

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, February 11, 2018

Church Discipline – Part 2

This week, we will take up where we left off in our analysis of Church Discipline (Part 1 preached on 11/19/2017). As a reminder, we established the following definition of discipline, and “church discipline”:

“Discipline”:

- Discipline is an established order of things that is to be followed.
- A disciple is a person that follows after that established order; it is a part of who they are – they pattern themselves after the established order.
- To be disciplined, is to be caused to learn, understand, and follow that established order.
- To discipline is to teach, and cause to follow that established order.

“Church Discipline”:

- The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is made up of disciples of Christ; we follow after him, and pattern our lives after the order of things that He established in the earth as the one and only lawgiver (**James 4:12**). If the Lord is with us, then we progressively get more light as we make this pilgrimage – the pattern never changes, but the clarity of our view changes, and we adjust our behavior to our better understanding of the pattern.
- **Titus 1:9 “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”**
- It is our blessed and sober duty to “hold fast” to the word of God – the form – the discipline that Christ established! We are to maintain that discipline – continually learning, doing, and teaching the pattern of the scriptures – is the very purpose of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the earth; it is the work of our lives that is commanded in the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**)

Recall that we are considering discipline under these three headings:

1. **Formative** (Teach, Instruct, Edify, Train, Nurture, Exhort, Provoke)
2. **Corrective** (Rebuke, Admonish, Correct, Chasten, Chastise)
3. **Excisive** (Exclude, Withdraw, Avoid, Keep no company)

Last time we established the “Formative” aspect of church discipline; our duty to continually teach the “form” – the doctrine and commands of God found in the scriptures

- in meaningful, on-the-ground ways, to those whom the Lord has entrusted to us. Today we will examine “Corrective” discipline; Lord willing, the next time I preach, we will consider “Excisive” discipline.

Corrective

2 Timothy 4:2-5 “2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

We can’t just talk a good talk, and have theoretical standards; when a person’s behavior doesn’t align with their profession of Christ, then we must be willing to correct them, and they must be willing to be corrected.

There is a major overlap between “Formative” and “Corrective” discipline. The one can’t meaningfully exist without the other.

Ephesians 6:4 “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

- We must first give meaningful instruction (nurture), and then give correction (admonition) when behavior deviates from that instruction. This is a never ending process.

As long as we are in these sinful bodies of flesh, we will need to better learn and understand the discipline of Christ. If we’ve stopped being instructed in Christ and His word, then we have left off of serving Him.

- **Proverbs 4:18 “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”**

Likewise, we will always have a need to be provoked and corrected, so that we will remember and obey those things that we have already learned:

- **Hebrews 10:24,25 “24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”**
- Verse 25 makes very clear that this grave work of watching for one another is built into the DNA of the Church – the Assembly. How can we encourage, provoke, and

correct one another to the form of sound doctrine, if we are not watching and considering one another? How can we watch and consider, if we are not assembled together? How can we be assembled, if our hearts are not knit together in love (Colossians 2:2), cleaving to Christ, and to each other, as fellow servants? This is our joyful lot; we submit ourselves to this blessed work, and ask the Lord to make it prosper in each of our hearts, and in the church as a whole!

How important is it to maintain this discipline? How important is it that I be willing to watch for, provoke, and correct my brothers and sisters in Christ? How important is it that I be willing to be considered, and corrected? To answer those questions, we need to look no further than Paul's instruction to "exhort one another daily". This is an admonition that we often reference, but let us consider it afresh in the light of it's dire and terrifying context in Hebrews 3:

Hebrews 3:6-15 "6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. 7 ¶ Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. 11 So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) 12 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. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; 15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

- We are defined as part of the house of Christ "*if* we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end". We have no reason for that hope, if we will not maintain the discipline of Christ in our lives, and in the church!
- Paul then warns us with a stark example of this fleshly tendency to depart from God in our hearts and our behavior (verses 7-11).
 - He is speaking of those Jews who had been given a form – they had been taught the discipline of God, and His holy law; they had been delivered from Egypt with a high hand; they were daily receiving miraculous sustainment and blessings. These men had seen, felt, and tasted the goodness of God, they had professed a belief in him, they had received his law, they had walked alongside of Moses, and yet they were unthankful and profane – they treated God, His commands, and His deliverance as a common thing; a thing that could be compared to the wisdom of the flesh. Even as they were DAILY

