

DIVINE CHASTENING

By Judson Cornwall

HOW OUR HEAVENLY FATHER CORRECTS AND INSTRUCTS US

*“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for **whom the Lord loves He chastens**, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb 12:5-11).*

Even in the best of families, there are times when the children become unruly and disobey their parents. They try to test the limits that have been set for their conduct. They want to find out for themselves if their parents really mean what they say. At such times, it is necessary for the parent to “chasten” their children. **To chasten means to discipline with a positive purpose in view.**

The purpose is to restore order in the home and develop godly character. Such discipline is truly needed to “*train up a child in the way he should go*” (Prov 22:6).

What is true in our earthly families is also true in the family of God. There are times when God must bring correction to His own unruly children when they want their own way. Such stubborn disobedience in the lives of Christians brings much disorder in the Church of Jesus Christ. Rebels must be disciplined before there can be peace in the house of God.

TO KNOW GOD AND MAKE HIM KNOWN

David declares that “*our God is the God of salvation*” (Ps 68:20). God does far more than give salvation to His people. He actually becomes their salvation. We are not just saved from our sins, but for a restored and ongoing relationship with God. It is a **going** and **growing** process in life – the life of God.

This was God’s plan for Adam before he fell. Because of Christ, that is still today God’s purpose for you and me. God is our Restorer. His desire is to restore us back into the image in which we were created – in His image – before sin did so much damage to us all. God wants us to grow in our knowledge of Him. He wants us to become more like Him in our thoughts, words and deeds – in our attitudes and actions.

God wants to have His will and way in our lives, because His way is the best and highest for us. He has designed life to work a certain way. Life will never work properly unless it is lived the way God intended it to be.

It is **through us** that the life of Jesus is to be seen here on earth. We are to be a faithful witness of that life to every nation, tribe and people in the world. But it begins with His life in us, and our life in Him. Being conformed into the image of Jesus is a **process**. It involves times of testing and discipline for our wills to become one with His. God patiently and faithfully deals with our broken and sin-damaged lives to make us more like His Son.

GOD CHASTENS HIS CHILDREN

The principle or concept of God’s chastening is seen throughout the Bible, and from the beginning. God corrects and chastens His people because He loves them and wants them to do His will. He knows that sin and rebellion will eventually destroy us and others around us.

God’s discipline may involve trial, challenge or pain. Its purpose, however, is to spare people the tragic outcome of their own self-willed ways. The pain of God’s discipline is a warning that we have taken a dangerous path and are walking on the wrong road.

In Deuteronomy, God said, “*You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you*” (Deut 8:5). It is to this principle that David refers when he says, “*But God will wound the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses*” (Ps

68:21). Some feel that the action here is directed towards the enemies of Israel. But the enemies of God can be within His own people as well.

Anyone who, in their pride, opposes God's will makes himself God's enemy (see James 4:6). This could include all of us from time to time when we are tempted to want our own will, way and word rather than that of the Lord. When we do, we put ourselves in a place that calls for God's discipline upon our lives.

PAIN WITH A POSITIVE PURPOSE

The Hebrew word for "wound" in Psalm 68:21 is ***machats***. This word is used fourteen times in the Old Testament. Seven times it is translated "wound." The other translations are: "be dipped, pierce, pierce through, smite, smite through, stroke, and strike through". Usually where the word "wound" is used, it is followed by a promise to also "heal". "...*I kill and make alive; I wound and I heal*" (Deut 32:39). Also, "*He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole*" (Job 5:18).

Nowhere in Scripture is ***machats*** used of God's judgment. Rather, it seems to speak of severe chastening or discipline which is followed by being healed and restored. Other and different Hebrew words are used for judgment or condemnation. ***Machats*** refers to pain with a positive purpose!

CHASTISEMENT VERSUS PUNISHMENT

There is a difference between chastisement and punishment. Punishment is the painful penalty for disobedience. The amount of pain is determined by the degree of disobedience. It is a legal consequence. The punishment matches the crime. The greater the crime, the greater the punishment. It is what we deserve for breaking the law.

