***Divine Discipline

RV33-01***

We are studying the letter to Sardis in Revelation 3. This is segment number 9.

**Repent**

The Lord Jesus Christ warns the members of the church in Sardis to repent. He is calling on them, as we have learned, to change their minds about their carnality and their reversionism. The word "repent" means "to change one's mind." Repent, in their case, meant to change their minds about their human good works which were flowing from their lack of spirituality. They were functioning outside of the inner circle of temporal fellowship, and were producing works which the Lord Jesus Christ branded as short of divine approval. They were to repent of their religious facade of spiritual activities ... in the midst of their dependence on their old sin nature. They were doing all the outward things that would suggest that they were very devoted Christians and functioning Christians, but internally, their dependence and their trust was on the human viewpoint of the sin nature, and not on the divine viewpoint of the Word of God.

These Sardis Christians were called upon to remember, therefore, the sound Bible doctrine which they professed, and to begin functioning on it. It is indeed a very dangerous thing for a believer to know doctrine and to know the principles of doctrine, and then to be negative toward them in practice.

There were several occasions when the Lord Jesus Christ, in speaking to the religious leaders (to the Pharisees and to the Sadducees), pointed out this very principle to them: that they had been informed by Him; they had been given spiritual enlightenment; and, now they were under great divine condemnation for the rejection of the enlightenment that they had received. On one occasion, Jesus told them, "It would have been better for you had you never known these things than for you to be enlightened and then to be negative toward them."

So, it's a serious matter to do what the church at Sardis was doing. They had sound doctrinal understanding and sound doctrinal principles, and then they ignored the core of those principles functioning in life on the leading of God the Holy Spirit.

In the previous session, I told you that there is a plan with God, and you must follow that plan of God in your life in all phases of it. That plan would include campaign posters in heaven right now that indicate whom God intends to be the president of the United States. That does not necessarily mean that the person that God has selected to be president is the one who is going to be good for the nation and for our future. It may be that, in the decree and plan of God, the person who will be elected will be the one who will ensure just the opposite – for the destruction of the nation, and for the moving out of the nation into oblivion. But the thing that we are concerned with is functioning on the principles of the Word of God that are sound and that are true, and God's plans will come to fruition.

Remember that the forces of Satan that control this world, and that control this system of evil in this world, will yet predominate in the course of God's plans.

So, here are the Sardis people who are sloppy as believers with doctrine and with principles of truth. They knew how they should have acted, and they knew the Word of God, and yet they were indifferent; careless toward it; and, negative in many respects. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is following with them the grace pattern of giving warning and time for correction before applying divine discipline or chastisement. That's how grace works with us. Every one of us should realize that when we're out of line with the will of God, first there comes warning; there comes a period of grace; and, there comes a period of waiting before the fracture in our lives is brought about in the providence of God.

No believer is unnoticed by the Lord Jesus Christ. No believer is unnoticed in what he thinks or in what he does. Sooner or later, any willful, persistent violation of doctrines will bring divine discipline into your life. Sooner or later: pretending that what is false is true; and, pretending that one cannot know what is true (that you must muddle around and struggle and try this and try that), that attitude will bring some area of discipline into your life, and some area of your life is going to come apart. You can count on it.

Every wise Christian can indeed review his own life and see times in his own life when he paid a price for his refusal to repent of some violation of the Word of Truth. It's a good thing to sit down and review the times when grief and unhappiness have come into our lives just because, at some point, we rejected the truth that we knew, and we rationalize that in some way or another. No ambition that you may have, and no desire that you may want to fulfill is worth violating Bible doctrine. No loyalty that you may want to keep is worth violating the doctrine that you know. It is a very expensive thing to do. Only people who think they are going to live forever on this earth, and that there is not going to be a tomorrow in terms of facing God play that game. There is no ambition; there is no desire; and, there is no loyalty worth the violation of the Word of God. Willful ignorance wants to pretend that the Bible has not clearly stated an applicable principle, so we find an excuse thereby to do evil. But the Bible is clear.

