

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISCIPLINE OF A CHURCH.

If discipline is necessary in families, schools, and armies, it must answer important purposes in the churches of Christ. It may be considered the process by which the spiritual improvement, usefulness, and efficiency of a church are promoted. In its comprehensive sense church discipline is both *formative* and *corrective*, though the phrase is generally used in the latter acceptance. We notice briefly,

I. FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE.

The doctrine of formative discipline is taught in such passages as these: "In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; will we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness charity." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephes. ii. 21, 22; iv. 12, 12; 2 Pet. i. 5-7; iii. 18.

It is clear from these Scriptures that Christians should ever be in a state of progressive spiritual improvement. They must not retrograde, nor remain stationary, but be constantly advancing in the divine life. The "perfecting of the saints" is an object of vast importance. The perfection referred to has to do, not so much with absolute freedom from sin, as some suppose, as with the symmetrical development and maturity of Christian character. The new convert to

the faith of the gospel is a “babe,” a spiritual infant, that has “need of milk,” and not of “strong meat.” Formative church discipline contemplates the vigorous growth of the “babe in Christ” till it is developed into “a perfect man.” Bringing the baptized disciples into local church organizations has this purpose in view. They are to be taught “to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded.” By such observance alone can a church edify itself in love, building up its members on their most holy faith. By such observance is promoted the symmetry of Christian character, and in it are included all the activities of the Christian life.

Formative discipline, in its sanctifying influences, ought to reach every church member. The old, with their gray hairs, should exhibit its beneficial power in the ripeness of the fruits of the Spirit. The middle-aged, in the perfection of physical strength, should also show that it makes them “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” And the young, in the morning of life, should yield to its plastic touches, that they may become useful laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. All have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and “should live, not to themselves, but to him who died and rose again.”

If every church will experimentally and practically learn the lessons taught in 1 Corinthians xii. 12-27, the subject of formative discipline will be well understood. Then no member will be dissatisfied with his own place, and envy the place of another. No one will attach undue importance to his own services, and undervalue the services of others. No one will forget that the “more feeble members” of a church are “necessary,” because they have something to do. There will be cordial sympathy and cooperation growing out of identity of spiritual interests. Such a church will prosper and “grow unto a holy temple in the Lord.” But if a church fails to learn the lessons referred to, its members will make comparatively no progress in the divine life – they will remain in a state of spiritual infancy – and their knowledge of the gospel

will be so meager and superficial as to subject them to the charge brought against the Hebrews: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk; and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” Heb. V. 12, 13.

II. CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE.

This phrase implies the imperfection of church members – their liability to sin. Alas, how many are the proofs of this imperfection – how numerous the illustration of this liability! Jesus said, “It must needs be that offences come.” Depravity makes this certain in society at large; and the remains of depravity render it certain in individual Christians and in Christian churches. In every case of church discipline the honor of Christ and the interests of his cause are more or less affected; and it deserves special notice that the Saviour’s injunctions contemplate disciplinary church action as the last resort. Every thing else that can be done must first be done to adjust differences and remove offences among brethren. There are two commands of Christ, which, if, faithfully obeyed, would in almost every instance prevent personal offences from assuming such form and magnitude as to require church action. These injunctions are to be found in Matthew v. 23, 24, and xviii. 15, and they are as follows: “*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*” “*Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.*”

According to the former of these passages the brother who is supposed to be the offender is to go to the offended brother. He must go promptly. The necessity of an immediate interview