Chastisement is punishment with a positive purpose. **The purpose is to correct and perfect a wayward life.** It is not just a penalty given for wrongdoing. It is designed to teach and train the individual in righteousness – right attitudes and actions. The main purpose of chastisement is to instruct in right doing, rather than just penalize for wrongdoing.

This idea is clearly seen in the Hebrew and Greek words used for “chastisement” in Scripture:

1. **Musar** (Hebrew): “instruct or train”
2. **Yasar** (Hebrew): “correct, instruct, reform, teach, reprove”
3. **Paideno** (Greek): “train, educate, discipline”

Therefore, the real theme of Psalm 68:21 is not judgment or even justice. It is **correction** and **instruction**. We see a picture of God as a heavenly Father, faithfully training His children. He has saved them from their sins, that they might grow in the likeness of His character.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD’S CHASTENING

The purpose of chastisement, therefore, **begins with repentance**. Divine discipline should bring us to a place where we readily confess that we were wrong, and God was right.

When we realize we have sinned or acted wrongly, we should feel badly. We should feel remorse. God does not condemn or reject us, but His Spirit does **convict** us when we are wrong.

We then express our sorrow to Him for sinning against His holy will, and grieving His great heart of love. We willfully turn away from our wicked ways, and seek instead to do His will. It is our desire to listen, learn and grow in grace – that others may see His life in us. This is the true meaning of full repentance.

True repentance frees us from the penalty of our sins. We have learned our lesson, and are better and wiser because of God’s chastening. However, sometimes there can be consequences or effects of our sin which cannot be stopped or undone. Such results are not God’s hand of judgment, but *the natural outcome of our own actions*. The one who kills in anger cannot bring back the life that was taken, no matter how hard he cries. And he may be imprisoned or lose His own life because of it. The prison or penalty is not God’s action. It is the consequence of a choice man makes.

If one leaps over a cliff in despair, they may repent midway through the fall. God will forgive them, but the tragic results of jumping cannot be stopped.

We can be thankful, however, that God has promised that He would work everything together for good. He also tells us what that “good” is. ***It is the nature and character of Jesus in our lives and in the lives of others*** (Rom 8:28-29). This is God’s perfect purpose for His beloved sons and daughters. Our life in Christ begins with repentance. We have complete forgiveness when we truly repent and confess Him as our Savior. We shall never suffer the final penalty for our sins, which is spiritual death. In Christ’s forgiveness we have His life, now and forever.

This does not mean, however, that as Christians we will never be chastened in this life if we rebel and willfully disobey. God will faithfully correct and instruct us, even if the process involves some pain. **He loves us too much to let us have our own rebellious way – unless we insist on defying God and His commands.**

JESUS: OUR DIVINE EXAMPLE

Even Jesus “*learned obedience by the things which He suffered*” (Heb 5:8). His entire life was lived by the principle of, “Your will, not mine, be done”: “*He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will’*” (Matt 26:39). The price of such obedience was indeed painful; one need only look at the Cross. We too are to take **our** cross and follow the same principle in our daily lives.

Jesus was sinless; He was never punished for sin until He took our place on the Cross. There He took our sin and its penalty upon Himself. However, the Scripture says that throughout His earthly life, He too had to learn the lessons of discipline and obedience.

Our lives are not sinless, and we are chastised for our wrong attitudes and actions. The purpose, however, is the same – **that we too might learn the principle of submitting to God’s will.**

From God’s viewpoint, therefore, the meaning of punishment and chastisement is clear. The purpose for **punishment** is to provide a just penalty for breaking God’s holy law. The purpose for **chastisement** is that we might learn how to live according to God’s holy will.

THE NEED FOR CHASTENING

How does God relate and react to His children who at some point in their life choose to rebel? What about the self-willed, stubborn saint?

