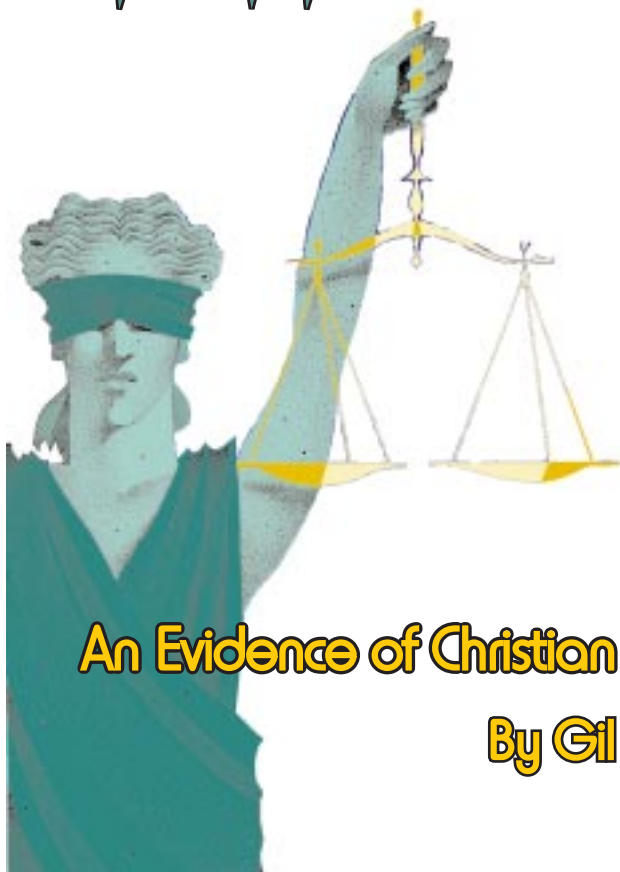


CHURCH DISCIPLINE



An Evidence of Christian Love

By Gil Rugh

Church Discipline—An Evidence of Christian Love

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F O R E W O R D

One of the most difficult responsibilities for parents in raising their children is exercising discipline. Most parents would rather not discipline their children at all. It seems much easier to just let things go rather than have a confrontation. However, if the ultimate good of the children is at heart, it is necessary to exercise loving but firm and consistent discipline.

The same principles are true in the family of God. Within God's household, the Church, He has given instructions about disciplining those members of the family refusing to submit to the standards for godly living which God has established in His Word. Those responsible for leadership within the family of God must sooner or later come to grips with their responsibility to exercise discipline within God's household.

When the subject of church discipline is mentioned, many questions immediately come to mind. What does God say about discipline? Is discipline intended for use today? What principles should be followed in the discipline process? How do you begin discipline when it has been overlooked for so long? What kind of repercussions can be expected if the discipline process is initiated?

Discipline is never easy. It is difficult for those being disciplined as well as for those administering the process. However, in God's family, His children are called to do what is right even though it may be difficult. As the writer of the Book of Hebrews said, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness," (Heb. 12:11). That fruit is the goal in all discipline — the righteous character of Christ produced in the life of the believer.

The guidelines God gave for discipline within His family and the responsibilities He has given His children are presented here. Our desire is for God's children to understand what He has said about this important subject.

Church Discipline— An Evidence of Christian Love

The Book of Proverbs speaks repeatedly of discipline within the family context. The father is given the responsibility of disciplining his children. Proverbs 13:24 says, “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”

If parents fail to discipline their children, it is an evidence that they really don't love them. Some people say they love them too much to discipline. No, the Bible says that *no* discipline means not enough love. It is for the children's good that they are disciplined. Lack of discipline will lead to problems for themselves and for others.

Discipline Involves the Family of God. When the family of God is considered, the principle is still the same. Discipline is necessary. It is always a manifestation of love if it is handled properly. It is easy to think of the abuses of discipline, for example, parents who punish their children in an abusive manner. Obviously, that is not what the Bible encourages. Cases of church discipline that were administered unbiblically also come to mind. The focus here, however, is on how God's children should handle discipline.

Discipline involves the local church. The universal church is comprised of every person who has come to understand and believe that Jesus Christ died for his sins.

