

Doctrine of Divine Discipline

1. God is the Author and Administrator of divine discipline. His sovereignty in this area was established in heaven when He cast Satan out of His throne room.
 - *Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

2. The sovereignty of God in administrating divine discipline in the human race was established in the Garden of Eden when He pronounced judgment upon the woman, the serpent, man and all of nature. .
 - *Genesis 3: 9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. 11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? 12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. 14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

3. Divine discipline is rooted in God's holiness.
 - *Habakkuk 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. 13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...*

4. Divine discipline is manifested in justice and love.

- **Unbeliever.** Justice is exclusively for those who will not repent and confess sin and accept God's way of salvation from the penalty and pollution of their transgressions. Such souls will be judged on the basis of their works. *Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*
- **Believer.** Justice and mercy rooted in love is reserved for those who do repent, confess sin and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in order to become children of God. God will always deal with His children in love though at times there may be "tough love" manifested. *Hebrews 12: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth [corrects], and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

5. There is a principle associated with God's administration of divine discipline and that is forewarning. Grace always precedes discipline.

- **God warned Adam and Eve** not to eat or even touch the Tree of Life lest they die. *Genesis 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*
- **God warned Noah** and his generation of an impending flood. *Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.*
- **God warns all men** everywhere today to repent or be destroyed in an eternal judgment. *Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent : ...John 3:18 He that believeth on him [Christ] is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

6. Often divine discipline is progressive rather than initially total. In dealing with national Israel, God detailed five waves of discipline He would administer.

First Wave of Divine Discipline Leviticus 26:14-17

“But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; 15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: 16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.”

- **Terror in the form of terrible diseases to include consumption** which in itself would involve contracting dysentery, cholera, typhoid fever, typhus fever, malaria, tuberculosis and various types of cancer. *Leviticus 26:16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption...*
- **The burning ague** that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart may refer to gonorrheal blindness. *Leviticus 26:16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you....the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart:*
- **A robbed harvest.** *Leviticus 26:16 I also will do this unto you; ... [ye shall] sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.*
- **Military defeat in battle.** *Leviticus 26:17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies...*
- **Subjection to foreign rulers.** *Leviticus 26:17 And I will set my face against you, and ...they that hate you shall reign over you...*
- **A constant state of panic.** *Leviticus 26:17 And I will set my face against you, and ...ye shall flee when none pursueth you.*

Second Wave of Divine Discipline Leviticus 26:18-20

“And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. 19 And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: 20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.”

- **National humility.** *Leviticus 26:19 And I will break the pride of your power...*
- **Crop failure.** *Leviticus 26:19 ...and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: 20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.*

Third Wave of Divine Discipline Leviticus 26:21-22

“And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. 22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate.”

- **Increase of natural predators.** *Leviticus 26: 22 I will also send wild beasts among you,*
- **Death of innocent children and livestock.** *Leviticus 26: 22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number...*
- **Loss of commerce.** *Leviticus 26:22and your highways shall be desolate.*

Fourth Wave of Divine Discipline Leviticus 26:23-26

“And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; 24 Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. 25 And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel [breaking] of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. 26 And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.”

- **Military invasion.** *Leviticus 26:25 And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant:*
- **A specific pestilence associated with warfare.** *Leviticus 26:25 ...I will send the pestilence among you...*
- **Foreign domination.** *Leviticus 26: 25 ...and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.*
- **Lingering hunger due to insufficient food supply.** *Leviticus 26: 26 And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.”*

Fifth Wave of Divine Discipline **Leviticus 26:27-39**

“And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; 28 Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. 29 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. 30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. 31 And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. 32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. 33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. 34 Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths. 35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. 36 And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. 37 And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. 38 And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. 39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

