***The Chastening of the Living God  
  
RV70-01***

We are once more in Revelation 3:14-22 on the letter written to the church in the city of Laodicea, segment number 24. One of the things that was true about Adam and Eve was that they were a marvelous divine creation made, of all things, in the image and likeness of the sovereign God of the universe. Consequently, everything about Adam and Eve was perfect. They had no experience with sickness, and they had no experience with conflict of any kind. They knew nothing but perfect happiness. Positive volition was constantly exercised toward the Word of God. They would listen to God, and they would obey Him. Nothing interrupted this perfect fellowship with their Creator God.

However, after Adam and Eve sinned, by rebelling against the will of God and the Word of God, their perfect existence very rapidly deteriorated. The nature of man was now diseased by sin so that he could no longer respond perfectly to God. Their perfect lifestyle degenerated into sorrow; into pain; into frustration; and, into a variety of disappointments. Their enormous IQ capacity made them painfully aware of what had happened to them personally, and what this reflected about their future. They had such mental capacity that they were fully aware of the consequences of their act. Their separation and spiritual death from their gracious and loving God was total. And worse than that, it was irreparable. They could do nothing to restore it again.

At the very moment of God pronouncing His judgments, however, upon Adam and Eve for their sin, God, in His grace and in His love, promised to help them with a Savior to bring them back out of this terrible disaster into which they had chosen to cast themselves. So, we have that first promise of a Savior found in Genesis 3:15. There was immediately held out to them a hope. They were not left to suffer the consequences of evil with no hope of return to the full joy and to the image and likeness of God in which they had been created. The sin nature, which now dominated them, was to be a source of great pain to their posterity, but there was light at the end of the tunnel.

The punishment of God, which His Holiness demanded, was for the purpose of their ultimate restoration to happiness with God, to the point where there would be no more death; no more sorrow; no more tears; and, no more pain. Negative volition to the revealed mind of God leads a human being into a nightmare of grief and pain – on the physical side, and on the social side. The arrogance of the sin nature always thinks it can beat the odds by pretending that God has not spoken, and that man can be his own sovereign boss.

Adam and Eve made that terrible mistake. They pretended that God had not spoken about the issue that they were dealing with, and they pretended that they could be sovereign in making their decision in spite of what God had said.

These people that we've been studying, here in the book of the Revelation, have exactly this kind of background. The Laodicean church members were born again, but they were living in this kind of arrogant, negative volition to the leading of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, the Bible makes it clear that people who lived in the condition of innocence can fall into disobedience. This was the status of Adam and Eve. They never engaged with anything evil. They knew only obedience, yet they could fall into this kind of arrogance. But it is also true that those of us who are born-again believers, and for whom all this tragedy is being gradually reversed, and which ultimately will be completely reversed, we too can play this kind of arrogance of negative volition toward the leading of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here in Laodicea was a whole church full of born-again believers who were doing exactly that. They were blind in God eyes; they were naked in God's eyes; and, they were poor in God's eyes. In their eyes, they were just exactly the opposite.

The Lord Jesus must threaten, for such believers, punishment. His personal, divine, holy integrity demands that. But the punishment may be escaped if the believer will repent and turn back to positive volition toward the Lord and toward His Word.

After describing the Laodicean condition of spiritual reversionism, the Lord, in love, urges them to repent so that He may again bless them. Jesus Christ tells the Laodiceans, these sinning saints, that he has an emotional type of love for them. This was a very unusual expression of the word for emotional love which is not often used in the Word of God in terms of God's attitude toward people. His grace has made them part of His body and His bride, so He is emotionally attached to them. His grace has destined them to possess His absolute holiness. So, He is emotionally attached to them. The Lord Jesus says, therefore, that He rebukes those He loves, so as to bring them to a conviction of their evil, so that they will change.

That's what you have to remember about this. Behind all of this is the fact that God is saying, "I love you, and I want to change all this. I want to reverse this tragedy. That is why I am dealing with you in terms of chastisement and in terms of punishment." The Lord Jesus says, therefore, that He rebukes those He loves so as to bring them to a conviction of their evil, so that they will change. The Laodicean Christians themselves didn't think that they were in opposition to the Lord's will, and for this reason, they needed to be jolted, because they thought that everything was just great.

