



Growing into Church Discipline Pt 2: The Nature of Biblical Discipline

July 16, 2023

Holy Text: Hebrews 12:3-13

Last week, we began to try to understand Church Discipline by refreshing our understanding of the Church itself.

In part, we said that it would be hard to grasp the need for Church Discipline without knowing the definition and mission of the church!

In Matthew 16:18 we read the first use of the Greek word *ekklēsia* in the NT, which is translated *church*. It literally means “a *calling out*.” (Strong’s)

In that Text, we read of both **the nature of the church (called out, which includes separate, holy living apart from the world) and mission of the church (to advance on and push back the kingdom of darkness), which includes preaching the Gospel, making disciples, battling devils, and upholding and making great the Name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God!**

We learned that the Church of Jesus Christ (it belongs to and is being built by Him), through the God-breathed Scriptures handed down by the apostles, has real authority. Authority to:

- Take message of the Gospel to the world, opening the door of salvation to all who would believe through their preaching and teaching.
- Open and close, allow and disallow, open matters and settle matters.
- Engage in Spiritual Warfare
- Gather the LORD’s people, preach the Bible, receive and excommunicate members, and administer the ordinances among other important duties:

The meeting of the LORD’s Church on the LORD’s Day was designed to be a blessing for His chosen and redeemed children, who alone can enter by the blood of Jesus! It is meant to provide salve for our wounds, refreshment for our souls, a reset for our weary bodies, and be a vessel of the oil of gladness. It is designed to undergird our faith in Christ and belief in His Gospel! The ministry of the Local Church on LORD’s Day is filled with wonderful things that remind us of the LORD’s sacrifice, provision, communion, holiness, love, and gift of eternal life!

1. We Gather Together on the LORD’s Day!
2. We Pray Together!
3. We Exhort One Another!
4. We Sing Together!
5. We Greet One Another!
6. We Involve and Bless the Children!
7. We Welcome New Members!
8. We Hear God’s Word being Preached!
9. We Call One Another to Respond to the Word in Repentance and Faith!
10. We Experience the LORD’s Table Together!
11. We Rejoice with the Baptized!
12. We Pronounce God’s Blessings upon One Another!

Such an institution MUST be protected!

Our Working Definition of the Church (drawn from many Passages):

The (local) Church is a group of born-again, Spirit-filled, baptized believers in Jesus Christ who gather on the LORD's Day for biblical worship and who are committed to obeying Scripture and personal holiness. It is led by the Holy Spirit through specific elders and deacons, governed by the Scriptures, and, collectively, is passionate about covenant love one to another, advancing the Gospel, making disciples, and being a light in the midst of the culture.

Bottom line: there is true, divine authority granted to the LORD's church and that authority is delegated to and humbly administered, via the Scriptures, by its duly qualified leaders.

The Reasons for Biblical Discipline

Now that we have a better understanding of the Nature of the Lord's Church, prayerfully, the topic of discipline will be easier to deal with.

The very nature of the Church and all the good things she does at times necessities the need for loving discipline. The Church is loving, but also called to be holy. She is to be a demonstration to the whole world of joyful and pure submission to Christ. When she is consistently unrepentant and rebellious, something must be done.

We believe Biblical Discipline has two main purposes: 1) The Glory of God and 2) The Good of God's People.

1. Biblical discipline is a way that God maintains His reverence, His awe, and His Majesty among His people. It is designed so that God's name is not taken lightly.

- **Leviticus 22:31-33** *Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I am the LORD. 32 Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you, 33 That brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD.*
- **Leviticus 10:3** *Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

This is necessary because we, His people, too easily lose our reverence for Him and backslide.

- **Galatians 3:1** *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*
- **Hebrews 3:12-13** *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*
- **Hebrews 10:38-39** *Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

2. Biblical Discipline is used by God to instruct, correct, and sanctify His people.

- Biblical discipline is always for the good of God's people. Yes it warns; but it also restores. As we said last week, no one gets a pass...

1Ti 5:19-20 Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. **20** As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

The Nature of Biblical Discipline from Heb 12:3-13

Thought on our Text:

v.3 - First, let's ensure that any thoughts or considerations of *Biblical Discipline* are framed by our LORD's own suffering.

- Christ paid the price due for sin; He took our punishment and was “disciplined” for our sakes!
- **Hebrews 12:2** *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- Based on the Cross of Christ, I believe God is immune to charges of being unfair!

v.4 - Biblical Discipline is a preventive and hedge against sin. Sin destroys and must be resisted by all means necessary.

- Although I believe holiness should be motivated by love in ideal circumstances, sometimes fear of discipline can shock us back to Kingdom reality when we are tempted.
- The nature of sin is so terrible (a truth we often forget), the standard of resistance is the “shedding of blood” (KJV) or to “give your lives” (NLT).
- **Bottom line: It's better to endure discipline than be overrun and overcome by the destructive reality of sin.**

v.5 - Biblical Discipline can (and I believe should) be viewed as an encouragement and exhortation.

- When God “limits” or “restricts” or “commands,” must we always view that as negative?
- Indeed, this quote from Proverbs 3:11-12 is contained within a book which is largely “from father to son” and filled with exhortations that sound like discipline but are full of life and blessing!
- Appropriately, surrounding the quote by the writer of Hebrews are these promises of good!