An analogy which is used often in the New Testament for the Church is that of a body, the Body of Christ. First Corinthians 12 uses this analogy to show how believers have been placed by the Spirit of God into the Body of Christ. This is the baptism of the Spirit. Each one who has believed in Christ became part of the Body of Christ the moment he believed. Ephesians 1:22,23 says all believers

are part of the Body of Christ of which Christ Himself is the head, the One who directs all of its activities and oversees its conduct. The local church is simply the local representation and manifestation of the universal body of Jesus Christ with believers meeting in a given place to worship and serve Him.

Two Reasons for Discipline. Within the framework of the Body of Christ, the Bible says it is important to maintain the purity of the body and to manifest accurately and correctly the character of Jesus Christ. Since believers are His Body, they are to be an accurate representation and manifestation of His character, holiness and purity. To maintain that purity and holiness, discipline is a necessity. Paul told the Corinthians to deal with sin in their midst because sin is like leaven, and “a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough,” (1 Cor. 5:6). In Galatians 5:9 he says the same thing — sin must be dealt with because it pervades the Body and will affect others. So if sin is not disciplined, it will spread. As it spreads, it compromises the testimony believers are to give concerning Christ’s character and purity. His holiness is to be manifested in His Body.

The second reason for discipline in the Body is love for fellow believers. The great mark of a believer is love for one another as God’s children. Love always necessitates discipline. If genuine love is to be manifested in the local church, biblical discipline must be practiced.

Two Basic Principles in Discipline. Keep in mind two principles of church discipline. First, it deals with believers who are part of a local church family. Church discipline concerns only those who are part of the family of God. Further, each local church is responsible for its own children. Parents don’t punish the neighborhood children, and it is the same way with biblical discipline.

Second, discipline is always for the purpose of correcting the problem. Discipline is applied to believers who are living in sin to help them address the sin and stop it.

In Matthew 18, Christ clearly sets down the pattern for church discipline. This pattern is supported throughout the epistles of the New Testament. There are six steps in biblical church discipline. Four of them are in Matthew 18; two are in other portions of the New Testament.

Confront Personally

The *first step* is personal confrontation. “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private” (Matt. 18:15). A brother is a fellow Christian, one who is part of the family of God, one who has believed in Christ and now is functioning as part of the Body of Christ. “Brother” is used generically in the text. If a sister sins, the principle is the same. The situation described applies to any believer who sins. Basically, any area of a believer’s life that is openly in rebellion to the Word of God is in view here.

If a Christian is in sin and it becomes known to a fellow believer, the brother or sister is to confront that Christian. There is no responsibility to go and tell someone else. If God has made the sin known to a believer, it is His indication that He wants the sin confronted. He didn’t make one believer aware of the sin so that another believer could make the confrontation. The believer made aware of the sin is the believer to do the confronting. God puts it strongly in His Word, “Go and reprove him” (Matt. 18:15). A correction must be made. So the believer should approach the sinning Christian properly—in love.

The confrontation is to be done “in private” (Matt. 18:15). Don’t wait until other people are around. Talk to the Christian about the sin which has been revealed. That is hard to do, but it is the manifestation of true Christian love. Trust God to lead, confront the fellow believer, and demonstrate Christian love. There is no way to anticipate the reaction, but trust God to work in the life of His child.

Matthew says, “If he listens to you, you have won your brother” (Matt. 18:15). If there is repentance, that is the end of the matter. It’s over! Don’t tell someone else about the situation—that would be sin. Don’t gossip or spread rumors. Remember God commands that the situation be dealt with privately. Rejoice and praise God for His grace and His work. Thank God, but that’s it! It is strictly between you and that person and the Lord.

Luke 17:3 gives the same pattern. Galatians 6:1 similarly says, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one.” *Restore* is used when speaking of mending and repairing nets (Matt. 4:21). “Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness” (Gal. 6:1). Do not approach someone in a spirit of superiority. Approach in a spirit of gentleness or meekness, “*each one*

looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted” (Gal 6:1). Don’t go with an arrogant attitude, but go with the sincere desire to help. Be careful not to be drawn into sin.

