

Titus Chapter 3, verses nine through 11. Why don't we stand as we read God's word? I want to speak this morning on the subject ... Two Strikes and You're Out. Because here in Titus 3, verses 9 through 11, the issue of church discipline is being addressed. In fact, let's back up into verse eight.

This is a faithful saying. And these things I want you to affirm constantly that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition knowing that such a person is warped and sinning being self condemned. So reads God's word. You may be seated.

Over 20 years ago, I took a class on church planting at the Master's Seminary with Alex Montoya. Dr. Alex Montoya was one of my favorite teachers while I was there at TMS. He has planted several churches across the LA basin. There's many things I've forgotten about that class. But as I was studying Titus chapter 3, verses nine through 11, I was reminded of a statement that Dr. Montoya made. Here's what he said, and it kind of perked my interest. He said this: "Guys, be on your guard against the guy who can undo in five weeks what has taken you five years to do."

What he was doing was warning us about people that might come to our future churches that can destroy the work. That can disrupt the work. He was reminding us of something that's kind of counter intuitive for the Christian or the Christian pastor who is normally bent on welcoming people. He was reminding us that not everybody ought to be welcome in your church. Some people ought to be removed. Some people ought to be rejected. Now I know that doesn't sit well on our ears this morning, but it is the truth. That's why he perked my interest, because I'd never heard anybody say that. Because here we are doing a church planting class. How do you build community? How do you welcome people? How do you reach out? And yet he told us, "Guys, watch out for the person who can destroy in five weeks what it might take you five years to build."

What he was really saying was this: there are some people you can point to the front door, and there are some people you can point to the back door. In fact, that's what's going on, isn't it? Here in Titus chapter 3, verses nine through 11, where Titus is told by Paul that it is the role of a pastor ... it is a job of a leader sometimes to reject people. Did you notice that in verse 10? Reject. Have nothing to do with is the greek. Have nothing to do with a divisive man after the first and second admonition knowing that such a person is warped, and sinning, and being self condemned.

Paul is schooling Titus on the tough side of ministry. That some people are a problem, a grave problem. That they pose a threat to the unity, vitality, and momentum of the church, and they must be dealt with. You know we're in a series on Titus called 'Doing Good.' Well, here's another aspect to doing good. If I was to put a kind of heading on this, Titus 3:9-11, doing good involves church discipline. Doing good involves church discipline. In fact, throughout this letter which was written to Titus, who was sent to the Island of Crete in the middle of the Mediterranean, go back to verse five in chapter one for the reason of setting in order the things that are lacking, of fixing what's broken, of strengthening what's weak, of developing what's underdeveloped.

That was Titus's job. You'll see that along with that call to benefit these churches on the Island of Crete was a call to confront error, remove unrepentant people, and rebuke sin. Look at chapter one, verse nine as an example. Here's the role of an elder. Here's the role of a pastor holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine to exhort. and notice, and convict those who contradict. One of the jobs of a pastor is to get in the face of those who contradict the gospel. You'll

notice in verses 10 through 16 that the issue of false teachers and false teaching is addressed. Notice in verse 10, For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision. Now, notice this, whose mouths must be stopped. who subvert whole households, teaching things that ought not to be taught.

Alex Montoya was right. You gotta be on your guard for people that are going to show up to your church and be a disruptive force in the life of your congregation. And you have got out of love for God, out of love for them, and out of love for God's Word in the glory of Christ, to indeed confront them and in some cases reject them. That's where we're at in Titus 3, verses nine through 11. As Jonathan Leeman has said in a book on church discipline, "An undisciplined church membership is an undisciplined church membership." There is a correlation between discipleship and discipline. One is positive and one is negative, but both serve the same end.

Now, if you're wanting an outline, here's how I've broken verses nine through 11 up. One, there is a pivotal contrast. Two, there's a personal concern. And three, there's a pastoral caution. Let's look at a pivotal contrast. Notice our paragraph. It begins with a conjunction, but. Now you know that 'but' is pushing us back to consider the words that were said just a moment or two ago, and draw a contrast, or to make a connection. I want you to notice a pivotal contrast. A sharp contrast is drawn here for Titus and for the congregations on Crete. And here's the contrast. At the end of verse eight, you'll notice these words. These things ... We'll explain that in a moment.

