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FROM FULTONDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST...

The Reflector

Discipline

By DELMER HIGHTOWER
From GOSPEL TRUTHS

DISCIPLINE is a very abused or neglected activity. Usually when we think of it, it is in the vein of punishment. Effective discipline involves much more than we are inclined to include.

The proverb "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6), has probably been quoted more and practiced less than any you can think of. Many seem to be woefully lacking in its understanding and application. A close examination reveals three distinct areas to be understood and applied. Training, the right way, and the reception of instruction. Let's deal with the proper training first.

I. Train up... (teach, educate, prepare). "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). This places a great responsibility on parents. Many parents cannot train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord because they don't know where to start.

Training means instruction. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye" (Psalms 32:8). "Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Psalms 34:11). "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, For I believe Your commandments" (Psalms 119:66). We need to teach our children to make good decisions while they are young. Start with little things, like simple chores, and teach them to be responsible and take pride in doing a good job, compliment them when they do well and correct them when they don't. It takes time and patience but it will be worth the effort. If you teach them to make the

little decisions right it will be much easier when the big ones come along.

Have you noticed how hard it is to teach what you don't know/practice. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5: 12).

II. Correction... "for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in Whom he delights" (Proverbs 3: 12). Correction involves more than just a spanking or stern rebuke. It is greatly enhanced by proper examples and wise instruction. "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40 NIV). Have you noticed how hard it is for other parents to correct their children for doing the same things they are? How effective is it to rebuke a child for smoking, drinking, cursing, frequenting the wrong places, keeping the wrong company, (and on and on) when the teacher is guilty of the same things? Can you convincingly teach patience, love, integrity, honesty and faithfulness by your words and example? Why do parents think they can teach what they don't live?

III. Punishment... "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11 NIV). My Son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; (12) for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the Son in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:11).

Many parents are not consistent with punishment and correction. They either threaten to whip and don't, or whip without reason and explanation. Punish-

ment must be both timely and appropriate to the occasion. Chasten thy son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction (Proverbs 19:18 nkj).

To be effective discipline must be timely, appropriate and impartial. It sometimes requires severity. Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die (Proverbs 23:13).

Remember our verse said "... in the way he should go..." some children are hard to teach or refuse to be taught. We must make up our mind that we will do whatever it takes to impress our children with right and wrong and faithfulness to the Lord. "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24). "Harsh correction is for him who forsakes the way, {and} he who hates reproof will die" (Proverbs 15:10). I know the law nowadays looks at spankings as child abuse, but the lack of correction and teaching in the sight of the Lord is child abuse. We should correct because we love and because we want to save their souls.

We find some examples of harsh punishment in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father are the voice of his moth-



er, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil person from among you, and all Israel shall

hear and fear."

That same reasoning is expressed by the great leader Joshua. "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). It was not a suggestion, but an ultimatum. We have a saying today that parallels it. "Shape up or ship out!"

No one said it will be easy, but the parents of the well trained child can be proud of him, while the parents of the untrained and unrestrained child will be brought to shame. It is never too early to start training them "how they should go" and take consolation in the hope that proper training will bring them back to the Lord when they are older if they do go astray.

If you train them right and they go astray the Lord has shown us the reason. He who keeps instruction {is in} the way of life, but he who refuses reproof goes astray (Proverbs 10:17). "Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 19:27).

The Remission of Sins

By JAMES W. ADAMS
From GUARDIAN OF TRUTH

(Author's Note: This article was written and published as an editorial in the September 1952 issue of Truth In Love of which I was the editor. My views today are essentially the same as those expressed in the article. jwa)

THE universality of sin is a fact which no man admits the existence of evil would think of denying. Man's inability to liberate himself from its guilt, love, and dominions is a fact equally as well known and as universally acknowledged. Experience and observation unquestionably confirm the statements of inspiration: "All have

sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23); and "If we say that we have not sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

The recognition of evil logically demands a recognition of righteousness. To admit the existence of evil is to give tacit recognition to a standard by which thoughts, words, and deeds are determined to be good or evil. To recognize such a standard is to agree that it is *the law* of life. If men are to submit to such a law, it must possess authority. To possess authority, it must be infallible. Men are not likely to submit themselves to a law of life

that can give no evidence of being infallibly correct. Imperfect beings cannot give to the world a perfect law of life. An infallible law could emanate only from a perfect being. This accounts for the moral decadence and corruption of heathen religions and the devotees of all ideologies that are fundamentally atheistic.