This is true again of us. It is always necessary for Christians to be aware of the fact that they can kid themselves, and that God comes in, and He jolts us with this factor of discipline to alert us to the fact that we are deceiving ourselves. This is one of the occupational hazards of the Christian life – to deceive yourself about what you think about God, and about what you're doing in putting a different connotation upon what you're doing, and putting a different name and attitude on what you're thinking and what you believe than what God holds.

I have found that Christians have a fantastic ability to use the sin nature to distort even the Word of God which they have been taught. This is the old slimy condition of Christians who use our liberty, as believers, for license to cover up their evil. They never seem to learn that they're not kidding anybody, especially an informed believer. Adam and Eve tried to do it. The Laodicean church was full of people who were trying to use liberty for license.

I found that the things I preach sometimes come back in very strange fashion. The things I declare to be the things that the Bible indicates are the mind of God come back to me in very strange applications. However, I notice that the distorters of the Word of God, or of something that I have taught, don't come and distort it with me. They always do it with somebody else because they're smart enough to know that if they come to me, they're going to get the divine viewpoint treatment, and they're going to get their backs shredded by the Word of God, because I will not tolerate deliberate distortions of the Word of God. So, they're smart enough to do it to other people, and not to come to me and declare the distortions of the applications of their own decisions of taking some position of liberty with what the Word of God has taught them, and using it for license.

But this is an old thing. The very first thing that happened with the apostle Paul, the great teacher of grace, was that he was accused of telling people that they could do evil things (that they could sin). I've had people who used to attend this congregation who were very enthusiastic for the Word of God until I told them that the Christian life has rules. Then, once they discovered that there were certain restrictions upon them, they were out of here. That was especially the case when, every now and then, I had taken the Bible, and I had gone through the New Testament, and I went through all the "Thou shalt not" commandments. This includes those which say, "You better not touch;" "You better not fool with that thing;" and, "You don't do it." I'm not giving you an option. God is saying, "I'm telling you. You stay off of this." Boy, that makes them creak because they want to pretend that only God the Holy Spirit will tell them what to do. But what God the Holy Spirit tells you what to do is what is written in this book, and the implications of it as it applies to our lives and to our circumstances of service.

The loving Lord Jesus Christ is ready to bless, or He's ready to punish his followers. And they *are* His followers. They are His bride. They are His body. They are His believers. They are His sheep. And they are acting as rebels, and they are taking the Word of God, and they're distorting it in its implications and its applications. It's just like Laodicea. It's the greatest con job the devil pulls on us. He plays it all the time, and mostly on sincere Christians.

**The Correction of Chastening**

In Revelation 3:19, therefore, the Lord has laid it out to them, and placed it upon them in this terrible condemnation that describes their situation. We come to verse 19, and here's the effort by the Son of God to get His bride restored to what she should be: the correction of chastening. We have seen that the Lord, in the beginning, said, "Those that I have an emotional love for, I rebuke." This rebuke has the connotation of expressing to them that which is their condition, with the idea of correction. It is a rebuke that is so designed as to bring about a correction.

Then He adds the word "and" which is the word "kai" in the Greek language, indicating an additional action of Jesus Christ to bring the Laodicean to repentance. Jesus says, "First of all, I'm going to rebuke you. I'm going to tell you what your condition is. I'm going to describe to what you've been doing. I'm going to spell it all out to you. I am going to inform you so that you are not being deceived, and that you will not be in a condition where you thought you were something sincerely other than you were – that something was other than it is. I'm going to spell it out to you." All of that is in that first word "rebuke."

**Chastening is Education**

Then the Lord comes along and says, "And I'm not going to stop there. I'm going to do something more. I'll rebuke and I will chasten." The word "chasten" is a very important New Testament word. It looks like this in the Greek language: "paideuo." "Paideuo" is the word that denotes "the training of children." So it has the broad connotation of education. This is the New Testament word for the concept of education. So, when we talk about chastening, the first thought you attach to chastening, God's point of view, is education. Chastening is educating, and education, therefore, basically carries the connotation of chastening.

This is demonstrated, for example, in Acts 7:22: "And Moses was learned." That is the word "paideuo:" "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." What does that mean? "Moses was learned" means that Moses was educated. It is this very word which is used, indicating that the idea behind chastening is to educate.

You have this again in Acts 22:3, where this word is again used as education. Paul says, "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." Here again, Paul says, "I was taught according to the Jewish religion of Judaism." This is the Greek word "paideuo." Again, the concepts of chastening and educating are tied together.