SUSTAINED BY MIRACLES, they murmured against God! This is a constant, terrible, and ruinous danger, beloved! What remedy do we have to guard against the flesh that wars against the Spirit of God dwelling in us? What remedy do we have to guard against a false professor that dwells in our midst? The Lord has given us a beautiful, life-sustaining remedy:

- “Wherefore ... take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” **Watch!** Continually, faithfully, diligently, with meekness and earnest prayer that the Lord would keep us and give us wisdom and discernment sufficient for each circumstance that He appoints.
- **“Exhort one another daily**, while it is called today”: encourage, comfort, teach, admonish, correct, etc., when and where it is needed. If we will not submit to this remedy that God has provided us – watching, giving and receiving correction – then we will be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. To silently watch our brothers and sisters walk in a course of sin, is to be the faithless watchmen warned of in Ezekiel 3 and 33 – their blood will be upon our head. Additionally, we are hardened in our own pride and sin, when we refuse to offer exhortation.
- If we will not provoke one another, engaging in this work of corrective discipline, then we will most assuredly provoke God to anger against us! Consider the awful wrath that fell upon those that Paul just warned us of: how many died because of the thankless idolatry of the golden calf? How many died by the fiery serpent, because the people murmured against the Lord’s blessings? How many died wandering in the wilderness after the people counted God as faithless at Kadeshbarnea? This is the dreadful context of this simple instruction for us to exhort one another daily – do it, OR ELSE!
- To reiterate from the first part of this sermon: Every member of the body has help that they can offer to other members; however, it must be help that is commensurate with their experience, gifts, roles and understanding. We are only able to teach those things that we have already learned, and followed. We are only able to discipline where we have been disciplined.

We just identified 3 practical elements that are required to do the work of corrective discipline. Let’s consider each of them individually:

- Watch for one another
- Give correction
- Receive correction

Watch for one another

Any person that is claiming an interest in Christ must be fruitful – bringing forth good works that give evidence of their faith; if they do not bring forth good fruit, then their profession is vain:

- **John 15:16** “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

From the beginning of our profession, we are to “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (**Matthew 3:8**) i.e. words and deeds that manifest our faith. We are to “maintain good works”, that we “be not unfruitful” (**Titus 3:13**); “even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”. This fruitfulness is a hallmark of God’s elect people in the earth; by it we comfort and edify one another in Christ; without it, we corrupt and endanger one another.

- **Matthew 7:15-20** “15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

When a person stops bringing forth fruit, it is either because they are one of God’s people that has fallen into sin, or because they have not been given saving faith – their profession is vain – their apparent fruit was not borne out of a heart of faith. Let us each consider our own lives – how often have we fallen into sin, either in outward behavior, or in our depraved hearts? Consider also that there are 3 types of ground that receive the seed in the parable of the seed (**Matthew 13**), but ultimately, 2 of those 3 types of ground are not fruitful. Beloved, we will most assuredly walk with those who make a profession for a time, but are unable to sustain that profession, because the Spirit of God does not reside in them. Consider the scripture:

Hebrews 12:14-17 “14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

- We are to look diligently – watch for one another! This takes serious work, and serious submission. This requires that we spend time talking to one another; enquiring, spirit to spirit. “**Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of**

remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.” (Malachi 3:16). In the course of this work, we have ample opportunity to meaningfully and practically comfort, instruct, and admonish each other. When both hearts are desirous of this spiritual nourishment, it is a wonderful, comforting thing. When either heart is puffed up in pride, this is a grinding and arduous process that is fraught with Satanic traps.

- Don't read this as an instruction for each of us to be on a witch hunt for the secret Esau maliciously hiding among us. Rather, we engage in this work of maintaining discipline with a sincere desire, and constant prayer, that the Lord will recover each of us from the various devices of our flesh. I desperately need that! Each of us needs that! It is through this process that the Lord will often provide spiritual chastening, instruction, and growth in each of those that are His; likewise, through this process, the Lord will make manifest, and deliver us from the peril of false brethren. We NEVER know which of these two things we are dealing with, while we are in the midst of the process. We put our hand to the work, trembling in meekness and reverential fear before our Holy Lord, asking Him to bless our efforts; any other posture belies an understanding of our own sinfulness, and is itself a profane thing!
- Our flesh DESPISES this notion that we should watch for each other, because it carries in its teeth the notion that we are depraved – totally depraved - and that we need to be watched for. Sadly, the more that we learn and experience in this life, the worse that this gets; our flesh wants to believe that we know better than anyone else. Some words of caution:
 - This is a two way street; it is not sufficient to watch for others, and yet not be meaningfully and practically willing to have others watch for you.
 - We can use watchfulness as a way to feed the fleshly desire to get into other people's business; it can also feed our fleshly desire to be in control of others. To the contrary, we are not to be busy bodies, and we are not to lord over one another. We must take great care to avoid even the appearance of such things – we must ask the Lord to help us to engage in this work with eyes and hearts fixed on Him.

Consider the parable of the fig tree; there is much larger application of this parable, but I am only going to focus on the elements that illustrate the work, and proper spirit of watching.

Luke 13:6-9 “6 ¶ He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth

it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”

- Notice first, that there is an expectation of fruit; we are a part of the Church of Jesus Christ - a living organism – dead, fruitless branches have no place in the Church.
 - *Matthew Henry: “Leaves will not serve, crying, Lord, Lord; blossoms will not serve, beginning well and promising fair; there must be fruit. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be according to the gospel, light and love.”*
- We can see the fruit that the heart produces; God alone sees the heart. We don’t have to outthink these matters that come before us; we go with the visible fruit of the matter – if the fruit changes, then we reassess. Is there fruit of obedience to Christ, or not?
- Consider the work of patience here: 3 years had already past, and now yet one more. This is not hasty, emotional judgment. How many times have we found ourselves frustrated and distressed in the face of someone’s behavior? Our desire to be relieved of the burden cannot rule the day; regardless of the outcome of a particular situation, the Lord has instruction and chastening for each of us in the process itself.
- The fruitless tree wasn’t just neutral; it was injurious – it “cumbered the ground” – taking up the space and resources of the fruitful trees. So it is when a member of the church is walking disorderly – the whole body is grieved. It’s like we have a broken limb, that is shooting pain throughout the body!
- Intercession is made; mercy is shown. Christ is THE Intercessor - we are to emulate that spirit of mercy wherever it is appropriate. We ought to take great care, with much prayer in these matters; we are compelled to pray that the Lord will give repentance to a person that is fallen into sin. (1John 5:16)
- This reprieve – the intervening year – is not a time of idleness, or a license to continue in an obstinate pattern of sin. It is a time of sober correction and work. It is a time to set straight paths. It is a time for digging and dunging – stabilizing and nourishing with scriptural helps. It would be folly to pray about the matter, without putting our hand to the remedies that the Lord has given us.
 - *Henry: “In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The dresser of the vineyard engages to do his part, and therein teaches ministers to do theirs. He will dig about the tree and will dung it. Unfruitful Christians must be awakened by the terrors of the law, which break up the fallow ground, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warming and fattening, as manure to the tree. Both methods must be tried; the one prepares for the other.”*

- *Henry: "Unfruitful professors of religion, if after long unfruitfulness they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find all is well. God will be pleased, for he will be praised; ministers' hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it; the ground will be no longer cumbered, but bettered, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. But, though God bear long, he will not bear always with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and, if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be cut down at last, and cast into the fire. Those that now intercede for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay, they will approve and applaud, the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it."*

Similarly, let us also consider the law of the leper, in the context of our duty to watch, and enquire, and correct, when someone's words or behavior appear to be inconsistent with the scriptures. God spends 59 verses explaining to Moses the process of watching for and identifying leprosy (Leviticus 13); notably, there are more words on this than any other individual topic in the entire book of Leviticus. The point of this law is to deal with situations where someone is exhibiting potential symptoms of leprosy; there are detailed instructions as to how to inspect and diagnose the matter.

- On the surface, this law is aimed at a medical issue, but this is not simply an old school version of the Physician's Desk Reference, or WebMD. In fact, this isn't treated like a medical issue at all – it isn't being referred to a doctor; This matter of discerning leprosy is treated as a spiritual issue, wherein the matter is referred to a priest. There is a determination needed as to whether this person is clean or unclean. So it is with the church: when we have a situation where a person appears to be walking in a course of sin, we are to watch, and give scriptural correction, all the while looking to the Lord for discernment about the matter.
- It is an up close, detailed observation; it is a patient and diligent work, that results in serious consequences. There is a reliance upon God to show the matter - human logic and human emotion CANNOT determine the matter. In some cases, the matter can be seen easily, and in other cases it requires repeated inspection over time.
- The fact that such effort is required to determine clean vs unclean is a testimony to the vileness of our condition, and the sin that we are all inclined toward. Let us consider some of the particular situations described in Leviticus 13:
 - **The sore is only skin deep:** it is not leprosy. If it is deeper than the skin, then it is leprosy, and the person is unclean. *Henry: "The infirmities that consist with grace do not sink deep into the soul, but the mind still serves the*

law of God, and the inward man delights in it. But if the matter be really worse than it shows, and the inwards be infected, the case is dangerous.”

- **The sore is at a stay, and does not spread:** it is not leprosy. If it spreads, then it is leprosy, and the person is unclean. *Henry: “If men do not grow worse, but a stop be put to the course of their sins and their corruptions be checked, it is to be hoped they will grow better; but if sin get ground, and they become worse every day, they are going downhill.”*
- **Raw, rising flesh:** it is certainly leprosy. We’re talking about clear, notorious, impenitent sin. *Henry: “Nor is there any surer indication of the badness of a man’s spiritual state than the heart’s rising in self-conceit, confidence in the flesh, and resistance of the reproofs of the word and strivings of the Spirit.”*
- **If it covers the body, head to foot:** it is not leprosy. But, if later raw flesh rises, then it is leprosy, and the person is unclean. When a person is ignorantly walking in a course of sin, they have no reason to conceal it – it is pouring out of them, from head to foot. If they hear scriptural correction about the matter, and change their course, then all is well. If, however, they respond to that correction with prideful obstinance (raw flesh), then they witness against themselves.
- **Repeated inspection over time:** We have often encountered issues where the outcome is unclear for a time. We address the issue in the measure that is appropriate, given the facts, and the light that we have, but then we must wait patiently on the Lord to show the matter more fully. *Henry: “The priest must take time in making his judgment, and not give it rashly. If the matter looked suspicious, he must shut up the patient seven days, and then seven days more, that his judgment might be according to truth. This teaches all, not to be hasty in their censures, nor to judge any thing before the time.”*
- **If a person was inspected and found to be clean, then they must wash their clothes.** Maybe it was nothing in the first place; maybe it was miscommunication; maybe it was something that was acknowledged and corrected. In any case, my friends, there is nothing about this process to glory in, or to be contentious over – we must be clothed in humility when we engage in any part of this work. When we are acquitted in a particular matter, we ought not to be puffed up, angry, or indignant, but rather we throw ourselves at the feet of Christ knowing that we have need to be washed by Him and clothed in the garments of His righteousness.
- **If the person is found to be unclean, then they are sent out of the camp:** They must be removed from the camp, lest they infect others. They are caused to dwell with other lepers. Likewise when the church is faced with a

person who will not heed reproof, then we are to send them outside of the fellowship of the church, to dwell with the spiritually dead in the world.

Give correction:

Let us start by considering some scriptures related to the correction of children. Clearly the means of correction within the church are different than those required with children, but the spirit is the same. Particularly focus on the idea that it is our heavenly Father that instructs and corrects our hearts; we can – and must - give words of admonition to one another, but the Lord is the only one that can make them prosper in His children. This work of chastening the heart belongs to God alone.

Proverbs 23:12-16 “12 Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. 13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. 15 My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. 16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.”

Proverbs 13:24 “24 ¶ He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”

Proverbs 19:18 “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”

Clearly then, it is a hateful thing to withhold correction. The world calls it loving, the Bible calls it hateful:

Leviticus 19:17-18 “17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. 18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.”

- If we owe this debt to the world, and are willing to engage in this work freely in our efforts to preach the Gospel, then how much more so do we owe it to our brothers and sisters in Christ? When we see a member of the church headed down a path of sin – in doctrine, in their spirit, or in their outward behavior – we are obligated to offer fitting, scriptural words, with a desire that the Lord will correct their heart and their behavior.
- This work is difficult and uncomfortable to the flesh. The flesh LOVES to give correction with a spirit of anger and superiority. The flesh HATES to receive correction, because our prideful hearts want to be right about everything. If this

process is engaged in with sincerity, love, and true meekness toward God, then it is a pride breaker, that brings forth the fruits of the spirit; if it is approached with wrath, and self-serving pride, then it will only tend to bring forth the fruits of the flesh.