Confront With Witnesses

If the fellow believer responds negatively to the private confrontation, your responsibility has not ended. It is time for step two. If there is no response to personal confrontation, the *second step* is to confront him with witnesses. “If he doesn’t listen *to you*, take one or two more with you” (Matt. 18:16). It is clear that Christian love has to be at work. It is hard to exercise biblical discipline, but love is doing what is best for another, regardless of the personal cost. If there is no repentance after the private confrontation, take one or two mature Christians with you as witnesses and confront him again about his sin.

Witnesses serve two purposes. First, they, too, testify against the sin. Second, if there is no acceptance of the admonition, they will add testimonies as the process continues. Matthew 18:16 says, “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.” This verse is quoted from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 19:15. Two or three witnesses are needed to establish the facts according to 1 Timothy 5:19.

Two or three mature Christians confront this believer about being in sin and rebelling against God. They encourage him to stop the sin and offer help in any way possible. If there is a biblical response, the matter goes no further. It is over. It means that perhaps three people in addition to the one who was confronted know the situation. No one else needs to know. Repentance is the goal. The goal is not to punish him but to restore a fellow believer to a right fellowship with God. The response, however, of this second confrontation may not be positive. If the response is negative, responsibility has not ended.

Confront With the Church

The *third step* is in Matthew 18:17: “And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.” The sin now must be confronted by the church. Two attempts have not reconciled the believer—one private and one with a small group of believers. The local church must now

deal with the sin.

The Board of Elders. At Indian Hills Community Church there are two phases for this step. The first phase involves the Board of Elders, the representatives and overseers of this local body of believers. They are appraised of the situation, indicating the steps which have already been taken. At that point, the Board of Elders contacts the individual involved. They meet with the individual, confronting the person about the sin at issue. They encourage the individual to see the gravity of the situation and to deal with it properly. If the person recognizes the gravity of the sin and deals with it properly, then, praise the Lord it is dealt with. It needs to go no further.

The Church as a Whole. If there is no appropriate response, the second phase of this step is initiated. The church body is made aware of the person and his sin. We believe it is necessary for the local Body of Christ to be made aware of the individual and the sin at a public service. The congregation should be in prayer about this matter and for the individual for a specified period of time, perhaps two or three weeks. If the Lord burdens a particular member of the body to make personal contact with that person to encourage him to repent of his sin, by all means, he should do so. If during the specified time, the individual recognizes the gravity of the sin and turns from it, he is forgiven. The process is completed.

Cut Off From All Association

If the person is still unwilling to repent, the *fourth step*, the last half of Matthew 18:17, must be implemented: "And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer." That means the person is cut off from all association with the local Body of Christ. Believers are obligated to completely disassociate themselves from the individual. There is to be a total break.

Note the seriousness of this in Matthew 18:18: "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The statement is addressed to the local church, not to a church hierarchy. Discipline operates in the context of local churches. This pattern is seen in Corinthians, Thessalonians and Timothy as well. Matthew 18:18 flows out of verse 17. When discipline is adminis-

tered, the believer is cut off. God recognizes that discipline. It is part of His operation through the local church. The binding in Matthew 18:18 is in the context of discipline. The church is, in fact, binding the person with his sin until there is willingness to deal with it. However, when the person repents from the sin, the church forgives him and involves the believer in the Body again. Christian love is manifested.

Since the fourth step involves the local church corporately, a careful look at the concept of cutting a believer off from all fellowship is in order. In many discipline cases, the congregation is unaware of the situation until step four is reached. The initial steps are private, but step four involves the congregation. When there is unwillingness to listen and respond to the church body, then the person is to be cut off. The references to Gentile and tax-gatherer were clear to Jews. They had nothing to do with Gentiles or tax-gatherers. There were no social relationships; there was nothing!

A Common Objection. Often when the subject of church discipline arises, John 8:7 is quoted, "He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone." People use this verse as an excuse not to exercise Biblical church discipline. However, in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul tells the Corinthian church that they are carnal; they are spiritual babies; they are fleshly Christians. Yet in spite of their imperfections, the Corinthians are told to exercise discipline in chapter 5. Every person is a sinner, and no believer is perfect. But willful sin is not to be tolerated in the church. Open rebellion against the Word of God in the life of a believer is to be dealt with according to Scripture.

