINE FOR OFFENSES THAT CAN BECOME OR ARE SCANDALOUS TO THE CHURCH ITSELF BY BECOMING PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE WORD "COMPANY WITH" IS ONE GREEK WORD THAT HAS TWO PREFIXES, "SUN" DESCRIBED ABOVE AND "ANA" WHICH MEANS "UP" AND THE WORD "MIGNUMI" FOLLOWS THE PREFIXES AND MEANS TO MIX OR MINGLE. HENCE THE WORD TOGETHER MEANS TO "MIX UP WITH AS COMPANIONS."

PAUL IS ALSO CENSURING THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE HERE FOR THEIR CONDUCT IN THIS MATTER (4:14; 5:2,6).

ANOTHER AREA WHERE THE CHURCH IS TO BE INVOLVED IN JUDGING IS IN 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-8. THE REFERENCE TO JUDGMENT IN CHAPTER 5 BRINGS PAUL TO A RELATED MATTER. WHEN CHRISTIANS HAVE DISPUTES WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS IT SHOULD BE SETTLED WITHIN THE CHURCH. PAUL SAYS THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE NO BUSINESS GOING TO WORLDLY COURTS FOR JUSTICE

BY UNBELEIVERS WHO DO NOT LIVE AND THINK BY THE LAW OF GOD. IN VERSE TWO & THREE PAUL SAYS THAT THERE SHALL ONE DAY BE A JUDGMENT OF GIGANTIC PROPORTION IN WHICH WE SHALL TAKE PART SO WHY SHOULD WE THINK THAT WE ARE NOT CAPABLE OF JUDGING UNIMPORTANT THINGS THAT PERTAIN TO THIS WORLD. IN VERSE 4 THE "IF-CONSTRUCTION" CARRIES THE IMPLICATION THAT SUCH LAWSUITS SHOULD NOT EVEN ARISE, BUT IF THEY DO SET THOSE WHO ARE LEAST ESTEEMED (WHO, BY WORLDLY STANDARDS ARE NOTHING IN THE CHURCH) TO JUDGE THE ISSUES (PROPERTY DISPUTES, ECT.) SINCE THEY ARE OF NO REAL VALUE OR IMPORTANCE ANYWAY. IN VERSE 7 PAUL SAYS THAT IT IS MORE VICTORIOUS TO ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE DEFRAUDED AND TAKE THE WRONG DONE TO YOU IN STRIDE. TO TAKE A BROTHER INTO COURT IS TO ALREADY SUFFER DEFEAT, WHATEVER THE OUTCOME MAY BE, BECAUSE YOU HAVE LOST A BROTHER AND INJURED THE BODY OF CHRIST. IN VERSE 8 PAUL REPROVES THOSE IN THE CHURCH FOR RATHER WANTING TO DO WRONG TO SOMEONE ELSE AND DEFRAUD THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY THEIR BROTHERS. THOSE WHO WERE DOING THIS THING WERE SINNING AGAINST THE ETHICAL STANDARDS OF GOD (MAT. 5:39,40) AND AGAINST BROTHERLY LOVE. IT WASN'T THAT THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH WAS IGNORANT OF THE LAWS OF GOD FOR SIX TIMES IN THIS CHAPTER HE DRIVES HOME WHAT THEY KNEW SO WELL WITH "KNOW YE NOT?"