So, here's the picture with Sardis. The question now is: what is Jesus Christ going to do about this? What does He have to say to them, having delineated so clearly what they were guilty of? We begin in the middle of verse 3. The first part of the verse said, "Remember (think back or recall), therefore, in view of your imperfect works (your human good and your production of sins), how you have received (that is, what you have received in terms of a position in Christ) and the things that you have heard" (in terms of doctrine that you have been taught). Then He says, "You must do two things: First, grab hold of what you know to be the truth; and, secondly, act upon it by repenting (changing your mind). When you change your mind, the results will be you will change your actions."

**If They do not Repent**

Now, that's the picture. Pursuing an ambition; seeking to fulfill a desire; and, seeking to maintain a loyalty in the face of violation of doctrine – they were doing all of those things and many others. The Lord said, "Stop it. If you do not, here's what's going to happen." He said, "If therefore, you shall not watch." The word "if" is the Greek word "ean." The word "ean," which stands for the word "if," signals to us that this is a third class condition. Remember that there are four kinds of "if statements" in the bible. You never can tell that from reading the English Bible. Which kind it is is very important. This one is third class. Third class condition immediately tells us that this is a possibility: Maybe you will, and maybe you want. It is the same kind of "if" that you have in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins:" maybe you will, and maybe you won't. But if you do, this will be the consequence; and, if you don't, this will be the consequence.

So, here is a possibility. The Lord isn't saying that these Christians are going to get this stuff squared away. He is saying that if they do or if they don't, here's what's going to happen: "If, therefore." The word "therefore" is "oun." This indicates a consequence. He's going to tell them what the result is going to be if they do not square away: "If, therefore, you shall not watch." The word "watch" is the Greek word "gregoreo." "Gregoreo" means "to watch." It really is a way of saying, "Wake up." It is in the aorist tense which means the point at which they recognize their own spiritual neglect and degeneration. Nobody is going to turn around until you finally say to yourself, "Hey, I must be nuts. I am way out of line. I am pretending the Word of God has not spoken. I'm trying to convince myself that it has not spoken so that I can persist in a certain willful direction in spite of the fact that God has indicated otherwise. It is active which means that you must personally do the waking up to your own spiritual condition and degeneration. Again, it is subjunctive because it's a potential act: Maybe you will, and maybe you won't.

**Jesus Christ will Come**

This verb has with it this Greek negative: "me." This negative indicates that they shall not wake up. He's saying to them, "If you do not wake up," and that it is: maybe you will; and, maybe you won't. Then there is going to be a consequence. Wake up in terms of the repentance that he has called upon them to perform: "If, therefore, you do not wake up, I will come." The word "come" is "heko" The word "heko" means to arrive on the scene. We would actually translate it as "to be present." I will arrive on the scene. I will be present. This is future tense. It means that sometime in the future, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come on the scene to exercise judgment on the congregation in Sardis. It is active voice which means Jesus Himself will do the judging. It's is indicative – a statement of fact. It is a statement of a truth.

This does not refer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as such. This is talking about divine discipline. This is referring to the fact that Jesus is saying, "If you don't change your ways; if you don't correct the sinful direction that you've been following; and, if you don't correct this having a sound doctrinal statement and being negative toward it, then I'm going to show up on the scene, and I'm going to take action against you." This is in terms of divine discipline.

Now, it is also true that, in a spiritual way, this can refer to the Second Coming of Christ, because indeed, when He does come a second time to this earth, He is also going to come for the purpose of judgment. When He comes in the rapture to pick up the Christians and take them into heaven, they will be going there for the experience at the Judgment Seat of Christ – for the judging of their life's works, and for the distribution of rewards. When He comes to this earth a second time, and touches down on the Mount of Olives again, He will come to judge this world: the gentile nations; and, the Jews of this world. All people will come under His judgment. But right here, the emphasis is upon the concept of discipline.

