

## CHURCH DISCIPLINE (I)

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. The Subject Of Discipline Is Greatly Misunderstood And Neglected By Contemporary Society Generally.

##### 1. What do we mean by discipline?

a. Often thought of only in terms of corporal punishment (i.e. spanking a child, disfellowshipping a Christian, etc.), real discipline includes far more than mere punishment.

b. Our English word, discipline, is derived from the Latin *disciplina*, a derivative of *discipulus* from which our word disciple comes. Thus from the etymology there is inherent within the word a learning/teaching situation.

c. Webster defines discipline as: (1) That which is taught to pupils; training which corrects, molds, strengthens, perfects. (2) Chastisement, punishment.

d. From this definition it is obvious that discipline falls under two headings:

1) Instructive discipline.

2) Corrective discipline.

##### 2. That discipline (both instructive and corrective) has been greatly neglected by our society is evident by observing the function of:

a. The home.

b. The nation (society).

c. The church.

#### B. The Goal Of All Discipline Is To Bring The Individual To Sufficient Maturity That He/She Will Be Self-governed Within Acceptable Standards.

## II. AIM.

To Establish The Fact That God Disciplines.

- A. To Understand That Discipline Is Absolutely Essential To The Well-being Of Any Society.
- B. To See That God Has Always Exercised Discipline For The Good Of Humanity.

## III. OUTLINE.

### GOD DISCIPLINES.

#### A. GOD DISCIPLINED ADAM AND EVE FOR DISOBEDIENCE.

- 1. God's instruction. (*Gen. 2:15-17*)
- 2. Disobedience by Adam and Eve. (*Gen. 3:1-6*)
- 3. God's discipline:
  - a. God interrogated man to bring his disobedience (sin) into sharp focus for man to see. (*Gen. 3:9, 11, 13*)
  - b. The sentence pronounced:
    - 1) Upon the serpent. (*Gen. 3:14*)
    - 2) Upon the woman. (*Gen. 3:16*)
    - 3) Upon the man. (*Gen. 3:17-19, 23-24*)
- 4. Though it "hurt God more than man" to discipline, still God "spared not His own Son" (*Rom. 5:8; 8:32*) to show the importance of obeying what God commands. Note:
  - a. By disciplining man, death came upon all mankind. (*Rom. 5:14*)
  - b. Because of His great love for man, God provided for man's redemption, but it cost Him His Son to redeem sinful man. (*Rom. 5:15*)
  - c. Thus, even though God knew that by exercising discipline upon Adam (mankind) it would cost Jesus His life, God recognized discipline to be of such importance that this sacrifice was freely made.

- d. Can we, in light of these truths (*cf. Rom. 15:4*) refuse to discipline because of the personal hurt in disciplining others?

B. GOD DISCIPLINED MOSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE:

1. Israel's necessity which prompted God's instructions. (*Num. 20:1-6*)
2. God's instructions to Moses. (*Num. 20:7-8*)
3. Moses' action (disobedience). (*Num. 20:9-11*)
4. God's announcement of punishment. (*Num. 20:12*)
5. The unsuccessful attempt to have discipline aborted. (*Deut. 3:23-26*)
6. The discipline administered. (*Deut. 32:48-52*)
7. Note: God has written these things for our admonition (*Rom. 15:4*) because God wants us to learn in this life that He means what He says, so that He will not have to condemn us.

C. GOD DISCIPLINED ISRAEL AT AI. (*Joshua 7*)

1. God's instructions to Israel. (*Josh. 6:17-19*)
2. The disobedience of Israel through Achan. (*Josh. 7:10-12; 7:19-22*)
3. The punishment (discipline) of Israel and Achan:
  - a. Israel suffered defeat and thirty-six brave men died. (*Josh. 7:4-5*)
  - b. Joshua's prayer and God's answer. (*Josh. 7:6-15*)
  - c. Action taken against Achan by Israel at God's direction. (*Josh. 7:15, 25-26*)
4. This was written for our instruction that we might learn:
  - a. Sin touches the lives of the innocent as well as the guilty.
  - b. The people of God suffer when sin is allowed to remain in their midst. (*cf. 2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1*)

- c. There is a time for prayer (for wisdom, understanding of the nature of what was done, etc.) but prayer must not be substituted for action, once the facts are known!
- d. Proof of guilt was undeniably established before God's discipline was executed. (cf. *Josh. 7:24-25*)
- e. After sin was put away from the people, God again blessed His people.

#### D. GOD CONTINUES TO DISCIPLINE IN LOVE.

- 1. Like the writer of Hebrews who, after giving a long list of examples of individuals who acted in faith, concluded by saying: "...And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets..." (*Heb. 11:32*)
- 2. In considering our examples of discipline, we could paraphrase the Hebrew writer by saying that time would fail us to study Cain, Nadab and Abihu, Saul, David, Jonah, Ananias and Sapphira, and others whom God disciplined for failure to live harmoniously with His will.
- 3. The Hebrew writer removes all doubt concerning God's attitude toward discipline when we read *Hebrews 12:5-13*.

#### IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. God Has Exercised Discipline From The Beginning.
- B. God's Discipline Is For The Good Of Mankind, Proven By The Sacrifice Of Christ To Redeem Mankind.
- C. God Has Revealed These Accounts For Our Learning To Assure Us That Discipline Of The Disobedient Is Sure. (*Rom. 15:4*)
- D. Let Us Learn:
  - 1. Self-discipline to avoid future punishment for disobedience.
  - 2. To discipline those who have not developed self-discipline so that their souls may be saved.