

Why Officially Withdraw from Those Who Have “Already Withdrawn Themselves”?

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1. Because the Bible indicates that an official declaration should be made when the church is “gathered together” that the impenitent brother/sister is no longer considered to be in Christian fellowship, but has been officially “delivered unto Satan” (1 Cor. 5:5, 6; cf. Matt. 18:15-20).
2. Because if there is no official declaration of withdrawal announced to the church, church members might continue eating with and encouraging the person in sin. Instead, they should be admonished to have no company with him, to cause him to feel ashamed, so he will repent and be saved (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15). Just because a brother is not assembling with the church, that does not mean that he is not keeping company with or interacting with church members at other times.
3. Because any sin a brother commits that is known to others is a deadly leaven that negatively impacts others until public repentance takes place (1 Cor. 5:6); and that leaven should be declared evil and removed as much as possible to keep the church pure (1 Cor. 5:5-9; 2 Thess. 3:14).
4. Because when the world looks at the bad example of the erring brother, the church should be able to say, “We do not condone his lifestyle. We withdrew fellowship from him, as God commanded.”
5. Because other faithful Christians/congregations in the area need to be made aware not to keep personal company with this brother, whereby they would encourage him in his error (2 Thess. 3:14, 15).
6. Because other faithful congregations in the area need to be made aware that this erring child of God should not be accepted into their local flock as a member without repentance.
7. Because withdrawing may encourage other area churches to begin obeying the command to officially withdraw from brothers and sisters who will not repent (1 Cor. 5:5, 6; 2 Thess. 3:6).
8. Because erring brothers and sisters should not be able to “overrule” what God commanded the church to do and escape the “punishment” God prescribed (2 Cor. 2:6). This would be like a bad employee about to be fired, saying, “You can’t fire me, because I quit!”; yet the church still has the power to officially “deliver such a one unto Satan” (1 Cor. 5:5).
9. Because forsaking the assembling is a sin that will bring the wrath of God, unless repentance takes place (Heb. 10:23-31).
10. Because commands to practice church discipline are for sin in general—not simply a couple of sins like false teaching or fornication (Matt. 18:15; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-11; Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 3:10, etc.).
11. Because we take every sin seriously—not just certain types of sin (all sins are deadly, Isa. 59:1, 2; Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:1; James 2:10).
12. Because we have enough faith in God to trust His wisdom and follow His methods of restoration (Prov. 3:5-6).
13. Because God’s command to inflict this “punishment” is a test of a church’s faithfulness: “For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things” (2 Cor. 2:9; cf. 2:5-11).

14. Because apparently the Corinthians had been in sin for not disciplining the erring one: *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong [the fornicator, JPH], nor for his cause that suffered wrong [the father of the fornicator, JPH], but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you”* (2 Cor. 7:10-12; cf. 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 7:16).
15. Because if the church would practice discipline on those who stop assembling, it would cause other members to think twice before forsaking the assembling, like the fear instilled in the early church after the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:11), or the open rebuke of those in sin: *“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear”* (1 Tim. 5:20).
16. Because, even if they have been gone for some time, the church should revive efforts to restore them if need be, and use all methods necessary in efforts to bring about repentance, because of love for the lost soul (Matt. 18:12-14).
17. Because, even if the church has not obeyed God’s command to inflict this *“punishment”* in the past, the church’s full repentance would imply that the error be corrected to the fullest extent possible (2 Cor. 7:10-12; cf. 2:6; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20).
18. Because we cannot say that we have done all we can do to restore the erring until all methods are exhausted, including officially withdrawing.
19. Because we cannot say we have done all God commanded until repentance or church discipline takes place.
20. Because even if the erring one is no longer assembling with the church, the drastic, “last resort” measure of officially withdrawing fellowship may very well be the stimulus that causes repentance (as it has many times, even in recent years) (cf. Lk. 15:16-19; 1 Cor. 5:6).