

Here at Thessalonica the situation was somewhat different from that in the Corinthian church, not in the fact that Paul was in Corinth, making a judgment on the situation at Thessalonica on the basis of reports from a distance, but in the fact that the reason for judgment was not gross immorality requiring the extreme form of discipline, but rather an unwillingness to work to earn a living, requiring a lesser form of discipline. Paul does not suggest that such persons be excommunicated, but rather commands and exhorts them to work and to eat their own bread. However, if they refuse to do so, Paul instructs the Thessalonians believers to note such persons, to keep aloof from them, and to refuse to associate with them. Paul also urges the believers not to encourage these persons in their malingering by feeding them. On the other hand Paul urges the Thessalonians not to view such persons as enemies, but to admonish them as brothers in Christ.

I Timothy 5:19-20 is important because it deals with the discipline of church officers. The passage states:

"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue to sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning."

Five important features of discipline may be seen in this passage:

- (1) No member of the church is exempt from discipline, not even an elder.
- (2) Accusations of wrongdoing should not even be received unless they are supported by the evidence of two or three witnesses to the same sinful act. One witness is not enough!
- (3) Rebuke is here mentioned as a form of discipline.
- (4) Discipline is not to be exercised and executed by the church in secret but before the whole church.
- (5) Discipline has a salutary purpose, in creating fear of public exposure and rebuke of sin.

D. The Purpose of Discipline

As was mentioned earlier, discipline may either be administrative or judicial.

1. Administrative discipline is concerned with the maintenance of good order in the government of the church. its purpose is twofold:
 - a. To insure the preservation of all rights
 - b. To assure the faithful discharge of all obligations
2. Judicial discipline is concerned with the prevention and correction of offenses. its purpose is threefold: