

## Chapter Twenty-six

### For Conscience Sake

The Bible says:

*“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons....Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:6-8 & 11).*

When the Lord saves a person, it is not merely to keep him from going to Hell, or just to take him to Heaven when he dies, but God’s purpose is to conform the believer ultimately into the likeness His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. From the moment a person is saved, God continues to deal with His children in this process of cleansing and conforming them to the image of His Son. The ultimate purpose of the Lord for every believer is going to be carried out, and if it is not accomplished in this life, there will be eternal consequences at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

In the last study we saw in 1 Corinthians 11 that because of unwillingness on the part of the believer to submit to the warnings and chastening of the Lord, God visited them with weakness and sickness and even, at times, take the Christian Home prematurely, rather than have him continue in unconfessed sin. In 1 Corinthians we read:

*“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world”*

(1 Corinthians 11:28-32).

Remember, Paul is addressing these words to believers. The entire epistle of Paul to Corinth was written to those who had experienced salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were not saved because they were good, but because they had believed on the finished work of the Savior. That they were Christians is assured by the very setting of the passage. Paul is speaking of the Lord’s Table, and the sinner certainly has no place at the Table of the Lord. This is only for believers. Moreover, in verse 32 we read that they were chastened of the Lord that they might not be condemned with the world.

These Christians, Paul says, had among them many who were weak and sickly, and there were some who had died prematurely. The reason for their weakness, sickness and death was that they had refused to “*judge themselves.*” We see as we read through

the book of 1 Corinthians that there were several serious wrongs present in the Church at Corinth that were pointed out by the Apostle Paul – there were; dissensions, strife, sectarianism, divisions among the brethren, bitterness, malice and selfishness, not to speak of the grosser sins of immorality and worldliness. It seems from Paul's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that these were all rampant in the church at Corinth – and Paul refers to them as "*carnal*" (1 Corinthians 3:1). Instead of these Corinthians confessing their faults and judging sins in their lives, many had continued in them. Some had even come to the Lord's Table drunken and brought reproach upon Christ before the whole world. Now the Table of the Lord is the special provision that the Lord has given to remind us that Christ died for our sins, and that He has made provision for our cleansing from sin; and if there is any place where sins ought to be judged, it is at the Lord's Table where Christians gather to be reminded of the awful price paid for their salvation, and to be reminded of their duty and responsibility to love one another as brethren. These Corinthian Christians, however, had come to the Lord's Table with unconfessed sin in their lives, yet judging one another instead of themselves. So Paul writes for them to do two things: **(1)** *to examine themselves*; and **(2)** *judge sin in their lives*. After that they should come to the breaking of the bread. Notice carefully, therefore, the words "*let a man examine himself*." There are too many Christians who feel that it is their duty and privilege to examine the other fellow. Because of some official position they may happen to hold, they are forever examining their brethren and judging other Christians, instead of examining themselves. The privilege of coming to the Lord's Table is an individual responsibility, between the believer and God who knows the heart – and He alone knows it. It is absolutely not the business of anyone else. When we examine our own hearts we will find enough there to judge and to keep us busy, yes, too busy, to ever try to examine someone else. Failure to follow this admonition to judge sin in our own lives results, according to Paul in

### Physical Judgment

*"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"*

(1 Corinthians 11:29).

Unfortunately there is one word in this verse that is mistranslation in the King James Version – (and some other translations as well) – and it has given much misunderstanding. The word is translated "*damnation*," however the original Greek word would better be translated "*judgment*." – (The Greek word is "*krineis*" that means "*judgment*" – and not "*damnation*." ) – Christians are not "*damned*," or *condemned*, but the Lord nevertheless does *judge* His people. Verse 32 of 1 Corinthians 11 says definitely that these should not be condemned with the world. Interestingly, the word translated as "*damnation*" in verse 29 is the very same root word in the Greek that is translated as "*judge*" in this same passage of Scripture. So, careful examination of this passage reveals that the teaching of the Apostle Paul was that the Christian who refuses to confess his sin, is going to be judged of the Lord.

### Weakness, Sickness and Death

This judging of the believer's unconfessed sin, says Paul, may take various forms. It is a physical judgment, and Paul names three things that may come upon the believer who continues in unconfessed sin. There three are called, WEAKNESS, SICKNESS, and DEATH. I do not want to be misunderstood at this point and I want to emphatically point out that the Scripture does not teach that not all weakness, sickness and death are the result of the chastening of the Lord. We need to be very careful here. In fact I would state, unequivocally, that not even the great4r part of the ailments of Christians are due to God's judgment upon unconfessed sin. It may be difficult for the natural mind to understand, but there are times when God permits believers to suffer, as in the case of Paul and his "thorn in the flesh," or in the tribulations of Job, when any sinfulness on their part had anything to do with the cause. If you are ill or suffering, and have honestly confessed before the Lord and accepted His forgiveness, then you may rest in the promise of God that "*whom the Lord loves chastens.*" In such cases it is because of God's love, and not because He is judging sin in your life.

However, having said all that, we must face the fact that Paul says, "*many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep [Die prematurely],*" because of their unwillingness to yield to repentance to God.

