

Sanctification 101

Lesson 7 Discipline

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: The Lord expects His church and His saints to be perfecting holiness in the fear of God. He has provided several means of accomplishing that sizable task. He has given pastors to oversee the flock and watch for their souls. He has appointed the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. However, one very overlooked and neglected means of effecting holiness in His saints is church discipline. This is the primary responsibility of the church not only to God but also to its individual members. God has given the church the authority to discipline and deal with sin in the congregation.

It is surprising the amount of scripture that deal with this particular subject. It is likely an indicator of the importance of its practice. In Matthew chapter eighteen there is explicit instructions to the saints on how to deal with this issue. He explains three key concepts in relation to this process: giving of offenses, dealing with offenses, and forgiving offenses.

The offending of another is illustrated by the offending of a child, which has obvious application to spiritual children. Christ gives a grave warning of the seriousness of offending a “little one”. *“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”* He goes on to say that the will of the Father is not that one of these little ones should perish and illustrates it by leaving the ninety-nine and seeking after the one that is lost. The obvious goal in our relationship to others is to strive not to offend anyone. However, when the inevitable happens, He has given clearly defined rules to follow in dealing with the offense.

He gives a clearly defines three step process of how to deal with sin, any sin in Mt. 18:15-17. The responsibility rests upon the person trespassed against to confront the offender. The reason for this is that the offender may be completely unaware that they have offended anyone. Also it is the responsibility in watching over each other to not allow a brother to continue in a fault. Failure at this first point breaks down the entire process. The importance of this practice is shown in James 5:19-20.

When there has been a trespass, the offended individual has two options. He can either *“suffer himself to be defrauded”* or confront his brother with the trespass. If the trespass is not serious enough to progress into deeper sin, the stronger should bear with the infirmities of the weak. However, the usual and improper response is to not confront the brother and when the offense has caused lasting hurt to talk about it with others. This is the key to identifying when you are not able to bear the offense on your own.

We are not ignorant of Satan’s devices. When he detects an offense, which he easily does, we have *“given place to the devil”*. We have given him an immediate inroad to tempt to further sin in the offender and sow the seeds of bitterness in the offended. This is an opportunity that he is not likely to miss or ever pass up. Despite the difficulty of properly handling the matter, it is extremely vital to the health and holiness of the church. Much of the disruption in the church could be avoided by maintaining this spiritual discipline. Failure to discern the significance of this principle allows these trespasses to go unchecked for years while the animosity is built up. However, if the offender “hears” or receives the reproof, the fault and wound is quickly healed before further advantage can be gained by the enemy.

If the offender refuses to “hear” his brother, the second step is mandated for involving one or two more brethren to “establish” every word. The importance of this step, after there has been granted opportunity for repentance, is to establish the validity of the trespass and the proper approach in dealing with it. Because of our sinful nature, it is difficult not to have our judgment clouded by our own interests. If the individual remains impenitent before these two or three, the third step in the process must be enacted.

If the issue cannot be resolved the final appeal is to the entire church body. At this point every possible effort has been made to settle the dispute privately without unnecessarily involving the body of saints. The check and balance that this step provides is to prevent rash or partial judgment of individuals and brings it before a broader panel for decision. Likely only the most serious offenses will proceed to this juncture without being resolved. At this point the church makes a decision to ignore the accusation or enforce it. If the offender refuses to accept the decision of the church he is to be excluded from the fellowship with the goal of producing repentance and to quickly restore him.

The ultimate goal of the entire discipline process is restoration. The third and final concept dealt with in this chapter is the forgiveness of offenses. The guidelines have been established for dealing with the offense, now Christ takes up the issue of forgiveness. Peter asks the obvious question for us, such as how often are we expected to forgive a trespass. He offers seven, which he thinks to be a generous number. Christ’s response was seven times a day.

Christ then gives the parable about forgiveness which He concludes with a most serious warning, “*And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*” The obvious inference is that we are never allowed to be unforgiving. (Eph. 4:32)

Definitions: *For English use the Webster’s 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong’s Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong’s number is in parenthesis.*

English: **discipline** -

Exclude -

Excommunicate -

Greek: (1571) **ekkathairo** *ek-kath-ah'ee-ro*

(1808) **exairo** *ex-ah'ee-ro*

Quotation: “There must be great care taken, that when we seek to pluck up the tares, we pluck not up the wheat also; this may be understood of things, of truths and falsehoods, as well as of persons...in respect of things good or evil, there are some things apparently evil, they are rather thistles and briars, than tares; we may freely pluck them up; but other things, though perhaps they may prove evil, yet they have some likeness to good, so as you can hardly discern whether they be good or evil; Now, saith Christ, take heed what you do then, do not out of eagerness to oppose all evil, to get out every tare, pluck out some wheat too: what if that you oppose with violence as evil, prove to be good? You had better let forty tares stand, than pluck up one wheat.” Jeremiah Burroughs