There are certain things that are good and profitable. But notice verse nine. There are certain things that are unprofitable and useless. This is the contrast. This isn't a new paragraph. In fact, this is the conclusion of an argument that started in verse one. Remind them. And in verses one through eight, Titus is to remind the Christians on Crete of gospel indicatives and gospel imperatives. He's to remind them that they were once lost, but God in His mercy saved them, and the gospel is explained in verses three through seven. But gospel indicatives lead to gospel imperatives. When a man understands the gospel, and believes the gospel, and God saves him, his life changes and good works follow his faith in Jesus Christ.

That behavior is outlined, isn't it? Subject yourself to rulers, verse one. Be obedient. Be ready to do every good work in terms of your relationship to the Christ-less culture around you. Speak no evil, be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility, because remember you were once like them. You were once like them, and now that you're among them as a Christian, love them the way you would want to have been loved if you had known the gospel before you received.

And that's where we're at in verse eight. So, this is a trustworthy saying. These things, these gospel indicatives and these gospel imperatives, these things affirm constantly to those who believe that they need to be careful in doing good works. And that's profitable to men. Notice 'to men.' It's not just profitable to the church. A church that believes the gospel, a church that lives the gospel, a church that practices the gospel, and reaches out in its community with gospel compassion ... that's good for men. That's good for a community. The best thing we can do among many things as a church here at Kindred for Orange County is believe and live the gospel. That's good. That's profitable. That's what God wants us to do.

But in contrast, within the church people can be disruptive. False teachers can strive about the law. In fact, here we're told to avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law. Why? Because it's unprofitable. That's distracting. That takes you away from the gospel, and that makes

you less of a church. Because a divided factious church is not a good witness to the world. So, that's the contrast. I just want you to notice that.

But, here's the things that are profitable, but here are the things that are unprofitable. That's the contrast, and with the contrast comes a choice. I expect you to choose what's profitable. I just want to remind you it's not a big point. It's not even the main point here. But it is worth noting that life for any one of us wasn't a choice. We didn't ask to be born. But life is full of choices; small ones, big ones, routine ones, life-changing ones. Every day, our choices are turning us into something and someone. Think about the power of choice. Think about the implication of decisions you make. The things you eat and your physical life. The things you think about, and your emotional, psychological life. The choices you make in relation to the Lordship of Christ and your spiritual life. Here, we have an example of many examples in the Bible that we are reminded of the necessity to choose well, because of the power of choice.

We are, this morning, the accumulation of our choices. Now, I know part of your story is maybe an environment you grew up in. A broken home. A dysfunctional family. You grew up in a tough neighborhood where the choices were limited. I get all of that. That's part of a person's story and it affects them. But let's be honest, when you get beneath all of that, you are what you've chosen to be. You are what you've chosen to be regardless of your parents' choices, regardless of your neighborhood's condition, you have to choose your reaction. You and I are an accumulation of our choices this morning, and that's challenging.

Here, Paul says to Titus, "I want to remind you to choose between what's profitable and what's unprofitable and useless." So, the contrast begs a choice. I just want to remind you that the Bible often casts life in that kind of light. Here we are, Titus 3, verses nine through 11. You have the choice between what's profitable and unprofitable. But if you go back to Deuteronomy 28, 29, and 30 ... God is speaking to Nathan of Israel and he sets before them a choice. "If you obey me, I'll bless you. And here's how I'll bless you. But if you disobey me, I'll curse you. And here's how I'll curse you." And when you get to Deuteronomy 30, we're told that God set before them the way of life and the way of death. Choose between the profitable and the unprofitable between what's right and what's wrong. What about the Book of Proverbs, or wisdom literature in the Psalms or in Ecclesiastes? And the wise men of Israel often set before their people a choice. Hey, there are two paths in life, and one is marked 'wisdom' and the other is marked 'foolishness.' Now foolishness in that context has nothing to do with your IQ or have your high school diploma. That's moral.

So, here's the issue. When it comes to life, are you gonna respond to life in the light of the fear of God? Is God going to have His proper place? Is God going to have His proper proportion in your life? Or are you going to be foolish? Is there a way that seems right to you? But remember, the way that seems right to man ends in death. Are you going to declare your autonomy before God? Are you going to act wiser than God? You don't need His word. You don't need His gospel. You don't need His son. And so the Bible is constantly saying, "Hey, here's what's profitable. Here's what's unprofitable. Here's what leads to life. Here's what leads to death. Here's what's wise. Here's what's foolish."