**Without Warning**

He says that if they do not watch, He will appear on the scene. Then He uses the word "as" which is the Greek word "hos" which introduces the manner. That tells us that He's going to tell us the manner in which He is going to come. How is He going to come? It says that He will comes as a "kleptes." That's the word for "thief." You can see that we get our English word "kleptomaniac" from that for a person that's obsessed with stealing. This noun, "thief," stresses the idea that is characteristic of a thief. What is characteristic of a thief besides the fact that he takes what doesn't belong to him? It's how he does his business. He comes with stealth and with unexpectedness. He comes in a sneaky way, and he suddenly bursts in upon you to execute a robbery. It's done in a secretive manner.

So, the point is that the coming of Jesus Christ, in divine discipline upon those neglecting and compromising the doctrine that they know, will be without warning. You will have your grace period, but suddenly, when that period of grace is over, you'll have no indication. There it will be, and discipline will explode in your life. The thief analogy is used many times in Scripture, and it is used indeed to describe the nature of the Second Coming of Christ. That is His return to this earth. We have this in several verses: Revelation 16:15; Matthew 24:433; Luke 12:39; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; and, 2 Peter 3:10. All of those use the analogy of the return of Christ to the coming of a thief. What they are stressing in those verses is the same concept of stealth and unexpectedness.

So, the Lord Jesus says that He's going to come upon this congregation (upon these believers) in an unexpected way when they are not looking for Him. Negative volition and indifference toward the application of doctrine always eventually brings sudden judgment into a person's life. You cannot avoid that. If you persist, the judgment will come; and, when it comes, it will be sudden.

**Like a Thief**

But that is not all. He says that He will come as a thief. Then He uses this word "kai" ("and"), the conjunction of addition: "And you shall not know. The word for "know" is the word "ginosko." "Ginosko" is the Greek word for "knowing as the result of personal experience." This is knowledge by personal experience. This is in the aorist tense – at the point of time when divine discipline comes upon them. The will not know that point in time. It is active. They themselves will be in ignorance. It is subjunctive. This is a potential experience again. It's something that could possibly happen to them. It's interesting that, in this passage, God the Holy Spirit lays great stress upon the fact that they will not know when the discipline finally is applied. And He stresses that in a very strong way. There are two Greek negatives. One is "ou," and the other one is "me." "Ou" is the strong negative which means "definitely no." "Me" is "no," but it leaves the door ajar for possibly changing the mind. When you want to really make a strong negative in Greek, you put them both together. In the Greek Bible, that's exactly what happens. It says, "Ou me" ("know"): "You shall not know." We would say, "There is no way that you will know."

We can't talk like this in English. We can't put double negatives together in English. We can't say two negatives because that makes it a positive. The Greek is able to do that, and it makes it very forceful. When you read the Greek language, and you see an "ou" and a "me" together, the Spirit of God is saying, "There is no way that this is going to happen."

And what He says, "In no way is going to happen" is "what." This is the Greek word "poios" which refers to "quality." The idea here is quality in terms of time (the particular time); that is, when: "There is no way that you will know the hour." The word "hour" is "hora." This means, "The point in time at which I will come." Again, we have the same word we had before: "heko:" the imposition of divine discipline by Jesus Christ. It's in the future tense. It's at that point in the future when grace opportunity has run out. It's active. Jesus Christ is the judge who is executing. It is indicative – a statement of fact.

Who's going to experience this? "It is going to come upon." The word "upon" is the preposition "epe" meaning location. It is going to come upon "su," the personal pronoun, which here is singular indicating that particular congregation because they are the ones who are particularly guilty. The Christian who betrays or neglects his responsibilities from God's will will be called to account for it. That's the point. At a certain point, you're going to get hit. It's very serious for you to think that you're getting away with something. It's very serious to think that God is sliding. The lack of spiritual vigilance results in spiritual ruin to yourself and to others.