Cannibalism. *Leviticus 26: 27 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. “One of the worst disasters ever to affect the Jews in Jerusalem was the siege of AD 70. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish Historian, provides the most detailed eyewitness account to this holocaust. The horrors defy description. The Holy City, Jerusalem, reeled under the onslaught of wave after wave of Roman infantry as battering rams crashed incessantly against the gates. Inside the walls, the Zealots, whose fanatical hatred of the Romans prompted their every action, held the city in a tyrannical grip. Jews, known for their moderate views and pro-Roman sentiments, were ruthlessly executed. Bands of robbers and cutthroats roamed the streets at will, and no one was permitted to leave the city on the penalty of death. Clashes between the Zealots and other groups who opposed them were inevitable. One night, as a result of vicious street fighting, the entire food supply of the city was accidentally set aflame. Six to seven years of provisions were lost and the city now faced starvation. At that time of the year, Jerusalem was teeming with hundreds of thousands of Jews arriving in the city for Passover. They found themselves trapped in a veritable hell-hole of hunger and pestilence. The stench of the dead and the dying was unbearable to all but the thieves that stripped the corpses of their belongings. In utter despair, the Jews ate rats in the streets, and in the end many resorted to cannibalism” (R. B. Thieme, Jr.).*

- **Destruction of every overt expression of idolatry.** *Leviticus 26: 30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.*
 - **Cities and dwelling places left destroyed.** *Leviticus 26:31 And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation....*
 - **Rejection of attempts to worship.** *Leviticus 26: 31 ...and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.*
 - **National disintegration in the form of a Diaspora.** *Leviticus 26:33 ...And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. 34 Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths. 35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. 36 And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. 37 And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. 38 And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. 39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. ...James 1: 1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*
7. The reason for divine discipline is an obstinate stubbornness of the will to personal power and pleasure displayed in gospel disobedience.
- *Leviticus 26:14 But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; 15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:*
8. In each wave of divine discipline God assumes the position of being the Author and Administrator of the same. These judgments are from God.
- *Deuteronomy 8:5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.*
 - *Psalms 38:1 A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance. O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*
 - *Psalms 94:12 Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;*

- *Proverbs 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*
 - *Jeremiah 30:11 For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*
 - *Jeremiah 31:18 I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.*
 - *Zephaniah 3:2 She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.*
 - *Zephaniah 3:7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.*
 - *Hebrews 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*
9. If a nation claims the One and Only Living God to be their God and enters into a covenant relation with Him formally or informally then that nation is blessed. *Psalms 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*
 10. However, if that nation transgresses then it is possible the waves of divine discipline shall wash over the people. For historical illustrations of this concept in the western world an appeal might be made to Spain, England, France, Germany and America.
 11. How can a nation know if it is the object of divine discipline?
 12. One answer is to consider the nations relationship to God as a whole and then consider whether or not there is visible evidence of the various waves of punishment as outlined in Leviticus 26. A check list might help.

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| • Terrible diseases | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • A harvest that others enjoy | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Military defeat in battle | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Subjection to foreign rulers | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • A constant state of panic | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • National humility | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Crop failure | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Increase of natural predators | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Death of innocent children and livestock | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Loss of commerce | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Military invasion | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • A specific pestilence associated with warfare. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Foreign domination | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Lingering hunger due to insufficient food supply | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Cannibalism | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Destruction of overt expressions of idolatry | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Cities and dwelling places left destroyed | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • Rejection of attempts to worship | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| • National disintegration in the form of a Diaspora | Yes _____ | No _____ |

13. How can an individual know if he or she is the object of divine discipline?

14. On this question the scriptural evidence seems to be that individuals who came under divine discipline knew it.

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| • Adam and Eve | Genesis 3: |
| • Saul | 1 Samuel 15:16-31 |
| • David | 2 Samuel 24:13 |
| • Ananias and Sapphira | Acts 5:1-10 |
| • An immoral man | 1 Corinthians 5 : 1-5 |

15. God has many ways to discipline His people. Some of them have been noted.

16. Divine discipline does not last forever or the soul would despair. Once the discipline is over the believer is free to be restored to fellowship.

17. Divine discipline is not to be resented but received as an expression of God's great love.