And then you've got ... maybe in First Corinthians, 8, 9, and 10 on the issue of liberty, and the things that Christians can do and not do. The things they can eat, the things they can drink. Sometimes, Christians come to different places on that. And Paul calls for consideration and love of each other, but he does remind us that all things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. There is an interesting choice. In that relationship to whether, a Christian could eat meat that was once dedicated to an idol. Some

Christians say yes, some say no, and some hot and heavy debates were taking place. And Paul calls for unity, and he reminds those who would say, "You know what? You can eat it." And Paul would agree with them. "Actually, you can eat it because there's no such thing as idol. It's a piece of meat no matter what's being pronounced over it." But he says this: "All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. Now, you could eat it. But in light of your brother, and his foibles, and his scruples, why?"

It's a bit like what Sinclair Ferguson said at a chapel at the Master's Seminary. "Do remember that you are at liberty not to use your liberty." Just because you have a liberty doesn't mean you should use it. You need to be discerning and wise in your choices. Yes, I could do that. But I'm not going to do that because here's the better path. I'm going to say no more. I just want to remind you this morning, we are the accumulation of our choices. Before this day's done, you will make a lot more choices. Small and great. Routine and life-changing. Choices that will affect your health, choices that will affect your emotional wellbeing, choices that will affect your spiritual depth. Make wise choices.

I've told you this story before. But being back in Northern Ireland, I suppose recently I was reminded of it. You know that I spent some time in the police service there in the Reserve Forces during the troubles. During that time, I was also a lay preacher for the Irish Baptists. I spent the day at Lisnagleer Baptist Church near Dunggannon and Pomeroy, which means nothing to you. But that day, I had lunch after church with a man who was a farmer by day and a policeman on the weekends, like myself, Sam Benson. Over lunch at his home, he told me a story of how on one particular morning, he was getting ready to go to Lisnagleer Baptist Church where he was a deacon when the phone rang. It was the police station in Pomeroy, which was a really tough area by the way. There was an infestation of IRA units in and around that area of Pomeroy and Dunggannon. And the Sergeant said, "Hey, we're short of a man, Sam. Can I come over and pick you up? I need you to be a driver today."

Reluctantly, he agreed. Sent his wife and family off to the little Baptist church, and the Sergeant came in about 30 minutes. And Sam got his uniform, put it on, and they went out on patrol. And he said, "You know what Philip, we came at about 30 minutes into the patrol, we came to this fork in the road. And I said to the Sergeant, 'Which way?' And he said, 'I don't care.' And on a whim, he said, 'We went left.'" He says about 30 minutes later another patrol car came there, two young officers inside this armored vehicle. It was their first three months on the job as police officers having graduated from the depot. They went down the road on the right, about a half a mile and were blown to smithereens. The IRA had been lying in wait with a covert bomb and the car disintegrated. In fact, their bodies weren't found. It was that massive of an explosion. The family had nothing to bury.

Sam told me, he said, "Can you imagine?" He says, "I came to that fork in the road. I made a choice to go left on a whim. But I had no idea that that was a choice between life and death." Look, folks. It's a little dramatic. Most days of the week we don't choose between life and death, but we do choose many things on a given day that will determine the quality of our life and ultimately life or death, heaven or hell. So, just notice this pivotal contrast. There are things that are good and profitable, but there are things that are unprofitable and useless. Make a good choice. Do remember this, young people. I wrote this down when I was young and it served me well. I want you to think about it. "God gives His best to those who leave the choice to Him." Just always remember that.

Because you're gonna be faced with choices your whole life, and the culture is going to tell you to go down this road, the broad road that everybody's on, and it's hard to go down the narrow road that few are on. But God gives His best to those that leave the choice to Him.

Let's move on. A pivotal contrast ... Secondly, a practical concern. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this. A practical concern ... and the concern is that a good choice be made. Because if a bad choice is made and you get drawn into foolish disputes, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, nothing profitable results. Nothing useful comes off that. See, that's his practical concern. He's already introduced the issue of false teachers and false teaching in chapter one, verses 10 through 16. They pose a threat to the health, holiness, and harmony of the church.

He seems to be returning to that issue right here. He's concerned that the church that has the gospel and ought to be living that gospel for the good of all men, that they could fritter away that power and significance through feuding. That they'd get off track. That they wouldn't keep the main things, the plain things, and the plain things, the main things. No. They get drawn into fanciful theological debate. They get involved in speculation and strife, and that's bad news for the church, and that's bad news for the community. Bad news for the church's vitality, focus, unity, and witness before the world. That's why this kind of stuff that's profitless and useless is to be avoided.

