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Quenching the Holy Spirit and the Nth Degree **(Hebrews 12:1-13, 19-29; 1 John 5:16-17)**

Pastor Gene Giguere, October 11, 2026

Reading

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
 nor be weary when reproved by him.
⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
 and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed ...”

God Disciplines Us as Sons and Daughters

- 1) Last time, we looked at the bridge a believer crosses from Grieving to Quenching God the Holy Spirit. It's a loooooong bridge, and it's treacherous; we cross it step-by-step over an extended period of time.

These are *degrees of experiential distance* from God. We expressed it with a formula that I think encapsulates the idea: $T+PR=Q$. Which means: *time + persistence of resistance = quenching*.

And we looked to the book of Proverbs for a picture of Wisdom personified warning all to heed her call. Those who are wise heed her call because they fear/revere the Lord. Fools, however “despise wisdom and instruction” and they suffer the consequences of ignoring God’s Word.

Unbelievers – and believer’s living like unbelievers – move through life anesthetized to the point that they think they’re safe. But they are not.

The Apostle Paul says such people are “darkened in their understanding, [they are] alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance [of who God is] that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity” (**Ephesians 4:18-19**).

For a believer to make decisions to live this way is to invite the discipline of God. They are not being disciplined as sinners, but as sons. For as we just heard in our reading,

“God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons ... ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (**Heb. 12:7b-8, 11**).

Notice it: The purpose of divine discipline is never punishment; its purpose is to yield a good, spiritual harvest: “the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (**Hebrews 12:11b**).

Sometimes people will say, ‘It’s *hard* to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. It’s *hard* not to sin.’ But **Proverbs 13:15** has a different view: “The way of *transgressors is hard*” (KJV). Or “the way of the *unfaithful is hard*” (NKJV). Or, as our ESV has it, “the way of the *treacherous is their ruin*.”

The writer of Hebrews deals with this directly in our reading! He warns us to lay “aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us ...” (**Hebrews 12:1b**). And he tells us to do so considering the example of Jesus, who “endured the cross” and “despising the shame, endured from sinners such hostility against himself” (**Hebrews 12:2-3a**).

Now, *why* should we consider the suffering of Jesus in the context of our own struggle with sin? “So that [we might] not grow weary or fainthearted” (**Hebrews 12:3b**).

And as to our complaint about how hard it is to obey God, **Hebrews 12:4** reminds us to knock it off! Because, “in your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” Ah, but JESUS HAS! And guess what? He is now “seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (**Hebrews 12:2b**). And if that’s not enough motivation for us to get right, we should pause for a moment to consider the very uncomfortable prospect of divine discipline.

- 2) The writer warns us that there *is* a discipline which the Lord will visit upon those who grieve His Spirit and that we should NOT ‘regard’ it ‘lightly’ (**Hebrews 12:5**). Because, “the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (**Hebrews 12:6**).

The word translated “discipline” here is *παιδεύω*, which means to train by correction. It describes “providing guidance for responsible living”; I think ‘training’ communicates the idea nicely.¹ It’s very beautiful: **Hebrews 12:10** tells us that God “disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.”

That’s “disciplines,” but the word “chastises” is something else again. It translates the Greek verb *μαστιγώω*, and this word, Church, is no joke. It’s primary meaning, definition *numero uno*, is “to beat with a whip or lash, to whip, flog, or scourge.

¹ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 749.

In **Matthew 10:16-18**, Jesus said this to His Apostles:

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog [μαστιγώω] you in their synagogues ...” That word translated “flog” in verse **17** is **μαστιγώω**.

In **Mark 10:33-34**, Jesus predicted His own suffering in death. He told His disciples:

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog [μαστιγώω] him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.” That word translated “flog” in verse **34** is **μαστιγώω**.

In **John 19:1**: “Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.” The word translated “flog” here is **μαστιγώω**. *This is a very serious word indeed!* While “disciplines” speaks to God’s parental training of His children, “chastises” is a word reserved for those who continue to grieve the Holy Spirit through sin, and eventually quench Him by refusing to repent. So, when **Hebrews 12:6** says that “the Lord ... chastises every son whom he receives,” he’s actually saying more than that, much more!

- 3) And so, the writer of Hebrews instructs believers who’ve been playing with sin and are thus experiencing God’s discipline to, “lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees [weaknesses brought on by failing to repent], ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed [in order that further discipline might be halted]” (**Hebrews 12:12-13**).