The very existence of evil in the world, demands the existence of God and a standard of life emanating from Him. Christians worship the one true and living God and subscribe to the Bible as His word or law of life. All evil results from sin — transgressions of God's law of life as revealed in the

Bible. Law, however, is impotent unless it provides for the punishment of the transgressor. If law may be violated with impunity, its authority is subverted and its majesty degraded. God's law of life has ever provided for the punishment of the transgressor. The prophet said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). Paul said, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Eternal death is the penalty which has ever attached to Heaven's law. Since all have sinned, each responsible being is a condemned transgressor. The facts in the case are clear. The guilt of the transgressor is established. The sinner, therefore, is under condemnation and waits but for the judgment for the inflicting of the penalty.

He is helpless of himself to do ought that would justify his salvation. Only the intervention of Divine power can save him. God cannot disregard transgression and, at the same time, uphold the majesty and power of his law. Yet, infinite love yearned for the salvation of the creature who bore the image of his Creator. From this infinite yearning and heavenly passion, the scheme of human redemption was born. God's law could not permit transgression with impunity, but could and did admit pardon through a substitute offering of sin.

Naught could adequately serve in this capacity saved that which was absolutely sinless. Only a perfect being, hence only a Divine victim, would suffice. For this cause Jesus, Jesus "who knew no sin" came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" an by His sinless life and sacrificial death on the cross "condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1-4). In this lies the explanation of such passages as these: "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3); "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt. 26:28); "The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if one dies for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14); "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed in the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:6-8).

Concerning Imputed Righteousness

Denominations, and some of my own brethren, have greatly erred in supposing that "imputed righteousness" is an imputation of the perfect, personal righteousness of Christ to the sinner. The personal righteousness of one person cannot be imputed to another. Paul clearly shows that the righteousness possessed by the sinner (through faith in Christ, jwa) is attained through forgiveness or pardon. He quotes David as saying, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven." Christ, the perfect human, the Divine victim, offered Himself as man's substitute on the cross to make possible man's forgiveness without violating Divine law. When the sinner accepts the offering of Christ through gospel obedience, he is pardoned, forgiven, hence is then righteous before God. He has sinned (hence stood condemned, jwa), but through forgiveness has become guiltless, therefore possesses "imputed righteousness."

Baptist preachers (and other Calvinists, jwa) suppose David's statement, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," to mean that the child of God can do any evil thing under the sun and God will not regard him as being guilty whether he is ever penitent or not. The passage teaches nothing of the kind. God provides a plan for forgiveness of His children as well as one for the forgiveness of the alien sinner. In no case does he propose to overlook and forgive unconditionally the sins of men (saints or aliens, jwa).

The Conditions of Remission of Sins

That Christ died for all, Paul says, is just as certain as the fact that all are dead (2 Cor. 5:14). The blessings of the sacrificial offering of Christ are made available to all, but they are not bestowed upon them unconditionally. Such would be tantamount to passing by sin without adequate punishment and would subversive of the majesty, dignity, and power of Divine law, as much so as it would have been without the death of Christ. The sinner must see in Christ crucified the heinous character of sin, the awful penalty of transgression, and the glory and majesty of Divine law. In response to Heaven's overtures of mercy in Christ he must: Believe in Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world (the Divine victim) (1 Cor. 15:1-3); viewing

the awful character of sin and its just penalty, he must be led to a state of deep penitence (Acts 3:19); he must make a public acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9,10) and he must submit himself to His rulership by being buried with him in baptism into His death unto the remission of his sins (Rom. 6:4; Acts 2:38).