Proverbs 3:7-10 *Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

Proverbs 3:11-12 (KJV) *My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*

Proverbs 3:13-14 *Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, 14 for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold.*

v.6 - Biblical Discipline is one way God demonstrates His **love** for us.

- On one hand, this truth is hard for modern minds. On the other, every good parent gets it! We discipline our children because we love them!
- Good fathers, who love their children, discipline them.
- **Deuteronomy 8:5-6** *Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. 6 So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.*
- **Revelation 3:19** *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

v.7 - Biblical Discipline comes with being God's children.

- It follows from verse 6 that to be a child is to receive discipline for our growth and good.
- This is VERY IMPORTANT. If you see yourselves as sons and daughters of God, be encouraged in the truth that His discipline comes with His parenting of you...
- Again, we see this principle in Proverbs concerning earthly parents:
- **Proverbs 13:24 (KJV)** *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*
- **Proverbs 29:15 (KJV)** *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*

v.8 - If the LORD chooses not to discipline us, or if we reject His discipline, it is as if we aren't His children at all: "... *Ye are bastards (illegitimate children), and not sons.*" (KJV)

- Do you want to live as is you are spiritually illegitimate? Then resist discipline! Never caught a heavenly beat down? Then check your salvation! :)
- "After all, a gardener does not prune thistles, but he does prune grapevines." *Thistle* is the common name of a group of flowering plants characterized by leaves with sharp prickles on the margins. (Wikipedia)
- Are you a grapevine or a prickly flower? :)

v.9 - Biblical Discipline should be received with reverence and respect.

- If we honored our earthy dads when they corrected us, should we not honor our Heavenly Father? Who has more authority? Who loves us more?
- Rather than receiving such with reverence and respect, discipline, no matter how lovingly administered, is often received with indignity, defiance and rejection.
- Why is receiving correction so hard for us? In a word: **PRIDE**.

1. Pride makes us view ourselves more highly than we ought.
2. Pride makes us shift the blame to someone else. Pride says, "How dare you? I may be wrong, but you got some stuff too!"
3. Pride focuses us on our embarrassment rather than our escape... our dilemma rather than our deliverance.

v.10 - Biblical Discipline is for our profit...our **good!**

- Profit in Greek carries the meaning not only of *expedience*, but also of *bearing with or coming together*. The implication here is one of a "communal profit" and a joint sharing in something much greater than us as individuals.
- Biblical Discipline in its various forms is for our blessing! God wants us church collectively to partake in His holiness!
- What an amazing phrase and overwhelming truth. God's discipline, in part, is for us to be more like Him! John Gill's words here are edifying:

...not the essential holiness of God, which is incommunicable; but a communicative holiness of his, which it is his determining will his people should have: it comes from him, from whom every good and perfect gift does; it is in Christ for them, and is received out of his fulness; and is wrought in them by the Spirit; and it bears a resemblance to the divine nature: now men are naturally destitute of this holiness; they have it not by nature, but by participation; as God's gift; and they first partake of it in regeneration; and here an increase of it is designed, a gradual participation of it; and it may include perfect holiness in heaven: afflictions are designed as means to bring persons to this end; to bring them to a sense of sin, an acknowledgment of it, an aversion to it, and to a view of pardon of it; to purge it away; to wean the saints from this world; to increase their grace, and lead them on to a perfect state of glory, where there will be no more sin, and no more sorrow.

- I think we underestimate how much *holiness* is contrary to our fleshly nature. Only through discipline can we learn certain lessons and truly share in it.

v.11 - Biblical Discipline is **redemptive**; it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness!

- Discipline (or any kind of self-denial or personal discomfort/pain) is flat out unpleasant. There is little joy in it at the time. No one likes it.
- But “AFTERWARD!” That’s a good word to remember! But LATER (ESV)...a harvest comes! Peace and righteousness (and JOY!) come AFTERWARD. This is a Christian principle: have an eternal perspective...

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (KJV) *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

v.12 - When Biblical Discipline is being lovingly administered, we should worship and thank God for His **mercy**!

- “Lift up hands” in this context is more about persevering through the discipline, through suffering and trial, than a physical act.
- But it’s not a stretch to encourage God’s people to “lift up their drooping hands” (ESV) in the midst of suffering in praise and honor to our sovereign God! Hold on! Don’t quit! Remember the Words of our LORD: “**Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.**”¹
- We love the NLT here:

Hebrews 12:12 (NLT) *So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees.*

v.13 - Biblical Discipline eventually results in “straight paths” and **healing**!

- The encouragement, strengthening, healing, and renewed passion for holiness and purity that come from lovingly administered and humbly received biblical discipline results in lives better lived!
- Beloved, discipline straightens. Discipline causes that which is lame to be healed!
- The truth is there are some things WE WILL NOT LEARN unless under the rod!

¹ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2021/1/continuing-conflict-continuing-grace-pt-4-a-phrase-to-remember>

- This is not easy, but AFTERWARD...a harvest! Glory to God!

Final Thought for Today:

Perhaps the final words of Hebrews Chapter 12 is a fitting way to end: with our hearts fixed on offering the God who loves us enough to chastise and correct us, our lives in praise, reverence, and honor.

***Hebrews 12:22-29 (KJV)** But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, **23** To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, **24** And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. **25** See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: **26** Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. **27** And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: **29** For our God is a consuming fire.*

CRC, our LORD has given us so much. May we, when He wills it, embrace His sovereign and loving correction like grateful and faithful sons and daughters of the King.

Amen.