But then, just a few verses later, he reminds us of who we are and what we have! Beginning in verse **18**, he talks about the holiness of God. He reminds us that, although we live in the covering of New Testament grace, the God of the Old Testament has not changed! He urges us to “be grateful” and to “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire” (**Hebrews 12:28-29**). He is, and always has been a consuming fire!

God is the same holy God that descended upon Mt. Sinai in “a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ... and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them” (**Hebrews 12:18-19**). His presence made that mountain so holy that even if a beast touched it, it would have to be stoned (**Hebrews 12:20**). **Hebrews 12:21** says that “so terrifying was the sight that [even] Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’

And while we’ve come to a very different mountain – Mount Zion – “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” the writer of Hebrews wants us to know that the God who in habits both is “a consuming fire” (**Hebrews 12:29**).

When Grieving Turns to Quenching

- 1) Now, when we move from grieving to quenching the Holy Spirit, in essence, we put out the Spirit’s fire. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is represented as a burning, purifying fire (**Acts 2:3**). His fire provides *light* for us to see the path ahead, and *warmth* to melt our cold hearts by reminding us of His intimate presence in our lives, and *power* to refine our character and to stoke our zeal.

The Apostle Paul gives a sharp, urgent command in **1 Thessalonians 5:19**: “Do not quench the Spirit.” So, let me explain a few things here.

✠ First, the word picture ‘quenching’ paints for us is one of pouring water on the Holy Spirit’s fire until, at last, all that is left is a pile of ash.

The Greek word used here, σβέννυμι, means *to extinguish* or *to put something out*.² It means to cause something “to cease to function.” It can also mean to *stifle or, suppress* someone or something. So, to “quench” the Holy Spirit is *to extinguish* His fire, *to suppress* His influence in my life.

I quench the Spirit when I refuse to obey the conviction He brings upon my heart, and refuse to repent of the sins that are grieving Him.

The Church Age believer is God’s Temple, and, in the Old Testament Temple, there was a Law which prefigures the Holy Spirit’s personal indwelling. With

² Here and below, Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 917.

respect to the altar it says, “fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; *it shall not go out*” (**Leviticus 6:13**).

The moment I ignore the Spirit’s conviction to put aside sin, or stubbornly refuse to obey His leading, His fire begins to dim in me and His voice begins to lessen. God’s *light* begins to grow dim in my life. The *warmth* of God’s presences becomes distant and my heart grows cold. The *power* to live the Christian life dissipates and I’m left vulnerable to the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil – what we’ve called the Ruinous Triad. In a nutshell, I become the devil’s chump.

✠ And then, there are the biblically-described consequences of quenching.

Paul put it this way: “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life [that is, the *experience* of it in time]” (**Galatians 6:7-8**). What I put in the ground is what’s going to grow!

When I quench the Spirit’s fire, I begin to lose sense of the ‘things of the Spirit’ because I’m setting my mind on the ‘things of the flesh’ (**Romans 8:5**). I lose the desire to “be fervent in spirit, [and] serve the Lord,” as Paul encourages us to do in **Romans 12:11**.

We’re no longer *following* the Lord, and so we’re no longer *serving* Him, even if we’re still going through the motions. Echoing back to the passage which launched us into this study of deserved and undeserved suffering, Jesus said, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also” (**John 12:26**). If I am not *following* Jesus, I’m not *serving* Jesus; I’m not *where He is*.

And I’m left, as a saved but carnal believer, to navigate through life in my own strength. It’s not long before I learn that I am moving headlong into disaster!

- 2) I think we have a vivid illustration of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Prophet Jonah and King Saul. While we might look at the Prophet Jonah as an example of grieving the Spirit, Saul is an example of quenching Him – and the nth degree of divine discipline.

✠ When the Holy Spirit clearly directed Jonah to go to Nineveh, he grieved the Spirit by running in the opposite direction! “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”³ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord” (**Jonah 1:2-3**).

Jonah didn’t like his *Poterion* (τὸ ποτήριον). He did not appreciate what God was asking him to do. And so, he said, ‘No, thank you!’ He traveled down to Joppa, paid the fare, and boarded a ship heading for Tarshish in the exact opposite direction of where the Lord instructed him to go for the express purpose of moving “*away from* the presence of the Lord” (**Jonah 1:3b**). Jonah had apparently forgotten the words of **Psalms 139:7**: “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?”