There are times in every earthly family when children choose to cross their father's will. They willfully rebel against the rules and regulations for the home. Even if they do the right thing outwardly, it can be with rebellion and resentment in their hearts. They may be saying "yes" on the outside, but they are still saying "no" on the inside. What does the heavenly Father do when He faces the same problem with His children?

The Scriptures declare, "*Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted*" (Ps 107:17). God deals with those of His children who disobey by chastening them. The pain of correction often makes one ready to learn. Even so, God is not in a hurry to discipline our lives. He prefers to give us enough time to repent on our own.

When under pressure, we may do or say things we regret. God is ever ready to forgive if we will come to Him in repentance. However, if we delay in coming to Him in repentance, or if we persist in our wrong attitudes and actions, He will chastise us.

GOD, IN HIS GRACE, GIVES US TIME TO REPENT

In the letter to the church at Thyatira, God speaks of a woman called Jezebel. She was a false prophetess who led some of God's servants into sexual sin and idolatry. He said this of her: "*I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent*" (Rev 2:21). Her sin was very serious, and pulled in many others in a bold and evil way. Yet God gave even Jezebel time to repent. Surely He will do the same for us in our times of fault and failure. Sadly, some think that God's "time to repent" is a sign that He is not taking their sin all that seriously. They may even be deceived into believing that they have His approval for their actions. If chastisement does not come at once, they may feel that everything is all right. They fail to realize that God is graciously waiting in love for them to turn away from their sin and turn to Him for forgiveness.

Sometimes such people say that they still sense the presence of God, and therefore believe that nothing is wrong. God does honor our desire to be in

His presence, and will protect and keep us from harm for a time. All the while, however, He will be seeking to warn and convict us of our wrong attitudes and behavior. If we refuse to respond, then He must act in a more direct way. **We must never use the sense of God's love and presence as an excuse for not facing sin in our life.** In time, *we will reap what we sow.* **There are no exceptions.** God cannot and will not overlook our sin. Calvary is all the proof we need for the truth of that statement.

NO EXCUSES AND NO EXCEPTIONS

Quite frankly, we will never get by with anything that is a direct violation of God's Word and God's will. There is no way we can excuse ourselves as a special case. Satan may even come to us as an "*angel of light*" (2Cor 11:14). When he does, he seeks to make us think that if something is so beautiful it must be all right – even when God's Word says it is wrong. **But Satan is wrong; there are no exceptions to the principles of God's Word.** I say this from years of experience in counseling. There is no way we can avoid the clear commands of God's Word.

Once God puts His finger on a sin in our life, He never takes it off. He will at once begin to deal with us. At first He may do this with a still, small voice, for He desires that we be that close to His heart. If we have chosen to follow at a distance, He may have to raise His voice and even lift His hand to gain our attention. Even so, He will allow us enough time to make the first move – **towards Him.** He patiently waits.

How long God waits, and how much time He gives us, is different for each person. It seems to depend on how close our relationship is with Him. Some seem to get years in which to make things right. Others have only a few days or even hours in which to repent.

It seems that **the closer we are to God, the less time we have.** He expects us to respond more quickly to His voice. This would be true of an earthly father as well. If there is a problem, he would expect a quick response on the part of his children. However, he might wait a month for a neighbor to correct the same problem in their relationship.

The longer we have walked with God, the more mature we should become. An earthly parent is more patient with a small child, who is still learning what is expected. But more is expected from those who are mature, have already learned and know what is right.

If we go on in our own stubborn, willful way, then as the Scripture declares, we can expect God to chastise us. If we ignore His gentle word of warning, we will feel, in God's time, His rod of correction.

One Scripture scholar states that the "*hairy scalp*" of Psalm 68:21 speaks of a strong, stubborn, non-repenting pride. Such an attitude is sure to bring the chastisement of God. Such chastisement will be strong enough and long enough to teach us the hard lesson we need to learn.

