

# Discipline in the church

To know and understand discipline in the church and the necessity of its application is of utmost importance if we are to be manifesting the love of God and striving on toward our perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ! **“Whom the Lord loves He disciplines”** and therefore whom we love we discipline even as a father his beloved children (Heb. 12:5-11 NAS).

The word **“discipline”** and its various forms appear in the New American Standard version of the bible forty-seven times. The most prevalent Hebrew word is *musar*, and the most prevalent Greek word is *παιδεια, paideia*, and both are translated in the King James Version variously as “discipline, chastening, or correction.” The word *παιδεια, paideia*, which comes from the root word *παισ, pais*, meaning “a child,” means literally “child training.”

Discipline starts with oneself, then in a family, and then in the family of God. An elder must first have self-discipline over his own life, then over his wife, and later over his children, before he can exercise good and loving discipline over the church. The scripture says that an elder must be: **“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he**

**take care of the church of God?)** (I Tim. 3:4-5 KJV). The Greek word for “**rule**” is *προιστημι, proistemi*; the root *istemi* means literally “to stand, place, or set” plus the prefix *pro* means “before.” Therefore, the word means “to place over, to preside over, superintend” (Thayer’s lexicon).

The words for “**in subjection**” are *εν υποταγη, en hypotage*. The meaning of *εν, en*, is “in”; *υπο, hypo*, means “under”; and *ταγη, tage*, means “to place, appoint, assign, order.” Consequently, the words are defined to mean “to have in subjection, in submission, in subordination, in obedience” (Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich lexicon).

The word for “**gravity**,” *σεμνοτης, semnotes*, means “gravity, dignity, seriousness, honor, probity, purity,” and is spoken in reference of those entitled to “reverence and respect” (Thayer’s and B.A.G. lexicons).

Now, in the scriptures to Timothy and Titus, Paul has given us the qualifications for an elder, which are part of the job description for that position of service in the church of one’s locality. As we just explained from Paul’s letter to Timothy, part of those qualifications involve having proper discipline in the home, so that one can know how to have proper discipline in the church. Again, Paul writes similarly to Titus of the necessity of good discipline in the home when he says that an elder must be one “**having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward**” (Tit. 1:5-7 NAS). Then Paul goes on to mention self-discipline and some of the aspects of discipline in the church when he says that an elder must also be “**self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine [teaching] and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. For this cause prove them severely that they may be sound in the faith**” (Tit. 1:8-13 NAS).

These last verses emphasize that for “**the elders who rule**” (I Tim. 5:17), discipline in the church is imperative because of the battle that we are in and that the enemy of both our souls and the church of Jesus Christ will stir men up to try and destroy the faith and truth implanted in God’s people. Therefore, let us look more

carefully at the exact meaning of several of the words used. “**To refute**” comes from the Greek word *ελεγχειν, elegechein*, and means “to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted”; also, “to find fault with, correct, to reprehend severely, admonish, reprove, to call to account, show one his fault” (Thayer’s lexicon).

Now this is to be done to those who “**contradict**” the truths of God’s Word. Here the Greek word is *αντιλεγοντας, antilegontas*, and means literally “to speak against”; and it is translated in the KJV as “**gainsay**.” What an important ministry of the rulers of God’s people!

Unfortunately, in the present man-divided church structures making up most of the one true God-made church in each city, the meetings are not freely led of the Holy Spirit of God, and therefore we seldom see the free exchange of teachings and ministry that regularly occurred in the New Testament church. (These structures are the typical type of congregational church structure — man-controlled, man-centered, man-led, principally a one-man ministry or a hierarchy with one man at the top.) Consequently, we seldom see the correction of false teachings that is so needed and necessary among God’s people. In fact, men spurn and deny the church the freedom for this purpose that is given to us by God, often with the excuse that it will result in disorder and confusion. However, the result of this denial is the massive confusion of false teaching and division that we see in the body of Christ; because God has ordained freedom to result in the correction of erroneous doctrine and behavior that is so often present. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about this when he said, “**when ye come together in the church . . . there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you**” (I Cor. 11:18-19 KJV). However, because of men’s selfishness, they are not adequately interested in the body of Christ as a whole, nor even the quality of their particular little portion of it, but mainly its quantity or their own ways.