between the parties is so imperative as to justify the suspension of an act of worship till the interview is held. "Leave there thy gift before the altar." The form of expression was no doubt suggested by the sacrificial arrangements of the Mosaic economy. The person addressed is supposed, after getting to the altar, to remember that his brother has something against him. He must not say: "My brother ought not to have any thing against me – I have done him no injury – he is laboring under a false impression – his grievance is not real, but imaginary – and it is needless to go to him," &c. But the Master says, "Leave thy gift at the altar, and go." Dare the servant disobey his Lord? Let him go and show the offended brother that he has no just cause of complaint, that he is under a false impression, if this is the case. But if, at the altar of God, he remembers that he has done his brother injustice, let him go, if possible, more promptly and, confessing his fault, seek reconciliation. The observance of this first injunction of Christ would lead to the adjustment of a thousand differences among brethren. But, according to the second command, there is something for the offended party to do. "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." The offended brother is not to wait till the offender goes to him and seeks reconciliation. The offender may not know that he has given offence – that "his brother has aught against him." Or if he knows it, he may neglect his duty. This, however, does not affect the obligations of the offended brother. There must be an interview between the parties. The offender, as we have seen, is required to go to the offender; and should they both start at once and meet midway it would be so much the better. It would show such a spirit of obedience to Christ as would make the settlement of the difficulty morally certain. "Tell him his fault between him and thee alone." The offended brother is, at this state of the proceeding, to tell the offender his fault. He must let no one know what he is going to do. He must not ask the advice of any one. He needs no advice. Nothing can be plainer than the

command of Christ. "Tell him his fault." This is to be done orally. (It has sometimes occurred that the offended brother has chosen to write to the offender rather than state his grievance by word of mouth. This is very reprehensible. Christ does not say "write a note or a letter," but "go and tell him his fault." In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the inclination to write would indicate a wrong spirit. It would betray an unchristian desire to get some advantage, especially if the offended one believed he could wield the pen more effectively than the offender. The language of the Master is, "Tell him his fault.") A word is used in the original, which suggests the idea of presenting reasons or proofs to convince of a fault. The offended brother is to do this, and if he does, the offender is to acknowledge his fault, ask forgiveness, and there the matter is at an end. If, however, the proofs presented are shown by the accused brother to be insufficient to establish the charge against him, let the party making the charge cheerfully retract it, with expressions of gratification that is not true, and with expressions of regret that it had been made. Neither party should ever mention the subject again.

TWO CLASSES OF OFFENCES.

It has been common to refer to offences requiring discipline as *private* and *public*. These epithets of designation are perhaps, not the best that could be selected. By a *private* is meant a *personal* offence, but a personal offence may be publicly committed. Hence the word *private* is inadequate to express the full idea intended to be conveyed. A *public* offence as distinguished from a private one is an offence committed in public; but as distinguished from a *personal* offence it is committed against a church in its collective capacity. It may be committed, too, in secret, or in comparative secrecy. For example, theft, with whatever privacy perpetrated, is against good morals, and is therefore what is usually called a public offence. We prefer the use of the epithets *personal* and *general* to designate offences. They are sufficiently descriptive for

all practical purposes. There might be a third class of offences termed *mixed* – that is partly personal and partly general – but we confine this discussion to the two classes indicated.

1. Personal. – What is a personal offence? It is an offence against an individual. “If thy brother shall trespass against *thee*.” Any offence committed by one brother against another, which, if acknowledged and forgiven by the parties, would leave the fellowship of the church undisturbed, is personal. Such an offence, whether committed in private or public, has to do with the two brethren, and not with the church. It can not be brought before the church legitimately till the directions of Christ, in Matt. xviii. 15, 16, are complied with. The offended brother, presuming to bring his grievance before the church, in disregard of these directions, would subject himself to church censure; and the church by considering the grievance would violate the law of her Head. The more this law is studied the more will its wisdom be seen; and the less surprise will be felt at the unhappy consequences resulting from its neglect.

In all personal offences the rule to be observed is plain: “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother.” The object of the offended brother must be to *gain* the offender. If this is not his purpose, he violates the *spirit* of Christ’s law though he may obey it in the *letter*. He must earnestly hope and pray, that he may be so successful in this first step as not to find it necessary to take the second. It is sometimes the case – it is humiliating to admit it – that the first step is taken in an unbrotherly spirit, with the hope that the second will have to be taken, and then the third, so that the offender will be, as speedily as possible, put in the place of “a heathen man and a publican.” When this is so it is not hazarding much to say that the offended brother is as censurable as the offender.