THE RULE OF REASON IN GOD'S CHASTENING

The Scripture states that God begins to deal with us by "wounding our **head**" (humbling us). Pride and rebellion begin in the **mind** of man. It is proper, therefore, for the Lord to make His first appeal to our understanding: "*Come now, and let us reason together,*' says the Lord. '*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool*'" (Isa 1:18).

UNDERSTANDING THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

God, in His mercy, appeals first to our understanding because He wants us to thoroughly understand the serious consequences of even the "smallest" sins.

Yes, God wants to make clear to us that the final outcome of sin is death in one's total being – spirit, soul and body. Spiritual death means being separated from the very presence of God Himself. Sin may begin with little things in small ways, but it finally leads to a great loss. "*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36). **There is no such thing as keeping little sins small.**

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER

No wonder God says, "*Come now, and let us reason together.*" He wants us to see the folly of sin. It begins in our minds, and that is where God makes His first appeal. But what happens if we fail to listen to reason? What can we expect if we choose to ignore His gentle words of warning?

THE CHASTENING OF GOD IS PROGRESSIVE

Our sin is not the only thing that progresses from small to large. God's chastisements also progress from slight to severe. He comes against our rebellion with discipline that matches our efforts to resist. The prophet Hosea warned the people and priests of Israel who were sinning with these strong words from God: *"I will pour out My wrath on them like water"* (Hos 5:10).

THE FIRST STAGE IN DIVINE DISCIPLINE

Water is a "type" in Scripture of the Holy Spirit. It may come as a gentle rain or a soft shower. It can also flow forth as a roaring river or a mighty flood. Hard, dry ground is broken up. Deeply rooted trees can be forced from the earth and washed away. So it is with the Holy Spirit. *"When He has come,"* Jesus said, *"He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8).

I have watched the work of the Holy Spirit during times of real revival. Those who responded to the move of God's Spirit were brought to new life and built up in their faith. Those who resisted the work of the Holy Spirit were left without any sense of spiritual stability. God's love, joy and peace had been totally stripped from their lives.

THE SECOND STAGE IN DIVING DISCIPLINE

The second step in God's chastening is found in Hosea 5:12: *"Therefore I will be to Ephraim [Israel] like a moth...."* If we do not respond to God's dealings as the water, He will deal with us as a moth. A moth is an insect which in one stage of its life-cycle will feed upon wool. It can secretly attack the clothes in our closet. We do not even know what is happening until we find our wool coat or sweater full of holes. By the time we discover our loss, it is too late.

One is reminded of Samson of old who did not know that the Spirit of the Lord had left him (Judges 16:20). Sometimes we are not aware that God's Spirit in our lives has been grieved and we have been left powerless. Such was Samson's sad story, and it can be ours as well. We realize what we have lost only when we seek to move forth in the power of God's Spirit and find it is gone. The failure that follows can strike hard at our pride. God prefers to

discipline us privately. If we do not respond to Him there, He is forced to deal with us publicly.

THE THIRD STAGE IN DIVINE DISCIPLINE

Hosea takes us further into God's process of chastening with these words: "*Therefore I will be . . . to the house of Judah like rottenness*" (Hos 5:12). Rot within fruit sometimes begins on the inside before it is seen on the outside. It can look good on the outside, but be soft and rotten on the inside. The process of death and decay has set in although unseen and unheard.

Whenever we grieve God's Spirit, not only is there a loss of divine power, but we begin to die within. It is God's desire that we will sense something wrong deep inside and turn to Him in repentance. If we fail to do so, God has more!

THE FOURTH STAGE IN DIVINE DISCIPLINE

"For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me" (Hos 5:14,15).

The Hebrew word here for "lion" is **shachal**. Its basic root meaning is "to roar". A lion is a large, terrible animal that can cause its prey to shake with fear when it roars. If necessary, God will raise His voice to get our attention. He allows fearful things to happen to us as a result of our rebellion. We begin to reap what we have sown. We are forced to face the awful outcome of our disobedience. Again God seeks to correct our lives and teach us the folly of going our way rather than His.