**Divine Discipline**

So if they do not make correction in this congregation, Jesus says this: "I'm going to appear on the scene, and it'll be like a thief: suddenly; and, unexpectedly, because you are not watching, and you are not correcting. And you won't know the hour. You won't know the moment in which suddenly I arrive on the scene, and disaster is brought upon you." Disaster in what form? In the form of divine discipline.

So, at this point, we summarize what the Bible has to say about the subject of divine discipline. This is a very important subject because this again is something that applies to each of us. What we are going to summarize is what you will experience if you put yourself in the same negative attitude position toward doctrine that the people in Sardis did.

1. **Correction**

First of all, we should begin with the Hebrew and the Greek words that the Bible uses for "discipline." In the Hebrew, there is the noun "musar." There is also a verb: "yasar." The noun means "correction." That's an important point. If you're going to talk about discipline, what do the words mean? Well, the Hebrew word for "discipline" means "correction." It is used, therefore, in the Bible, for example, of correction relative to children. This word is used in Proverbs 22:15. This is a familiar verse: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." There is the rod of discipline (correction), and it uses this Hebrew noun "musar," indicating that the discipline is for the purpose of correction.

Proverbs 23:13: "Do no withhold correction from the child, for if you beat him with the rod, he shall not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from Sheol." "Do not withhold correction ('discipline')." Here is the Hebrew word, and the idea is "correction." And the purpose of that correction here is clearly stated to be to shake him up to God's point of view, and the means of it is to use a stick.

This is outlawed in the state of Texas. In the state of Texas, you cannot spank a small child in public schools or daycare centers – someone under 6 years old. And they are the people who need it the most. Here the Bible says that you do that: you'll beat him; and, he won't die. In fact, other parts of the Word of God say you will even bruise him a little bit, but he will survive. Yet, the human viewpoint of our society comes along and says, "No, this is wrong. This is not the way to rear children."

The Hebrew noun "musar" means "correction," and it is used for the correction of children.

It also is used in the sense of meaning divine discipline. For example, in Jeremiah 2:30, we have an example of that: "In vain have I smitten your children. They received no correction (no discipline). Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion." They received no correction. They did not respond to the correction which God gave them. The Hebrew verb here means "to correct." When the Hebrew uses the verb "yasar," the basic idea is to bring about a correction. This is in a variety of ways.

In Deuteronomy 22:18, for example, it is correction with blows: "The elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him." It uses this word for correction; that is, with physical blows: "Chastise with blows."

Proverbs 9:7 uses this verse in terms of admonition: "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser. Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." There the idea is that the instruction is another way to discipline – to discipline with words by means of admonition.

Then there is the example in Isaiah 28:26 of discipline by means of giving people information. When children do something wrong, they have to be informed of the reason why that is wrong: "For his God does instruct him to discretion, and does teach him" (discipline him). So, here is giving him instruction; that is, giving him information.

Now, on the Greek side, you have the noun "paideia" and the verb "paideuo." In the case of the noun, it basically means "the rearing of a child." This refers to training and instruction. We have this word used in this way in Ephesians 6:4. It is speaking to fathers: "Do not provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture (in the discipline) and the admonition of the Lord." It uses this noun "paideia" for that. In 2 Timothy 3:16, this same noun is also used: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine; for reproof; for correction; and, for instruction in righteousness." So, the Greek noun means "training in instruction." It is also used for the concept of divine discipline from God. You have that in Hebrews 12:5: "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto sons. My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him." And it uses this noun "chastening." The idea there is that discipline is for correction.

Let's take a look at the verb. The verb means also "to train children." Therefore, this verb form in the Greek is used sometimes to convey the idea of "teaching" or "to instruct." We have this in Acts 22:3, illustrating it as discipline by teaching: "I am verily a man who is a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God as you all are this day." The idea of "taught" there is, "I was disciplined. I was given instruction."

