

ACCEPTING THE DEALING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The discipline of the Holy Spirit which we are now considering **does not refer to the inward discipline** of the Holy Spirit, [but what the Holy Spirit] is doing in **our outward environment**; it refers to **His arranging** of all people, things, and happenings, through which we are being disciplined. These two aspects [inward and outward discipline] comprise almost the complete work of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 tells us in the first part how the Holy Spirit, which contains the law of life, is able to set us free from sin, and how that through Him we can put to death the deeds of the body... All these activities are the work of the Holy Spirit **within** us as the anointing. In the latter part of this chapter we read, “To them that love God, all things work together for good” (v. 28). This speaks of the discipline of the Holy Spirit in our **outward** environment. The work of this outward discipline coordinates with His inward moving and leading... Although in many instances this causes temporal pain and trouble, yet in the end it is for the good of those who love God, that they may be conformed unto the image of His Son. This arrangement is what we mean by the discipline of the Holy Spirit.

THE **PURPOSE** OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – CHASTISEMENT, EDUCATION AND BREAKING

Chastisement means punishment which is necessary because of our rebellion, stubbornness, and disobedience. Many times in our experience the Holy Spirit has already spoken within us and has anointed us to make known the will of God, but... we have disregarded the voice of God and paid no attention to the feeling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore **God has arranged environmental situations** through the Holy Spirit to cause us to feel afflicted, painful, suppressed, and miserable, that we may be punished and chastised.

For example, consider a brother who has gained his income in a dishonest manner and has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit to deal with the situation and repeatedly moves and urges him; yet, due to his pride and his concern for financial loss, he refuses to obey the will of God in this matter. At this time God has no other alternative but to use an outward environment to chastise him. It may be that he will be hit by an automobile. Though he does not die, nor is he critically injured, yet he suffers great pain. While he lies in the hospital, groaning in anguish, the Holy Spirit speaks to him again, reminding him of the former demand. He becomes humble and subdued and is willing now to deal with his behavior according to the will of God. Shortly after obeying and accepting the dealing, his wound is gradually healed. This is the environmental discipline arranged

by the Holy Spirit according to the will of God and our need for chastisement. This is His dealing especially with our stubbornness and disobedience that we may be disciplined. The purpose of chastisement can be subdivided into two kinds. One kind deals with rebellion and consists purely of punishment for our rebellion. The other kind corrects our mistakes. This means that when we have gone astray and refuse to turn back at the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or when we are about to err, though the Holy Spirit has given us a certain sense, we proceed headlong into the error, then the Holy Spirit is forced to raise up an environment as a blow to us that we might be warned and corrected from the mistake or kept from falling into the mistake. All these activities are counted as discipline.

The second purpose or category of the discipline of the Holy Spirit is **education**... However, the chastening education is a punishment due to our fault, while pure educational discipline has nothing to do with punishment or our fault, for though we may be faultless, we still must be educated. The education given through the discipline of the Holy Spirit **coordinates with the [inner] anointing work** of the Holy Spirit within us in order to fulfill the goal of God's mingling with man...[T]he discipline of the Holy Spirit for education is given to purge us of the contrary elements through raising up the environment, in order that God's element may be anointed into us. The chastening discipline deals only with our fault and is concerned with the problem of our outward behavior, whereas the educational discipline deals with our human element and is concerned with the problem of our inward nature. Regardless of whether our outward behavior is good or bad, our inward nature is always in opposition to God.

For example, we would find it rather difficult to apply an additional coat of paint to a small table which already has been painted with a thick layer of glossy paint. Such a surface simply cannot absorb the new paint. In other words, the original element becomes an opponent to the element which is to be added. Therefore, we must *sand off* the original paint, so that the surface becomes rough and better able to absorb the new paint. Likewise, if we are filled with the element of self, the Holy Spirit finds it difficult to anoint us through His moving and anointing within. Hence, there is also the need for the Holy Spirit to raise up environments which act like sandpaper upon us. This kind of scraping is not to punish us for rebellion, neither is it to correct our mistakes, but to make us rougher, who otherwise would be shiny and glossy, untreated and hard, thereby enabling the Holy Spirit to anoint God's element into us.