THE FINAL STAGE IN DIVINE DISCIPLINE

God is prepared to go yet another step along the path of discipline. "*I will be . . . like a young lion to the house of Judah*" (Hos 5:14). Hosea uses a different Hebrew word for "lion" in this passage. It is **kephiyr**, which means a "young lion". An old lion may loudly roar, but a young lion will actively pursue its prey. It has the strength and speed to overtake and overcome all the animals of the forest. He is known as the "king of beasts".

When we stubbornly refuse to heed God's many warnings, He must then, in a lion-like way, take some very stern action to turn us around. In His love, He seeks to stop us in our downward path to destruction and regret. He may even allow us to suffer great physical pain and material loss. **It is our eternal souls He is seeking to save!**

If gentle words and fearful warnings do not cause us to repent, we can expect God's discipline to become most severe. Hosea plainly pictures this final step in divine chastisement in very strong words: "*I will be . . . like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me*" (Hos 5:14,15).

God will allow us to be totally broken and left almost alone in our pain and sorrow. We may suffer great loss in our worldly goods and personal relationships. He will not provide even a small measure of relief, lest we fall back into our old habit-patterns. So often we turn to God in a half-hearted way when we are in pain or need. But as soon as the pressure is removed or we "feel better", we go right back into our sinful behavior.

FORCED TO FACE OUR SIN

However, if we persist in our sinful ways, there comes a time when God no longer allows any way of escape. We are forced to face and dealt with the sin in our life. He will bring us into a place of great distress and difficulty.

Some of our distress is the result of our own wicked ways. God is allowing us to reap what we have sown. At other times the Lord is directly touching our lives in a sharp, painful way. All else has failed, and severe pain or loss is the only means He has left to save us and others from destruction. He will not allow us to find help from the world, friends, or even the Church, until we have ***turned to Him in sincere repentance***. It is the only way.

It is sad when we do not heed God's gentle words of warning. He finds no joy in bringing pain into our lives. "*For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*" (Lam 3:33). How tragic it is that we force God to deal so harshly with us before we will seek His face.

How often in times of blessing and prosperity do we go our own proud, willful ways. Only in the time of pain, loss and loneliness do we finally turn to

the Lord. It seems that we sometimes have to suffer the loss of family, friends, wealth and health before we are willing to get things right with God.

This is NOT to say that anyone who experiences these tragedies is guilty of unrepentant sin and a prideful heart. Job is an example of someone who was suffering, but not because of his own rebellion.

When God finally deals with us severely, there will have already been many instances of gentler forms of conviction. And even in God's harsher dealings, He is faithful to make it clear that **what is happening to us is of our own making** and that **there is always a way of restoration through humility, repentance and surrender.**

How foolish it is to make God use such strong, painful methods of discipline to get our attention. He first comes as the gentle rain. He then deals inwardly with us in a quiet, hidden way. If again we fail to respond, He is forced to use more severe ways of dealing with us. His action is sudden, and we are stunned and broken. Only then do we finally turn to God and submit to His will and way.

HE WHO HURTS WILL ALSO HEAL

There is good news, however. For when we **do repent** and turn to the Lord with all of our heart, He is ready to forgive, heal and restore. The same Lord Who chastens will also heal. He Who wounds will also make us whole. *"Come, and let us return to the Lord,"* the prophet pleads, *"For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up"* (Hosea 6:1).

THE PURPOSE FOR OUR PAIN

The purpose for corrective pain is to move us to repent. Then we will be restored to the joy of our salvation. Our new desire will be to know God and to follow in His ways. *"Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us..."* (Hos 6:3).

God chastens us that we might follow on to know the Lord. He wants to be not only the "Lord of our lives," but the highest desire of our hearts. He wants us to know Him as He really is – as David pictures Him in Psalm 68. Such is the love of our Lord and the grace of our God.

“For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men” (Lam 3:31-33).

GOD’S METHODS FOR DIVINE DISCIPLINE

God has many ways or methods by which He chastises us. He often used the enemies of Israel to chasten the people for their rebellion. When Israel would walk away from God and obedience to Him, He would allow other nations to take her captive for a season. This is the reason God did not destroy all of her enemies. He chose to Israel’s enemies as a means of bringing discipline to His people.

In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, Hezekiah and others, God used sickness as a means of discipline. Because of being chastised physically, they were brought back into God’s gracious will for their lives. Sometimes the Lord uses illness as a means of getting our attention. It is easier to see Heaven when our backs are on our bed. The busy affairs of our lives come to a halt, and we have time to listen and “reason with the Lord.” God truly can work everything together for His good will for us in Christ Jesus!

Sometimes God even uses natural disasters or tragedies as a chastening tool. Jonah is a good example of this. God used a sudden storm, a seasick whale, and a sunburned vine to chasten Jonah. It did the job, and Jonah finally submitted to God’s will. In the process, He learned more about the greatness of God’s grace – for himself and others.

IS GOD TRYING TO SAY SOMETHING?

We need to add at this point that **not all painful events are the dealings of God**. Sometimes we create our own problems. At other times we are victims of a bad situation or the challenges of life for which we are not to blame. We are not always kept from the accidents or natural disasters of this earthly life. Our human bodies are temporary and frail, and eventually will succumb to the process of dying.

But God does protect us from many things. At times He delivers us out of our “fiery furnace” or “den of lions.” He sustains our health or defends us from harm.

But either way, what God chooses to allow to happen, or to deliver us from, He will use to perfect us through it. Again we are reminded that while all things that happen to us are not good, God promises to work everything together for our good in Christ Jesus – His image being restored in us.

However, we should always examine our lives during times of trial or distress. Is God trying to say something to us? Have we ignored His conviction and warning about sinful behavior? Is He warning us that we have rejected His will and purpose for our lives?

If we have not given attention to His gentle words and actions, God may be speaking more directly. It is good for us to come before Him in humility and honesty. He is ready to receive, forgive and restore us. He is indeed most merciful!

THE MERCY OF CHASTENING

David said, “*God will wound . . . the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses*” (Ps 68:21). How merciful of God to convict us in the privacy of our own heart. He does not strike us across the face. That would leave us with a shameful scar.

Rather, God wounds us in our scalp, where scars cannot be seen. **God’s desire is not to humiliate us, but to correct and teach us.** We are not marked like Cain, so that all will know God’s judgment on our lives (Gen 4:8-15).

Some churches find it easy to put “the mark of Cain” upon members who have fallen or failed. But God never will! When God wounds, we have a tender spot known only to Him and to us. God hides the scars in our “hairy scalp.”

FOUR REASONS FOR DIVINE DISCIPLINE

1. Discipline Saves Us from Destruction

Paul said, “*When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world*” (1Cor 11:32). Through discipline now, we will be spared condemnation then. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...*” (Rom 8:1).

However, if we refuse to accept Christ's discipline, we cannot be His disciples. A disciple is a "disciplined one." A disciple is someone who watches and listens and learns from his master, so that he might faithfully follow in obedience. That relationship in life is destroyed if we choose to go our way rather than His. Nothing then is left, but condemnation. **Divine discipline is a gift of God's love!**

2. Discipline is a Sign or Proof of His Love

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (Rev 3:19). Divine discipline is not a sign that God dislikes us or is rejecting us. It is a proof of His love!

God cannot approve of our sin, but He does approve of us. He cannot accept a proud, willful way, but He will not reject us. **He disciplines us because we belong to Him – and He loves us.** Correct us, yes; reject us, no!

3. Discipline Prepares Us to Share in His Holiness

"For they [our fathers] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Heb 12:10).