“If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” It is easy to see that the Saviour refers to this as the accomplishment of an important object which should gratify the aggrieved brother’s heart. “Thou hast gained thy brother.” What an acquisition, and how sublime the satisfaction arising therefrom! And it may be said, the offending brother is generally gained when there is a sincere desire to gain him expressed, in earnest prayer, that he may be gained. If the brother is gained, proceedings happily end, and the dearest friends of the parties must not know, if the offence is a private one, that the adjusted difficulty ever existed. Or if the personal offence has been publicly committed it is enough for it to be known that the matter has been satisfactorily settled. It is better not to talk about the details of the adjustment.

But there will be cause in which the offending brother is not “gained.” What then is to be done? The second step to be taken is this: “If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” The brethren selected by the aggrieved brother to go with him should be very judicious and eminently spiritual. Sound judgment and ardent piety will be needed. If the charge made by the plaintiff in the case is denied by the defendant – that is, if there be an issue of veracity between the parties – and no third person knows any thing of the matter, it must be dropped. The “one or two more” present must so advise and insist. The parties concerned stand on a perfect equality as members of the church, and the veracity of the one is to be considered as unquestionable as that of the other. It will not do for the brethren whom the offended brother has taken with him to yield a credence to his statements of the other. Whatever may be their *private* opinions as to the Christian and moral character of the parties, they must be treated alike. Hence we repeat, that if there is an issue of veracity, on which no third person can shed light, the cause must be dropped.

But the Saviour's language supposes that the case may be continued. The offender may not deny the charge brought against him, but may attempt to justify himself as to the thing complained of. It may be evident to the "one or two more" who are present, that he has a wrong spirit, and that, from his own account of the matter he has given the aggrieved brother just cause of offence. Here then is the place for them to exercise Christian judgment and show the spirit of the gospel. They must, if possible, convince the offender of his fault, and secure from him a reparation of the injury he has done the offended brother. If he is convinced that he has done wrong, and makes a satisfactory acknowledgment, it must be received. Or, if the acknowledgment is not satisfactory to the aggrieved brother, while those he has taken with him think it should be, they must say so, and urge him to accept it. It must be the object of their anxious desire to have the difference adjusted in accordance with the law of Christ. If this is done, let the parties concerned say nothing more about the matter, and let the brethren who have aided in the adjustment hold their peace.

But there is another supposition: It is supposed that a reconciliation may not be effected and that the "one or two more" may be called to testify as witnesses before the church. "That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Now the third and last step is to be taken by the offended brother: "Tell it to the church." The church, till this point is reached, has nothing to do with the matter. The discipline, strictly speaking, has not been church discipline but the discipline of brethren in their individual character. In a meeting of the church the aggrieved brother states that, in his judgment, he has just cause of offence against a fellow-member, and asks permission to present the facts in the case. The pastor, or presiding officer, must inquire of him if he has gone to the offending brother and told him his fault, no third person being present? If he answers in the negative, the pastor must tell him kindly, but firmly, that he

can not be permitted to state his grievance. If he answers in the affirmative, the pastor must ask him if he with “one or two more” has gone to the offending brother, taking the second step enjoined by Christ? If he answers negatively, the pastor must say, “The rule which governs us will not permit you to tell your grievance to the church till the second step is taken as well as the first.” If he answers affirmatively, he can name the brethren he took with him, who can corroborate his statement. The pastor can then say, according to the law of Christ, you can now make your statement. He tells his grievance to the church. The offender, if may be, admits that the cause of complaint is stated just as it was at the two previous interviews, or if he says it is not, the witnesses can testify as to the statement made in their presence. Every word said at the second interview between the parties is to be established by the witnesses. The offender may still attempt to justify himself. The witnesses may repeat the arguments they used to convince him that he was in the wrong; and the church seeing him in the wrong, may admonish him to make reparation of the injury he has done. If the offender should, at this point in the proceedings, “hear the church” – that is, carry her advice into practical effect – the matter ends and he retains his membership. But, “If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.” The intimation here is, that a refusal to hear the church will be followed by the act of exclusion, which is a public withdrawal of fellowship. Having been excluded he becomes to the offended member, and to all the members, “as a heathen man and a publican.” There is a cessation of Christian intercourse.

