

Discipline – Part 3 – Acceptance of Discipline

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You have already seen some of the purposes for discipline: Discipline is necessary for the purity of the church. Discipline is necessary for evangelizing. Discipline is necessary for the confidence of believers in Christ and in the elders. Discipline is necessary to show love to the erring. Discipline is necessary to restore the sinner. And discipline is necessary to honor God. Last week you saw the order of discipline: verbal rebuke, provable rebuke, and ecclesiastical rebuke. But there is another aspect of discipline that requires your attention: **You must willingly and eagerly give and accept discipline**. Today, in the proclamation 声明 of God's Word, I will address the issue of those who would like to avoid being discipline and those who are reluctant to discipline.

Our headings are: **The Offender must Accept Ecclesiastical 教会的 Discipline** and **the Church Must Accept the responsibility to Perform Ecclesiastical Discipline**.

Our goals are: That **you realize it is your duty, as children redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, to give or exercise good Christian discipline on the unrepentant for your good, for the church's purity, and for Christ's glory**.

The Offender Must Accept Ecclesiastical Discipline

1. Why do some people refuse to accept disciplines?

a. Sometimes people don't like to accept discipline even though they see the benefits of it.

b. Sometimes some don't accept discipline because they don't see the benefits of it.

But like you sometimes have to say to an arguing child, Christ says to the rebellious member and elder: "You accept discipline because I say so. And it doesn't matter whether you believe it or not. It is good for you." So it is a command and you must accept it.

2. First, let's look at **the Scriptures to see the command to accept discipline** whether you like it or not.

Hebrews 13: 17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Not only is there a command to accept discipline, there is a veiled 蒙着面纱的 euphemistic 委婉的 threat for those that don't submit to discipline. You see, those who don't accept discipline are considered "unprofitable." The word, "unprofitable" is also translated as "hurtful" or "pernicious 恶性的." In simple words: It is painful to avoid punishment. It is deadly to avoid discipline. As if that were not enough, you also learn from the wisest man who ever lived talk about the importance of taking discipline. He personally experienced the foolishness for not taking rebukes in his life...and he strayed 走失 from God, abusing the poor, marrying non-believers and worshipping idols.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool despises 轻视 his father's instruction, But he who receives correction is prudent. 审慎的

"Prudent" means wise...careful...sensible...

3. What can we say against those who refuse to accept discipline? **The one who refuses to accept the punishment of the elders is antagonistic 敌对的 against the Lord** who paid for his freedom. The Apostle Paul pointed that these men are of Divine appointment.

1Corinthians 12: 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

With heavenly appointment, you are bound to follow those who have oversight over your soul – especially since that oversight is bound to work for your good. And you must never see the elders as working for their own advantage. They work for your good and for the praise of the Lord.

4. This is **not to say that these men who are called to discipline the erring will be perfect**. Not at all. They are not perfect!

But that is not the point. The point is, you do not submit to discipline from the elders because they are perfect. You submit to their discipline because your good God has appointed your elders for this purpose. And even if elders are harsh 严厉的, God will work that out for your good. (Being caned in high school while being innocent caused me to be more careful with evidence when I became a headmaster.) Jesus himself pointed out that the authority elders have were not from themselves but from him.

Mark 13:34 "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

Luke 9:1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick...5 "And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

5. Further, the Lord clearly stated that **he supports and confirms the judgment of the elders of the church.**

Matthew 18:18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

It is evident that the Apostle Paul knew the words of Jesus: that excommunication that is properly done is ratified 认可的 in heaven. (1Corinthians 5) Therefore, to reject the elders' authority is to reject Christ's authority. This is why God calls on you to show yourself humble by accepting the judgment of the elders.

The church must Accept the Responsibility to Perform Ecclesiastical Discipline

1. The church must not hesitate to take discipline when it is warranted. Yet, sadly, ecclesiastical discipline is rarely carried out in Christian churches today. We have already seen some of the reasons for this. Here are three more!

a. Often elders don't want to "rattle anyone's cage." They like to keep the status quo and keep their job. They try to avoid confrontation 对抗.

b. At other times, elders are afraid that they might lose members, and so lose their authority and money.

c. At other times churches don't discipline because they are afraid of being sued.

So it is not because elders don't know that they ought to discipline. They do. It is often because of a purposeful desire to avoid discipline.