Corroborative of these facts are the following incidents from apostolic history. Cornelius the Gentile was told, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). You will note, this passage does not teach that the sinner receives remission of sins through faith only, but rather, he receives it through the name of Christ. In verse 48, Peter commands them "to be baptized in the name of the Lord." The Jews in Solomon's porch were told, "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). Believers on the day of Pentecost were told, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

No person can consistently (or correctly, jwa) claim to be a child of God and enjoy the righteousness of God who has not complied with the Divine conditions of pardon. The assurance of our pardon (and a right standing with God, jwa) lies in the integrity of Divine promises. Hence, no person can have the assurance (of salvation, jwa) who has not met Divine conditions (upon which it is predicated, jwa). The child of God, having accepted Christ as his offering for sin (in primary gospel obedience, jwa) has Divine assurance of pardon for all sins committed after baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:27) upon the conditions of repentance, confession and prayer (Acts 8:13-23; 1 John 1:9).

(I have exercised the prerogative of slightly changing my terminology in the original article in a few places to make the meaning clearer. Too, I have inserted in parentheses a few comments for the same purpose. Otherwise, the article is just as it originally appeared. If I were writing the article today, I would probably express myself in spots in a slightly different manner, but the import would be the same. jwa)

Can we withdraw from the “withdrawn?”

By EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

“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 he received from us.” — 2 Thess. 3:6.

A brother or sister “quits the church,” or more correctly quits the Lord. Is there anything the church can do beyond urging them to return? Usually when we suggest that maybe the church should consider withdrawing from such a one, we are faced with: “You can’t withdraw from those who have withdrawn themselves.” We do not believe that those who raise this objection are wilfully trying to avoid responsibility for discipline. I have heard it from some of the finest and more conscientious brethren that I know. But, I do believe that they have a misconception of the withdrawing process.

There is more to “withdrawing yourselves” than making a formal announcement at church and then no longer “using them” in a public way. Many seem to think that since the quitter no longer attends and participates in congregational activities that this constitutes his having withdrawn himself so we cannot “withdraw our fellowship” since the quitter has already withdrawn himself. But this solution to the problem will not do.

We suspect that part of the problem is that of referring to discipline as “withdrawing fellowship.” The scriptures refer to “withdrawing yourselves.” There is a difference. When one withdraws himself it is true that

his spiritual fellowship is withdrawn, but it goes beyond that. One withdraws his **person**, his **company**, or his social **association** from the offending party. Surely one can do this even though the brother or sister no longer attends the meetings of the church. Such withdrawal or isolation is designed to make the offender ashamed of his conduct and produce repentance. If Christians refuse to have any social association with such a one and let him know why he can have none then we believe many would feel the pressure and be restored that probably would otherwise be lost. Of course, this severing of company does not preclude contacts for the purpose of admonishing (2 Thess. 3:15) and/or fulfilling other obligations one may have toward the person.

I have known many who have “withdrawn themselves” who continue to enjoy the day to day association with Christians. That association has not been severed at all. It is precisely the company (“mixing up with” — Vine’s Dictionary) that must be withdrawn. (See 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Thess. 3:14). Such a person can still be “marked” or “noted” by the church and then each member can withdraw his company (association) that the one might be ashamed.

The concept that we cannot withdraw from the withdrawn (meaning one who no longer attends) because he has withdrawn himself presents still another problem. Suppose a brother (or sister) becomes an adulterer but still attends all services, sings, bows in prayer, eats the Lord’s supper, etc. (we have known this to

happen) — can the church withdraw from him?

“Of course, they can,” you say.

But wait a minute. Does the fact that he still attends regularly and participates in worship not mean that he refuses to be withdrawn from? How can the church withdraw from one who refuses to be withdrawn from?

“But, we can’t keep him from coming and participating,” you say.

Right!

“We can announce that we no longer fellowship him.”

Right again!

“Each member can refuse to associate with him on a day to day basis.”

Right one more time!

“After all, we can ‘withdraw ourselves’ from him even though he is regular in attendance and participates in the worship.”

Now, my brother, you are beginning to get the point! If the fact that one quits means that he has “withdrawn himself” and we cannot withdraw from him — if one refuses to quit it must mean that there is nothing further we can do, since he refuses to be withdrawn from. If not, why not?

I believe that we can mark and refuse to company with a brother who walks disorderly whether or not he attends services. In fact, the very refusal to attend faithfully is walking disorderly and is grounds for marking and withdrawing ourselves.

(Editor’s Note: This article first appeared in the January 1978 issue of The Reflector. One or two minor changes were made in the original wording.)

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