

The Duty to Discipline – LD 31

Heidelberg Catechism

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Bible Text: 2 Thessalonians 3; Matthew 18
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The Scripture reading, we read 2 Thessalonians 3.

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. 5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. 16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all. 17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Thus far we read in God's inspired word, and it is that word of God together with the whole organic revelation of God in the Scripture that we find the basis for the teaching of Lord's Day 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism which we consider this morning. Lord's Day 31.

Q. What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel, and Christian discipline, or excommunication out of the Christian church; by these two, the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.

Q. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the holy Gospel?

A. Thus: when according to the command of Christ it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, when it is declared and testified to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted; according to which testimony of the gospel, God will judge them both in this and in the life to come.

Q. How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?

A. Thus: when according to the command of Christ, those, who under the name of Christians, maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent therewith, and will not, after having been often brotherly admonished, renounce their errors and wicked course of life, are complained of to the church or to those who are thereunto appointed by the church; and if they despise their admonition, are by them forbidden the use of the sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and when they promise and show real amendment, are again received as members of Christ and His church.

In connection with our consideration of the Lord's Supper and Lord's Day 30, beloved, we were introduced to the subject of the keys of the kingdom, introduced to that subject in question and answer 82,

Q. Are they also to be admitted to this supper, who by confession and life, declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No; for by this, the covenant of God would be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation; therefore it is the duty of the Christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and His apostles, to exclude such persons, by the keys of the kingdom of heaven till they show amendment of life.

In that Lord's Day, Lord's Day 30, we are told that it is the duty of the Christian church to use these keys. Christ did not give the keys to the church to be merely ornamental, Christ gave the keys to his church to be used and that is the church's duty. One of these keys is Christian discipline, church discipline, and that's the one that we will especially focus on this morning as we find it set out in Lord's Day 31. It is the duty of the church, then, according to question and answer 82, that the church discipline those who walk in sin. That's the same teaching of the Belgic Confession, Article 32, the last sentence of that article where we read this: for this purpose, excommunication or church discipline is requisite, which means required. It points again to the duty of the church to use this key. For this purpose, excommunication or church discipline is requisite with the several circumstances belonging to it according to the word of God. So the church has, we have as Christ's church, the duty to discipline.

When we consider the Lord's Day, Lord's Day 31 under that theme, the duty to discipline, first of all, an urgent necessity; secondly, a powerful manner; and thirdly, a blessed goal. It is the duty of the church to discipline. According to the Catechism, we pointed that out already, but let's demonstrate that. Question and answer 82 says that exactly: therefore, the answer says, therefore it is the duty of the Christian church to use, to exclude such persons, by the keys of the kingdom. Then again in question and answer 85, the answer begins this way, the question: how is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened up by Christian discipline? The answer: thus, when according to the command of Christ, and then goes on to speak of the activity of church discipline. It is the command of Christ, therefore the duty of the church, that discipline be carried out in the church.

One of the places in Scripture that that command is brought out is in Matthew 18, a passage we are very familiar with. Matthew 18:15 and following, there Jesus says,

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

And we'll look at the passage more later on. Jesus goes through the steps of discipline. We noticed now at this point that there is a duty set out here by the Lord. This is the command of Christ. He says, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee," that's the situation one finds himself in, Jesus does not say, "Go tell other people. Confer with them. Start something big yourself." That's not what Jesus says. "Make sure that you begin to start some strife over the issue or something within the congregation." That's not what he commands but he commands, "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." That's the command of Christ. That's often where discipline in the church begins.

But also, that command is brought out in the passage we read this morning, 2 Thessalonians 3:6. We read again, "Now we command you, brethren," the apostle writes, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." That passage is talking about, in particular, the end of the work of church discipline; withdrawing from one who has been excommunicated by the church.

So at the beginning and at the end, both we have the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, the command to discipline.

Those who must be disciplined according to this command are those who under the name of Christian, those who appear to be Christian, or at least to say that they are Christian, maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent therewith. That's answer 85. Those who under the name of Christian maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent therewith, that is, one who says, "I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe in God, the God revealed in Scripture." But then his life doesn't line up. His life doesn't harmonize with the Christian faith. Or he holds to a particular doctrine and that doctrine is not consistent, does not line up with the revelation of God in the Scriptures and as we have it in our own churches so beautifully summarized in the three forms of unity. Those individuals who maintain, that is who continue in, who hold to and continue in a doctrine or a practice that's not consistent with the Christian faith, those are the ones that must be disciplined.

