

## 1 Cor. 5:1-5 (LD 31, Q/A 85) "Handed Over"

**For the Children:** Sometimes your parents have to discipline you. If you had very soft parents, who did not like to discipline you at all, it would not be good. You would probably grow up spoiled and uncontrollable. Soft parents might think they are being very loving, but they are not: they are harming their children. In God's church, we find much the same thing. If the church is very soft and ignores sin, it does harm to the members. It is not loving to them at all! Church discipline is aimed at helping the person to see their sin and repent of it, as well as to prevent others in the church from following bad examples, and preventing others from thinking God doesn't care about sin. **Questions:** Since we all sin, why are we not all under discipline? What does church discipline involve? How could church discipline help a person to repent?

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### Introduction:

#### First Point: The Cause of Discipline

- 1) The Unrepentant Sinner: As Q/A 85 points out, even if a sinner claims to be a Christian, the deciding factor in discipline is his repentance – or lack thereof. See Mt. 18
- 2) Wickedness and Error: Sin may take the form of error or wicked practice. Q/A 85 speaks of professing un-Christian teachings or living an un-Christian life. That refers to anything contrary to God's Word, that is professed or continued in an ongoing, unrepentant way. The Bible gives many examples of the seriousness of both error and sinful deeds: 2 Thess. 3, 1 Cor. 14, Galatians, 1 Jn. and 1-2 Tim. In the case of 1 Cor. 5, the sin was one of practice – a form of incest
- 3) The Negligent Church: Sometimes the church contributes to the problem by its failure to admonish sin. The Corinthians knew about the man who had his step-mother, but they did nothing. This may seem loving and humble. Paul sees it as a serious fault by the church – he seems to admonish the church more than the sinner! He also sees their negligence as arrogance – as if they knew better than God how to deal with sin

#### Second Point: The Nature of Discipline

- 1) Excluded from Fellowship: Paul says the unrepentant sinner must be removed from their midst. At the end of the chapter he uses terms like "do not associate" or even eat with him. Close association is forbidden. Q/A 85 puts it in terms of avoiding Christian fellowship, barring from the Lord's Table and making clear that the sinner is excluded from God's Kingdom until he repents
- 2) In Satan's Custody: With his apostolic authority, Paul also declares the sinner handed over to Satan. The Corinthians must concur when they next assemble. The language indicates bondage to Satan – which is, of course, the state of all unbelievers. In Satan's domain there is no Christian fellowship, admonition, encouragement, or preaching of the truth. These privileges are generally taken away from the sinner handed over to Satan. If we are not careful in how we treat sinners in this category, we might give the impression they are not handed over to Satan, but still under our hand!

#### Third Point: The Purpose of Discipline

- 1) Closing and Opening: The immediate and universal goal of discipline is to close the Kingdom of God to the unrepentant former member. It may or may not lead to repentance and readmission later on. Hence the order, that discipline "closes and opens" the Kingdom. Well-meaning Christians sometimes make the opening the primary thing, playing down the closing
- 2) For Salvation: However, Paul insists on this discipline in the hope that the end-result will be the sinner's salvation – though our prayers and efforts towards that have limits (1 Jn. 5:16, Mt. 7:6)
- 3) Destruction of the Flesh: The immediate purpose of the discipline includes the "destruction of his flesh." This might refer to the destruction of the sinner's sinful nature, after he spends some time under Satan's control, leading to his repentance; or it might refer to a temporal judgement, in which he is physically afflicted – again, leading to his repentance when he hits "rock-bottom"

### Conclusion: