Withdrawing Fellowship

Intro: The action of withdrawing fellowship is an unhappy occasion. As a result, many congregations have not practiced this command, as they should. Yet, the Bible is clear on the subject. In this lesson, I want us to study the command to withdraw fellowship.

I. The New Testament Commands Discipline
   A. We notice that it is to be done by Divine authority.
   B. There are at least 68 verses that relate directly to this subject, specifying a wide range of unrepented of sins with which we are to deal.
   C. Scriptures:
      1. Mat. 18:15-17 "15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."
      2. Rom. 16:17 "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."
      3. 1 Cor. 5:1-13 "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."
      4. 2 The. 3:6, 14 "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.... 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."
      5. 1 Tim. 1:3-4, 19-20 "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do... 19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."
      6. 1 Tim. 6:20-21 "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen."
7. 2 Tim. 3:8-9 "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was."

8. Tit. 1:9-11 "9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake."

9. Tit. 3:10-11 "10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

10. 2 John 9-11 "9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

II. SPECIFIC SINS TO DISFELLOWSHIP

A. DOCTRINAL ERROR

1. 1 Tim. 1:19-20 "19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

2. Tit. 1:9-11 "9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake."

3. 2 John 9-11 "9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

B. SOWING DISCORD

1. Rom. 16:17 "17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

2. Tit. 3:10-11 "10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

C. IMMORAL

1. 1 Cor. 5:9, 11 "9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a raider, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

2. Eph. 5:11 "11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

D. MISCELLANEOUS CAUSES

1. Any public sin which a child of God will not repent

   a. Mat. 18:15-17 "15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

   b. 1 John 5:16 "16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
2. Those who walk disorderly
   a. 2 Thes. 3:6, 14 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us…. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
   b. This would include those who have stopped attending the worship services.
3. 1 John 1:6 “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:”
   a. Darkness: used metaphorically, here, of those who are in moral or spiritual darkness, of ignorance respecting divine things and human duties and the accompanying ungodliness and immorality.
   b. Since these no longer have fellowship with God, we must sever fellowship with them.

III. PURPOSE
   A. For the individual
      1. 1 Cor. 5:5 “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
      2. Destruction of the flesh; to help him put sin (fleshly things) out of his life
      3. Save the person
         a. 2 Thes. 3:14 “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
         b. Cause him to be ashamed of his sin leading him to repent.
   B. For the congregation
      1. For purity
         a. 1 Cor. 5:7 “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:”
         b. Eph. 5:26-27 “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
      2. To prevent sin’s spread; let others know that sin will not be tolerated
         a. 1 Cor. 5:6 “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”
         b. 1 Tim. 5:20 “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”
         c. 1 Cor. 15:33 “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”
   C. For the world
      1. It allows the world to know that sin is not tolerated.
      2. Acts 5
         a. Ananias and Sapphira sinned.
         b. They both died.
         c. Acts 5:14 “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”
   D. It is an act of love
      1. 1 Cor. 5:2 “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.”
      2. Just as God’s chastisement (Heb. 12) or a parents discipline is done out of love, so this is done out of a heart of love.
IV. TIMING
A. Guidelines that must be followed:
1. There are no specific guidelines given in the Bible, but no doubt certain principles do apply.
2. Mat. 18:15-17 “15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”
   a. Visit the sinner, urge him to repent
   b. Continued visitation with others (possibly elders)
   c. Tell it to the church (bring them in to urge repentance)
   d. If he refuses all attempts, then withdraw fellowship
3. Tit. 3:10 “10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;”
   a. One admonition
   b. Two admonitions
   c. If he still refuses to repent, avoid (disfellowship) him.
B. Urgency
1. Ecc. 8:11 “11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”
2. The longer the sin is allowed to fester, the more damage it does.
   a. It is harder for the impenitent man to repent.
   b. He may die in his sins or become mentally incapable.
   c. More people will be affected by his sin
   d. The Lord may come.
3. 1 Cor. 5 indicates that this was to be done immediately
   a. Taken away instead of puffed up; 1 Cor. 5:2 “2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.”
   b. Gather together and deliver him to Satan; 1 Cor. 5:4-5 “4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
   c. Purge out; 1 Cor. 5:7 “7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us;”
4. Yet, we are not to dispense with the proper procedures.
   a. Gal. 6:1 “1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”
   b. Jam. 5:19-20 “19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

V. HOW TO TREAT THE DISFELLOWSHIPPED BROTHER
A. In general
1. We are to disassociate ourselves from him
   a. The Bible uses terms such as: “have no fellowship,” “withdraw yourselves,” “note,” “mark,” “avoid him,” “refuse,” along with many others.
b. This carries over to the social area as well.

   (1) 1 Cor. 5:9, 11 “9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a raider, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”

   (2) We are not to eat a meal with him; 1 Cor. 5:11 “11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a raider, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”

2. We are not to indicate in any way that he is in fellowship with God or us.

B. What if a family member?

   1. It is difficult area.

   2. We must be guided by the principles of the Bible.
      a. Often more than one principle is involved, as is the case here:
      b. The command to withdraw fellowship, not to eat with such a one, etc.
      c. The command in relation to family obligations.

   3. While family responsibilities continue, we must make it clear that we do not endorse the disfellowshipped one. We must show that spiritual fellowship has been withdrawn, and encourage him to repent.

C. Continue to admonish him as a brother

   1. 2 Thess. 3:15 “15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

   2. When we see him, talk to him, etc., we urge him to repent.

VI. Who Is To Do It

A. It is a congregational action.

   1. Mat. 18:17 “17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

   2. 1 Cor. 5:4 “4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

B. It would be led by the elders.

   1. It is not just an elder action.

   2. They, being the overseers of the congregation, should lead the church in carrying out this action.
      a. Acts 20:28 “28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
      b. Tit. 1:9-11 “9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.”

   3. While they take the lead, the action is congregational.

   4. We should never hear phrases like:
      a. They withdrew from So-and-so.
      b. The elders withdrew from him
C. Those who do not follow the withdrawal of fellowship are themselves subjects of withdrawal.
   1. Heb. 13:17 “17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”
   2. They would be sowing discord; Rom. 16:17 “17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”
   3. They would be walking disorderly; 2 The. 3:6 “6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

VII. What If The Sinner Repents?
   A. He is to be received back into fellowship.
   B. 2 Cor. 2:6-8 “6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. 7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.”
   1. He is to be:
      2. Forgiven
      3. Comforted
      4. Our love confirmed toward him.

Conclusion: This action is not pleasant. Yet, if we are to be faithful to God and His Word, we must carry it out when needed. If we love the souls of men, we will carry it out. When properly applied, it will work to the salvation of souls.