Those who must do the disciplining, according to the command of Christ, are first of all, each member of the church. We begin there intentionally because it seems often our thinking of discipline is that discipline is the work of the elders, and certainly it is the calling of the elders to do that work. That's a very important work that they are called to but discipline is also the requirement of every member of the church. Not necessarily to do that discipline and not at all to do that discipline in an official manner but in a private personal way with those whom they know maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent with the Christian faith. Not every member, then, will be involved necessarily in discipline. If a member can truly sincerely say, "I know of no one who is walking that way. I know no one who is walking inconsistent with their confession." Then there is no need for that individual to be involved in discipline. But where any of us are aware of someone living or holding to heretical doctrines, living in a sinful way or holding to heretical doctrines, if we're aware of someone in that situation, then we have the calling, the command, "Go to that individual and bring the word of God to them. Work with them. Labor with them. Love." That is the calling then of each member of the church to be diligent to obey this command of Christ. It is also the elders' calling certainly. The elders have been especially chosen by Christ and ordained and anointed with his Spirit in a special way to stand in the midst of the office-bearers of the church, the office, those who hold to the office of Jesus Christ, the prophet, priest and king office, but those now who are called to be special office-bearers in the church and who are given the authority to that work by Christ himself. The elders too must be busy in that work.

And that work of discipline, beloved, as it takes place organically within the congregation, within the life of the members of the congregation, one member to another, seeking the good, the welfare, the correcting of other brethren, and the work of the elders as they labor, that work is vital for the church, vital for the health of the church. The church that is not busy in this work is sickly; is not healthy. A church that is busy in this work, that takes this command of Christ seriously and engages themselves in this command of Christ following faithfully what Christ has set out in the Scriptures, is a church that will be and remain healthy.

But it is vital for not only the health of the church, discipline is vital for the continuance of the church. The church cannot continue as a true church of Jesus Christ except it do this work; except it obey this command. And that can be seen from an historical point of view; we can see those churches that have laid aside this key of the kingdom and we can see that the road to apostasy, they go on that road to apostasy ever more and more swiftly. But it can also be seen simply from looking at the three marks of a true church of Jesus Christ. This is one of those marks. Church discipline is one of the marks of a true church of Christ. If a church loses that mark, she no longer can be called a true church of Jesus Christ. She's not marked out as a true church any longer and so it is vital, absolutely vital for the health and the continuance of the church that she be busy in this work.

Despite that clear command of God and the urgent necessity of this work, the mark, as we know, the mark of church discipline is rare in churches today, at least rare to be found vibrant and strong and faithfully administered in congregations today. And that too, even in reputedly Reformed churches; those churches who have historically been Reformed and bear yet that name, even in those churches, this mark is very rare. That's because, at least partly because the prevailing opinion today is that church discipline is not nice; it's not loving to discipline someone. It's not loving to be so judgmental and to get into other people's affairs and to begin to tell them that they have to live the way we think they ought to live. There are many problems, of course, with that, but the idea of being loving is played over against strict obedience to the commands of God as if the two are in some kind of a conflict. One is loving if he's tolerant, and if one insists upon the word of God and submission to the word of God and obedience to the word of God, then he's unloving, he's too strict. That is at least part of the thinking today.

The church, and we raise this not only again to point out the errors of others but to learn from those errors for ourselves, that we do not follow, that we do not get swept up in the thinking of the world today. If we are honest with ourselves and we examine ourselves, we can look and we need not look even so much at others, we can look at ourselves and we can say, "I find a little bit that thinking of the world today in my own mind, in my own heart, that has infiltrated, at least to some degree, my own thinking." And we ought stand firmly against that. The church today is threatened by the world's idea of tolerance and that world's idea of tolerance is really only take the veneer off from it, take the pretty exterior off from it and we can see the world's idea of tolerance, loving tolerance is really only at bottom a tolerance for sin. That's what it is, plain and simple. Tolerance for sin. And how sad, grievous it is to see so many churches fooled by that siren song of the world. The world says it's loving to tolerate and the church says it's loving to tolerate and meanwhile they are tolerating sin. That's what they are tolerating. And all of that in direct contradiction to how God views sin and how God reveals what he thinks about sin, and how God reveals in the Scripture plainly how the church ought to deal with sin and how every member ought to deal with sin within themselves, not with tolerance but with action, repentance within ourselves, and aiming for the repentance in our fellow members as well.