2. *General Offences.* – It has been stated that a general offence, as distinguished from a personal one, is committed against a church in its collective capacity. That is to say, it is committed against no member in particular, but against all the members in general – against one member as much as another. To this definition it may be added that while all general offences

are against churches as bodies, some are, and some are not, violations of the law of public morals. For example, drunkenness, theft, lying, etc., violate the law of morality, and may be considered offences against society at large as well as against the churches of Christ; but the espousal of false and heretical doctrines by a church member, though an offense against the church, is not a crime against society. It does not invade the domain of public morals.

While it does not comport with the limits or the design of this volume to give an exhaustive catalogue of general offences, it is believed that the most of them may be classified as follows:

1. *A rejection of any of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.* – According to the constitution of the human mind the denial of fundamental truth is the belief of fundamental error. The Apostle Paul attached great importance to what he termed “the truth of the gospel,” and knowing that he had preached the gospel in its purity to the Galatians, he said: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again. If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” Gal. i. 8, 9. The beloved disciple, proverbial for kindness of heart, said with great firmness, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John 10, 11. As the gospel is the charter of the church’s incorporation, it is plain that a denial of any of the essential doctrines of the gospel is an offence against the church, and calls for its disciplinary action. And then, too, every church by virtue of its constitution is the guardian of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” How can its guardianship be effective, if it does not put fundamental errorists without the pale of its fellowship? Paul said to Titus: “A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition,

reject.” The term “heretic” in this passage, no doubt, means an instigator of divisions; but why does the heretic become such an instigator? Because, ordinarily, he has embraced false doctrines, which place him in antagonism with the church, and make him the head of a faction. He is, therefore, a proper subject of church discipline. It will be observed that reference has been made to fundamental errors, and these errors are supposed to be inconsistent with true piety. There are errors, however, of a lower grade, which, while they do not promote piety, are not subversive of it. With regard to these a judicious toleration must be exercised – such a toleration as is suggested by the words of the Apostle: “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.” While in the flesh, individual Christians and Christian churches will find it necessary to bear with errors in sentiment and imperfections in practice; but they must tolerate nothing which is virtually subversive of the gospel. Loyalty to Christ forbids this.

2. *Any thing that seriously disturbs the union and peace of a church.* The New Testament teaches nothing more plainly than, that while a church meets together “in one place” it should be “of one accord, of one mind.” Its members are required to be united in love; for while truth is the basis, love is the cement of their union. How reasonable that they love one another, and that out of their love should grow a union sacred and inviolable! They are children of the same Father – redeemed by the same blood – regenerated by the same Spirit – baptized into the same body – bound by solemn covenant to live according to the gospel – and animated with the bright prospect of immortal glory. Surely there should be union and peace among the members of such a congregation of the Lord. Alas, the union may be disturbed – the peace broken. The seeds of discord may be sown and every thing thrown out of harmony. This was sometimes the case in the days of the Apostles. Hence Paul says: “Mark them which cause divisions, and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such

serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.” The union and peace of a church may not only be disturbed by the espousal of false doctrines, but also by the adoption of false views of church polity. Suppose a member, for instance, while holding to what are termed “the doctrines of grace,” should deny the necessity of regeneration in order to church membership, or the necessity of immersion in order to baptism, or should have his own children christened in infancy, or should insist on the right of unbelievers to come to the table of the Lord; every one can see that the union and peace of a church, organized according to the Scriptural model, would be seriously disturbed. Such a disturber would deserve church discipline, and fidelity on the part of his offended brethren would institute the process without delay.