The third purpose of the discipline of the Holy Spirit is the **tearing down or breaking**...To achieve this goal we must first be torn down. The educational purpose of which we have spoken is trivial and minor when compared to this. The educational discipline causes us to have merely an opening or a crack, while the breaking smashes and demolishes us completely, to the end that all that is of the natural and old creation in us will completely disintegrate. Therefore, breaking is the most severe step as well as the final goal in the discipline of the Holy Spirit. God's salvation is very

special. On one hand He needs the goodness of man, while on the other hand He breaks it. According to the human point of view, this is really contradictory. When a person disobeys, God wants him to obey; but when he is obedient, God smashes his obedience. If a person is not gentle, God wants him to be gentle; but when he becomes gentle, God smashes his gentleness. When we do not love Him fervently, He wants us to be fervent, and He will draw us to love Him; yet when we love Him fervently, He breaks us to pieces. In God's leadings, the work of God always seems so contradictory. Yet this contradiction is exactly the breaking work of the discipline of the Holy Spirit in us.

THE POSITION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – Outward and Negative

The position of the discipline of the Holy Spirit in the entire work of God is **firstly** outward, not inward...**Secondly**, the discipline of the Holy Spirit is negative, not positive. [T]he **positive** work of God through the Holy Spirit is the inner anointing [and] guidance... However, within us there are many natural elements which must be removed; therefore in the work of God there is an **accessory part**, which is the environmental dealing or discipline...

Furthermore, the positive work of the Holy Spirit within us is always accomplished through the Spirit of God, whereas the negative discipline of the Holy Spirit in our environment is brought about **by the deeds of Satan**. All the people, things, and happenings used in the discipline of the Holy Spirit are of Satan's manipulation. For example, if someone is opposing us and causing us trouble, this opposition or trouble is definitely not directly of God, but directly from Satan. Again, a thief who steals our clothing, or a fire which burns our house, is definitely not sent directly by God, but by Satan. If someone is obstinate, rebellious, and sins against God, and as a result becomes seriously ill, this sickness is not sent directly from God, but from Satan. Therefore, all the people, things, and happenings involved in the discipline of the Holy Spirit are measured to us by God according to our need. But the one who is acting behind the people, things, and happenings in order to harm us is Satan. Therefore, this is another major reason why we say that the discipline of the Holy Spirit is not sweet. Since the position of the discipline of the Holy Spirit is outward and negative, **we should not consider it more important than the positive anointing of the Holy Spirit within**. The purpose of our experiencing the discipline of the Holy Spirit is that we may experience the anointing of the Holy Spirit. If there were only the discipline of the Holy Spirit, but not the **anointing** of the Holy Spirit, it would be **meaningless**.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT -- TEMPORAL AND LONG DURATION

There are two characteristics of the discipline of the Holy Spirit: temporal and long duration. [T]emporal discipline is only for a short period of time and usually comes suddenly and passes quickly. Take for example someone who is hit by an automobile and is seriously injured, but who does not die. After two weeks in the hospital he recovers, and the discipline is ended. This is temporal discipline.

The discipline of long duration is of a longer period of time, the least lasting several years, and the longest following us throughout our entire life. Thus, the pain is great and the breaking severe. Suppose, for example, that God gives a brother a quarrelsome wife, or that He gives a sister a most unreasonable husband, causing them to suffer daily, perhaps unbearably. Since, as Christians, they cannot be divorced, the wife becomes the life-long discipline to the husband, and, likewise, the husband to the wife. The disciplines of long duration are mostly in an environment which we contact regularly, such as our family, job, church, or relatives. Among these, the family discipline is of the longest duration and is the most severe. Many in China say that a family is a *cangue*.^{*} This is very meaningful. The people of this world take marriage as an enjoyment; but practically speaking, when we marry, we receive a painful dealing, and we must prepare to carry the *cangue* and wear a lock. There is nothing which binds people so much as the family. He who has a family is one who receives a bondage and discipline from God. The husband is a life-long discipline to the wife, and the wife to the husband. The children in the family are also a means of discipline. Those who are childless always wish to have children, but in spite of their wish, some remain childless. Others, who have many children, do not want anymore; yet the more they do not desire them, the more they have. A certain sister may wish to have a child as gentle as Jacob, but unfortunately the child is as wild as Esau and creates much trouble in the home every day. She is made to feel that her home is like a kiln. Servants can be dismissed, but children must be kept whether she likes them or not. They follow her all through her life and serve as discipline of long duration to her.

The church is also a place where man is severely disciplined. God ordains that we cannot be isolated Christians; we must be in the church and in the Body, serving the Lord and being coordinated with the brothers and sisters. However, God also arranges some very peculiar brothers and sisters to be with us. They love the Lord and are consecrated, but they have such peculiar dispositions. They always conflict with us and make us suffer. This also is the Holy Spirit's discipline of long duration. Throughout our lifetime there are many instances of this kind of discipline. Some, like Paul, live continually with a thorn in the body—it may be weakness of the physical body or a certain disablement. This is a discipline of long duration... Actually, the discipline of long duration is the most precious; it alone can give us lengthy and severe breaking.

Good lessons are learned by going through the discipline of long duration. Therefore, we should pay attention not only to temporal discipline, but even more to the discipline of long duration.

THE **SCOPE** OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT -- UNIVERSAL

The scope of the discipline of the Holy Spirit is **universal**... [E]verything that comes to us, including people, things, and happenings, either great or small, is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. We must believe that nothing a Christian encounters is what the people of the world call coincidence or luck, but the arrangement and discipline of the Holy Spirit. It is not that certain aspects, certain kinds of things, or certain matters are the discipline and arrangement of the Holy Spirit, and all others are not. We must admit that in all our living, every matter is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The reason you have such a job opportunity is due to the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The reason you meet such brothers and sisters is also due to the discipline of the Holy Spirit. You wish you were healthy, but unfortunately you are weak; this is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. You expect your work to expand so that you can render good service to the Lord, but unfortunately you encounter so many problems that you are unable to move at all; this also is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Whether you can have a virtuous and prudent wife or marry the husband of your desire depends on the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Whether or not you have a perfect home life depends also on the discipline of the Holy Spirit. You do not care for many children, yet unfortunately your children are especially numerous; this is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Or, you wish you had children, but unfortunately you have none; this is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Even the loss of property, mismanagement of affairs, or failure in spiritual matters are the discipline of the Holy Spirit. We must apply the discipline of the Holy Spirit to all our living, to all our environment. We must especially admit that all those circumstances which are neither pleasant nor agreeable are within the scope of the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we will learn this lesson in a thorough way.

THE **ACCEPTANCE** OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit we must **acknowledge** that It Is Discipline. Acknowledgment precedes acceptance. When we receive the Lord as our Savior, we must first acknowledge that He is the Savior. Likewise, in accepting the discipline of the Holy Spirit, we must first acknowledge that all we encounter is of the discipline of the Holy Spirit. In other words, whenever we encounter something, we must realize that it is of the Holy Spirit and acknowledge it as the discipline of the Holy Spirit... Matthew 10:29-30 says also, *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”* These passages show that all things that come to us, even such a

trivial matter as the falling of hair, have been permitted and measured by God to work together for our spiritual benefit...

[Also, we must] **Find the purpose...of the discipline**. For example, someone hit by an automobile cannot ignorantly think that since this is the discipline of the Holy Spirit, it is good enough to just praise the Lord; if so, **he cannot** reap the benefit. He must ask, Why was I hit by the automobile? What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit in giving me such discipline? Is it for chastisement, education, or breaking? He must have a longing heart and a prayerful spirit; he must be quiet before the Lord, seeking Him until he is clear that it is a particular problem or need which caused him to be disciplined by the Holy Spirit. In this way he can **learn the spiritual lesson** and **obtain practical benefit**.

[Thirdly, we must], **Confess** regarding the point of the purpose to be dealt with. Once we ascertain that the purpose of the discipline of the Holy Spirit in dealing with us is a certain problem, we should confess it seriously before the Lord with regard to that particular problem... Since the Holy Spirit arranges the environment to discipline us concerning a specific point, we must realize that it is in that specific point that we have a problem before God, either because we are stubborn or proud, stiff-necked or disobedient, not willing to pay the price, or not willing to deny self; it is either one thing or the other which must be removed or broken, dealt with or torn down. At any rate, there exists a problem. We must remember that the discipline of the Holy Spirit never causes us to suffer without a reason; rather it is always because there are areas within us which require dealing. The Holy Spirit had already anointed us many times, perhaps, yet we disobeyed; therefore, He has arranged such a discipline to assist His inward anointing. Hence, once we discover the purpose of the discipline of the Holy Spirit, we should have a thorough confession regarding the point in view.