God does not chasten us just to change our conduct, but to make us holy. He wants us to share in the holy life of His Son. He desires to have beloved sons and daughters that are becoming more like Jesus.

Therefore, God must come against everything in our lives that is unholy. He longs for us to have His **nature** as well as His **Name**. He chastens us to change us. It requires time and process.

We can be grateful that our heavenly Father is very patient. He will persist in His effort until the holy life of Jesus brightly shines through ours.

4. Discipline Offers Us Security

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons" (Heb 12:5-7).

Parents are responsible only for correcting their own children. Such discipline is a sign that the children belong to them. Therefore, if God chastens us, it is proof that we belong to Him. He is our Father, and we are His children.

Discipline is not a sign of rejection, but a sign of relationship! (Heb 12:8-11).

Furthermore, God's discipline will protect us and keep us safe and secure. David said, "...*Your rod and your staff, they comfort me*" (Ps 23:4). The shepherd's rod was a stick that could be thrown at any animal that might prey on the sheep. The staff with its crook could be used to pull the sheep out of danger; it could also be used to pull a sheep back if the sheep had gone astray. In this way, the sheep could be protected both from their enemies – and from themselves.

As our good Shepherd, God also sets limits and directs our paths. If we cross those limits, or take a wrong path, He may need to bring us back. It is for our own safety. Sometimes we need to be protected from ourselves, as well as from our enemies. Nothing can stop wayward conduct faster than the rod of God applied to our lives.

The faithful love of our good Shepherd is a source of great security. It removes the fear of missing God's will. If we want to do His will, but miss it through ignorance, He will patiently teach us and give us the wisdom we need. If we miss His way because of our own stubborn wills, we can expect the rod of God to correct and redirect our lives. It may involve pain, but the way will be plain.

We need never fear that we are going to miss God's will if we have truly given Him our hearts and lives, and have taken Him as Lord and Master. He then has the right to override and overrule in all of our affairs. Our faith is not in our wisdom, strength and faithfulness – but in His. **He is indeed a good Shepherd!**

PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

Christians should not fear the chastening rod of their heavenly Father. We should welcome it. A child who is never corrected in the home is really sad and miserable. He has no sense of love or security. He is not sure of his family relationship or personal value. He knows somehow deep within that if his parents really cared for him, they would discipline his life.

The same is true in the family of God. If we are allowed to disregard and disobey God's rule and authority, we will indeed be most miserable. God loves us too much to allow that to happen.

We need to know that we do not fall from grace every time we fall in our Christian walk. Sin will grieve the Holy Spirit, but He will never leave us. Though we sadden the heart of our heavenly Father when we disobey Him, He will not forsake us. He loves us without any conditions on our part; even while we were sinners He loved us (Rom 5:8).

There is nothing we can do, say or be that will make God love us any more or any less. He gave His whole heart when He sent His Son to die for our sin. Love is not blind; it just keeps on loving. But love does act; it will discipline plainly and, if necessary, chasten severely – over and over again.

LET US WELCOME THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD

The chastening of God is for our correction, direction and development. It is to teach and train us. He wants to correct and perfect our attitudes and actions. He wants us to walk this world in holiness.

David said, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord...*" (Ps 37:23). God orders (directs) our steps to develop His goodness in our lives. Every step we take with God is designed to make us more like Jesus. God's order involves chastening if we go astray. Lost sheep still have His special attention! The discipline of God will never force us to go against our own will. He will never push His way into our lives. Much of God's correction comes in letting us reap the results of our own self-willed way of life. We finally see and feel the folly of having our own way. Then we gladly seek the will of God.

When we commit ourselves to Jesus as our Lord and Master, we give Him the right to correct and direct our lives for His glory and our good. He is loving, wise and faithful in all that He does. Let us, therefore, welcome and receive the discipline of the Lord. "*For whom the Lord loves He chastens*" (Heb 12:6).