“The City of God: A Bride Made Ready”

**Matthew 18:15-20**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Sean Hoisington, Hayden Bible Church, 9/19/21)

 You really have to admire a pastor who tackles church discipline in a Sunday sermon! But if you’re preaching a sermon series on “The Church: The City of God”, you really need to cover every aspect of the church. Pastor Sean, however, did NOT lead off with how to kick obnoxious people out of the church! Instead, he focused on the “why” of church discipline: to create a pure, spotless, radiant bride for Jesus Himself.

 The Hebrews of the Old Testament were God’s own people (Exod. 6:7). They hungered and thirsted for righteousness. They wanted to live lives that exhibited the characteristics of their God. But they continually wandered away like an adulterous wife. When God brought judgments, Israel would repent for a time, but then turn back to her adulteries. She needed something that would change her **heart**. She needed a New Covenant (Jer. 32:40). This New Covenant in Christ’s blood doesn’t depend on the fickle faithfulness of people, but on the faithfulness of God Himself. It is a covenant between God the Father and God the Son. Under this New Covenant, God the Father is preparing a faithful bride for His Son. The last 2,000+ years have been about the preparation of that bride, the church (Rev.21:9-11). (Q1)

 God’s kingdom will have no end. His righteousness will shine through His church as we are transformed by Him. We, His church, are to be holy and blameless. THIS is why we have church discipline. God’s church is to be a holy, pure, chaste bride for her wedding with the King of Kings (Eph. 5:25-27).

 Church discipline is all about the careful **preparation** of the bride for her eternal union with the Bridegroom. Church discipline is to be **intentional**, **restorative**, **purifying**, and **under God’s authority**.

 Church discipline is **intentional**. We don’t just sit on our hands. We go get our brother and bring him back because he’s important to God and to us. We are to pursue peace with all men (Heb. 12:14 and Rom. 12:18). Discipline is actually good for us and good for the church (Heb. 12:9-11). (Q2)

 Church discipline is **restorative**, not punitive (Gal. 6:1). The steps laid out in Matt. 18:15-17 are meant to work toward reconciliation, bringing back the erring one, recovering the straying one. (Q3)

 Church discipline is also **purifying** (Matt. 18:17). In preparing a pure, chaste, holy bride for Christ, there is no room for someone who is unrepentant and no longer believing. There is no room for someone refusing to listen to the Holy Spirit’s conviction and pleading. Intimate body life and fellowship is no longer possible with such a one (2Cor. 6:14-18 and 1Cor. 5:9-13). (Q4) It would be our mistake if we let such a one live with the delusion that they are a Christian and living the Christian life. We are called, after exhausting the other steps, to remove him from among our body. Church discipline is **purifying**. (Q5)

 Finally, church discipline is **under God’s authority**. God designed and ordained the process given in Matt. 18:15-17. Christ is with us in this process, and He will direct us (Matt. 18:20 and Matt. 28:20). We are called to practice this discipline personally, within our fellowship with others, and corporately through our elders. Church discipline is the careful preparation of the holy bride of Christ. May He guide us every step of the way. (Q6)

**QUESTIONS**:

1. I know me: I still sin! Explain how this New Covenant gives me hope. Explain how I can still be part of the spotless bride of Christ.
2. How is discipline good for us as individuals? How is discipline good for the church?
3. Have you been the subject of gentle restoration? Share your experience with the group.
4. Should we separate ourselves and go live in a monastery? No. What is the separation talked about in these verses?
5. How can these steps of restoration and purification work with someone who removes himself from the local body?
6. Look at the last sentence of “O Worship the King”. Which name of God is the most meaningful to you today? Why?

 “O Worship the King” (Grant)

O worship the King,
all glorious above,
And gratefully sing
His power and His love;
Our Shield and Defender,
the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor,
and girded with praise.

 Frail children of dust,
and feeble as frail,
In Thee do we trust,
nor find Thee to fail;
Thy mercies how tender,
how firm to the end,
Our Maker, Defender,
Redeemer, and Friend.