Another example is in Titus 2:12, where we read: "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age." That first word in verse 12 is "paideuo:" "teaching us (educating us) that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age." There is no doubt in the mind of the apostle Paul, this great apostle of grace, as he writes here to Titus, that the calling of the Christian is to be a life which, "Rebels and rejects ungodliness, and that rejects all the worldly lusts that are thrust against us: we who live soberly; we who live righteously; and, we who live godly in this present age," which Paul elsewhere calls "This presence evil age." Christians are to be paragons of righteousness. They're to be exemplary in their personal integrity. That means adjustment to a lifestyle that is radically different from that of unbelievers.

And the more we gather together as a congregation, and forcefully move in the direction of mutual understanding of the things that are told us as educating and chastening here in verse 12 of "Moving away from godliness and worldly lust, and living soberly, righteously, and in a godly lifestyle," the stronger we are; the greater impact we will have; and, the richer all of you will be in eternity.

This word "paideuo" is a fascinating word. Teaching or education connotes the concept of chastening. It's in the present tense, meaning that the Lord constantly applies discipline. It is active. Jesus Christ Himself handles this discipline relative to the Laodicean church and other believers. It is indicative – a statement of fact. Chastening or discipline for wrongdoing is always an expression of divine love.

Furthermore, it is an evidence that you are a child of God. Remember that God does not discipline unbelievers. God does not discipline the people who do not belong to His family. The Bible makes it clear that if you experience the discipline of God, it may be tough sledding, but at least draw comfort from two things about it: First, the fact that you are disciplined shows you that you are in the family of God. Secondly, it shows you that God loves you. This is taught to us in Hebrews 12:5-8:" And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto sons. My son, despise not chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him, for whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons. For what son is he whom the father does not chasten? But if you be without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are illegitimate, and not sons."

So, the Word of God uses this word "paideuo" to speak of chastening as an education at the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ to believers who need to be educated in His will. And it is done because you are members of His family. Otherwise, He wouldn't be chastening you. And it is done because He loves you. This is certainly clear of a human father (in a human father's realm). He chastens his own children, and he does it because he wants the best for them. His affection for them seeks to turn them away from self-destructive forces.

**Correction with Words**

This chastening represented by "paideuo" takes two forms. One is an internal form of chastening: correction with words. It's an internal appeal to the mind by means of admonition. You have an example of this in 2 Timothy 2:25. This is discipline internally with words: "In meekness, instructing those that oppose them, if God perhaps will give them repentance that he acknowledges the truth." Here is the concept of bringing to repentance from evil ways by teaching people what God has to say. God says, "Don't do certain things." We call that a moral code. There is no option, and there is no exception. God says, "Do certain things." There is no exception. There is no option. These are things that are imposed upon us by divine commandment – we who are part of the body of Christ. 2 Timothy 2:25, therefore, talks about instructing. Here you have this word "instructing," which is reflecting the concept of teaching with words – chastening with words.

**Correction with Calamities**

Then there is a second way that God corrects, and that's with calamities. This, you can see, is an external. This is external appeal to return to a path of righteousness by means of physical and psychological pain. You have an example of this in 2 Corinthians 6:9. This is external chastening: "As unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed." This is physical punishment short of death. These are calamities of one kind or another, so that there is correction being brought about.

Another example of this external calamity chastening is in Hebrews 12:6: "For whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges everyone whom He receives." That word "scourging" can be translated as "He skins alive." One way that God deals with you is physically to skin you alive in chastening.

Another example is in Hebrews 12:10: "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure (our human fathers), but He for our profit, that we might be caretakers of His Holiness." Human fathers chasten externally, in part. It's an external chastening. That's a basic form of chastening. This is what God does.

We have a classic example of these two kinds of choices: internally, with words; and, externally, with calamities, in 2 Samuel 12:5. This deals with David, a man after God's own heart. We have David being confronted with his sin of adultery. He has been chastened, first of all, with words. Notice: "And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man." Nathan the prophet has described to him a man that had everything, and he wasn't satisfied with the fact that he had everything. He had to take another man's sole little sheep that he had. It was an analogy. David, who had everything, and multiple wives, could not be satisfied. He had to take his captain Uriah's wife as well.

