

Divine Discipline

Romans 8:1 (Corrected Translation) Therefore there is now no punishment (discipline) for those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not according to *the* flesh but according to *the* (Holy) Spirit

I am not revisiting the detailed rationale for the corrected translation of verse 1 here. That was covered last week. It is supported by a reworking of the textual evidence, understanding a theological bias and most important, the context. Many Bible teachers repeatedly repeat the three rules of Bible exposition: “context, context, context.”

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Romans 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

Romans 8:4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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Before we get started, let us take a detour and look at highlights of coming attractions. As I read Romans chapter 8 again and again, I realized how important verse 32 is. OK, all the verses are important, but here is a gem well worth visiting now and then revisiting later.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

This struck me as similar to Romans 5:8 and John 3:16. But in this case, it is talking to believers who are already saved. God supports us in life, not just at the point of salvation.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

This sounds a bit like John 3:16. It deals with Christ's work on the cross which is the basis of our salvation.

John 3:16 “For (in this manner) God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Romans 5 and John 3 passages are talking about our initial faith in Christ and salvation. But Romans 8:32 is talking about the believer in time. This is a case of “from the major to the minor.” In other words, if God did the most at the point of salvation it is easy for Him to give us “all things” in time. As others stressed, God provides blessing to prepared souls. As you mature you can appreciate increased blessings.

Romans 5:8 → John 3:16 → Romans 8:32 (phase 2 salvation)

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Let us start with an outline of chapter 8 from R. B. Thieme. There is no one universal outline of a chapter. Some are easier to outline than others. Of the few commentaries on Romans, I didn't find two that agreed.

Per R. B. Thieme Jr, an outline of chapter 8:
The New Life and Sanctification 8:1-17
The New Life and Suffering 8:18-30
The New Life and Its Challenges 8:31-39

The New Life is a reference to Romans 6:4 "the newness of life."

Romans chapter 8 is a continuation of Paul's argument in chapters 6-7. In particular Paul has been setting the ground for the spiritual life. He has approached life based upon the sin nature from different angles.

In chapter 6 he stressed the issue of the sin nature, also called "the flesh." Our sin nature is in our DNA. There is no single gene that carries the sin nature. It is in the entire structure. Anything less than Jesus' DNA would be incomplete or imperfect and hence carry the sin nature.

In chapter 7 Paul addresses the issue of the Mosaic Law. The Law is perfect. But there is no power to accomplish the requirements of the Law. Only the Holy Spirit enables a person to accomplish the Law. That is how Jesus fulfilled the Law: in the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember that the Law not only encompassed physical tasks but also dealt with mental attitude. Paul explained that in chapter 7 when he encountered the commandment against coveting, a mental attitude sin.

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,

2 Corinthians 10:4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

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2 Corinthians 10:5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

2 Corinthians 10:6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

Now let us tackle verse 1.

Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no punishment (discipline) for those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not according to *the* flesh but according to *the* (Holy) Spirit

Punishment. This is not the word *krima* which would agree with the NASB translation as condemnation. No, this is the word *katakrima*. This is the result of judgment.

Take for instance a court case. Whether a case tried by a jury or a bench trial by a judge, the verdict is that the person is guilty and must be punished in a certain way. That might be *krima*. The judgment, the condemnation. But *katakrima* is the actual punishment. So much for the word.

Now, the context. The context of chapters 6-8 is the life of the believer. The text says there is now no punishment for the person in Christ Jesus who walks in the Spirit and not after the flesh. The clause that is left out of most modern translations is key. The King James Version includes this verse. This indicates that there is no discipline for the believer that is walking by the Holy Spirit.

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Let us finish looking at the rest of the words in the verse before we summarize the meaning and application.

In Christ Jesus. It is striking that all through chapter 8 Paul uses the phrase “in Christ Jesus” or just “Christ Jesus” Not “in Jesus Christ,” nor “in Jesus.” Just previously in chapter 7 Paul uses “Jesus Christ.” Why the change? Partly Paul is emphasizing position “in Christ.” Remember that “Christ” is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word for anointed one, Messiah. So you could legitimately translate this as “in Messiah Jesus.” “Christ the anointed one” is emphasizing His mission. From our perspective, His accomplishment.