2. Of course carrying out discipline is hard. Let me illustrate! Who likes to spank a child? No good parent gets pleasure from spanking his child. I dare say that it often hurts a parent more than it hurts the child. But you have to do it anyway. And so it is with elders. You have to do what you may not like to do and that which is hard to do. This is similar to some of the hard choices Joseph, who ruled Egypt under Pharaoh, had to make to ensure that the people had food in the future. Many people would have been upset with Joseph as he taxed them...and life was hard for a time, but they sure would have rejoiced later when they had food to eat and all the world around them had nothing.

1Thessalonians 5: 12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish 劝告 you,

This urging was not saying "if you want to, please admonish the sinful." Admonishing the erring was taken for granted. That is why Paul doesn't even command it. He simply commanded the members to accept that discipline.

3. Let me illustrate again with another case from the Bible. Just before Paul left the Ephesians elders for the last time, he warned them of the coming troubles...and how hard it would be. But he does not give them any way out of doing this most noble work of teaching and disciplining the flock.

Acts 20: 17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, **28** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage 野蛮人 wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Positively, if elders deal with problems when they are small they would avoid having to react very strongly in the future when the problem would have grown. You can avoid child abuse, for instance, if you deal with the small troubles your child has. If the trouble gets too big, you might overreact in anger and really hurt a child.

4. To this great end of pursuing instruction and discipline, Paul urged the Ephesian elders to **prepare to discipline.** The elders had to learn to watch themselves – their own hearts. Do you see the implication...this is work. You need to learn how to discipline, and you need to spiritually prepare to discipline.

5. One implication of this is that discipline is **never determined by one man.** There always must be a **plurality**多数 of elders.

This gives temperance 节制 and seriousness to the discipline. This group of elders has oversight of discipline. John Calvin called discipline the "nerve of the church."

6. What can we say about those elders who refuse to discipline? **If church elders don't do the job of carrying out discipline they cause others to be hurt.** How? Those sinful people will lose respect for the office and rob Christ of his proper

glory. Consider what Jesus said about those who caused weak ones to stumble!

Matthew 18: 4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. **5** "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. **6** "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

The **elders of the church are not allowed to be tolerant of sin**. So don't boast about inactivity as the Corinthians did. That is an aberrant lack of love for the weak sinful brother. Consider:

1 Timothy 5:20 -Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, **that the rest also may fear.**

7. Our church order (URCNA) – Article 32, summarizes this well.

We also believe that, although it is useful and good for those who govern the churches to establish and set up a certain order among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, they ought always to guard against deviating 背离 from what Christ, our only Master, has ordained 任命 for us. Therefore we reject all human innovations and all laws imposed on us, in our worship of God, which bind and force our consciences in any way. So we accept only what is proper to maintain harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God. To that end excommunication, with all it involves, according to the Word of God, is required.

This is also a limitation of what the church is able to do. We will talk more about this next time.

8. Keep in mind the church does not belong to you, but the Lord, so you must follow his rules.

Matthew 16:16-18 - Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." **17** Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. **18** "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

The elders are to open and close the door of Christ's church in obedience to Christ command. And when the elders open the door to you, you will be taken into heaven by Christ. When elders close the door, as in excommunication, you can only expect hell. As you can see, this is the high view of the church. Christ made his church that way and he directs her actions. And since it is a hard job for elders to discern who have true faith or not, pray for them and encourage them. After all, elders are vessels 容器 of clay 泥土. 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Conclusion:

The one who submits to Christ will submit to his church. He will accept her discipline if he has strayed from the way of Christ. The church that submits to and love the Lord Jesus Christ will willingly exercise discipline in his name to return the sinner in the way of the Lord. By doing this the elders keep the Lord's church pure...and she can glorify the Lord better.

Brothers and Sisters: Most people who die in house fires die because their house was disorderly. They trip 绊倒 of over things, fall, break a bone, and can't get out. The solution then is to make sure the church is orderly so that when troubles come, she is well prepared to face them. One of the main things that keeps the church in order is discipline: the giving of punishment on just occasions, and the taking of punishment on just occasions. The order in the house is not to make work or to unsettle the congregation...order is to save lives. Discipline saves the lives of the sinner and ultimately the congregation. But there is one other greater benefit. It causes those whose lives are preserved to glorify the Lord who bought them with his own blood. May you therefore love discipline...either to receive it if you are erring, or impose it if you are entrusted with that responsibility from God.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you will not be disciplined by God. He would not care enough to discipline you. You are not his child. But he offers to adopt you as his son, knowing that Jesus Christ paid the price for the sins of the world. May you then accept his offer of life...I plead 恳求 with you to do so. Do not delay. Then he will care enough to discipline you.