3. *Disorderly and immoral conduct in all its forms.* – There is reference to disorderly conduct in the following passages: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.” For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. 2 Thee. iii. 6, 11. For a church to withdraw from a disorderly brother is equivalent to his exclusion. There is a cessation of church fellowship.

In the subjoined passage *immoral* conduct is referred to. “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” 1 Cor. v. 11. These terms, so expressive of immortality are used, no doubt, to denote specimen classes of wicked persons. The term fornicator, for example, is to be understood as embracing all those who commit sexual iniquities. There is no express mention of murderers, liars, thieves, etc., but they are unquestionably included, with all other wicked characters, as guilty of general offences which call for church action. Alas, that these offences so often occur.

How general offences are to be treated. – The impression prevails, to a great extent, that, because general offences are committed against a church as a body, they need not be treated after the manner of personal offences. True, they cannot be treated alike in all respects, but there should not be such a difference of treatment as is often seen. In some churches there is scarcely a private, personal effort made to convince of their guilt those who have committed general offences. This is wrong. A *heretic* is guilty of a general offence; but, according to Paul, he is not to be rejected till “after the first and second admonition.” The reference is no doubt to the programme of discipline as arranged by Christ in Matthew xviii. It cannot be too earnestly urged that private, personal effort be made with brethren who have committed *general* offences. They will be much more likely to show a Christian spirit when thus dealt with than when their offences are, without preliminary steps, made the subject of church investigation. These private, personal exertions are considered proofs of kindness, and there is something in human nature which revolts and rebels against public exposure. In Galatians vi. 1, 2, it is written: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” It will be seen that the restoration of the offender is the object to be sought. It is to be sought by the “spiritual” in the “spirit of meekness.” While prosecuting this object they are to consider their own liability to be overcome by temptation, and make necessary allowances for the offending brother. They, are as nearly as possible, to place themselves in his position, and take on their hearts the burden which, it may be, is crushing his. This would be fulfilling the law of Christ – that law is love; and love prompts us to bear the burdens of those we love. When the inspired directions of the Apostle are faithfully followed, the brother “overtaken in a fault” usually confesses it, and gives satisfaction to those seeking his restoration. This is an

auspicious result, and it must be announced at the next meeting of the church. The offence having been general, the church must be satisfied. Ordinarily, what satisfies the brother or brethren seeking the offender's restoration, satisfies the church.

Sometimes the most earnest exertions to reclaim a brother fail of success. Then the case must be brought before the church. The facts connected with it must be stated. The arraigned member must have ample opportunity to defend himself. If his defence is satisfactory to the church the matter goes no farther. Or, if the brother, while the investigation is going on, becomes convinced of his guilt and makes confession, the church must forgive him. If, however, the offence is established by conclusive proof, and there is no penitence leading to confession, the act of exclusion must take place. The church must withdraw its fellowship.

Offences of an infamous or scandalous character must have a peculiar treatment. The church must express its reprobation of them by an immediate act of exclusion. No preliminary steps are necessary. No penitence must prevent the withdrawal of fellowship. The honor of Christ and the purity of his religion are specially involved in these cases. What Paul says in regard to the incestuous man (1 Cor. v.) vindicates the position here taken. If a church member is guilty of adultery, or murder, or perjury, or theft, or forgery, or drunkenness, or any kindred crime, he deserves exclusion without trial. Some perhaps would except drunkenness from this catalogue, but taking into account the manifold evils of intemperance, in connection with the light shed on the "temperance question" for thirty years past, one instance of drunkenness makes it the duty of a church promptly to exercise its power of excommunication. No church can adequately express a suitable abhorrence of such offences without excluding the offender. Nor can the world be otherwise convinced that the church is the friend and the conservator of good morals.

HOW EXCLUDED MEMBERS OUGHT TO BE TREATED.