1 Timothy 1:20 also presents the idea of discipline as being taught something: "Of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered (and there is the word – to discipline) unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

**Chastisement**

We ought to add one other verse here. In the Greek, it also does mean "to chasten" – the idea of divine chastening. Luke 23:16: "I will therefore chastise him and release him." Here, Pilate, speaking of what he is going to do with Jesus, the word "chastise" is this Greek verb meaning to chasten him.

In Hebrews 12:7, this word is used: "If you endure chastening (the verb form), God deals with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the father does not chasten?

Then, finally, for outright (not only chastening, but for the whole concept of) divine discipline, you have that in 1 Corinthians 11:32: "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." There we are chastened for the purpose of teaching us something. Back in Hebrews 12:6, we have, "For whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

So, as you put all this together, the Hebrew and the Greek words for divine discipline connote training; connote instruction; and, connote correction. That is the idea behind divine discipline. However, these words carry the concept of enforced learning and correcting. So it connotes chastisement. It is discipline which is forced upon a person. It is instruction which is forced upon a person. It is correction which is forced upon a person. That's why we have said that divine discipline, sooner or later, when God begins applying it, is a no-return operation. It conveys the fact of a superior authority exercised irrevocably over its subjects. The Greek and Hebrew words carry this connotation. It is for correction. It is to teach you something, but it is inexorably inevitable when God moves into action. It's an instrument that is enforced. You can learn it the easy way, or you'll learn it the hard way.

1. **Holiness**

The purpose of divine discipline is to make the believer compatible with divine integrity. In Hebrews 12:10, we read, "For they verily for a few days (that is, human fathers) chastened us after their own pleasure, but He, for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." Why does God place divine discipline upon us? In order to bring us about and to make us compatible with divine integrity – His Holiness. Again, if we are willing to be compatible with that, then there is no discipline.

1. **Righteousness**

Divine discipline produces experiential righteousness in the positive believer. Hebrews 12:11 says, "Now, no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness into them who are exercised by it." So, the point of discipline is to cause us to act right according to God's standards. That's a very significant point. Remember that discipline is evidenced, in part, by the fact that some part of our life has become fractured. There is a grief in some part of our life. Something is a point of great pressure, and we can always trace that back to some violation of the Word of God. The divine discipline is to produce righteousness in practice.

1. **Love**

Divine discipline is an expression of divine love for the believer, and so is not the cause for discouragement. Notice again Hebrews 12:6, which says, "For whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives." Let's compare that to Proverbs 13:24, which says, "He that spares his rod hates his son, but he that loves him chastens him early." So, the concept there is that the chastening of God is an expression of the love of God.

In Revelation 3:19, the Lord says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Therefore, when chastening does come into our lives, we are not to fall into that temptation of saying, "Why does this happen to me? How can God treat me in such a cruel way?" The point is that He is treating you in maximum love, because the point is correction, so that blessing may be flowing into your life – and in terms of eternal consequences that are often related to this.

1. **Don't Despise Divine Discipline**

Divine discipline should not be despised. Proverbs 3:11 says, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction. Hebrews 12:5 again states to us that He speaks to you as sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him. Divine discipline is not something we should resent. It should be something that says, "Hey, there is a signal from God. Something is wrong, and I need to make a correction and get something straightened out." The Lord could ignore that. He could let you just go right on into eternity, but with the lack of divine discipline (with some problem that exists between you and Himself), you go out into that eternity with great personal loss. Discipline is an expression of the love of God, and it should not be viewed as something that we resent.

1. **Welcome Divine Discipline**

A believer who loves the truth will welcome divine discipline. The only people who resent when problems arise in their lives that are obviously the working of God upon them are those who are negative to truth. But those who love the truth welcome discipline. Proverbs 12:1: "Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge. But he that hates reproof is stupid." He that hates discipline is stupid.