Protected pulpits are Babylonish creations which have become the honored thrones of proud dictatorial authority, maintained and guarded for the preservation of the many kingdoms of men, not the one true kingdom of God ruled by humble servant authority.

To continue on with an exposition of Paul’s instructions to Titus, we should not be surprised then to find him stating that there are many “**rebellious**” men. Here the Greek word is

*ανυποτακτοι, anipotaktoi*; the prefix *αν, an*, means “not”; *υπο, hypo*, means “under”; and *τακτοι, taktoi*, means “orders, control, or authority”; and thus the word means “insubordinate,” and is translated “**unruly**” (KJV) and “**rebellious**” (NAS).

Also, there are many “**vain talkers**” (KJV), or “**empty talkers**” (NAS). The Greek word is *ματαιολογοι, mataiologoi*. It is interesting in that *ματαιος, mataios*, means “devoid of force, truth, success, result; useless, to no purpose.” And *λογοι, logoi*, is the plural form of a very familiar word *λογος, logos*, meaning “speech” or “a word which, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea.” What a word for much of the empty preaching and teaching of today!

Also, Paul says there are many “**deceivers**,” and here the Greek word is *φρεναπαται, phrenapatatai*; *φρεν, phren*, from the root *φρην, phren*, meaning “mind,” plus *απαται, apatai*, meaning “deceivers”; and is, therefore, more accurately translated “mind-deceivers,” suggestive somewhat of the popular word today, “mind-benders.” These are especially from the “**circumcision**,” Paul says, which we might think of as from the religious crowd who distort the word of God so cleverly with the aid of “**seducing spirits**.” After a little meditation on these words and their implications, please reread the preceding scripture in Titus. Then the tremendous need can certainly be seen for faithful elders who will be able and willing to deal with these kinds of people and maintain proper discipline in the church.

Now that we have seen a little about who is responsible for discipline in the church and why, we should consider how it is to be done. But remember what we said at the beginning?

“Discipline starts with oneself, then in a family, and then in the family of God. An elder must first have self-discipline over his own life, then over his wife, and later over his children, before he can exercise good and loving discipline over the church.”

So then, let us consider some aspects of all of these areas of discipline.

First, how do we attain more self-discipline?

I believe our only hope is in the Lord, and if we go to His Word, we’ll find the answers. In the Sermon on the Mount, we find three whole chapters of very important teachings that we must understand (Mt. 5, 6, & 7). These are about attitudes and actions, about righteousness in many significant areas. The Lord sums up His teaching with the authoritative declaration that we must hear His words and act upon them if we are to enter His kingdom. We

will not expound on the entire Sermon, but let us look at those self-disciplines that He calls righteousness which are very personal and of a private nature, and which He expects us to do.

First, He instructs us about giving alms, which is assistance to the poor (Mt. 6:1-4). When we do this, and do it correctly, we will be rewarded. Our rewards are not only material blessings in return, but many spiritual blessings of growth and development.

Secondly, He instructs us about prayer, and forgiveness (Mt. 6:5-15). We must have a good and adequate prayer life in secret. No one has ever been successful spiritually without communion with God in all of its aspects. And learning to forgive quickly and completely is fundamental.

Thirdly, Jesus expects His disciples to fast (Mt. 6:16-18). Regular weekly fasting is a discipline that is essential for real growth and development, the building of the kingdom of God within ourselves and within others.

Next, Jesus talks about material things (Mt. 6:19-34), that we must **“seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you [us]”** (Mt. 6:33 NAS).

Paul writes about self-discipline when he likens the Christian life to participating in the olympics. He writes, **“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified”** (I Cor. 9:24-27 NAS). Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, and whether we wage spiritual warfare, or “the battle against the bulge [our flesh],” it is only available from Him (Gal. 5:23).

Next, if a leader is married, he must know how to function as the head of his household. His wife must be under subjection according to the Word of God, and he must be lovingly leading her into holiness (Eph.5:22-33; I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:34-37; Col. 3:18-19; I Pet. 3:1-7).