Deliver to Satan. A few passages in the epistles also relate to cutting off believers in rebellion against God. In 1 Corinthians 5, a person who has persisted in sin is described. This passage discusses a man who was involved in sexual immorality with his stepmother. The Corinthian church was ignoring the matter. Note the emphasis in 1 Corinthians 5:4, 5. "In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I *have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Discipline must be exercised in the name and power of the Lord Jesus. Turning a person over to Satan is another way of saying to sever all associations with believers. Remember, the ultimate goal is

the believer's restoration, but the local church body must also be protected from corruption.

The Corinthians had taken no action against the man in their midst because they had misunderstood Paul in an earlier letter. Paul had said not to associate with immoral people. The Corinthian church thought he meant they were not to associate with the world. That is not a possibility. Paul clarified his meaning in 1 Corinthians 5:11, "But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one."

How do you determine whether this person is a Christian? You take him on the basis of his verbal testimony. If a person professes to be a believer, then he is dealt with as a believer. Paul didn't discuss whether or not the person in 1 Corinthians 5 was a believer. He professed to be a believer, so he was to be disciplined as a believer.

Remove the Wicked. The emphasis on severing ties to the person continues in 1 Corinthians 5:13: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves." This is another way of saying deliver him to Satan (v.5). Cutting off all association with the believer pushes the person into the realm of the Devil. It is an awful thing. In 1 John 5:19 we are told, "The whole world lies in *the power* of the evil one." What happens when a sinning believer is excluded from Christian associations? He is left in the realm of the wicked one. This allows Satan to have certain physical liberties with the believer. So cutting off association is another way of saying that the Devil can deal with the person.

In 1 Timothy 1, Paul warns Timothy about those who make a shipwreck of the faith, the truth of God. He gives some examples in 1 Timothy 1:20: "Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme." The purpose of giving those men over to Satan was not for their ultimate destruction. It was so they might learn from the discipline that comes from being exposed to Satan. The discipline is very, very severe.

The Bible talks about the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2 Timothy 2:16, 17. Here Timothy is told to "avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will

spread like gangrene.” The necessity of discipline is clear. What must be done when gangrene infects a part of the body? The only remedy is to cut off the infected part so the gangrene does not spread. So here the analogy of gangrene is used. Christians are not manifesting love when they allow gangrene to spread throughout the Body. “Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some” 2 Timothy 2:17, 18).

Second Thessalonians 3 also describes the practice of severing ties to sinning believers. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us” (2 Thess. 3:6). *Tradition* here simply means *the Scripture*. The tradition they received was the written Scripture. The command is the same: disassociate from anyone who doesn’t function in accord with the Scripture.

There were moral and doctrinal problems in 1 Corinthians. Both required the same kind of discipline—cut off the sinning believer so the sinfulness doesn’t spread and corrupt the Body. Turn them over to the realm of Satan.

Turn Away. There is one other passage to consider on the subject of disassociation. Romans 16:17, 18 could be talking about believers or unbelievers. It is difficult to determine, but they are to be dealt with in the same way. Keep in mind, believers are always to disassociate from false teachers. The Word is clear. This is not discipline, it is the order in the Christian life. In Romans 16 Paul said, “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17). There are some who cause division. Some churches have been plagued over the years by those who are divisive. Failure to deal with the situation has caused their ministry to suffer.

The Bible says, “For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Jesus Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting” (Rom. 16:18). Whether the reference here is to believers or to unbelievers, the response is the same. Have nothing to do with them.

The pattern is unmistakable and undeniable. It is described in

several places in Scripture: Matthew, 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, 2 Thessalonians, Romans, Titus. A believer who lives in sin must be cut off from association with believers. It is hard to do, but it is the biblical pattern for maintaining the purity of the Church and for manifesting Christian love.

Put to Shame. The problem identified in 2 Thessalonians 3 was that some weren't working. "For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies" (2 Thess. 3:11). They were leading lazy, undisciplined lives and thought others ought to support them. Second Thessalonians 3:14, 15 says, "And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And *yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The believer is not an enemy. Paul says that if some of the Thessalonian believers don't obey the instructions in his letter, do not associate with them. This is difficult. The temptation is to devise reasons not to abide by the plan of God. Some reason that this is the time to reach out and draw the wayward believer in to get the person more involved. However, such reasoning is sin. The message is clearly stated—do not associate with them.