Notice that? But avoid ... In verse eight, you'll notice there are things I want you to affirm and stress. The gospel and living it out as a witness before the community. That's good. Do that. And what you mustn't do. This is my concern. Don't do this. Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law. The word 'avoid' there in the Greek simply means to go around. There's some places you go around because you want to avoid that place. And there are some people at work or in your neighborhood you go around, you know? You see them coming and all of a sudden you've got a great interest in the soda machine at work, or you duck into the bathroom because you want to avoid them. That's just the way life is.

And Paul's saying, "Hey, there are certain issues and certain individuals ... avoid. Give them a wide berth. Stay clear." What are they? Well, in the life of the church ... number one, foolish disputes. It's interesting. Strong word, foolish, kind of understated here. Foolish means stupid. Or it's actually the Greek word from which we get our English word 'moron.' I know. We tend not to use that word anymore. Moron. "You're a moron." It's a great word, actually. But you know, in the politically correct culture, we probably shouldn't say it that much.

But here's what the Bible saying: stay away from moronic disputes. Don't become a moron where you allow another moron to draw you into moronic disputes. Because that's a waste of time. Gets you away from the gospel, grieves the spirit, and gets you off the mark in terms of trying to reach people with the gospel. All right. Now, what might that be? Theological tangents. Discussions on doctrines that serve no purpose that haven't been solved for a millennial, and you're not going to solve them. Getting involved in subjective rather than objective discussions. Getting involved in conjecture rather than substance. Stay away from that. You know what? There's enough of the Bible that's easily understood that will take me a lifetime to master than get drawn off in tangents.

Now, let me say this by way of qualification. As verses 10 through 16 of chapter one made it clear, Paul is not prohibiting all theological controversy or all disputes. He writes several letters that are all about disputes. Colossians is about early Gnosticism and the denial of the incarnation. Paul writes about it in a controversial, polemical manner. He writes to the Galatians. He doesn't even say hello to them. He just gets stuck in. "I'm so fed up hearing about the fact that you're removed from the gospel." And then he chastises them, and warns them about the Judaizers. Hebrews is written to scold and rebuke Christians that are thinking you know going back to Judaism and the old covenant. So, there's much of the new Testament that's polemical. Don't read into this text you can't get involved in disputes, doctrinal, or

controversy, theological. What is being prohibited here? Moronic disputes, tangential disputes, secondary matter disputes.

In fact, I came across this story ... true story about a church in Tennessee. You can find it. A little church in a corner of Tennessee, and it's called Left Foot Baptist church. Let me tell you the silly story behind the title. There was a time in the life of Baptists in Tennessee where foot washing was in vogue. Jesus talks about foot washing is at an ordinance or not. There were some Christians that believed that was an ordinance like Baptism and the Lord's Table. And this church did that. As part of their worship, they washed each others' feet. But it comes to a point which there's a dispute. Do you start with the left one or the right one? It's true Bill. Here, we have this stupid dispute. There was a split, and you have the Left Foot Baptists. Tragic.

And we laugh. But let's be honest, sometimes when we get drawn into blogging, and media platforms, and discussing things, before long, man, we're all involved in moronic disputes that really get us off our game. That aren't profitable or useful for the life of the church. Number two, genealogies. Genealogies. That's an emphasis, you can imagine, on birth, pedigree, ethnicity, something very important to Jews. Let's be honest, there's a reality there because you know what? There were things promised to the seed of Abraham. Literally. There were blessings involved in tying yourself into the covenant made with Abraham and his descendants. You get into Joshua, and a Jew's territory was determined by a Jew's tribe.

I get it, Genealogies are important. But as time went by, they took on a life of their own. And by the time of Jesus' time, the focus was on not who a man was in terms of his character, but whom a man was. What family he belonged to. Was he of the seed of Abraham? Yet he didn't live like Abraham, but his connection to Abraham biologically covered all his sins? And Jesus challenged that. In fact, the gospel challenges that.