We do the same when we don’t like the place the Spirit is leading us! We grieve the Spirit when we run away from the clear, personal call to the *Divine Desideratum* for our lives, our very own *Poterion*.

But, if we learn anything from Jonah’s story, it’s that we can run, but we cannot hide! Because when we do, *the Spirit does not leave us to peacefully enjoy our dumb decisions!* He goes to work to get our attention; we call this *divine discipline*.

As we’ve seen, this is *not to punish us*; its purpose is to yield a good, spiritual harvest: “the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (**Hebrews 12:11b**). **Hebrews 12:10** tells us, God “disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.”

Well, we see God’s response to Jonah’s rebellion in **Jonah 1:4**: “But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up ...”

The superstitious sailors decide to toss the prophet overboard amidst the tempest. And, I think you know the story. Verse **17**: “And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.” *Who* is engineering Jonah’s personal catastrophe? THE LORD IS!

This is *divine discipline*. Now, eventually, Jonah came to his senses and the story ended well. In fact, God engineered a mass spiritual awakening among the Ninevites through this reluctant Prophet!

- ✠ But King Saul's story is something else again – and it leads us to the end of our study. God, as we know, set Saul as King over Israel because of the request of the people (**1 Samuel 8:4-5**); they wanted to 'be like the other nations.' Saul's life represents a tragic transition from a humble, Spirit-empowered beginning to a bitter end marked by paranoia, rebellion, and death on the battlefield.

Saul started his reign as a humble man from the tribe of Benjamin. When he was chosen as Israel's first king, he hid among the baggage out of a sense of inadequacy (**1 Samuel 10:22**).

But the Spirit of God came upon him, and He gave him early military success. In those days, the Holy Spirit did not indwell believers as He does the Church; He only rested upon certain people through whom He desired to work. So, in **1 Samuel 11:6** (cf., **10:10**), we read that "the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul." But in **1 Samuel 16:14** we also read that "the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him." Or, in the NASB95: "... an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him." Or, in the NKJV: "... a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him."

- ✠ Aside: *Can the Lord send an evil spirit upon a believer?*

This is a theological problem – one that is taken up in a fine excursus in David Tsumura's wonderful commentary on **1 Samuel** in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* series.³ A number of possible solutions to this problem have been offered by scholars.

- ✚ The word translated 'evil' can mean 'harmful' or 'distressing' or 'troublesome,' rather than indicating *moral* wickedness. And so, this 'spirit of distress' could be in line with divine discipline.

- ✚ Another idea is that God's action of '*allowing*' a malicious spirit to terrorize a person could be seen as God, essentially, '*sending*' it.

³ Tsumura, David, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), p.427.

Walther Eichrodt thinks that “the evil spirit from the Lord” is a spiritual power under God’s sovereignty; hence it is not same as an ‘evil spirit’ in contrast to a ‘good spirit,’ such as is common in pagan dualism.⁴

✚ Theodorus Vriezen (1899–1981) points out that the idea of a “harmful spirit from the LORD” tormenting Saul indicates that YHWH holds absolute authority over good AND evil.⁵ To that end, Klein & Gordon suggest that the OT tends “to trace both good *and* evil back to YHWH,” thus ascribing evil to the hand of YHWH in such texts as **Deut. 13:2–4, Amos 3:6; 2 Samuel 24:1; 1 Chronicles 21:1, Judges 9:23, 1 Kings 22:19–22 and Job 2:10.**⁶

✚ And there are others, like P. Kyle McCarter, who accept the idea that the evil spirit is indeed “from YHWH” and explain that God even uses these in the “working out of the divine plan.”⁷

I tend to agree with Dr. Tsumura’s opinion that “this is not so much a theological as a linguistic problem.” He writes:

“The translation ‘an evil spirit from the Lord’ is not adequate for the Hebrew original. We would like to suggest that the phrase *rûah-rā ‘āh*, which is usually translated as “an evil spirit,” should be taken as a construct chain, “a spirit of evilness (or disaster) ... So, *rûah hārā ‘āh* and *rûah YHWH rā ‘āh* are better translated as “the spirit which brings forth disaster” and “the spirit of YHWH which brings forth disaster,” taking *rā ‘āh* as “objective genitive” (or “genitive of effect”) ...”⁸

I LOVE Dr. McCarter here! He suggests that ‘a spirit of evil [or, *for evilness*]’ arrived “as though rushing into the vacuum Saul’s loss of

⁴ Eichrodt, Walther, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), p.55.