Walk. This is a *present active indicative*. This is continuous action in the present time. In this context, Paul is not talking about physically walking but a mental activity. How is the believer ordering his life? By what standard or what power is the believer ordering his life? The order of the words in the Greek points to the separation of the two ways. You are either walking according to (*kata*) the flesh (i.e. the sin nature) or according to the Holy Spirit. Here is the order of the Greek words:

Not according to *the* flesh **walking** But according to *the* Spirit.

But. This forces us to understand the contrast between flesh which we should avoid and the Holy Spirit which we should embrace. This verse is suggestive. It says there is no discipline for those walking in the Spirit. The implication is that those who are walking by the standard of the flesh are subject to divine discipline. Ouch!

I thought that was instructive: flesh – walking – Spirit. One or the other. Absolutes. Also note that “the” is in italics in my translation. It is not “the” sin nature, but the sin nature as an essence. Something we all have. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is a power in each believer waiting for him or her to activate Him by choosing. Ahh, there is that word again: choice.

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Let us spend some time on the concept of “punishment” for the believer.

1. Neither believers nor unbelievers “pay” for their sins. The unbeliever goes to the Lake of Fire because of rejection of God’s plan—salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and eternal blessing. God does cause suffering in time to both believers and unbelievers as a result of sins. Look at the book of Judges. There are a variety of reasons for suffering. At another time I will go over some points on suffering. But today I want to focus on “discipline.”
2. The concept of discipline was documented even in the first composed book of the Bible.

Hebrews 12:4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

Hebrews 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

Hebrews 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

This is a New Testament passage that quotes from the Old Testament applying the principle found there.

3. The book of Job recognizes divine discipline. Job’s friends accused him of having sinned. As a result, they reasoned that God was

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disciplining him until he acknowledged his sin. Listen to some of Job's friends. They understood discipline.

Job 4:7 “Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed?”

Job 4:8 “According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it.

Job 4:9 “By the breath of God they perish, And by the blast of His anger they come to an end.

Job 8:4 “If your sons sinned against Him, Then He delivered them into the power of their transgression.

Job 8:20 “Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, Nor will He support the evildoers.

Job 5:17 “Behold, how happy is the man whom God reprove, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

That is the concept of discipline. But are there Biblical examples of discipline meant to return the believer to fellowship with God. A prime example is David. We know that David didn't go out to fight with his

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army when he was supposed to. Then he had sex with another man's wife. Perhaps the case can be made that he raped her. Then he conspired with his chief of staff of the army to have her husband killed in battle. Murder. You can read that in 2 Samuel chapter 11. What happened to David? He was moping about out of fellowship. But then God sent Nathan to help David recognize his status quo sinning.

Psalm 51 is David's reply when he realized how sinful he had been.

Psalm 51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin.

Psalm 51:3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

Psalm 51:4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.

David acknowledged his sins. He returned to God.

Another example is Saul. He had banned consorting with witches and mediums including the death penalty for anyone who did. Now Saul does exactly that.

1 Samuel 28:15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am greatly

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distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do.”

1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has departed from you and has become your adversary?”

1 Samuel 28:17 The Lord has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.

1 Samuel 28:18 As you did not obey the Lord and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the Lord has done this thing to you this day.

1 Samuel 28:19 Moreover the Lord will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the Lord will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!”

Saul suffered the sin unto death. There is an interesting play on events. Saul had declared that anyone dealing with mediums and their activities would die. So, in essence he had declared his own judgment. David had

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done the same in answer to Nathan's story. The difference is that David acknowledged his sin and sought God's mercy.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

2 Timothy 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Word of God, Scripture, is useful to provide correction. If we sin, God can remind us of verses that identify our sin. There are verses to keep us from sinning. Those that consistently, continuously, reject the corrections are subject to the sin unto death like Saul. Also Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament.

Acts 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,

Acts 5:2 and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?

Acts 5:4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you

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have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

Acts 5:5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

Acts 5:6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.

1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.

Reminders again from the Word of God.

Proverbs 3:11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord Or loathe His reproof,

Proverbs 3:12 For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights.

Quoted by the author of the Book of Hebrews.

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Hebrews 5:4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

Hebrews 5:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

Hebrews 5:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

Hebrews 5:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Hebrews 5:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Hebrews 5:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?