**“Whom the Lord loves He disciplines,”** and as Christ (the head of the man) disciplines the husband, the husband (as head of his wife) must discipline her in love the same way (Pro. 3:12; Heb. 12:6; Eph. 5:25, 28-29). Many men are not willing to do this properly,

and I have seen many lose their ministries in the Lord because of it. We must not be partial in our dealings, we must love as He loves, impartially, but at the same time holding to the wife in love. This becomes very practical. Let no one abuse his wife, physically or verbally, but often words of admonishment and correction are needed as well as encouragement, and the denying as well as the giving of things. Sometimes a wife needs to stay home when her attitudes and actions are not what they should be. The Lord certainly disciplines men in this way. He withdraws His sweet presence, and refrains from taking them places with Him in ministry.

Any man who is going to be really successful as God counts success in the ministry, must have the Lord first in his life in every aspect. He must rid himself of all idolatry; that is putting anything or anybody before the Lord. He must understand the words of the Lord when He said, **“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”** (Lk. 14:26-27 NAS). The love we have for God must be greater than the love we have for anything or any one, including ourselves. The Lord’s requirement for discipleship was given in the midst of parables about land, business, marriage, building, and rulership, as well as His declaration about any family member or oneself; and He closes His teaching about possessions, and the fearful consequence of putting anything before Him. He said, **“So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear”** (Lk. 14:33-35 NAS).

Now, about children. Many scriptures can be given about training and disciplining our children, and I will list some of them. Let us begin by quoting some very famous words of Moses about our responsibility to love God by teaching His Word to our children.

**“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach**

**them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”**  
Deut. 6:4-7 NAS

Next, let us consider a word that God spoke to David through Nathan the prophet about Solomon. It is a word that can be applied to all of us individually, and to small groups, and on up to national leaders that know the Lord.

**“I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him.”**  
II Sam. 7:14-15 NAS

Now let us consider some of the words of God through Solomon himself concerning discipline (whom the Lord Jesus commended for his wisdom), which the church has cherished for centuries and therefore used so very successfully in rearing children; but I might add are under such distorted and severe attack today in this lawless and rebellious generation (Mt. 12:42; Lu. 11:31).

**“My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord, or loathe His reproof, for whom the Lord loves He reproofs, even as a father, the son in whom he delights.”**  
Pro. 3:11-12 NAS

**“On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding [lit., heart].”**  
Pro. 10:13 NAS

**“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently [lit., seeks him diligently with discipline].”**  
Pro. 13:24 NAS

**“Stern discipline is for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof will die.”**  
Pro. 15:10 NAS

**“Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death [KJV, and let not thy soul spare for his crying].”**  
Pro. 19:18 NAS

**“Stripes that wound scour away evil [KJV, The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil], and strokes reach the innermost parts.”** Pro. 20:30 NAS

**“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”** Pro. 22:6 NAS

**“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”** Pro. 22:15 NAS

**“Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.”** Pro. 23:13-14 NAS

**“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way [KJV, left to himself] brings shame to his mother.”** Pro. 29:15 NAS

**“Correct your son, and he will give you comfort [KJV, rest]; he will also delight your soul.”** Pro. 29:17 NAS

Now two scriptures from the New Testament.

**“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”** Eph. 6:1-4 NAS

**“Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.”** Col. 3:20-21 NAS

It is obvious from the foregoing scriptures alone, when words of correction or other disciplinary measures or restrictions do not



bring the necessary correction desired, that physical pain must be used. But then the question arises as to what form of physical discipline should be used. The scriptures we quoted tell us that we can either choose wisdom on our lips, or a rod on our backs; and that the discipline of the rod will effect a change in the inner man, the heart. I believe a rod is just that; it's a thin switch or a thicker rod, depending upon the seriousness of the offense and the size of the child. The purpose is to inflict pain, not damage. When the physical pain of swift and just discipline is done in love and compassion, and is greater than the physical pleasure of the sin committed, a child will change his thoughts and ways.

The physical discipline of a child is the responsibility of the father, and if a mother will use wisdom and the proper admonishments, and warn the child about turning them over to their father for physical correction, both they and the child will be better off. The mother will be more at rest, and the child will be more obedient.

Now concerning discipline in the church, we have already covered scriptures teaching us that it is the responsibility of the elders. These scriptures confirm that an elder must be able and willing to reprove those who error in teaching, but we also need to look at scriptures that pertain to the errors of life (that means sinful behavior) and how we all are to deal with even unrepentant Christians.

When there is sin in an individual's life, we are to pray for them, and God promises to forgive them and give them life (I Jn. 5:16). Sometimes we must go to the individual, admonishing them in humble love in order to restore them (Gal. 6:1). We must always go in the right attitude, humbly and gently, having dealt with ourselves first before going to our brother (Mt. 7:3-5; II Tim. 2:24-26; Jam. 2:12-13).

At other times, when Christians have sinned against us and are not repentant about their sin, we must follow the Lord's instructions that He gave us in Matthew 18:15-35. Here we find that if after we have gone to our brother alone and he doesn't hear us, that means that if he does not listen to us and respond correctly by repentance from his sin, we are then to take with us one or two more because sin is serious. We must do this because if more than one person shows him his sin he may be more apt to accept it, and also because every word must be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. Finally, if he does not hear the two or three of

us, then comes the matter of dealing with sin before the church. Not only is an elder of God's people responsible for teaching and helping people deal with sin on the personal level, but he especially must be willing to deal with sin openly before the church when necessary, recognizing that the discipline of sin on the church level is very important for several reasons. First, an individual must not be allowed to perish without our love and concern; and that involves not only admonishing him about his sin, and praying for him, but loving discipline must be administered to whatever degree necessary so as to do all within our power and that of God to bring the person to repentance and his ultimate salvation.

A second reason that we must continue to deal with sin to the point of bringing it before the entire church is that **"a little leaven leavens the whole lump"** (I Cor. 5:6 NAS). This truth that Paul writes concerning sin in the church should be seen in two aspects. One, sin is pernicious, and infectious. It will influence the behavior of other saints, and therefore must be purged out before it can infect other members of the body and cause them to enter into sin. However, a second aspect must be seen that is not as often considered. This is the fact that the Lord looks at His church as a whole, and judges us accordingly. If we look at the story of Achan, we see that the Lord judged all of Israel when this one man sinned. The account is given to us in Joshua chapter seven where we find Israel going up to battle against the small town of Ai immediately after the very famous and glorious victory over the much larger city of Jericho. Achan took of the spoils for himself (a Babylonian garment and some silver and gold), and buried them in his tent. Consequently the Lord was angry with all of **"the children of Israel,"** and when they went to battle, thirty-six innocent men were killed as their invading forces were routed in fear and shamefully defeated. When Joshua fell on his face in supplication before the Lord, the Lord told him to get up off his face because **"Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant"** (Josh. 7:11 NAS). God looked at them as a whole the same as He looks at us today. Therefore, we must purge the body of Christ of sin and wickedness if we are ever to see victory over our enemies and the healing of our land. When Israel dealt properly with Achan, God gave a wonderful victory, the same as He will for us when we deal with our "Achans." The spoils of war were to be brought into the treasury of the Lord, not greedily gathered for personal profit; and Babylonish garments are to be abhorred and destroyed, not worn like some proud peacock (Josh.

6:18-24). One man's sin brought a curse on the whole nation, and national disgrace; innocent men died, and their families lost their husbands and fathers; therefore God's righteous judgment in turn was not only the death and dishonor of the man, but the destruction of his whole family.

Therefore, if after a professing member of the body of Christ begins to practice serious sinful behavior, and the matter is brought before the whole church, judged properly, and they are proven guilty but refuse to repent, the church must discipline them. The church must love them enough to pray for them, and depending upon the sin, take whatever action is appropriate to attempt to bring them to repentance and restoration.

