

LESSON XXXV—THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION: The meaning, Webster, "Treatment suited to a disciple, education, training, subjection to rule, the habit of obedience."

It is two-fold: (1) instructive, (2) corrective.

I. Instructive Discipline. Preventative in Nature:

1. The work of the Bishops or Elders:
 - a. Feed the flock (Acts 20:28).
 - b. Tend the flock (I Pet. 5:2).
 - c. Take the oversight (I Pet. 5:2).
 - d. Rule well by example (I Tim. 5:17).
 - e. Watch for souls (Heb. 13:17).
 - f. Must give account (Heb. 13:17).
2. The attitude of the Church:
 - a. Esteem them highly in love (I Thess. 5:12-13).
 - b. Submit to them (Heb. 13:17).
 - c. Obey them (Heb. 13:7).
 - d. Count them worthy of honor (I Tim. 5:17).
 - e. Imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7).

A recognition of these duties will maintain God's order. To reject them results in anarchy and a state of spiritual bolshevism in the Church.

II. Corrective Discipline, Chastising or Penalizing in Its Nature:

1. Its importance.
 - a. The Lord wants a pure Church (Eph. 5:25-27; II Cor. 11:2-3).
 - b. To harbor sin, disorder, rebellion, wickedness in the Church brings the frowns and displeasure of the Lord on those guilty of doing so. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (I Cor. 5:6).
 - c. Corrective discipline therefore has a two-fold purpose:
 1. To save the Church (I Cor. 5:5).
 2. To save the guilty party (I Cor. 5:5).
2. Upon whom to be exercised:
 - a. Those who walk disorderly (II Thess. 3:6). One who persists in sin, rebels against the teaching (I Cor. 5:11-13).
 - b. A busybody, troublemaker, one who will not tend to his own business (II Thess. 2:11-15).
 - c. Those who cause division (Rom. 16:17; II Jn. 9-10; Titus 3:10-11).
3. The scriptural course to pursue (Matt. 18:15-18):
 - a. Pray for them (I Jn. 5:16).
 - b. Try to convert them (Jas. 5:19-20).

- c. Restore them if possible (Gal. 6:1).
- d. Admonish them (I Thess. 5:14).
- e. As a last resort, if they will not repent, withdraw from them (II Thess. 3:6; I Cor. 5:4-13).
- f. In which case it is the duty of the Church as a whole to support such action (I Cor. 5:9-13; II Jn. 10-11; Matt. 18:17).

Questions For Discussion

1. Define the word "discipline."
2. Who are to have the oversight in preventing, if possible, rigid steps in discipline?
3. Name some ways how they may prevent the exercise of discipline.
4. What is to be the attitude of the Church toward the elders?
5. What does the Lord want the Church to be?
6. Why then, is corrective discipline sometimes necessary?
7. Who are to be disciplined?
8. What course is to be pursued in disciplining the disorderly?
9. How should the whole Church support the actions of the elders in withdrawal of fellowship?
10. How are those disciplined to be treated?