It is this same kind of unbiblical thinking that brought psychologists and child experts to suggest not spanking children. *Don't discipline children; their young personalities will become warped.* The Bible says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). A child's young personality will become warped if you *don't* apply discipline! It is the same in the Church.

Failure to exercise biblical church discipline results in the loss of the purity of the Body. No Christian love is manifested.

The real problem is we do not love one another enough to do the hard thing. The reason churches often do nothing is not because the sinning believer is loved, but rather because love of self is dominant. No one wants to be inconvenienced by carrying out the discipline. The Word, however, is clear: cut off all association; don't eat with the person; withdraw from the individual.

The Goal Is Restoration. It often happens when a person is cut off from all association with believers that the seriousness of the sin

is recognized. The person may have nowhere to turn except back to God. If the person repents, the Church is to welcome the believer back immediately.

Second Corinthians 2 says that the correct response is to immediately welcome the return of the believer. Thoughts of punishment and suffering are not appropriate. Remember, the goal is to restore, not to punish. As soon as the sin is acknowledged and left behind, the person is to be restored. That was the case in 2 Corinthians 2. "Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was *inflicted* by the majority" (2 Cor. 2:6). Second Corinthians 2:7 continues the instruction, "So that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort *him*, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow." There is no probation. After repenting from the sin, the believer is to be welcomed back. This is a manifestation of Christian love. "Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him. For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things" (2 Cor. 2:8, 9). Paul continued, "But whom you forgive anything, I *forgive* also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I *did it* for your sakes in the presence of Christ, in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:10, 11).

Be careful! Satan will try to corrupt the process, either by preventing the exercise of discipline or by prolonging discipline when it is no longer necessary. Hopefully, after this fourth step of being confronted by the church and excluded from fellowship with believers, the gravity of the situation will become apparent. The person will repent.

The first four steps delineate the responsibility of believers in the local church regarding church discipline: confront the believer personally; confront him with witnesses; confront him with the church; and cut off all association. When the person is cut off from association with believers, he is delivered into the realm of Satan. This is the terminology used in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. Evidently this enables Satan to take additional liberties with the believer's physical body. Job is an example of this, though not in the context of discipline for sin. When God removed the hedge from Job, he was open to Satan's attacks on his physical body. Additional liberties include more than a person's physical body. Property and those around the individual are included as well.

There are two additional steps of church discipline. They are very severe. Believers in the local church were used as instruments in the first four steps. In the last two steps, Satan is used by God as an instrument of discipline.

Confronted by Weakness and Sickness

In the *fifth step* of biblical discipline, the rebellious Christian will be confronted by weakness and sickness. This is described in 1 Corinthians 11. Many in the church at Corinth were not functioning biblically as it related to remembering the Lord's death with the communion service. They were taking the death of the Lord lightly. They were indulging in sin while remembering the Lord's death. They continued to perpetuate the sin for which Christ was crucified. In addition, they had failed to judge themselves and deal with sin in the Body. Paul says very clearly in 1 Corinthians 11:30, "For this reason many among you are weak and sick." These two conditions are the fifth step in church discipline.

Weakness is a broad term and can include a variety of problems brought into a believer's life. For example, Job not only suffered physical sickness, but also the loss of his possessions, the death of his children, and he was plagued with many problems. Physical health is removed. Bodily sickness in addition to all sorts of weaknesses are brought into the life of the believer.

While John 9 makes it clear that not all suffering is a result of personal sin, the sickness mentioned in James 5 *is* a result of sin. If a believer rebels against God and continues to live with sin in his life, sickness can be attributed to the chastening hand of God. If a believer is sick because of sin, he will know it. Be careful. Other believers can't always recognize this. If a believer has experienced the first four steps of church discipline without responding, a subsequent trip to the hospital with a serious illness can be scripturally linked to step five. The person is in the realm of Satan, and Satan is taking away physical health.

James gives this instruction, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed” (James 5:13-16).

The sick believer is to call for the elders of the church in this situation to indicate willingness to deal with the sin in his life. The chastening hand of God upon his life is recognized. God uses Satan to bring the believer to repentance. When this happens, the reason for the discipline is removed.