We should address ourselves – those of us who are believers in Christ Jesus. Any believer who is harboring unconfessed sin in his life, is inviting the chastening judgment of the Lord. This is certainly something to seriously to take into consideration. Just think Scripture teaches that there could be those who are ill or weak, or probably even facing premature death, who could be well today, *if* they would only heed the warning of the Spirit of God, "*let a man examine himself*" (1 Corinthians 11:28). God wants all His children clean, and He will not stop dealing with them until they are. The child of God is subject to God's chastening. How applicable, therefore, the passage in Hebrews:

*"...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons...Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby"*

(Hebrews 12:5-8, 11).

From this passage we notice two outstanding things: **(1)** the Lord chastens His own because He wants them clean and because He loves them; and **(2)** this chastening results in peace only to those who are exercised thereby. We ask, "*What about those Christians who are not exercised by the chastening, but instead they murmur and rebel?*" Paul answers, "*afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*" God has a way of dealing also with those who are not exercised by their chastening and do not repent and turn from their evil ways. God must then do a further work on them, and if His chastening here and now does not bear the desired fruit, they

will be dealt with at the judgment Seat of Christ. This will occur when the Lord returns to rapture His bride away – and to judge, or reward, His saints.

### Untimely Death

The Bible seems to indicate that there is a time appointed for every one to die, however, it is true that Scriptures teaches that the Christian may under certain circumstances die an untimely, premature, death. This fact Paul states clearly when he says that because of the unwillingness to confess their sins, some have “*fallen asleep*” – meaning to die prematurely. The Lord loves His children so much that He simply will not permit them to continue on-and-on in sin, but sooner or later will send upon them sickness and weakness; and if they still continue to rebel, He may even take them Home to glory. The Lord would rather take us unto Himself and have us settle the consequences of our faithlessness at the Judgment Seat of Christ, than to have us continue in our defilement and rebellion. I realize that this is an unpleasant truth, and yet it is one that, if we give heed to, will result in a peace and a return of blessing and assurance that many have lost.

Are you now experiencing the chastening hand of the Lord? If so, have you asked yourself why it is that you are passing through these trials and tribulations. Let me say, it is because God loves you so. It is certainly not because God is angry, but it is entirely because His love will not allow you to go on in defilement, because He wants you to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. I must add - If you will submit yourself humbly, underneath the chastening hand of God and be “*exercised by it,*” learning the lessons that God would have you learn, it will result in the peaceable fruit of righteousness in your life according to Hebrews 12:11.

*“Not now but in the coming years;  
It may be in the better land  
We’ll read the meaning of our tears,  
And then, some day, we’ll understand”*

It is enough for now to know that all of His dealings with us are in love, and for our profit, no matter how painful they may see at times. So I ask the question, “*Is God dealing with you personally?*” If so, examine your heart, and see just what God is trying to accomplish in your life. It may be that there is still something there that must be corrected, and He is trying to cleanse it by this study. Maybe your sickness is one that will not respond to medicine or surgery because God is seeking to cleanse you from something you have never really surrendered unto Him. While we thank God for all the means and methods He has given to us for the relief and cure of our physical ailments, we must also recognize that all the doctors and nurses and medicine in the world are unable to relieve some conditions that may be the result of a stubborn resistance to the will of God and an unwillingness to confess our sins. The epistle of James gives us definite teaching along this line:

*“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the*

*name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:13-16).*

There are those who make the mistake in rejecting this passage, saying that it does not apply to our dispensation; telling us that James wrote to the Jews, and therefore it has no application for us today. Of course, this is wrong! You will notice that James specifically says, “let him call for the elders of the church.”

There is the danger also of the extreme of believing that this passage teaches that it is always God’s will – under all situations and conditions – to heal the sick. While God’s Word does each in divine healing for the believer, we must not twist any text to suit our fancy – but examine each passage carefully to determine exactly what it does say.

James is speaking of certain cases of sickness only, that wee undoubtedly due to unconfessed sin. This seems evident from the passage. Look at it again, James says.

*“...the prayer of faith shall save the sick...”*

This passage is often quoted, “the prayer of faith shall heal the sick,” but that is not what it says, it says, “shall save the sick.” The healing James mentions here depends upon something. It is to be preceded by confession. Notice what James says in verse 15,

*“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”  
(James 5:15).*

Now notice the very next word in the following verse – “**Confess**” –

*“**Confess** your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (James 5:16).*

First, there is to be **confession** and **prayer**, then healing. To apply this passage to all cases of sickness is unscriptural. Those who believe that it is always God’s method to heal the sick by miraculous intervention of divine healing, unaided by any physician or medicine, should remember what Jesus said in Luke 5:31,

*“They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick”  
(Luke 5:31).*

These words from the lips of Jesus are plain. When we are sick, we need to believe God for our healing, however, in our belief, there certainly nothing unscriptural, or wrong in calling a good, reliable physician, and the believe that God, at times, uses physical means for the restoration of our health. But, we must remember to always be sure there is nothing in our life that needs to be corrected and confessed before God; and then submit the results entirely to His care. The most important thing in our life is that we are submissive to the will of God! If it is God’s will that we can serve Him better in

our present condition, then that is the condition in which we should be. God's will is always best. We should learn in all of our petitions to Him, to practice the spirit of the prayer of Jesus Christ Himself, *"Not My will, but Yours be done."*

Since God will not tolerate sin unjudged in the life of the believer, what a terrible thing it will be to fall into the hands of a living God without the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and without a covering for sins.

I repeat again 1 Peter 4:17-18,

*"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17-18).*