The church is threatened also by today's, in this area of discipline, the church is threatened also by today's individualism, the world's individualism. So often, and there

are arguments made over against discipline of a member, the argument is this: we don't want to lose that member. We don't want to drive that member off. If you discipline them, they'll leave. They'll be gone. So is the argument, so is the reasoning, but what about the body? What about the body as a whole? What about the organic unity of the congregation of Jesus Christ? What about the holiness preserved within that body? An individual member cannot be held up in their comfort and earthly peace, may not be held up as more important than the holiness of Christ's church, the holiness of the whole church as a whole as a body.

And so Christ's command is still in effect today. Contrary to the world's idea, contrary to many in the church who follow the world's ideas, Christ's command is still in effect. It gives us that command because the reality of sin in the first place, because the reality of sin still persists. That's really what many forget today too as they tolerate sin, they fail to take sin seriously and they fail to remember that sin is still a reality and sin must still be dealt with in themselves and within the church. It's still sin in the church, and always will be, until Jesus Christ returns and cleanses the church entirely and takes them, takes us away with him into the new heavens and into the new earth.

There are still those and always will be those who maintain doctrines and practices inconsistent with the teaching of God's word and sin does not go away if it is ignored. We find that in our own experience, don't we? Perhaps someone points out a sin to us or a sermon points out a sin to us or our own conscience points out our sin and we ignore it; we don't deal with it; we don't come to the Lord in repentance; we don't begin to engage the sword of the Spirit and the word of God over against that sin in our hearts and in our lives, and the sin doesn't go away, rather it grows. It begins to fester within us and it begins to infect other areas of our life as well so that the sins begin to double and to triple and to grow exponentially over time. Sin must be dealt with.

We see that in our own experience personally and individually, and that is also the case with the church of Christ within a congregation. Sin must be dealt with. It must be contended against. It must not be tolerated but resisted. If not, the covenant of God will be profaned. That's the stern warning, the serious warning of answer 82. We borrow that from Lord's Day 30. Answer 82: for by this if unrepentant sinners are allowed to the table of the Lord, by this the covenant of God would be profaned, made unclean, be defiled. That covenant of God is defiled. The enjoyment of the fellowship of God and the friendship of God which is only found in the sphere of Christ, in the sphere of the forgiveness of sins and thankful holy living, is profaned and the congregation, not only the individual but the congregation as well, begins to lose some of that blessed fellowship; the experience of that fellowship that Christ died to give to his church and to lead his church into that covenant life. The church begins to lose that and more and more again, that grows so that after a while the church is an empty husk of traditionalism or the church says we have to replace that true fellowship with God which happens quietly within the heart of the members of the church under the preaching of the Gospel, we have to replace that fellowship with God with something else that stirs up our emotions and fills that aching void within us. So we find it more and more in churches that do not maintain this mark and so we too must be warned, we must for the sake of the fellowship

of God's people with God, the covenant life of fellowship, we must maintain this mark in our midst.

And then to0, answer 82 goes on to say: the wrath of God will come upon the whole congregation. God's wrath is kindled against the whole congregation and that doesn't mean, at least the focus of that answer is not saying if one walks in some sin privately, unknown to the congregation, that God's wrath will come upon the whole congregation, but especially the point is if the congregation is aware, knows of an individual who maintains doctrines and practices inconsistent with the Christian faith and yet they say, "Let's be tolerant. Let's not get involved. Let's not deal with that issue. Let's not exercise discipline. For the good of the congregation and the good of that individual, let's not do that." And God's wrath is kindled against the whole body on account of that unity that exists between the member and the body.

Discipline then, beloved, is an urgent necessity indeed. An urgent necessity. And we can be comforted and encouraged to know the face of that urgent necessity, we can be encouraged and comforted to know that there is power that accompanies the work of discipline as that work of discipline is done properly; is done according to the word of God as the Belgic Confession also pointed out in that last sentence of Article 32. There is power and that power is Christ's own power. That's the meaning of Matthew 18:18. There we read,

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Jesus is speaking in particular with regard to the work of the office-bearers in the church, where those office-bearers bind. So there is a binding in heaven. Where the office-bearers loose, so there is a loosing in heaven. Jesus means to say not that men hold the power and men do and God follows, but Jesus means to say that God works through those office-bearers to accomplish his own purpose so that what we see on earth is bound or loosed, we can be assured in heaven is bound and loosed, bound or loosed by Christ himself.