1. **Children of God**

Receiving divine discipline is an evidence that you are a child of God. Hebrews 12:7-8 say, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the father does not chasten. But if you be without chastisement, of which all are partakers, you are illegitimate, and not sons." That verse tells us something very interesting. It not only tells us the fact that if God is chastening you, it's indicative that you are a born again believer in His family, but it also indicates to us that God does not chasten unbelievers. God only chastens believers. He does not chasten unbelievers. Unbelievers suffer the consequences of their violation of divine laws; of divine principles; and, of divine morality, and so on. They suffer the consequences of breaking these rules and breaking these laws. But chastening (teaching or correction), which is what these words mean, for the idea of bringing you into line for maximum blessing and maximum productivity to earn maximum rewards in heaven, is only done for Christians. It's a signal that you are a child of God when that happens to you, and it will only happen to you if you are a child of God.

1. **Delivery**

Divine discipline seeks to deliver a believer from the condemnation coming upon Satan's world system. Many Christians are going to share the consequences of divine condemnation because they are so intimately associated with Satan's world system. 1 Corinthians 11:32 says, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The Lord is trying to keep you from acting like the world. The Lord is trying to keep you from functioning on the devil's principles. Some Christians have a real tough time about it. The attempt to relate biblical concepts to the political scene and to the national scene has brought all kinds of resentments; all kinds of antagonisms; and, all kinds of furor on the part of people who never bothered to say anything. It never bothered them when the homosexuals and the perverts were relating themselves politically. It never bothered them when the murdering of the unborn with the abortion laws were being related to the political scene. Never forget that it is the liberals in our government who have politicized spiritual issues and biblical issues. If there is any mixing of church and state, the fault is at the part of the liberals who have politicized these principles of biblical morality.

Divine discipline seeks to deliver us from the consequence of divine judgment which is going to come upon our society for being part of the concepts of Satan's world system.

1. **Response to Discipline**

Failure to respond positively to divine discipline results in personal disasters, and that is the only word to describe it. Psalm 50:17: "Seeing that you hate instruction (divine discipline) and cast My words behind you." This is hating the words of God and hating discipline. Remember that we found that discipline is sometimes in the form of words (in the form of information that God brings to us in one way or another). So you hate the person that says it. You're antagonistic toward the person who is telling you what God is saying. Compare that to Jeremiah 7:28: "But you shall say unto them, 'This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God, nor receives correction.' Truth is perished and is cut off from their mouth." They don't receive correction. There's the Hebrew word for "divine discipline." This was true of the nation of Israel. They would not receive the words of God. They threw them back into God's face. They excused themselves. They pretended that they could not understand the Old Testament Bible. They pretended that it did not address itself to these issues of a social nature very specifically. They pretended that God had not laid down regulations. So the result is that they were to perish. Failure to respond positively brings personal disasters.

1. **Israel**

The cycle of divine discipline upon the nation of Israel included physical ailments; a sense of fear; poverty; drought; wild beasts; military conquest; famine; and, dispersion from their land. Leviticus 26 is where you will find that – the stages of the cycle of discipline. And each step was another bit of pressure. All of that was correction. Israel went through the whole thing, and they refused to knuckle under. Finally, they came to the last stage, which was military conquest and dispersion into other nations. That happened with Babylon. Then they were brought back, and the whole cycle of discipline started again, until finally they got to 70 A.D., and this time they were destroyed by the Roman army under Titus. Leviticus 26 spells out the cycle specifically. We cannot say that this is how God works with all nations, but it certainly gives us a little bit of a clue because there's been a similar pattern to other nations which have been destroyed to the way God dealt with Israel in these various stages of discipline.

1. **Physical Pain**

Divine disciplines sometimes comes as physical pain. Job 33:19: "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain." One of the ways that God brings discipline is with physical pain. You don't get away with anything. Divine judgment is bringing upon people physical pain.

