

## Matthew 18; Lord's Day 31

### THE KEY OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

- I. The objects.
  - A. The objects of Christian discipline.
    1. In general, all the members of the church are the objects because of the presence of sin in everyone.
    2. Specifically, the objects are those who hold practices or doctrines contrary to the name "Christian."
  - B. The institute (elders) take action.
    1. The consistory takes action after preliminary action by the individual members of the organism.
    2. The elders act only when the professing believer will not repent and persists in his sin (17).
    3. Positively, the key power is exercised to save (sanctify) those who are truly citizens of the kingdom.
- II. The Head of the church institute exercises the key of Christian discipline through its elders.
  - A. The Lord Jesus holds the key of Christian discipline (Matt. 16:18b; Rev. 3:7).
    1. The Lord Jesus gave this authority to the elders (John 20:22,23).
    2. Jesus declares that He is "in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).
    3. Further Jesus says their work is meaningful and effective in heaven, though it may be flaunted on earth.
  - B. Why do elders have the right to discipline?
    1. First, Jesus commands His church to do so, lest they be guilty of not alerting and warning (Ezek. 33:2-6; I Cor. 9:16).
    2. Second, discipline is for the spiritual well-being of the church because of corporate responsibility.
  - C. Thus, the elders, as Christ's representatives, are the ones to whom we vow submission to their care.
- III. Discipline's purpose and fruit.
  - A. The purpose is the glory of God and the edification of the Church.
    1. God is glorified when anyone fallen in Adam is saved and forgiven in Christ.
    2. The congregation as a whole is strengthened and built up.
  - B. There is positive fruit for everyone.
  - C. Finally, the elders receive the joy of the Lord, not for earthly success, but for faithfulness.