

SPECIAL BENEFITS OF THE CHURCH

Part Two

Discipline – *“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? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 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 life? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed”* (Hebrews 12:7-13). *“Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love for him”* (II Corinthians 2:6-8). God requires discipline as a show of love to help us stay on the narrow path that leads to heaven. While He could choose to mete out punishment directly on us when we sin, the church has a requirement to maintain purity among its members and to exercise careful, loving discipline when conditions are such that the scriptures require it. While we don't want to be a body that runs people off or seemingly throws souls away, there are times when the church has to act to be in accordance with God's will. The fact that God provides for a means of discipline when and if we stray should not be viewed as a negative, but as a positive benefit of the church.

Salvation – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you... obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls”* (I Peter 1:3-4,9). *“It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us”* (II Timothy 2:11-12). The ultimate purpose of Christianity is the salvation of our soul – to be able to live with God in heaven forever. If we are in the church and abide in the teachings of the Bible until we die physically, God has promised us eternal life.

Spiritual Blessings/Inner Peace – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3) *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:4-7) When we have obeyed the gospel and entered into the fellowship of God through His Son, we are added to His church. Then the blessings of this life will open up to us. We should live with a constantly positive attitude, knowing we are loved and will be provided for in ways that

those outside the church cannot comprehend. And the confidence we should have will allow us to endure anything that happens to us, knowing that we are a child of the Living God and are destined for an eternity with Him.

-Richard Bartholomew