[Fourthly, we must] **submit**. After we confess our sin, we must submit through the Holy Spirit. This submission implies acceptance. After we see that the purpose of this discipline is to deal with a specific point, we must submit ourselves in that particular point. It is only then that we accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit. [Then, we should] **Worship**. After we accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit, we need to worship God. Worship is the highest form of gratitude. We have to worship God for His work in us and His way regarding us. For His dealing with us, for His way in our life, and for breaking us in such a way, we should...worship Him.

Sometimes it seems that we have accepted a discipline before God, yet we have neither confessed to Him thoroughly nor accepted the discipline and worshipped Him solemnly. It seems that we have accepted the discipline, but we have not accepted it fully; therefore, that acceptance is not solid. Henceforth, when we accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit, may we first discover the purpose thereof, acknowledge our shortcomings and weaknesses, submit from within, and, finally, worship God. In this way our acceptance is very solid.

THE APPLICATION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Application means a continuous acceptance. If the nature of the discipline is temporal, it passes away after we have accepted it. However, if the nature of the discipline is of an extended and long duration, we need not only to accept it, but to know how to apply it. We should believe that all the environment we are confronted with is not just a temporal, accidental arrangement of the Holy Spirit, but that it has been prearranged by the Holy Spirit in the eternal plan of God. Before we were saved, and even before we were born, God has already prearranged our parents, husband or wife, children, church, or co-worker. In the whole universe, God has exercised His wisdom greatly to look for all these wonderful disciplinary measures in order to deal with us. Hence, we should not always desire that God would change the opposite party or the environment. We must continue to accept and apply His discipline until we are torn down and broken.

THE EXAMINATION OF THE RESULT

When we accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit, we need to look back after a certain period of time and examine how much result we have obtained from this discipline. Some people have been disciplined continually, yet there is no result whatsoever. A certain brother may have passed through ten or twenty years of discipline and tasted all sorts of troubles, such as being jobless, poverty stricken, sick, in distress and other bitternesses of life; yet with him there is no indication of any crack, wound, or breaking. He is just like an unbreakable iron shell. No matter how many dealings he has passed through, he remains sealed and untouched, without any result from the discipline. This is indeed regrettable!

Do not think that we have no wound because there has not been any discipline. Actually, none of us does not have discipline. Our God has never erred; His hand can be seen in all that we encounter. As a rule, each of us should be broken and show the result of having been disciplined. The longer a brother has been in the church, the more brokenness he should have. To be broken is to be torn down. By breaking after breaking, our natural constitution is terminated. However, if we pass through discipline, yet have not been broken, neither do we show any scar of having been struck or torn down, it proves our lack of accepting and especially our lack of applying the discipline of the Holy Spirit. We have simply submitted everything to fate and allowed the environment to pass meaninglessly by us as time goes on. Therefore, each one of us should always look back and examine the result obtained from the discipline. The result will show whether our spiritual condition is rich or poor. The more we accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the greater will be the result and the richer the spiritual condition. However, if we accept little discipline, the result will accordingly be small and the spiritual condition poor.

THE TESTING OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The discipline of the Holy Spirit is not only given to deal with us or to break us, but also to test us. Some people have been in painful trials, but after a certain period their sufferings have passed away and their life has become easy. There is no criticism given them, but praise; no suppression, but exaltation; everything goes well. Such a prosperous environment tests where we are. Therefore, the discipline of the Holy Spirit consists not only of trials of sufferings, but also of tests of prosperity. Some brothers and sisters can endure the trials of poverty, but cannot pass the tests of being rich. Some can endure criticism and attack, but cannot pass the test of being praised or exalted. Some who have never been exposed to riches claim that they do not love money. That is not dependable. Not until gold and silver are within their grasp will it be proved whether they really love money or not. Some say that they would love their wife, but that is because they do not have a wife; once they have a wife for them to love, it will be proved whether they love or not. In order to expose our inner condition we need the Holy Spirit not only to use a trial through a painful environment, but we often need the Holy Spirit to put us in a favorable environment to test us. Therefore, the discipline of the Holy Spirit works through both trials and tests simultaneously. But normally, the discipline of the Holy Spirit through trials by suffering is always more frequent than through tests of prosperity.