

## LTBS 23rd June 2019: APOSTASY FROM THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Hello dear listening friend. You are on to LTBS on Ray Power 100.5. We are glad that the Lord has given all of us the grace to be a part of this day and we say may His name be praised for ever in Jesus Christ name! Amen. LTBS is a sponsored program of the churches of Christ which continue to advocate a return to the Christianity that is found in pages of the New Testament section of our Bible. We at LTBS continue to reiterate our belief concerning the word of God that with the word of God, the seed of the kingdom of Christ, the church can be reproduced the way it was when Jesus designed and founded it. We believe the Bible teaches us to restore and maintain the undenominational Christianity as revealed in the pages of the New Testament of Christ and we pray that you will join us in this noble quest.

Again, we at LTBS believe that the Bible is the only authoritative and authentic guide everyone needs to follow in order to worship God aright. We also believe that it is only the word of God as contained in the Bible that generates life, creates faith, builds character, infuses hope, cleanses our minds, and guarantees our future forever! We cannot live without the Word of God! At the same time, we equally believe that anyone who wishes to worship God acceptably must of necessity rightly handle the word of God and interpret it based on the original intended meaning. Therefore, we urge you, dear listening friend, never to take the Word of God for granted by accepting the words of men.

I am Abiodun Adegoroye and with me in the studio is David Akpata, who also serves as evangelist with the Church of Christ, Kado, our sponsoring congregation, and Felix Ekpenyong, an evangelist of Christ serving with the church of Christ in Masaka.

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Dearly beloved listening friend, we have been studying the apostasy from the faith that Jesus brought and established before going to heaven. We have also studied the reality that Jesus Himself said that Satan will try to confuse the world by setting up churches which will even look like the real church. In the course of this series, we did see that many people have fallen way from the pattern given originally designed by Christ. Today, we wish to once again shine the light of the word of God on the apostasy or the

falling that has taken place in the church specifically in the aspect of church discipline. As we will be delving into this lesson, may we ask you the following questions:

- i. Do you know that anyone that is discipline by the Father is considered an illegitimate child?
- ii. Do you know that in the church established by Christ, nobody is above discipline?
- iii. Are you aware that the only person that cannot be corrected or disciplined in the church is Jesus Christ, the head of the church?

As you ponder on the questions, please join us as we approach the throne of God seeking for His grace and mercy upon our lives even as we delve into this broadcast.

#### **PRAYER:**

Listening friend, the concept of discipline is one of the issues in the church that cannot be overemphasized. This is because discipline is one of the keys to the growth and development of the church that Christ established. Again, discipline is a part of the nature of God's relationship with us. Thus, when Christ designed and founded, His church, He established how discipline will be carried out, who will be disciplined and why discipline should be carried out. But today, a vast majority of people seem to be above discipline in the church, may be, because they are the owners of the church. Let us allow the Bible to speak to us in the book of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 concerning discipline. LTBS

**“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2Ti 3:16-17 ESV)**

Having heard what the Scriptures reveals to us in the text just read, we need to answer the question, **“What is discipline?”**

Microsoft Encarta simply defines discipline as a “training to ensure proper behaviour.” Based on this definition, discipline can be seen as the training that teaches and develops one through the instruction and exercise in self-control. It is training or experience that teaches, molds, corrects, strengthens, and perfects someone in the area of the training especially in moral excellence and self-control. In fact, from the military perspective, discipline is a regimentation of good ethical habits and behavioural practices. That is, correcting the one who steps out of line or helping him/her to fall back in line. Based on the definition of discipline, ideally a disciplined individual is seen in his ability to keep to acceptable patterns of behaviour by internalizing the principles and teachings prescribed by the standard. Thus, discipline is both instructive and corrective. That is why church discipline is a part of discipleship process, which correct and point every member of the church to the path established by Christ for all to follow. Therefore, every Christian is disciplined through instruction and correction of the word of God as captured in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 which we read.

Listening friend, do you know that the biblical church discipline has been abandoned in the religious landscape today and apostasy has crept in that regard. This is so because people who are claiming to have the form of godliness are denying the power of the word of God. As such, a vast majority of people are not cannot be disciplined in the church. Now, you may be asking, **“who should be disciplined in the church?”** Beloved, based on the instruction of the Holy Spirit as we read in 2Timothy 3:16-17, discipline in the church as set forth by Jesus Christ, the head of the church is for all children of God. This is without accepting the discipline of God, there will be no salvation. LTBS from Titus 2:11-12

**“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to renounce ungodly living and worldly passions so that we might live sensible, honest, and godly lives in the present age”** (Tit 2:11-12 ISV)

You see, according to the revelation of the Holy Spirit, based on the grace of God, the word of God trains everyone, disciplines everyone in the church without exception to renounce ungodly living and worldly passions so as to live a godly live in this present. Thus, every believer in Christ Jesus needs to be discipline. That was why when apostle Peter whom some people considered to be super apostle did what was not in conformity with the word of God, apostle Paul rebuke him sharply or we may say apostle Paul discipline apostle Peter. LTBS from Galatians 2:11-14