“There is more confidence needful in a thing that we impose upon others, than in what we practice ourselves. If a thing be to us rather true than otherwise, we may lawfully do it, but this is not enough to be a ground for the imposing it upon others, who cannot see it to be a truth; in such a case we need to be very sure.” Jeremiah Burroughs

“The nature and end of judgment or sentence must be corrective, not vindictive; for healing, not destruction.” John Owen

“Prudence must be exercised in the proceeding, lest we do more hurt than good... we should deal humbly even when we deal sharply.” Richard Baxter

“The proper inward effect that accompanies this ordinance (excommunication) is inward affliction and distress of conscience by Satan, which of all afflictions is the greatest punishment... This we see in the excommunication of the Corinthian; whose excommunication is said to be a delivering up unto Satan in the name of the Lord Jesus. He was to be cast out by a commission from Christ, which going forth in His name, when they published it on earth, He signed it in heaven.” Thomas Goodwin

Confessions (Look up and read these articles)

London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 26: Of the Church - paragraphs 7,12,13-15

Chapter 27: Of the Communion of Saints - paragraph 1

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (*Answer in writing*)

1. What is the primary responsibility of the church towards its members?

2. What are the three key concepts involving church discipline?
3. What are the three steps of church discipline?
4. What is the key to determining whether you are able to bear with a particular trespass?
5. Why is the offended brother the one expected to confront the trespass?
6. What responsibility does the offended brother have towards the offender?
7. Who will take advantage of our failure to deal with offenses properly? How?
8. When the offender will not hear his brother why is it necessary to be taken before one or two witnesses?
9. When the offender will not hear the two or three, why is it necessary to take it before the church?
10. What is the ultimate goal of all church discipline?

Key Scriptures: *(summarize what each verse teaches in your own words)*

Leviticus 19:17 God's people have a responsibility to _____ one another and to not allow each other to fall into _____.

Deuteronomy 19:15 When confronting a person publicly it is necessary to have _____ or _____ witnesses to establish the truth of the matter.

Psalm 141:5 When the righteous smite each other it is a _____.

Proverbs 25:9-10 We must take our offenses to the individual _____ and not reveal it to _____.

Luke 17:3-4 If your brother _____ against you, _____ him and if he repents _____ him. Even if he sins against you _____ times a day and repents, we are to forgive them.

Romans 14:7 Our sin affects other people because none of us liveth to _____ .

Romans 14:13 We should not judgmental toward each other but strive not to be a stumbling-block or cause a brother to _____ .

I Corinthians 5:4-5 When Paul instructed this church how to discipline a member, he told them to do so in the _____ and _____ of our Lord Jesus Christ. The act of church discipline is very serious because it is to _____ them to _____ for the destruction of the _____ so that the spirit may be _____ in the day of judgment.

I Corinthians 6:6-8 There were members of this church suing each other in a secular court. Paul said they were at _____ for doing so and told them instead that they should _____ the _____ and allow themselves to be _____ .

Galatians 6:1 When dealing with a man _____ in a fault, we are expected to _____ the repentant man in the spirit of _____ lest we should be _____ in the same way and fall.

Ephesians 4:32 When dealing with the brethren we are to be _____ , tenderhearted, and especially _____ EVEN AS God for Christ's sake hath _____ you.

Colossians 3:13 We are expected to forbear with one another and be _____ to one another EVEN AS Christ forgave you which is absolute forgiveness.

I Thessalonians 4:6 We are forewarned against defrauding our brother in any _____ because the Lord is the _____ of such.

II Thessalonians 3:6 We are expected to _____ ourselves from _____ brother that walks _____ .

II Thessalonians 3:14-15 If any refused to obey the word of God we should _____ that man and have no _____ with them that they may be _____. However, we should never count him as an _____ but _____ them as a brother.

James 5:19-20 If a brother errs from the _____ and you are able to bring them back, you are able to save his soul from _____ and can _____ a multitude of sins.

Key Chapter(s) (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):
Matthew 18

I Corinthians 5

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: Matthew 18:15

Personal definition: *(Write a definition in your own words)*
church discipline -

Personal confession: *(Study the confessions and summarize them in your own words)*
church discipline -

Meditation question: *(be prepared for discussion)*

How do you determine if your brother has “heard” you or “forgiven you”?

Extra credit:

Ask God to forgive you for any outstanding trespasses or unforgiveness in your life. Identify an unresolved offense you have and follow the rules of Christ to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.