- What a beautiful thing that the Lord has appointed! It clearly cannot be accomplished in the flesh – we must submit to this pride breaking process with complete reliance upon God, believing that this remedy is sufficient for us. We must put our hands to this work while we earnestly ask God to send us the Holy Spirit to effectually work in our hearts. We desire that He will give us a right spirit to approach correction, to receive correction, and to be corrected even as we offer it. That is the only way that we can meaningfully offer correction; it is the only way that we can hope to maintain discipline within the church.
 - This is a distinguishing characteristic of a true church, that we would truly love one another, such that we are willing to submit ourselves to this scriptural process. This is part of how we are to love one another, and it makes us unique in the world: **“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35)**

Galatians 6:1 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

- When we find a brother or sister caught up in some sin, and they are willing to hear correction, then our job is to set their behavior on a proper, scriptural course, and to help them with scriptural framing for their spirit.
- **“Ye which are spiritual”**: this language again highlights our reliance upon the Spirit of God to make our efforts prosper. The people of God are the only people in the world that have the Spirit dwelling with us; we must prayerfully sow to that Spirit.
- **“Restore such an one”**: think of this like a shoulder that’s out of joint. There is an immediate remedy to apply – the shoulder has to be restored into the joint. This process is painful, and leaves the joint tender and weak. Afterwards, the arm has to be supported with a sling, while the injury heals. Likewise, when we find a person in a state of sin, even if they are willing to harken to words of correction, it is often a painful process in their heart. We are to help them to see what needs to change, and give them a clear, scriptural path forward; thereby supporting them, and setting straight paths for their feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way (**Hebrews 12:13**).
- **“In the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”**: This is a process of mercy; we desire mercy, as those that have been given mercy. If we let anger, malice, or vengeance creep into this process, then we have

forgotten our own sinfulness, and we are tempting the Lord to chasten us, and show us to be hypocrites. At best, this is a serious hindrance to the work.

- This meekness and humility is not a position of weakness, it is a position of strength; it causes us to rely upon the scriptures, and prayer, rather than what we “feel” is the right answer. We don’t have to overengineer these matters, and we don’t have to think several steps ahead; the Lord owns the hearts, and He will clearly show every matter in its appointed time.
- To be clear, this “meekness” doesn’t mean that we are to be mealy-mouthed, emotionless robots. While we ought to be kind and considerate, we also have to be plain spoken: **Titus 1:12-14 “12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.”** We need not rely upon anger for this sharpness; the word of God is sufficient for every situation, and it is sharper than any two-edged sword.
- Furthermore, our particular approach to correction is situational. It is a part of considering one another: what is the circumstance; what is this person’s disposition; what is the sin; what is the history of the matter; what is their current frame of mind; what seems to be the most helpful at this hour? **Jude 1:21-23 “21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”**
- We ought to be careful not to turn to sharp rebuke where it is not clearly warranted: **1Timothy 5:1,2 “1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; 2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.”** This includes all categories of people; we are not to be respecters of persons; we can’t be kindly to some people, and harsh toward others, just because we think we can.
- By the same token, when sharp rebuke is warranted, we cannot be respecters of persons: **1Timothy 5:19-21 “19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.”**

A major part of our efforts to correct is to engage in prayer – prayer that the Lord will frame OUR spirit appropriately before him – clothing us with wisdom and humility to engage in the work, and showing us where we err in those efforts. Perhaps even more importantly, we ask the Lord to give wisdom and understanding to the person that we are trying to help – whether through our words, or some other means. We have to be willing to be wrong in the midst of this work, and to quickly, humbly repair offenses; no grudges can be held on either side of this equation! Just because we said a thing, doesn't make it the word of God – we ought to be careful not to try to fix a spiritual problem by insisting upon a particular tactical course. We can give our best counsel, but then we leave the matter with the Lord. Just because we think we have a bead on someone's thinking, and the driver of their behavior doesn't mean that we actually do. In fact, we ought to spend far less time trying to sort out what is the specific driver of someone's behavior, and far more time prayerfully entreating them to engage in the proper, scriptural behavior, and to frame their mind around a spiritual, scriptural view of the matter. The only good that it does to try to understand the driver of the behavior is to try to more effectively help the person to reframe their thinking. Too often, I have spent time on my perspective of a person's motivation – this can lead to trouble. Let us focus on what God requires of us, and why – let us provoke each other to let go of all else, and focus on those good, pure, lovely things. This is humbling, heavy hearted work, that is done UNTO GOD! This is not a matter of lording over someone, and yet we are compelled to use the authority that God gives us with the spirit of a servant, and fellow laborer.

Lord willing we will finish this analysis of corrective discipline, as well as excisive discipline the next time that I preach.

I love you all. Amen.