**“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”** (Gal 2:11-14 NIV)

Here, the Bible makes very clear for us to know how Paul, an apostle rebuked, corrected, disciplined Peter, who was also an apostle. This shows us that in the church which Jesus Christ established and owned by Him alone, no one is above discipline. If apostle Peter was rebuked by Paul when he did what was not in tandem with the gospel of Christ, who is that man that cannot be disciplined or rebuked today in the church. But, you see in almost all the denominational churches in our religious landscape, there is nothing like church discipline as set forth in the Scripture. This is having fall away from the truth of God’s word, men have established their own churches these men controlled their churches since they are General Overseers and they operate and run the affairs of the church like their private businesses. Now, the General Overseer, being the founder of his/her church, operates it as he/she wishes. Therefore, if he/she indulges in any act that is not tandem with the gospel of Christ, there is nobody that can discipline him/her. WHY? Because, he/she is the founder of the church. Beloved listening friend, have seen anything like this happening before? Or have heard it happening among the owners of church in religious landscape? We at the LTBS are calling you attention to this great

apostasy or falling away so that you will realize that the danger of lack of biblical church discipline today which has created a vacuum for a decline in morals in the Christendom. As a result, sin is at the increase and people are going about committing all kinds of atrocities. Instead of those committing abominable act, especially those claiming to be religious leaders to repent and ask God for forgiveness, they are so proud tell whosoever that tries to question their action to his church and go to anyone that like. If a man opens his mouth and say, "If you do not like what is happening in this church, you are free to go to any church, this is my church." This should simply reveal to you that such a church does not belong to Jesus Christ but to that man. Please shine your eyes once you see a man been a General Overseer of a church. It means that man is the owner of the church and he alone detects how the church is to be operated.

Listening friend, we at LTBS do not intend this morning to affirm that church discipline is a cure-all for the ills of the apostasy. church; And we are saying lack of church discipline as set forth by Christ is the only way in which apostasy or falling away has taken place. Rather we advocating that church discipline as established by Christ in the church is part of the restoration necessary in the church today. If biblical church discipline is restored, then no one or group of people will be above discipline in the church. Thus, the church will be returned to Christ as the only founder and owner.

Listening friend, having seen who should be discipline in the church as reveal to us in the Bible, may we consider few instances in the Bible where people were disciplined in the church. There are many texts in the New Testament that point to the practice of church discipline. The most prominent and well-known is probably the one recorded in the book of Matthew. LTBS from Matthew 18: 15-17

**"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."** (Mat 18:15-17 ESV)

Listening friend, considering the passage carefully, on the surface, Jesus appears to have two concerns: first, that the sinner repents; second, that the number of people involved remain as small as necessary for producing repentance. A careful study of the passage shows that beneath these concerns of Christ is the deeper conviction that the church should look different than the world. That is, Christians are not to live like pagans or tax collectors. "Pagans or Gentiles" here represent those who are outside the covenant community (the church) and "tax collector" represent those who had betrayed the covenant community (and are also outside the community of Christ). This obviously shows church members should live differently than the world. And if, after a series of gracious warnings, a person does not harken to the instructed of the word of God, the church should exclude such a person from her fellowship. The goal of this discipline is for restoration not banishment.

Listening friend, apart from the instance of discipline mentioned by our Lord Jesus Christ, apostle Paul and other New Testament writers as they were guided by the Holy Spirit also write about church discipline. For instance, just like in our religious landscape today where immorality has crept in the churches in various aspects to the point that a G.O of a particular denomination was caught in an act of adultery, but was not be disciplined, because of the fact that he is the owner of the Church, Paul the apostle addressed such in the Corinthian Church. LTBS 1 Corinthian 5:1-5 and 1Corinthians 5:11-13

**“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”** (1Co 5:1-5 ESV)

Here, Paul, an apostle of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit encourages the church to play a judicial function. Like Jesus, Paul is addressing a scenario where someone professing the name of Jesus could be removed from the church when the person is not working in line with the word of God. You see, “To hand the man over to Satan is to treat him, in Jesus’ words, like a pagan or tax collector. It is to treat the person as someone who no longer belongs to the covenant community. The Holy Spirit through apostle Paul further observes that failing to remove the man from the church puts the whole church at risk. LTBS from 1 Corinthians 5:6-10

**Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.** (1Co 5:6-10 ESV)

In the final verses of the chapter, the Holy Spirit through apostle Paul reiterates the fact that the church has a judicial role to play in a man’s life. LTBS from 1 Corinthians 5:11-13

**But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”** (1Co 5:11-13 ESV)

Listening friend, we equally see the Holy Spirit through Paul, an apostle instructing the church at Thessalonica not to keep company with anyone who does not obey the instruction of the word of God. LTBS from 2 Thessalonian 3:14-15

**“And if anyone does not obey our word by this letter, mark that one and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”** (2Th 3:14-15 MKJV)

Beloved, the passages we have seen so far demonstrate the fact that open, unrepentant sin in the church is a grave issue that God is serious about. In fact, it was God Himself who exacted the punishment of death upon Ananias and Sapphira in the first recorded case of church discipline in the Bible (Acts 5:1-11). If God takes sin in the church that seriously, then we too must also take it very seriously irrespective of who is involved.

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