There is power, then, through these means. It's what the keys of the kingdom are, the means that God uses; the means of discipline, discipline, then, that proceeds in an orderly manner. That's how God reveals discipline must be done. That's the proper manner, it must be done in an orderly way. If discipline is going to carry with it Christ's power, if Christ will work through it, then it must be done as Christ commands it to be done, in an orderly way, and that order which we'll look at in a moment, that order exists because of the calling to live with one another and work with one another even when fellow saints are entangled in some sin, especially maybe we could say, when a fellow saint is entangled in some sin to work with one another with love and patience.

The order must be carefully carried out, not in a hasty manner. Hasty discipline is very often mistaken, very often not done properly, well, not done properly period, but very often not done according to God's will and therefore then not carrying the weight of the

power of God either. The Heidelberg Catechism mentions that in answer 85 where it speaks of the brother being often admonished. Over and over again we bring the word of God patiently, giving time for God to work by his Spirit through that word. God is not always pleased to work immediately. As soon as the word of God is brought to us, again, we can look at our own experience for that, can't we? We hear something in a sermon, never heard that before or narrowly our first reaction is to hold it somewhat at arms length, especially as we grow older; it takes a little while for us to think about it, to compare it with Scripture and then we say, "I understand that is the word of God."

So too we must expect it in laboring with one another. We bring the word of God often, patiently, always in love. That too with regard to a proper biblical manner of proceeding in discipline, whether that discipline be done now individually by us as members or by the elders, we do it in love. The Catechism speaks of an individual having been often brotherly admonished. Brotherly admonished. Again, whether we're a fellow member of the one who walks in sin and we're working with that individual or whether we are elders laboring with an individual in sin, we don't go to them as if we are exempt from their sin; as if we are above their sin; as if we're not brothers in the family of Christ; those who have equally together with them been forgiven of our sins through the blood and the work of Jesus Christ. But we approach an individual as a brother who claims to be a brother, is a member of the church, we look at him and in judgment and charity we say, "That's a brother of mine and I'm going to go to him with a humble attitude, knowing my own sin." Not standing back and saying, "Brother, you have to go to the cross," but saying, "Brother, let's go to the cross together. Both of us need forgiveness for our sins. Neither of us perfectly obey the law of God. Not even this sin, not even this law that's being transgressed by you at the moment, I don't even obey this one perfectly either. Together we need the grace of forgiveness."

Patiently and in love, but not, beloved, not drawing back either when there is resistance to the word of God. They may not stall out on any particular step, a brother didn't receive it as I wished he would. He hasn't taken hold of it. He hasn't confessed his sin and repented of his sin and therefore then we back off and we let the matter fall away. We persist, following the steps laid out by Jesus Christ. Those steps we take, as it were, putting one foot in front of the other, sometimes having to drag our foot forward to take the next step because it's difficult. We don't want to do this, at least not according to our own old nature. And all kinds of fears and worries come up but we go forward in faith, trusting that Christ has laid out good steps which he inevitably will use. He will use them for the good of our erring brother and for our own good and for the congregation's good as well.

The steps we saw began with going to a brother and telling him his fault between him and ourselves alone, and "if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Jesus says, "Perhaps at that point, it is my will to work through you to bring him to repentance, and you have gained him back again into the fellowship of the church. But if not, if he will not hear thee," Jesus doesn't say if he will not hear thee, then leave the matter there. Walk away from it. Leave it. Jesus says, "If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Again patiently we work, in love we work, but we must follow this step if Christ points

that way by the brother not coming yet to repentance. We take one or two others with us and we go to that brother and we labor with him patiently and in love. "And if he neglect to hear them," those others that we brought with us, shall neglect to hear them, verse 17, "tell it unto the church." Tell it under the church, the Heidelberg Catechism says it means to the elders, those who are appointed to govern the church to deal with such matters. Tell it unto the church does not mean broadcast it to everyone you know, all the members of the church. By no means. Tell it to the church means tell it to the elders. If he neglect to hear the church, neglect to hear the elders of the church, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and as a publican," that is, excommunicate that individual and put him outside of the church, there too with the hopes that that excommunication will bring about repentance. Even after excommunication, there is still work to do. There is still work to do. One way that we respond as an individual or as members of the congregation is let him be unto thee as an heathen man and as a publican. There is that way that we must set ourselves over against an individual who has been excommunicated. Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and as a publican.