⁵ Theodorus Christiaan Vriezen (1899–1981), *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), p.81.

⁶ Gordon, R. P., *I & II Samuel* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), p.152; Klein, R. W. *I Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary Series (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983) p.165. See also R. D. Bergen, ‘Evil Spirits and Eccentric Grammar: A Study of the Relationship between Text and Meaning in Hebrew Narrative,’ in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994), pp.320–35.

⁷ McCarter Jr., P. Kyle, ‘Evil Spirit of God,’ in K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) pp.602–604.

⁸ Tsumura, David, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), p.427.

favor has created” and *began to terrorize* him.⁹ This is a perfect description of what happens when we quench the Spirit! When we push God away, we create a vacuum within our soul. The void created by our loss of fellowship is rapidly filled with other things – and those things are NEVER good.

And, as the prominent Dutch linguist Jacob Hoftijzer (1926–2011) put it, the removal of the Holy Spirit and the sending (or *allowing* of) a maleficent spirit reflects “not only a state of fright, but also a state of being ([at least] partly) incapacitated.”¹⁰

McCarter concludes (rightly, me thinks): This spirit is *from the Lord* and hence “will play its part in the working out of the divine plan.”¹¹

✠ Well, Saul started out strong – eyes on the Lord and off of himself. But God removed His empowering presence because Saul began to walk in disobedience. The Spirit’s absence left a void that was filled by ever-increasing bouts of terrifying fear, depression, rage and paranoia.

Finally, Saul’s rebellion – even a foray into witchcraft/the occult/the dark arts (**1 Samuel 28**) – led to a total spiritual collapse and the Nth Degree of divine discipline, what we call the sin unto physical death (**1 Samuel 31**). This was the sin unto physical death.

God’s judgment against Saul took place in **1 Samuel 31** on Mount Gilboa. Surrounded and wounded by Philistine archers, and facing certain capture and humiliation, Saul chose to take his own life by falling on his own sword (**1 Samuel 31:4, 1 Chronicles 10:4–5**). Completing the picture that our sin always affects others, his armor-bearer did the same (**1 Samuel 31:5**).

How do we know this was the result of the Nth degree of divine discipline? Well, because God’s Word *says so!* The Bible tells us that his death was not merely as a military defeat, but was the direct spiritual consequence of his unfaithfulness.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, McCarter, ‘Evil Spirit of God,’ in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.602-604.

¹⁰ Hoftijzer, Jacob, ‘Some Remarks on the Semantics of the Root b’t in Classical Hebrew’ in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), p.781.

¹¹ McCarter Jr., P. Kyle, ‘Evil Spirit of God,’ in K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) pp.602-604.

1 Chronicles 10:13-14 says, “Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. ¹⁴ He did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore, the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”

Isn't that precisely what we do when we choose to grieve, and then quench, the Holy Spirit? In a “breach of faith” we stop keeping “the command[s] of the Lord.” We no longer “seek guidance ... from the Lord”; we seek it from someplace else – *anyplace* else! If this is not remedied by repentance, at some point God will have had enough and take us home early in shame.

- ✠ Well, rather than obey God, Saul began to compromise. He fell into the trap of **Proverbs 14:12**: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” The Spirit is grieved and eventually quenched when we try to bargain with God, replacing the exact things He’s told us to do with lesser, more convenient, religious alternatives.

Saul’s death was not an accidental tragedy; it was the predictable consequence of his spiritual treason. The most terrifying aspect of God’s judgment on Saul was not *the physical sword* that ended his life, but *the spiritual abandonment* that drove him to despair!

When Saul stopped listening to God, God stopped speaking to Saul. The Spirit was completely quenched! **1 Samuel 28:6** says, “when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.” In like manner, when believers of this age refuse to repent, they gradually cease to hear God’s voice and the fire is eventually extinguished.

- ✠ What is shocking here though is the *theological* point that *God* was the ultimate Agent in the death of Saul. Although it may sound counterintuitive, the Philistine archers did not kill Saul. Nor did Saul’s sword. Again, **1 Chronicles 10:14b**: “Therefore the Lord put him to death.”

Saul's death stands as a sober warning that God’s patience has a limit. Continued, unrepentant presumptuous sin moves God from being our protective shield to becoming our disciplinarian. And, as Saul’s story shows us, not even a crown can protect us from defying God.

The Nth Degree: The Sin that Leads to Physical Death

- 1) So, what happens when a believer reaches a point of absolute, unyielding, and defiant rebellion?