Paul in Philippians 3 says, "I was of the stock of Israel. Hebrew of Hebrews. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin". But while many believe that's important, I've come to realize faith in Jesus Christ is more important. And setting those things aside, I am pursuing him. And it seems that given the fact that some of the false teachers, according to chapter one, verse 10, were of the circumcision from a Jewish background, they were making issues over genealogy. They were doing a kind of a one-upmanship probably on Gentile believers. Well, you know what? You want to hear about my genealogy? I tie into Moses. I tie into Abraham. I tie into Jacob. Paul says, "Stay away from that stuff."

Contentions? That's self explanatory. Stay away from fights. Stay away from feuding over secondary issues, preferences, rivalries. That was going on in Corinth, right? I'm of Paul. I'm of Apollos. Stay away from people who can pick a fight with their own shadow. I mean, there are people like that. I used to belong to a nomination of Baptists who were pretty well known for their feuding and their fighting. And we used to tell jokes on ourselves. The joke was this: that a GRBC Baptist pastor was once ship wrecked and stranded on an island. He stayed there for several years until he was rescued. As he was being wrenched up on the helicopter, they looked to the brow of the hill. And there were three buildings. They said, "Are you sure you're the only one on the island?" He said, "Yes, the building on the left." He says, "That's my home." He says, "The building in the middle, that's the church I go to. And the building on the right. That's the church I used to go to."

You get that? There's only one guy ... Okay. But there's people like that. They'll fight with their own shadow. Leave them on an island to themselves, and there'll be disputes. Paul says stay away from

people like that. Contentious people who want to fight over everything and fight over nothing. Then there's strivings about the law. Again, we're back to this idea of chapter one, verse 10. Many insubordinate idol talkers, deceivers especially, those of the circumcision, the Jewish party. Given the fact that circumcision is mentioned in chapter one and the fact strivings over the law are mentioned in chapter three, we would connect those dots and say, "Hey, there was probably some within the churches in Crete arguing for this fact. You know what? You need to be circumcised." It's the Judaizers that we read about in Acts 15, and in the book of Galatians.

They argued, "You know what? If you want to be a complete Christian, you need to not only follow Jesus, but Moses. You need not only grace, but the law." Now, all Christians believe that the moral law was good. Paul says that in his letter to Timothy, "the moral law is good." Keeping the law of God, the 10 Commandments, reflects God's character, His holiness, it's good for society, and certainly a path to righteousness. But Christians were not bound to the ceremonial law. But there were some that wanted to bind Christians to the ceremonial law, circumcision. Dietary laws. That's why in his letter to Timothy, Paul will address that. Talks about how all food is good and stuff like that. And it seems that there were those who wanted to add Moses to Jesus, the law to grace, and works to faith. It was another gospel. And Paul says, "Hey, avoid that kind of person."

Now, listen. I want to move on to the last thought. But I want to kind of summarize this. These four things are to be avoided like the plague. Strong word, 'avoid.' Go around. Don't get drawn into, don't be party to. Why? Because they're profitless. They're useless. None of that produces verse eight. That's the point. None of that produces verse eight, which is affirming the trustworthy statements about the gospel in verses three to seven, and living out your belief in the gospel through good works which makes an impact on men who are without Christ.

So, the point is the church needs to keep its focus on its priorities and make the gospel its passion. Verse eight, affirm the gospel constantly. Verse eight, practice the gospel radically. Verse eight, share the gospel widely to all men. And verse nine, focus on the gospel jealously. Don't get drawn away, sidetracked by contentions, strivings about the law, genealogies on moronic theological disputes.

It's simply this: guard against mission drift. May we at Kindred constantly guard ourselves. Every decision we make. Every discussion we get into. When you and I are together, let's keep bringing ourselves back to how does this advance the gospel? How does this make our witness before men more effective?

My father introduced me to a character that Charles Spurgeon had created. The character was called John Ploughman. In fact, you can buy a little book by Spurgeon called John Plowman's Talks. In fact, it's been reprinted. I recommend it highly to you. It's called Spurgeon's Practical Wisdom by Banner of Truth. Now, John Ploughman didn't exist. He was a literary creation of Spurgeon's imaginative mind. And John Ploughman was just your ordinary Englishman. Farmer by trade, laborer by occupation. He would pass on these wise statements and Spurgeon wrote them down.