"David's anger was greatly kindled against the man (the man in the story). He said to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, the man who has done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.' And Nathan said to David." Here we go – chastening with the words (internal): "You are the man. Thus said the Lord God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hands of Saul. And I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. If that had been too little, I would, moreover, have given unto you such and such things. Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

"Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. I will take your wives before your eyes and give them unto your neighbor. He shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun, for you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" These are all words from Nathan: sobering; staggering; and, terrible words of divine condemnation. They are words of chastening, and they are words, therefore, of education.

Then God added calamity to the discipline of David in 2 Samuel 12:14: "Because of this deed, you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, so the child also that is born to you shall surely die." The child resulting from this union with Bathsheba was doomed to death before it was born. It was a calamity. In addition to the words of discipline, it was a calamity of discipline as well.

So, when God disciplines, you have these two factors that come in. We have words of warning, and that we have contained basically in Scripture that is laid out for us in terms of the teaching of the Word of God (the exposition of Scripture). It is not uncommon for people in this congregation to be sitting and listening to the instruction of the Word of God, and for God the Holy Spirit to put two-and-two together, and speak to them. It almost has nothing to do with what the preacher has said. But God has connected a line of thought that has alerted them to something that is out of line, under which God is bringing them into conviction for correction. So, God speaks with words in a variety of ways from His Bible. You can ignore it, and you can resist it. That, when you arch your back like a cat who is in the presence of a snarling dog, is going to cost you dearly. When words will not do it, then God goes to the next stage, and He'll hit you with calamities. The book of Hebrews is so vivid. Have you ever seen a person whose back was shredded? God says, "I am going to shred you. I'm going to skin you alive, and I'll break you down. And if you still arch your back against Me, then I'll take you to heaven. I'll just snap your life right out from under you, and I'll take you to heaven. I'll take your life."

So, we have a serious principle that we've touched upon here in Revelation 3:19 when God says, "Because I love you, I'll rebuke you. I'll give you the words of warning and analysis. Furthermore, I will give you the education of divine discipline."

**The Doctrine of Divine Discipline**

So, let's look at the subject of the principle of Christian sin and divine discipline. It is good to remember that for every evil committed by a Christian, there is a divine chastisement. We see that in Hebrews 12:3-15, part of which we have already read, that there is divine discipline for every evil that we commit. It isn't just for some of the things that we do. It's for all of the things that we do. Unconfessed sin results in loss of peace with God, and loss of divine good production. It results in wasting your life. You're out of the inner circle. Divine discipline begins as a curse on a believer. But then it turns to blessing following confession.

In Hebrews 12:11, we read, "Now, no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised by it." So, we want to remember when we talk about discipline that, while it always begins as a very unpleasant thing, and as a case of misery, it is destined to be converted into happiness. That is structured upon the response of the believer who is being disciplined.

Job 5:17-18 puts this in a very forceful way, when Job says, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore, don't despise the chastening of the Almighty, for He makes sore, and He binds up. He wounds, and His hands make whole." His hands heal. God only goes so far until you're ready to stop fighting back. There's a great cost to be paid by fighting back. You have a cost to pay, and your family will pay if you insist on fighting back. It is better to recognize when God is speaking in words or in calamities, and back off, and recognize that He is sovereign, and make the correction that's necessary to be made – to stop the progress of the discipline, and to change it to blessing.

When God is disciplining, and we confess, it will always turn to blessing. The discipline will not always stop, but from the moment you confess (the moment you admit the evil for which the discipline is being imposed), that continuing discipline will now become a blessing. It will now become a means of God's teaching you and training you, and the result will be desirable. Blessing is always the purpose of discipline. 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 lay down a very important principle relative to divine discipline, therefore: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." What does that mean? That means that if you will face up to the fact that you are out of line with what God has said, and stop trying to fight Him, and stop trying to be sovereign, then the discipline will not come down. Verse 32 says, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world." God does not want you to suffer the consequences of His condemnation that is coming upon the world. A lot of Christians insist on putting themselves under that same condemnation.

**The Sin unto Death**

So, divine discipline ranges from Hebrews 12:6, of being skinned alive, to the ultimate (most serious) of all discipline expressed in 1 John 5:16, which reads, "If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give them life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it." The ultimate chastening is to take the person's life – sin unto death.

There are, of course, many biblical examples that we could go through of how this system of discipline works. I'll just mention a few. We've already mentioned David's sin of adultery which placed him under the divine discipline of the sin unto death. You can compare 2 Samuel 11 and Psalms 38. The Old Testament law very clearly said that, for adultery, there is a divine judgment as physical death. That's what was executed. In the Old Testament era, adultery was dealt with by physical death. David repented. He turned around. God, in His sovereignty, did not execute the penalty of death.