This is a question of little importance; for the practical answer to it has much to do with the effect of church discipline. Social intercourse with the excluded is not to be entirely suspended; for then many opportunities of doing them good will be lost: neither is it to be just as before the exclusion; for that would impair the efficacy of discipline. The members of a church must so act toward those they have expelled as to give the expulsion its legitimate moral influence. The Apostle Paul lays down this rule: "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." 1 Cor. v. 11. That is, we must not keep company with such an one. There must be no such social familiarity as the excluded may construe into a connivance at their offences. Andrew Fuller well remarks: "If individual members act contrary to this rule, and carry it freely toward an offender, as if nothing had taken place, it will render the censure of the church of none effect. Those persons also who behave in this manner will be considered by the party as his friends, and others who stand aloof as his enemies, or at least as being unreasonably severe; which will work confusion, and render void the best and most wholesome discipline. We must act in concert, or we may as well do nothing. Members who violate this rule are partakers of other men's sins, and deserve the rebukes of the church for counteracting the measures." (Works, vol. III., pp. 334, 335.) We dismiss the topic by a reference to 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15: "And if any one obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

OBJECTS TO BE HAD IN VIEW OF DISCIPLINE.

Prominent among these objects are,

1. *The glory of God.* Whatever makes corrective church discipline necessary dishonors God. The greater its necessity the more is God dishonored. The need of discipline in all its stages arises from the fact that there is a state of things in conflict with the will of God.

Whatever is in conflict with his will tarnishes his glory. If then God is to be honored, and his glory promoted in the churches, discipline must be exercised to correct that which is in conflict with his will, and which obscures his glory. Our God is infinitely holy, and the neglect of discipline, when either personal or general offences require it, virtually represents him as the patron of iniquity. Let the churches tremble at this thought, and remember that the holy God they serve is also a jealous God.

2. *Purity of the Churches.* – The followers of Christ, though in the world, are not of the world. They are called out of darkness into marvelous light – called to be saints – called with a holy calling: -- and in their embodied form as churches they are the depositaries of the pure principles of the gospel. They are Christ's representatives in the world – lights of the world, cities set on hills which cannot be hidden. Paul said to the Corinthians: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. These significant questions show that the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of the world are utterly irreconcilable. And if so, the churches of the saints, to maintain their purity, must apply the rod of corrective discipline to all who live unworthily of the gospel. They must do this to vindicate “the truth as it is in Jesus,” and to represent his religion as the antagonist of whatever is evil. With special reference

to the necessity of expelling an unworthy member (1 Cor. v. 1,) an Apostle says, “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” As if he had said, “Are you ignorant that the retention of a flagrant transgressor will corrupt the entire church?” The purity of the churches cannot be preserved without faithful discipline. And every church virtually endorses the wrongs she does not, by disciplinary action, attempt to correct.

3. *The spiritual good of the disciplined.* – This is a third object to be kept in view in all disciplinary proceedings. We have seen already that in matters of personal offence the “gaining” of the offending brother is to be specially regarded. Those who have been “overtaken in a fault” are, if possible, to be restored. And when a church passes an act of exclusion – delivering a member over to Satan – that is, *formally* transferring him from Christ’s jurisdiction to that of the Devil – it must be done, “*that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*” There must be no bitterness of feeling, no disposition to persecute and oppress, no indulgence of revengeful impulses. The act of expulsion must be considered a *painful* necessity, and should be so done as to make the impression on all that it is an awful thing to be cut off from the fellowship of God’s people. It would be well for an earnest prayer to be offered that the disciplinary action may prove a blessing to the offender, exert a salutary influence on the church, and impress the community with the *holiness* of the religion of Jesus.

It is suggested that it might be well for every pastor, the next Lord’s Day after the exclusion of a member, to announce the fact to the congregation. Sometimes a church is considered by men of the world as endorsing an unworthy character because they do not know of the act of exclusion. It should, in some way, be made known.