The work is spelled out in 2 Thessalonians 3:14 and 15 as well, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man," and the Apostle Paul speaks to the church, note that man, "and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." He's speaking not about members outside of the church, but those within the church who have been dealt with properly and have been excommunicated from the church. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." So read those two passages together and we may say there seems to be a conflict here. On the one hand Jesus says treat him as an heathen man, as a publican, on the other hand, the Apostle Paul says count him not as an enemy but admonish him as a brother. Really there is no contradiction, it only seems perhaps to be on the surface a contradiction. There is no contradiction. When Jesus says, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican," Jesus means to say simply this: with regard to your fellowship with that individual, with regard to how you deal with him in relationship, you must cut him off; you must excommunicate, put him out of your communion, out of your fellowship, as you would put an heathen man and a publican out of your fellowship as you apply the antithesis to your life as commanded by the whole of Scripture.

Let him be unto thee as an heathen man, as a publican. That's exactly the same thing the Apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:14, "if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." That he may say, "I'm embarrassed. I'm ashamed. The way these individuals treat me, the way that those who once were one with me now treat me, I can't bear it." And he be brought to repentance so that once again he can be received into the church and be reunited with the members of the church. That's Christ's own will and way in which we must work.

And yet count him not outright as an enemy. Look at him as a brother, an errant brother, a straying brother, and admonish him. That's what you would do with a brother who strays, admonish him, at least in as far as he will listen; in at least as far as you can have any contact with him to bring the word of God to him. You admonish him. Not a free and

easy fellowship but speak. Not cut him off either entirely so that you say, "I will have no fellowship, no contact with him at all." But you say, "I'll have no fellowship and friendship," while at the same time, "I must speak and bring God's word until that brother says I want no more to hear from you. I want nothing to do with you." And he withdraws himself and pulls himself away entirely.

We must be consistent in all of our work, beloved, in all of our work as a church in disciplining. We must be consistent as in disciplining our children. We must be consistent. We know that is one of the first principles in dealing with children and disciplining them, we must be consistent. Our work will have no effect. So too within the covenant community, we must be consistent. As we exercise discipline in the church, so we must exercise that discipline in the school. The children must know in the school that there is a law, there is an order, and there are consequences for violating that order, there are consequences to disrespecting the teacher or walking sinfully with regard to one another, stealing answers from one another. There must be discipline exercised in the school and parents must not only allow that but must request that and support that where that need to take place with regard to their own children.

So too there must be discipline in the home. If there is not discipline in our homes and if parents do not bring consequences for sin, admonishments and corrections to their children for sin, then the whole structure of discipline in the school and in the church as well will fall away in time. What we do in our homes is vitally important for the future, the health and continuance of the church of Jesus Christ here in this place.

As we walk consistently, orderly, patiently and lovingly in this work, we will attain our goal. For a brother who is truly a brother, elect of God, we work with him in this way and he will again be received as answer 85 says, he will come back into the church. He will confess his sins. He will come back into the fellowship and communion of the church in the way, not only in the way, but in the way of repentance and faith, believing in the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus Christ with us, a sacrifice that covers all of his sins. You will again be received when the Catechism puts it, when they promise to amend their life and when they show real amendment of their ways, they can again be received.

Then too, our goal not only with regard to that brother is attained as that brother is elect, where that's not the case, then the goal of the purification of the church is certainly maintained. The church is guarded from leaven. Scripture tells us sin that is allowed to be maintained in the church grows and infects and spreads within the congregation as leaven in a lump of dough. The church becomes puffed up in its pride and in its sin, but the church is guarded from that as she maintains this work and is busy in this work, and the church then will flourish; flourish in the knowledge of the forgiveness of their sins. The members of the congregation will flourish in that knowledge and in the knowledge of the work of Jesus Christ on their behalf. The church will flourish with true true godliness and holiness in the way of constant repentance and constantly returning again and again by faith to that work of Christ on our behalf.

Let us, beloved, be busy, diligent in the work that Christ has commanded us to perform, the duty of discipline, that we as members in the beloved Church of Christ here, may flourish as he has promised. Amen.

Father, we thank thee for thy word, a sobering word and yet a word spoken unto us in love; a word which reveals to us that thy holiness, thy love of holiness and of thy forgiveness and thy delight in leading to repentance and forgiving those whom thou hast chosen. We pray, Father, that we may be submissive to thee and thy word and that we may walk according to it in our lives as elders and as individual members of the church, busy in this work that thou hast set before us for the good of the church until the day that all sin is removed and this duty we are relieved of at last. We ask, Lord, that thou would hear our prayer, grant us thy richest blessing in this thy day. In Jesus' name we pray it. Amen.