

# Power of the Church

# Class Notes

Notes / Slides / Recordings are posted:

- <https://iknox.org/seminars/systematic3>

# Context

- ~~The Church: Its Nature, Marks and Purposes~~
- ~~The Purity and Unity of the Church~~
- **The Power of the Church**
- Church Government
- Means of Grace within the Church
- Baptism
- The Lord's Supper
- Worship
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit - Part 1
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit - Part 2
- The Return of Christ: When and How?
- The Millennium
- The Final Judgement and Eternal Punishment
- The New Heavens and New Earth

# Definitions

“ Grudem, p1095

We may define the power of the church as follows: *the power of the church is its God-given authority to carry on spiritual warfare, proclaim the gospel, and exercise church discipline*

# **Spiritual Warfare**

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**2 Corinthians 10:3-4**

For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds.

# Power of the Church in Spiritual Warfare

- Power of the Gospel to break through sin and hardened opposition
- Awaken faith in the heart of unbelievers
- Render demonic opposition ineffective
- But, what about us?

# **Power of the Church and Power of the State**

# Physical Power of the Church

- Christ's Kingdom - expectation vs. reality

# Physical Power of the State

- Clearly Granted: restrain/punish evil
- Should Not be used to force/mandate Christianity
- Forced conversions would be false conversions

# Spiritual Power of the State

# Church Discipline

# Purpose of Church Discipline

- Restoration and Reconciliation of the Believer Who is Going Astray
- To Keep Sin from Spreading to Others
- To Protect The Purity of the Church and the Honor of Christ



## Westminster Confession of Faith

Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

# For What Sins Should Church Discipline Be Exercised?

- Scripture gives no specific list, but many varied examples:
  - divisiveness, incest, laziness/refusing to work
  - Disobeying Paul's writings, blasphemy, teaching heresy
- Some general principles:
  - Public, outward sins
  - Continued over a period of time
- Grudem's wisdom:
  - Mature judgement is required
  - Give careful thought to the person's current struggles
  - Wide degree of tolerance if area of Christian disagreement

# How Should Church Discipline Be Carried Out?

- Principle of "Need to Know"
- Start Small, Increase as Needed
- Special Case: Church Leaders
- Other Considerations
  - Repentance/Restoration
  - Posture of those Involved
  - $P(A \cap B) = P(A)P(B)$ 
    - Personal Forgiveness != Repentance/Reconciliation



## Question

In what ways could our church exercise its spiritual power against the forces of the enemy more effectively? In what ways could you use this power more effectively yourself?



## Question

What is the strongest enemy to the effective proclamation of the gospel in your community now? How might the power of the church be used against that enemy?



## Question

Are you aware of situations where a gentle word of admonition has resulted in a positive change in your behavior or the behavior of another Christian?



## Question

Are you aware of situations where church discipline has been fully carried out and has resulted in restoration of the erring person?



## Question

If a church refuses to carry out church discipline at all for a number of years, even though there is an evident need for it, what will be the harmful results in the church?



## Question

Have there been times when you wished that someone would have come to you earlier with a word of admonition or counsel concerning an area of sin that you were unaware of or that you were uncertain about?

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