

### Titus 3:10 and Church Discipline

- 1 **Παρατεόμαι** (*paraitēomai*); reject, decline, avoid, refuse (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7 = Have nothing to do with; 2 Tim. 2:23 = refuse).
- 2 **αἰρετικός** (*hairetikos*); factious, contentious, divisive, causing divisions (only used in Tit. 3:10)
- 3 **νουθεσία** (*nouthesia*); warning, instruction, admonition (cf. Eph. 6:4, 1 Co. 10:11 = instruction)

Matthew 18:15-17 was a well-established practice of discipline before Paul was called as an apostle (see Deut. 19:15ff), and the other apostles presided over cases of discipline (e.g. Acts 5:1-11). But beyond the general steps outlined in Mt. 18, the apostles did provide instructions for particular cases that didn't strictly adhere to this process. The principle of gentle, patient personal admonition before public discipline seems almost universal (cf. Gal. 6:1-5, 1 Thess. 5:14-15, 2 Tim. 2:25). 1 Tim. 5:20, for example speaks of rebuking sinning elders in the presence of all after he's been rebuked by 2 witnesses (step 2 in Mt. 18). But there were instances in which putting someone outside the church or disassociating with a brother bypassed public admonishment.

The brother living in adultery in 1 Co. 5:1-11 was not personally admonished by the Corinthians to cease sinning – indeed they boasted in their tolerance of his sin. Yet instead of admonishing the Corinthians to complete steps 1-3, Paul immediately applied public discipline – he was to be put out of the church forthwith (cf. 1 Co. 5:5, 5:9). Those who led unruly lifestyles in 2 Thess. 3:6 were also not afforded all of the steps outlined in Mt. 18 – other believers were commanded to “keep away” from them. At times Paul admonished believers to “take special note” of those who sinned in dissension and factious behavior (Ro. 16:17) – this was apparently a way of telling believers to not associate with these men in order to shame them into obedience (cf. 2 Thess. 3:14-15). While Ro. 16:17-18 seems to indicate “taking special note” as regarding these factious men as unbelievers, 2 Thess. 3:15 clearly identifies it as a practice also meant to shame fellow believers. Titus 3:10 is another example of bypassing the public admonition of step 3 in Mt. 18 – the brother is to be immediately “rejected” after a first and second warning. The context of this passage seems to suggest that a divisive person is deemed an unbeliever (as in Ro. 16:17-18), because he is “self-condemned”. This accords with John's test for true belief, namely that the brothers love one another (1 Jn. 1:8-11, 3:10-11).

So it would seem that while Mat. 18 is the general guideline for church discipline, and individual confrontation followed by public confrontation was the general rule, Paul made exceptions to it in certain cases, such as those who were clearly and openly living in unrepentant sin (1 Co. 5:1-11; 2 Thess 3:6), and those who were factious and divisive (Ro. 16:17-18, 2 Thess. 3:14, Tit. 3:10). In each case when repentance was proven the shame of disassociation ceased, and the brother was let back into the community (cf. 2 Co. 2:5-11). In the case of those whose disassociation was a declaration of their unbelieving status (such as in 1 Co. 5:1-11, Ro. 16:17-18 and Tit. 3:10), repentance would obviously still allow such a one back into the fellowship.