

Dealing with Division – May 8, 2015

How does one deal with divisions within a church body? What is the proper protocol when a member has wronged another member? What does the bible say in this regard?

The recommended process is:

1) One on One with person.

One is to forgive their brother and overlook the transgression and tell him in person of the transgression. One is not to run to the courts at the slightest abuse (see Mt18:22 with 70 times 7).



RSV Matthew 18:15 "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.

RSV Proverbs 19:11 Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

RSV Proverbs 26:20 For lack of wood the fire goes out; and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.

RSV Matthew 18:21-22,35

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"

22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

RSV Luke 6:37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

RSV Matthew 6:12-15

12 And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors;

13 And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you;

15 but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

RSV Luke 17:3-4

3 Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him;

4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

If there is no resolution, and the Christian still wrongs you or doesn't repent and make amends and you have forgiven multiple times then the party who has been wronged may proceed to the next remedy.

2) You + 2/3 Witnesses.

You must take your evidence of wrongdoing along with 2 or 3 witnesses and confront the Christian that wronged you. You request that which will repair the breach of what was taken from you (item or good name).

RSV Matthew 18:16 But if he does not listen, **take one or two others along with you**, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

RSV 2 Corinthians 13:1 THIS IS the third time I am coming to you. **Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses.**

RSV 1 Timothy 5:19-21

19 **Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.**

20 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

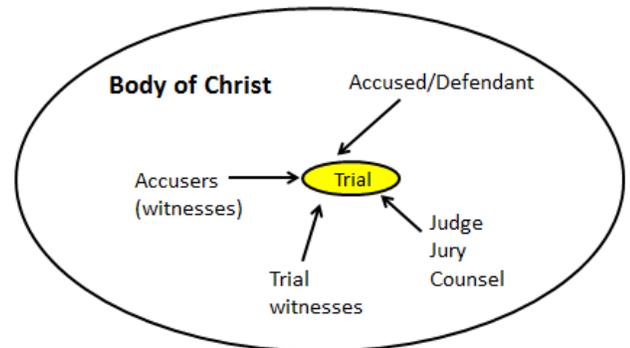
21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality.

If the Christian brother refuses to repay the damage in front of the 2 or 3 witnesses then you may proceed to the next step of presenting the case before the church.

3) Tell it to the church.

In present times one may text/IM/email/facebook/tweet the entire church of the wrong but that is not scriptural as it will be discussed below.

RSV Matthew 18:17 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.



Two examples of presenting the matter to the church will be discussed

- a) Paul's trial
- b) Jesus' trial
- c) Apostle trial

a) Paul's trial - Acts 23:33-35, 24:1-14

Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Caesarea. Governor Felix read the complaint but told Paul that he would hear his side "when your accusers arrive".

- This statement indicates that the accusers would come and be physically present in front of Paul and the judge (Governor Felix) – Acts 23:33-35.
- The accuser presented their case first (Acts 24:1-7) and the accuser's witnesses confirmed the same (Acts 24:8).

Right to face
your accusers
face to face

Right to
impartial
judge

- Paul was allowed to rebut the presented evidence and witnesses with his own – Acts24:9.
- Paul was also allowed to appeal the decision to a higher jurisdiction when he felt the judge was not impartial – Acts25:11 which corresponds to appeal process in Exodus18:21-22

Right to appeal

RSV Acts 23:33-35

33 When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him.

34 On reading the letter, he asked to what province he belonged. When he learned that he was from Cilicia

35 he said, "I will hear you when your accusers arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium.

RSV Acts 24:1-14

1 AND AFTER five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul;

8 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all this was so.

9 And when the governor had motioned to him to speak, Paul replied: "Realizing that for many years you have been judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.

10 As you may ascertain, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem;

11 and they did not find me disputing with any one or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues, or in the city.

12 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me.

<p>RSV Acts 25:11</p> <p>11 If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death; but if there is nothing in their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar."</p>	<p>RSV Exodus 18:21-22</p> <p>21 Moreover choose able men from all the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe; and place such men over the people as rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.</p> <p>22 And let them judge the people at all times; every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves; so it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.</p>
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b) Jesus' trial

The Jews acknowledge that the right to a trial was essential in which you could present evidence as seen in Jn7:50-51.

The Jews presented their case and Jesus accepted his right to remain silent – Mt25:63 & Jn19:9-10.

RSV John 7:50-51

50 Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them,

51 "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?"

Right to a trial

RSV Matthew 26:59-64

59 Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,

60 but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward

61 and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'"

62 And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"

63 But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Right to remain silent

RSV John 19:9-10

9 he entered the praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer.

10 Pilate therefore said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?"

c) Apostle trial

Acts 15:1-27 shows a where there was a doctrinal dispute where the people opposed Paul's and Barnabas' belief. The people appealed to the leaders of the church for a decision. The parties wanting an appeal were allowed to send trial watchers along with Paul –Acts15:1-2.

The entire church didn't participate in the trial but only the apostles and elders in order to hash out the matter at hand –Acts15:6

Once the judgment was decided then a written statement was made – Acts 15:19-20.

The written statement was sent back to announce the result of the trial along with leading men who would verify the written statement – Acts 15:22,27.

The trial wasn't the entire church but a small group of knowledgeable persons of the scriptures (apostles and elders).

RSV Acts 15:1-7

1 BUT SOME men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. *[appealed Paul and Barnabas' judgment]*

3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles, and they gave great joy to all the brethren.

4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.

5 But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses."

6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. *[Trial by the elders of the church]*

7 And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

RSV Acts 15:19-27

19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

20 but should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood.

21 For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues."

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, *[witnesses of court decision]*

23 with the following letter: "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting.

24 Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. [Written statement + confirmation by mouth]

What if a person bypasses the process and begins broadcasting one side of the matter far and wide?

Then they are considered: gossipers, whisperers and slanderers. The first person saying anything about a case seems to be telling the truth but it's one sided and it may not be the truth.

Pro 18:17 **The first to plead his case seems right**, *Until* another comes and examines him.

RSV Romans 1:29 They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, **they are gossips**,

RSV 2 Corinthians 12:20 For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, **slander, gossip**, conceit, and disorder.

RSV Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man spreads strife, and **a whisperer separates close friends**.

RSV Leviticus 19:16 You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand forth against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.

RSV Psalms 140:11 **Let not the slanderer be established in the land**; let evil hunt down the violent man speedily!

RSV Proverbs 10:18 He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and **he who utters slander is a fool**.

What if a person refuses to go to trial?

If a person refuses to listen to the church then that person is cut off.

RSV Matthew 18:17 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**.

What about the open rebuke by Jesus and Paul?

In Mt16:21-24 Jesus rebukes Peter for going against Jesus' intentions.

RSV Matthew 16:21-24

21 From that time **Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem** and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

22 And **Peter took him and began to rebuke him**, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you."

23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men."

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Paul rebukes Peter for being a hypocrite and setting the example that caused the congregation to fall into hypocrisy.

RSV Galatians 2:11-14

11 But when **Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.**

12 For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

13 And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity.

14 But **when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all**, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Rebuking an elder that hasn't repented of sin is lawful.

RSV 1 Timothy 5:19-21

19 **Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.**

20 **As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all**, so that the rest may stand in fear.

21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality.