Here's one of them. Here's one of the maxims of John Ploughman. Here's what he said: "Never stop a plow to catch a mouse." I know I'm talking a lot to city slickers, so try and imagine you're in a field, and a farmer, and here's what John Ploughman is. Think of a man, and a boy, and four horses all standing still for the sake of a mouse. You know, they're plowing. Big horses. It's a big field. The crops got to be sown, the harvest is coming. All of a sudden, they stop because they see a tiny little mouse and they go mouse hunting. And the seed never gets sown, and the crop never gets planted, and the harvest never comes.

That's a little piece of wisdom in life. Basically, keep the main thing the plain thing. You can say it in a whole lot of different words. Now, John Ploughman ends up sharing this with his minister. Again, fictional. And the minister says, "You know what? I can identify with that, because in the church there's a lot of mouse hunting that goes on." Now listen to these words from the minister talking to John Ploughman. A society of good Christian people will split into pieces over a petty quarrel, or a mere matter of opinion while all around them, masses of people are perishing. A miserable little mouse, which no cat would ever hunt, takes them off from the Lord's work.

Again, intelligent men will spend months of time and heaps of money inventing and publishing mere speculations while the great field of the world lies unplowed. They seem to care nothing, how many may perish so long as they get to ride their hobby horse. In other matters, a little common sense is allowed to rule. But in the weightiest matters foolishness is sadly conspicuous. As for you and me, John, let us kill a mouse when it nibbles on our bread, but let us not spend our lives over it.

What can be done by a mouse trap or a cat should never occupy our best thoughts. You get the point. It's Paul's point. Stress these things. Stress the gospel. Stress evangelism. Stress living a life of radical discipleship for Jesus Christ in your community, and stay away from the mouse traps of the false teachers and their speculations, and their strife. Keep the main thing, the gospel, the plain thing.

Okay, let's move on. Last thought. There's not only a pivotal contrast between what's profitable and unprofitable. There's not only a practical concern that they stay away from that which distracts and dilutes their gospel mission. But there's a pastoral caution. In verse nine, they're told to avoid certain issues and certain individuals. But it's interesting. By verse 10, it seems that certain issues and certain individuals become unavoidable.

Here's what we read: "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self condemned." Now, who is this divisive man or divisive woman? We're not told, but one would assume that the divisive man is someone who manifests the behavior of verse nine. So, the divisive man is someone in the church who is given to foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, strivings about the law that are unprofitable. And they do it to a degree. That's the issue. They do it to a degree that becomes disruptive to the gospel, and they're confronted. And a kind pastor or a Christian leader goes and says, "Hey, cut it out. You know what? This isn't profitable. You've got to submit to the elders. Here's our doctrinal statement. This is what we believe. You can't teach anything else." You get the picture. And there seems to be a scenario where that happens lovingly, firmly, patiently for awhile and they don't respond.

At that point, out of love for God, out of love for the church, out of love for the witness of the church in the community, and out of love for the person being addressed, they're actually rejected. They're kicked out of the church. They are disciplined by the church. They are removed from membership, and their connection to the church is limited. That's what's being taught here. That's what we have here. The doctrine of church discipline. You'll find it in other places. Jesus taught about it, didn't he? In Matthew 18:15-17. It's the mark of a healthy, effective, biblical church. You read about church discipline in the letter to the Romans Chapter 16, verse 17. In the letter to the Corinthians Chapter five, verses one through 11 in the first letter. In the second letter to the Thessalonians Chapter 3, verse 14.

Several people are identified and the church is told to avoid them, reject them, have nothing to do with them, turn them over to Satan, put them out of the church. Treat them like publicans. Strong. Strong stuff. Now no church glories in this, but it's there and it's a mark of a healthy church. Because a church is

meant to be holy, pure, and unspotted from the world. Therefore in its pursuit of holiness and purity, it will guard itself against moral lapses that become public and pronounced. It will guard itself against theological dilution of the gospel. And any pastor worth his salt and any leadership team worth their salt will do the tough side of ministry, which is this. They'll be mindful of what Dr. Montoya said that day, 20 years ago on the campus of the Master's Seminary. "Guys, watch out for the guy who will turn up and in five weeks destroy what God has been doing for five years."

Listen to Al Mohler. Authentic biblical discipline is not an elective, but a necessary and integral mark of an authentic church. Now, it's a big subject. I'm going to make a stab at it for about 10 minutes here. We'll kind of work our way through this text and we'll make some references to those other passages. If you want to study in this, there's certainly resources we can put in your direction.