We have an incidence mentioned in God's Word where certain Christians were leading an **"unruly"** and **"undisciplined life,"** and not according to the example and teaching that their leaders had given them (II Thes. 3:6-16 NAS). Paul and his companions had set the example by working hard, night and day (although as apostles they did not have to, they could have lived off the tithes of God's people), but there were certain Christians who refused to work at all, and were expecting the rest of the church to provide for them. Paul writes to the church that they were to admonish such people as unruly brethren, and then to stay away from them in order that they might be ashamed. Paul gives the church an order and a principle that has been so helpful down through the centuries. **"If anyone will not work, neither let him eat"** (II Thes. 3:10 NAS). This is true Christian love, caring enough about our brothers and sisters to discipline them in love so as to bring them to repentance from their sinful ways.

Because of the seriousness of such sin as rebellion, and teaching things which should not be taught for the purpose of making money, often God's Word to us is to **"reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith"** (Tit. 1:10-13 NAS). Paul also writes that we are to take note of those who are making division in the church, and causing others to stumble, and turn away from them because they are not serving the Lord but their own selfish appetites (Rom. 16:17-18). For these reasons we are given the Word of God, and it is to be preached **"in season and out of season"** (II Tim. 4:2 NAS). Paul tells Timothy to use it to reprove and rebuke, because in time people will yield to their own selfish desires, and therefore choose to sit under ministers who will teach them what they want to hear in accordance with their own carnal appetites (II Tim. 3:16 - 4:4).

When a person becomes “**factionous**” (NAS), “**a heretick**” (KJV), they are to be admonished at least twice, and if they do not repent, they are to be rejected (Tit. 3:10-11). The Greek word is *αιρετικον*, *hairetikon*, and comes from a root word *αιρεω*, *haireo*, that means “to choose, to take for one’s self, prefer.” Paul writes that they are “**perverted**” (NAS), “**turned out of the way** [the true faith]” (literal Greek), and are sinning and have condemned themselves (Tit. 3:11 NAS). One can observe from the context then that a heretic is someone who has chosen to believe a false revelation or teaching and has chosen to cause division in the body of Christ over it because of selfish motivation. The church must reject this kind of person. This is further confirmed by the use of the Greek word *αιρεσις*, *hairesis*, which occurs nine times in the New Testament, in either the singular or plural form. It is translated “**sect**” five times the same in both the KJV and NAS (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5; 26:5; 28:22); “**heresy(ies)**” the other four times in the KJV (Acts 24:14; I Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20; II Pet. 2:1); and in the NAS, variously, “**sect**” one more time (Acts 24:14), “**factions**” twice (I Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20), and “**heresies**” once (II Pet. 2:1). It means “that which is chosen, hence, one’s chosen opinion, tenet; a body of men separating themselves from others and following their own tenets; dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims” (Thayer’s lexicon); and is listed as one of the works of the flesh for which people are condemned (Gal. 5:20-21).

John goes even further and states that a person who has left the true teachings of Christ is not only not to be allowed into your house, but is not even to be greeted with a friendly greeting such as “Hello” (II Jn. vv. 9-10). To do so is to affirm that what he is doing is acceptable, and therefore it encourages him in his evil teachings, and thereby one becomes a partaker of his evil deeds.

The Lord Jesus said that when one sins and refuses to repent, and it is necessary to bring them before the church, “**if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer**” (Mt. 18:17 NAS). This means that they are not to be considered as a Christian (but a Gentile, a heathen), and as one of the publicans (the hated Jewish tax-gatherers for profit employed by the Romans), as a traitor and apostate.

Jesus then immediately goes on to say, “**Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in**

**heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst”** (Mt. 18:18-20 NAS).

These verses have been applied to other circumstances, but here in the context Jesus is revealing that when an unrepentant Christian is put out of the church on earth, he is out of the Lord’s eternal heavenly kingdom; he is lost! This church discipline may in some circumstances be done among just a few. Who I must add are in right standing with God and under the direction of the true Holy Spirit of God.

This brings us then to the last and most severe form of church discipline, and that is when the Lord uses Satan.