**Restoration**

King Saul of Israel, by negative volition, put himself into the sin unto death. He did not confess, so God executed upon him the sin unto death. 2 Samuel 12 tells us that David confessed, so he was spared. Saul did not confess (1 Samuel 28:19), so he died. After David's confession of this particular terrible sin, he had about 25 years of his greatest fellowship and his greatest service with God. That's a very important time factor for you to remember. The low point of this great man's life was an act of evil that merited physical death, and only his confession and the sovereign grace of God overrode that in his case. After that, God restores from our falling. God restores us with His discipline, and in David's case, to the point where the next 25 years were the greatest years of his life. He wrote portions of the Word of God. He was a fantastic man out of a fantastic tragedy. That's what discipline does. That's the restoration (the correction) of the hand of God.

In 1 Corinthians 5, you have a Christian who is in the church in the city of Corinth. He is delivered to physical death. But in 2 Corinthians 2:6-9, it shows that he confessed to the Father, and he was spared that physical death. 1 Corinthians 5 is a rather serious passage of Scripture, because it deals with the kind of discipline that sometimes we have to deal with in believers. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul says that the act of discipline of this church body is: "To deliver such one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Every now and then, it is necessary, because of the persistent rebellion against the Word of God and persistent rebellion against God's standards, to have to turn to the Lord and say, "Father, we are delivering so-and-so into Your hands for dealing with him physically, and for ultimately, in Your sovereign decision, for physical death." This is an act that believers perform to this day – delivering the rebel into the hands of God for judgment unto physical death. They did it here in Corinth after Paul wrote them. They did exactly that. You can read the details of the sin in 1 Corinthians 5. Again, sexual immorality was involved. And then this person turned around, so it all changed, and the discipline again was reversed. The person's life was spared.

Divine discipline is designed to bring a Christian around to confession of his sins. Discipline, therefore, is only for believers. God is not seeking to correct unbelievers. The only thing that God is trying to do with unbelievers is to get them saved. You don't want to forget that God only wants unbelievers to get saved. God is not disciplining unbelievers for what they do. That's why the psalmist points out that the wicked look like they're getting away with everything. Why should we try to be so righteous when they're living up so high-on-the-hog, and everything is working great for them? And the point is that the reason it works so great is because God is not dealing with them. The consequences of what they're doing is coming out there eventually in eternity. But God is not disciplining to correct them from their evil. So, it looks like everything is coming up roses for them.

But God does discipline believers. In Hebrews 12:7-8, that we've already read, indicate that that is what God does for believers. God's discipline also flows from His love for His children. We've seen that Hebrews 12:6 tells us that. But discipline never implies loss of salvation. Hebrews 12:7 indicates that it is because you are already saved that God disciplines – because you are His child.

Furthermore, all divine discipline is confined to time. The only purpose of divine discipline now is to get you turned around so that you can correct the most expensive thing that you are suffering by violating the integrity of God, and that is loss of your rewards in heaven. So, there is no discipline for believers once you die. That is made very clear to us in Revelation 21:4 which says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." The believer in heaven is beyond the point of discipline. Therefore, there is no more discipline after you enter the Lord's presence. Discipline is strictly confined to this life. The reason for that is to bring you into a position where you can start producing divine good works. That's the only reason you need the discipline. Once you're in heaven, you're past the point of being able to store treasures in heaven. You're going to live with what you have set up and prepared before that time.

The Christian who fights discipline, and refuses to confess his sins, builds callouses on his soul. In time, he gets very spiritually disoriented to the point of spiritual insanity. Then he will reject his right church. He will reject his right pastor-teacher. He will give his loyalty to those which are his false church, and those who are his false pastor-teachers. If you want to cut off your eternal reward with one climactic blow, just sit under the wrong pastor-teacher, and just sit in the wrong congregation – and you've finished yourself off from then on. These church-hoppers (these church mavericks) that roam from one place to another are playing a very dangerous game. This is spiritual Russian roulette that they are playing, and they are sure to hit the chamber that has the cartridge in it every time. If you cut yourself off from your right pastor-teacher, and cut yourself off from your right church congregation, you have introduced disaster without reversal in your life.