A couple of things stand out. Notice, number one, what I called the reason. What would be the reason to reject someone? I mean, that's a big thing, isn't it? That's something you slow march. Where you actually reject someone from the church. You bar the doors, you limit the fellowship, you turn them over to the world. That's strong stuff. What is the reason? What would bring that about? Well in our context it's division. I mean, Proverbs 6, God hates a man who sows strife among the brethren. This is a person that's been approached. This is a person that's been loved. This is a person that's been rebuked kindly and firmly, but they are unsubmitive. They are self-willed. They are bent on division, and at that point the church must guard itself. They are according, to second Timothy 2, verses 15 to 19, a cancer.

What do you do with a cancer? You cut it out. You don't tolerate it. You cut it out, and that's what's happening here. It's interesting. If you go elsewhere in the New Testament, you'll find other issues that are identified. I don't have time to explain them. I'm going to run down a list. I want you to be good bereans and look at these passages. First, Corinthians 5, verses one to five, open sexual sin could be another reason for church discipline. That's a sin in Corinth. It seems to be that someone had an incestual relationship with, I think, their mother-in-law. It was open, it was scandalous, and they did nothing about it. And Paul chastises him and tells them to remove that brother.

Doctrinal denial, second John 10. You are to have nothing to do with anyone that denies the incarnation, and there are other issues in Roman 16:17, addressed. Refusal to obey scripture. Second Thessalonians 3 verse six. On the one hand, there are those who deny the very gospel. But there are those who believe the gospel, but they have a pattern of disobedience that the church confronts, brings the word of God to bear on their lives, gives them time to repent, but they refuse to obey the scripture in the matter being addressed. They can be disciplined.

Second Thessalonians 3, verse six. Fostering disunity. That's Titus 3, verse 10. And then finally, unresolved personal conflict. Matthew 18:15 to 17. That's the one Jesus addresses. Hey if you've got something against your brother or sister, go to them. If there's a conflict developing between you and another person that's a real one and a substantive one, one that has the potential of disrupting the fellowship of the church ... go and sort that out. Do it in private. Nobody needs to know about it but you two. Don't go running to the pastors before you go to the person. You don't need to get them into trouble for no reason. Go and sort it out. If they don't listen, bring a couple of witnesses. If that doesn't work, now you involve the church.

Kind of like after two admonitions, we're at a bad place. So, those are the reasons. The reason. Number two, the rebuke. There's an admonition that's called for here. When someone is identified as divisive, or sexually immoral, or becoming a gathering point for dissension, are unresponsive to leadership, they're

to be admonished. They're to be admonished twice. Did you notice that? It seems to be a go, and you admonish them, and you leave them to think about what needs to be thought about. Then after time, you go back to see if there's a repentant response. And if there's not, there's a second admonition and the thing escalates. But you'll notice the reason, division, the rebuke two admonitions. And I think that allows for clarity. Make sure the issue's being truly understood, That allows for rebuke and appeal, and love, and grace, and patience.

Number three, the reticence. Reticence. You'll notice that there's no immediate dismissal. There's a process. Two admonitions. There's a desire to turn the person away from the error. Opportunities extended, grace is offered. In fact, this word 'admonition' carries the idea of advice offered for the interest of another's improvement. Two warnings are given. So, what's the point? There's no rush to judgment. Leaders are not to be trigger-happy on this issue. Patience is to be shown. The process is to be clear. The issues are to be clarified. The word of God is to be brought to the situation. Lordship of Jesus Christ appealed to. And hopefully, that person responds because there's a reticence to ever dis-fellowship or defrock anybody.

Nobody wants to have to do that. Although in some cases, it has to be done out of love for God, the person, the church, and the community. What is the ultimate goal in this? It's reclamation. That's the point. Why is there two admonitions? Because we're waiting to see if they'll return. We're waiting to see if they'll repent. That's what we want. That's what Jesus talks about, right? In Matthew 18:15. Why do you do this? To gain a brother. That's the point of discipline. Not to punish, it's to redeem and reclaim.

Number four, notice the recognition, verse 11. When this happens, when a person is rejected and their sin is established, it'll become clear. Knowing that such a person is warped, that's twisted, or perverted, sinning that's present tense ... notice that they go on sinning. They don't repent, they don't listen to admonition, they don't submit to leadership. They do their own thing. And when they do that, and the church disciplines them, you'll notice they are self condemned.