Such was the case when Paul, as an apostle, turned over to Satan two men who had been guilty of evil speaking (Greek: *βλασφημειν*, *blasphemein*, blaspheme, meaning “to speak evil or reproachfully of God or man, rail at, revile, slander, to injure the good name of another”; in this case most likely against Paul and his companions, but possibly about the Lord Himself), and had sinned against their own conscience and ruined their faith (I Tim. 1:18-20). This action was taken “**so that they may be taught** [*παιδευθωσιν*, *paideuthosin*, disciplined ] **not to**” do so. These are most probably the same men mentioned in Paul’s second letter to Timothy. There we find that one had seriously missed the truth concerning the resurrection, teaching that it had already taken place, and thereby was causing some to turn back from their faith (II Tim. 2:17-18). The other had stood vigorously against the teachings of Paul and done many evil things against him personally, for which the Lord would repay him accordingly (II Tim. 4:14-15).

Jesus talked of God using Satan at the end of the chapter in which he spoke of putting people out of the church who refused to repent (Mt. 18:21-35). He teaches that when we do not forgive our brethren of their sins against us, our heavenly Father will deliver us over to the tormentors, which may be either human jailors or demon spirits, or both, to torment us until we repent (Mt. 18:34-35). The word given here is *βασανισταιο*, *basanistais*, the plural of *basanistes*, which means literally “one who elicits the truth by the use of the rack, an inquisitor, torturer” (Thayer’s lexicon). These tormentors have been referred to in the ancient writing of the Apocalypse of Peter as “avenging angels,” and by modern experience as meaning either human or spiritual beings. Some people who have been taught “**another Jesus**” (II Cor. 11:4), or who have been taught falsely about our true Lord Jesus, do not understand the seriousness of sin and its eternal consequences,

and therefore disbelieve about such discipline, but yet strangely still may believe in an eternal hell, which is far worse because there is no escape. If torment for a brief period will bring someone to repentance, it is a small price to pay in order to escape the eternal torments of an everlasting, fiery, tormenting hell! The scriptures are full of examples of the wrath of God against unrepentant sinners, His own rebellious nation of Israel, and unrepentant Christians (Ro. 1:18; 2:5-11; 11:22; I Cor. 10:1-11; Heb. 10:26-31; 12:28-29). Jesus tells us of some severe judgments upon us if we turn to sin and refuse to repent (Jn. 15:6; Rev. 2:20-23).

With this in mind, let us consider in more detail some scripture that reveals to us the church's responsibility in this type of discipline.

Paul was writing to the Corinthians, and he tells them how to deal with severe sin in their midst, which they had not been dealing with because of their arrogance and lack of concern about the sin or the person committing it. He writes:

**“I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness?**

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as *does not exist* even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so

committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”

I Cor. 4:14 - 5:13 NAS

Please notice now that some of the Christians were arrogant and puffed up against the apostle who actually founded the church in the faith. They should have been praying and mourning over the sin and the person committing it that was in their midst, but they were not.

Paul gives them a choice, whether he will come with a rod of discipline, or with what he prefers, a loving and gentle spirit, and he has the power of God with him to back up his words.

Then, to deal with the man who was living in sin, he tells them to meet together and to pray in the name of our Lord Jesus and to turn the man over to the disciplining work of Satan (the destruction of one's health or property, or demonic torment against one's person, similar to what Job experienced) in order that even though it might result in the man's death if necessary, it will bring him hopefully to repentance so that he can ultimately be saved. To

help this man by disciplining him so as to help him repent and escape the eternal torments of hell is real love, my dear brethren. It is hatred of others not to want them to suffer a little time now, only to suffer much more and eternally later. We learned that clearly from the wisdom of Proverbs, and we must apply it now as the situations demand!

We are told why we must purge sin out of the church; that it is our responsibility to judge those within the church; and that we must not even associate with those who call themselves brothers and yet persist in practicing gross sins! Therefore, excommunication is biblical, and necessary. Because some may not understand, or others practice it falsely, does not absolve us of our responsibilities in these matters.

Dearly beloved, now that we have looked carefully at various forms of discipline, let us check our own hearts and lives, and determine that we will walk before the Lord in holiness and righteousness, and do all that is within our power to see that others who name the name of the Lord do likewise. Amen!

*“Dear Father, help us to love you with all of our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our strength, and to love others enough to do whatever is necessary according to your Word and according to your Spirit to help bring them to this same commitment. In the name of our Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen, and Amen!”*

This is the end of The church, Chapter 5  
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