So, it is a serious thing that a believer who fights discipline is rejecting all the things he should be accepting. He is blind to genuine spiritual opportunities for divine good production. But he confidently supports human good production. That's one of the sad things about a believer who is resisting God's guiding chastening hand. He supports exactly the human good, and he rejects the divine good. He's so shot-through with human viewpoint that he is insensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He is materialistic in his outlook. While on the one hand, he's materialistic in his outlook, on the other hand, he doesn't have the ability to know how to use his money in terms of storing eternal rewards for himself. He puts his money into all kinds of pseudo religious operations, and these fat-cat, short-return ministries that are always appealing for funds. He does not have the discernment to avoid those. He doesn't know how to use that money, as materialistic as he is, so that he will benefit eternally from it.

This person who resists discipline has a soul which is emotionally dominated. It causes his mind to be totally disoriented. He pursues cults. He pursues heresies. He pursues emotionalism. Yet this same person (this same believer), and this must have been true of them in Laodicea, can be a very attractive, dedicated, respectable, outward image that belies the inward status of spiritual derangement and viciousness that lies within them. You cannot always tell the Christian who is bucking discipline from externals.

The confession technique gives the Christian's life back to the Holy Spirit. It scuttles this old sin nature (this disaster that Adam and Eve imposed upon us), and it returns the life to the Lord's glory. Confession of sin, remember, does not pay the penalty for sin. Only the cross of Jesus Christ does that. But the confession of sin gives you the ground to turn around and make the chastening profitable. If it continues, or if it doesn't, it becomes blessing. It is chastening to keep us from sinning; chastening so that we can develop spiritual maturity; and, chastening to lead us to confession, which is the first aid that we need for our souls.

**The Stages of Chastening**

The steps of chastening are very clear. You should keep this in mind because it will help you to spot what may be happening to you. We have this laid out for us in 1 Corinthians 11:30: "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Chastening for the believer comes in three stages:

1. **The Warning Stage**

Stage number one is warning. Weakness is associated with the concept of warning. With these qualities, God is warning you that something is wrong. This is what Paul means when he says, "For this cause, many are weak." In the warning stage, your life begins to have the evidences of coming apart. Things aren't going right. You are being upset emotionally. You are distraught emotionally. You're disoriented in your thinking. There's a lack of peace. There's an uneasiness within you. There's an unsettled feeling, and there's a sense that the pieces of life just don't make any sense. That's weakness. Instead of operating from a position of strength, as a believer, you're operating from a position of personal weakness.

1. **The Pressure Stage**

If you do not respond to the warning stage with confession, repentance, and correction of evil, then you go to the second stage, which is the pressure stage. The pressure stage is described by the word sickly. Now you come to where suddenly you are hit physically. At this stage, the physical life begins to break. The physical structure begins to break down, and you begin to find yourself shot-through with a variety of diseases and physical ailments. That is God pressuring you now when you would not listen to the warning stage of His discipline.

1. **The Stage of the Sin unto Death**

Then, if that doesn't do it, Paul says, "And many sleep." That's the execution stage. That's when the life is taken, and the person is removed to heaven.

So, God deals with us first by the warning stage; then He hits us with pressure; and, then He hits us with execution. This is the pattern of personal discipline.

**The Prevention**

The prevention is described in Hebrews 11:31-32 that we've already looked at. You correct it with the use of 1 John 1:9. The result will be that you will escape the consequences. If you do not, you may find yourself put under the discipline, and then the return will be more difficult. God may keep up the pressure, and He may continue the discipline even after you have established the ground of confession.

There's one other factor in divine discipline. One of the serious results of divine discipline is the consequences of dabbling around in the sins that are in the lives of other people. There is a very clean-cut biblical principle laid out for you who stand and you see that here this believer is in sin. This believer is guilty of evil. This believer is disgracing the name of Christ. How do you deal with that? What is your relationship to this believer's evident evils? If you handle that in a wrong way, you're going to suffer the triple whammy discipline results. You're going to have a triple whammy discipline that the Bible warns us about very specifically. It is amazing how many Christians fool around with the sin in the lives of other people. They do not know how to apply the privacy of the priesthood of the believer in terms of personal responsibility, and the consequences that God says that He will impose. There is many a Christian whose back has gotten flayed with divine discipline that was never meant for him, just because he couldn't keep himself from getting between God's whip and the intended victim. This is the triple whammy discipline syndrome. Next time, we will deal with that subject.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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