

# *The Necessity of Christian Discipline*

## *Chapter 5*

1. The third major problem in Corinth was the neglect of Christian discipline. A man in the church was allowed to live in sin without reproof. The man was unrepentant; his sin was public and “reported commonly;” yet the sinner remained a member of the church in good standing. In Chapter 5, Paul commands the church, in the name of the Lord, to discipline the sinner by putting him out of the church.
  - a. What other passages in Scripture deal with Christian discipline?
  - b. Where do our Reformed confessions and our Church Order deal with Christian discipline?
2. The sinner in Corinth was guilty of fornication.
  - a. From one point of view, this is not surprising, because Corinth was saturated with immorality. Can you find evidence of this in the two epistles to the Corinthians? It may also be helpful to look up history books or websites with information on ancient Corinth and the worship of the goddess Aphrodite. Are there any parallels to our culture today?
  - b. From another point of view, this sin was surprising, because the fornication the church allowed was considered scandalous even by the immoral Corinthian Gentiles. What was so scandalous about this case of fornication?
  - c. Whatever the immoral Gentiles may have thought of this sin, the real scandal was that the man was openly unrepentant. Why does a refusal to repent make sin particularly heinous? Why is it so important for us to repent of our sins? Along the same lines, it has been said that there is really only one sin that may ever be disciplined. What is meant by that statement?
3. The sinner was guilty of fornication, but the entire church was guilty of allowing him to remain a member of the church while he was living in this sin. Their response to his sin was to be “puffed up” (2) and to glory (6). What do these things mean? What should their response have been?
4. Paul commands the church to discipline the sinner, “when ye are gathered together” (4). Who are the “ye?” There is an aspect of discipline which is the work of the elders alone, and there is an aspect of discipline which is the work of the entire congregation. What are these aspects, and which passages of Scripture and our confessions point to these two aspects.

5. Some striking things are said about what discipline does to the sinner. Paul says the church is “to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh” (5). In another place, Jesus says that Christian discipline has the power to bind a sinner unto destruction in the sight of God (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). What do these passages teach about what happens in Christian discipline?
  
6. Because Christian discipline is such a serious matter, the power and authority for it belong to Christ alone. Where in this passage and other places is it taught that although men perform the discipline, it is really the work of Christ through them?
  
7. Why must the church exercise Christian discipline? Several purposes are given in this passage.
  - a. The first purpose is given in verse 5. What is this purpose? Is this purpose usually achieved in Christian discipline? We know from II Corinthians 2:1-11 how this discipline case in Corinth turned out. What was the result?
  
  - b. The second purpose is given in verses 6-8. What is this purpose? Why is this so important for the church? What does this passage teach will happen if discipline is neglected?
  
  - c. A third purpose is implied in verse 1. What is this purpose? See also Article 80 of the Church Order.
  
8. In verses 9-13, Paul explains something he had written to Corinth in an earlier (uninspired) epistle. He explains that the necessity of Christian discipline does not imply that we may never have anything to do with sinners in the world. What is Paul’s instruction here and how does it apply to our life today?
  
9. Some related questions on Christian discipline:
  - a. What is the way of Matthew 18? (Note that there are two ways: verses 15-20 and 21-35.)
  
  - b. What is the process of Christian discipline in the church, as described in Articles 71-78 of the CO?
  
  - c. If someone has been excommunicated and does not repent, or leaves under discipline without repenting, how must we treat that person?