Now, I've been party to this and I've seen people be loved on patiently, rebuked firmly, and they leave the church, and the first thing they do is malign the leadership and gossip about the church. They blame everybody else but themselves. But the Bible says when you follow this process and it's clear and communicated well, they have nobody to blame but themselves. They had many opportunities to reconcile, but they didn't. By the way, very important point here, ultimately church discipline is about unrepentance. It's not about the church getting rid of idolaters, or thieves, or gossips. Those people belong in the church because of the redemption of Jesus Christ. In fact, the church is made up of people like that. Read the church in Corinth.

Now, the issue is unrepentant adultery, unrepentant gossip, unrepentant stealing. That's the issue. Ultimately, we discipline someone for the sin of unrepentance. It starts out as sin of adultery, starts out as the sin of pornography, starts out as the sin of gossip, starts out as the sin of division but ultimately, it's unrepentance. That answers the question because people ask it. How can you discipline someone yourself being a sinner? That's a good question.

Isn't the church full of sinners? You bet. They sin all the time. Christians sin all the time. But good Christians repent all the time. They're sinning and repenting. They're growing in grace. So, it's a ruse to say, "How can fallen sinners judge other fallen sinners?" Well, Matthew 7, we can do it with the right attitude and proportionately. The issue is we're not disciplining sinners in the stricter sense. We're disciplining unrepentant sinners that are a danger to the church. Get the point?

The removal. The removal. That's then reject, have nothing to do with. That's a formal process by which they are excommunicated from church membership. Limits can be put on social interaction with them. Read about it in verse Timothy 1, verse 20. Roman 16, verse 17. Your treatment of them is as an outsider. When you meet them, you treat them like any sinner. You want to call them to repentance and you preach the gospel. Because things have changed. You don't treat them as a brother in that fullest sense, because they're now behaving badly.

Let me finish with this. Spurgeon was destined to be a preacher and a pastor. Signs of it started showing up when he was six years old. Let me tell you a fascinating little story. He went to stay with his grandfather in Stambourne, England. His grandfather was a congregational minister, and as he listened to his grandfather, he could tell that his grandfather was grieved by a particular member of his church. A man by the name of Thomas Rhodes. He had stopped coming to church, he wasn't listening to the leadership, and he spent most of the Lord's day morning down at the local pub smoking his pipe, drinking his beer, and reading the Sunday newspapers.

As Spurgeon listened to his grandfather griping, he just said it one day straight out, "I'm going to kill Ole Rhodes." And he said, "Hey, you can't do that." "Oh," he said, "I'm not going to do it in a bad way, but I'm going to kill Ole Rhodes." After a few weeks, he comes back to the mance one day and he said, "I killed Ole Rhodes." "What do you mean you killed Ole Rhodes?" And before the day was done, the bell rang on the mance and they're standing at the door was Ole Rhodes, Thomas Rhodes, asking the pastor to forgive him.

Then he explained that the six year old Spurgeon had gone down to the pub that morning. Waltzed into the pub, found Ole Rhodes sitting in the corner with his pipe, and his paper, and his beer, and here's what that six year old boy said to him: What doest thou here, Elijah?" That's a verse right out of the Old Testament. "What doest thou here, Elijah? Sitting with the ungodly, and you a member of a church breaking your pastor's heart? I'm ashamed of you. I wouldn't break my pastor's heart, I'm sure." And he goes walking out.

Imagine that scene. It's amazing. And Rhodes is sitting there ... he's fuming. He just got taken down by a six year old. But he goes out of the pub, and gets his corner to himself, and he repents, and comes walking up to the pastor's house and says, "I'm sorry." And for four years after that, he lived as a faithful member of the church.

"I'm going to kill Ole Rhodes." It was a mercy killing. It was mercy. Severe mercy, embarrassing him in public, six year old boy taking him down, acting like some prophet from the Old Testament. But it was a mercy killing, because that's what church membership is. It's a severe mercy. None of us like to be called out. We don't like it. We bristle. Our pride rises, our sin takes hold. But it's a mercy killing. When a pastor says, "Stop. For the sake of God, your family, your wife your children, stop. For the sake of those around in the community they're going to see your sin and mock the gospel, stop it." It's a mercy killing. It's God's word. It's the true mark of a true church, and it's something that we must pursue to the glory of God. Lord, we thank you for our time in the word this morning. We pray that we'd hide it in our heart so that we may not sin against You, our brothers, our community, and the gospel. For these things, we pray in Jesus's name. Amen.