What happens when a child of God repeatedly, continuously, and willfully shuts out the Holy Spirit, completely ignoring the internal anxiety, the loss of fellowship, and the severe marks of the lash?

Scripture is clear that there is a terrifying final stage to divine discipline—I call it ‘the nth degree’ of God's corrective activity. It is what the Apostle John calls the “sin that leads to death.”

1 John 5:16: “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.”

Notice that John framed this in the context of a “brother” – a true believer whose relationship with God is eternally secure. But, mark it down, this is *the maximum level of divine discipline on earth*. It occurs when a Christian's lifestyle becomes so chronically rebellious, and his or her heart so utterly calloused, that they actively harm the testimony of Christ and His Church.

God is jealous over His Name! **Leviticus 22:32a** warns, “you shall not profane my holy name ...”

When a believer reaches this terminal state of unrepentant rebellion, God may choose to step in and cut their physical life short. Again, this is not a loss of salvation, but a premature removal from the playing field.

God will sometimes preserve the purity of His church by bringing a rebellious believer home early. **Proverbs 10:27** may be hinting at this when it says, “The fear of the Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.”

When a Christian reaches this extreme threshold of rebellion, the Apostle John warns that even intercessory prayer on their behalf should cease. At this time, God’s discipline shifts from a call to change to a divinely-imposed physical eviction.

2) There are examples of this in both Testaments.

- ✠ Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-11**) died on the spot when they chose to lie to the Holy Spirit about a financial offering. To preserve the purity, awe, and testimony of the nascent Church, God took them both home early in an act of terminal discipline. They fell dead at the Apostles' feet.
- ✠ The Apostle Paul wrote of “many” in the Corinthian Church who had become “weak and ill” and even died” because they’d dishonored the Lord’s Table (**1 Corinthians 11:30**). *They had treated sacred things with contempt and they suffered the Nth degree of divine discipline.*
- ✠ There’s an interesting case in **1 Corinthians 5** where a Church member was guilty of a vile sin. Paul’s instruction to them was to have a gathering and, “when you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (**1 Corinthians 5:4-5**).

Conclusion: Trading Our Heart of Stone for a Heart of Flesh
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1) Church, God’s discipline is a *rescue mission*. Our Father does not desire to scourge us, but to walk with us. Whenever we feel the sting of conviction we need to respond immediately.

We should never, as Paul warns, “presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience” (**Romans 2:4a**). Rather, we need to remember that “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance” (**Romans 2:4b**). Our salvation is secure, but we must endeavor to preserve our fellowship with God and not consider His discipline lightly.

God loves us so much that He’s given us a solution to the sins we commit after we’re saved: *repentance!* And it’s SO beautiful! Repentance instantly transforms God’s discipline into a comforting embrace.

2) It makes me think of three wonderful passages:

✠ First, **Ezekiel 36:26-27**, where God says to Israel,

“I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

As we’ve seen, it’s only the Spirit within us that gives us the ability to “walk” in obedience.

✠ And **Joel 2:12-13**:

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

[Notice the *contrition* and *repentance* here!
Paul tells us that the “sorrow that is according to the will of God (‘godly sorrow,’ KJV) produces a repentance without regret ...”
(**2 Corinthians 7:10**, NASB95).]

And so, Joel continues:

¹³ rend your hearts and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.”

“He relents over disaster” means that God will meet the disaster we’ve brought upon our lives by our rebellion with mercy when He sees our heartfelt repentance.

✠ And finally, the hopeful cry of **Hosea 6:1**:

“Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up!”
Now, doesn’t that sound better than continuing in our rebellion?

3) Mark it down Church: the saddest thing about not being in fellowship with God is not the discipline or the hardship, it’s the time we’ve lost walking with Him.

1 John 1:6: “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” Saying no to the Spirit leaves me in the dark and out of the light.

And while still saved, I am not enjoying the “joy of [my] salvation” (**Psa. 51:12**). Joy, peace, patience, etc. are all fruits of walking in the Spirit – and when I’m not, I think joy and peace are the first things to go (**Galatians 5:22-23**). In **John 15:11**, Jesus told His disciples, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

Rebellion won’t strip me of my citizenship in heaven, but it *will* make my journey here miserable, drained of peace and devoid of spiritual power. This is not why Jesus died! He died that we might have life and have it abundantly!

Amen?

So, *let’s be jealous over that life* and refuse to let any sin separate us from experiencing it to the full.

Let’s pray.