1. **Negative Volition**

Negative volition or discipline brings various punishments, including physical death. 1 Corinthians 11:30 says, "For this cause many are weak (emotionally and psychologically) and sickly (physically ill) and many sleep;" that is, they experience physical death. So, negative volition will bring a variety of punishments, including the ultimate of physical death.

1. **A Triple Compound Judgment**

Divine discipline may be a triple compound judgment. Matthew 7:2 tells us that fantastic statement that you can get for yourself a triple compound dose of divine discipline: "For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured unto you." This has to do with verse 1 which talks about the concept of judging. Here's the pattern. A mental attitude sin is indulged. That is reason number one for divine discipline. It may be envy, hatred, or whatever. That expresses itself overtly in gossip and maligning of a person's motives. There you have a second reason for divine judgment. Now you have compounded it twice. Then the Scripture says that because you have done that, you will be measured the same kind of measurement you gave out; that is, as you accused this person and attacked his motives, whether it's true or not, whatever the penalty of God was upon what this person was guilty of will be added to you. The measure that you gave to him will be given to you. The attack you made upon him will be delivered back to you.

So, you'll get judgment for your mental attitude sin; then you'll get judgment for the overt consequences; and, you'll get judgment for the evil that you accused that person of. That is added to you. The way you deal with him will be dealt back to you. Why? Because the Bible says there's only one person who exercises vengeance. It's not you exercising your vengeance on other people, including church members. Only God exercises vengeance. Keep your nose out of the vengeance business, because God says, "I'll give you a nose full of the same thing that you're trying to dish out to other people." Matthew 7:2 should be a very sobering verse.

1. **Self-Judgment**

Self-judgment prevents divine discipline. That's a great relief to know. 1 Corinthians 11:31 says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." We may escape discipline.

1. **Blessing**

If the punishment of divine discipline continues after repentance and confession, it will turn to a blessing in the life of the believer. Sometimes the punishment does not stop after you have repented and confessed. But that divine discipline is now correction and teaching unto your blessing. The Lord has something to show you; something to teach you; and, something to refine in you. So, the punishment may continue.

1. **Happiness**

The outcome of divine discipline ultimately is happiness. That is the divine goal. We have this taught in Job 5:17-18. The ultimate goal of divine discipline is happiness: "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrected. Therefore, do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He makes sore and binds up. He wounds, and His hand makes whole." If the discipline punishment continues, it will become blessing. The outcome is happiness.

1. **Salvation is Secured**

Divine discipline never entails the loss of one's salvation. Galatians 3:26 tells us that we are saved by faith. 2 Timothy 2:12-13 tell us that even if we are unfaithful, and even if we do not believe, Jesus Christ must remain faithful to Himself and to the salvation which He has provided for you, because He has provided that salvation on an irrevocable basis.

1. **Life on Earth**

Finally, divine discipline is confined to life on earth. You do not carry your divine discipline over into heaven. There are a lot of ignorant preachers who like to give people the idea that, "Boy, they're going to stand before the Lord someday, and are they ever going to get it? And there are a lot of wives who are looking forward to that – when their husbands stand before the Lord. There are probably a lot of husbands who are looking forward to when their wives stand before the Lord, and boy, are they going to get it?" No, Revelation 24:4 neutralizes that nonsense: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there should be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

So, the people of Sardis have a chance, because grace is giving them the opportunity to make correction for their degenerated lifestyle as believers, and to come back in practice to functioning on the doctrines that they know, and stop pretending that the Bible is not a clear book; stop pretending that these principles cannot be applied; and, stop pretending that these things are not functioning and applicable and usable in our lives. In Sardis, they were trying to realize an ambition. They were trying to fulfill some desire that was condemned by the Word of God. And they were willing to compromise and pretend that what they were doing was not under divine judgment.

The Lord Jesus said, "I'm going to come upon you like a thief who has burst into your home in the middle of the night. You're groggy; you're not expecting it; He's there; and, you're done in. I'm going to lower the boom, but I'm going to give you a chance to change your mind. Do it before it's too late."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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