Confronted by Death

The *final step* in church discipline, meted out by God, is the physical death of the believer. God often uses Satan as the instrument. The last part of verse 16 in 1 John 5 says, “There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.” The elders cannot pray for everyone who is sick. They cannot pray for a person who is ill and unwilling to deal with his sin. Since the believer is under the chastening hand of God, fellow believers are not to pray for preservation of his life or for healing. The ultimate chastening for the sinning believer is physical death. First Corinthians 11:30 says: “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.” *Sleep* is the word used in the New Testament exclusively for *death of the believer*. God intervened to the point of taking the life of some of the Corinthian believers because of sin.

James also describes this step, “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19, 20). To “save his soul from death” refers to physical life. The word *soul* is often used this way in the New Testament. A fellow believer has saved that person from death, because if that person had not repented, God would have allowed Satan to take his life.

Now be careful. Don’t think, “*Well, I’m going to heaven when I die. If He takes my life early, I’m just out of the rat race that much earlier. I’ll be much happier in heaven.*” Read about the lives of men in the Old Testament who were disciplined by God. Take Moses, for example. He died prematurely, and it was a costly thing for him. God took Moses’ life early because of the sin in his life. Although the tremendous cost of discipline taken to this point cannot be perceived in this life, be assured that in eternity the loss of rewards and blessings

will be seen. It is not a tragedy for a Christian to die at 15 or 20 or 80 when it is God's time. It *is* a tragedy for a believer to be disciplined by God to the point of death.

Discipline Is an Act of Christian Love. Is it clear that discipline is an act of true Christian love? James 5:19 and 20 say that if you see one overtaken in sin and you are able to restore him, you have saved his soul from death. Love demands that the process be started early. Discipline should be initiated as soon as the sin is recognized to avoid more severe steps. It is not an act of love when discipline is avoided. It is not an act of love if the local church does not practice biblical discipline. It is selfish and unfaithful to let a person continue sinning unchastened. Intervention can perhaps prevent the ultimate discipline.

The process sounds hard and cruel, but it is true Christian love. A believer cannot grow and mature if he persists in sin. God's goal in discipline is *always* to bring about maturity in Him.

Hebrews 12 discusses the discipline of the Lord. The writer quotes from the Old Testament, telling these Hebrews that they ought to appreciate the discipline of the Lord. Hebrews 12:6 tells us that He disciplines everyone whom He loves. "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (Heb. 12:7, 8). If God doesn't discipline a believer for sin in his life, the person had better examine himself. Is the person truly a child of God? He disciplines His children.

If a person is sinning and going undisciplined, maybe he isn't God's child. Consider a neighbor's child. Parents in the neighborhood don't discipline the child who is not theirs. In God's family, His children are disciplined. If sin goes unpunished, either the hard discipline is coming later or the person is not a child of God.

Discipline Is for Our Good. "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?" (Hebrews 12:9). The last part of Hebrews 12:10 says, "He disciplines us for *our* good, that we may share His holiness." You have to appreciate that. Discipline is for the good of believers so they may share His holiness, whether that discipline is meted out through the church or through

the direct means of God Himself, perhaps using the Devil. Hebrews 12:11 identifies the goal of discipline: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." The goal is righteousness. All believers should desire His holiness and righteousness. Discipline at all levels is required to achieve His righteousness and holiness. Many believers at some point will receive or give discipline. Sometimes it will require the more severe steps of discipline, but the goal is always righteousness.

Keep in mind that emphasis on the Word will produce righteousness in the life so that discipline won't be as necessary. Also remember that discipline is part of the maturing process for Christians. In Christian love, the Word demands that believers discipline one another.

The writer of Proverbs wrote, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently" (Prov. 13:24). "Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol [death]" (Prov. 23:13, 14). The goal in this process is "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). Believers need to pray that God will give the wisdom, the courage and the love to exercise discipline in a biblical way wherever it is necessary.

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Statement of Faith and Constitution
To Earth With Love: A Study of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ
To Tie the Knot or Not: A Biblical Study of Marriage and the Single Life
When the Bible Doesn't Say
Willing to Pay the Price

Other Tracts and Brochures by Gil Rugh

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Lordship Question: What Does a True Believer Believe?
Pare! Y Piense A Donde Va (Spanish tract)
Statement of Faith
Stop! And Think About Where You Are Going
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