

God's "Chastening" of the Believer

(Correction, Training, or Instruction)

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Hebrews 12:5-11;

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.

The first thing that we need to see from this passage is that it is speaking to *God's children*. A good father lovingly disciplines his own children; not the children next door. *All* of us are God's *creation*, but we are only *children* of God if we are spiritually born into His family by faith (John 3:3; Gal. 3:26). John 3:16 gives us the only way that we can have eternal life with God; believe on Jesus. This verse does not say to "keep the 10 commandments," "turn from sin," "repent of sin," "confess Jesus or our sins," "try hard," "promise something," etc. Some of these actions could help us greatly but *none* will get us into Heaven. The verse only tells us to *believe in Jesus*. The Epistle to the Hebrews is written to Hebrew believers who were in danger, not of losing their eternal salvation, which is impossible, but of losing their joy and rewards when being tempted not to remain faithful and obedient to God in their Christian lives. We are saved by "grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8,9) but God has a much better plan for us than to just sit around and waste our lives.

The following are some highlights that we see from the above passage. It explains God's chastening of the believer. God's Chastening is:

1. For God's children (v5)
2. Not to be despised, but endured (v5)
3. An act of Divine love (v6)
4. For every believer (v6)
5. Of varying intensity (v6)
6. Evidence of relationship (v7,8)
7. Not for those who are not in the family (v8)
8. Compared to, but superior to parental discipline (v9, 10)
9. Intended to keep us in subjection to the Father (v9)

9. For our profit (v10)
10. Not initially pleasant, but ultimately fruitful (v11)

I Cor. 11:30-32, gives us a simple and practical way to escape God's chastening in some specific areas: We should judge ourselves before God needs to.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.
For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.
But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

According to Unger's Bible Dictionary, there are at least 4 reasons for chastening:

1. **Preventive**, as in the case of the of the Apostle Paul, who was given the thorn in the flesh to keep him humble (II Cor 12:7-9).
2. **Corrective**, which is the disciplinary moving of the Father toward His wayward son for the good of the son.
3. **Enlarging**, the object being "unto holiness" to bring forth the "fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:6; John 15:2).
4. **Vindictive**, as in the case of Job who vindicated God against the challenge and accusations of Satan that the patriarch did not really love God apart from his family, his possessions and himself.

The word "chasten" (Heb. 12:6,7,12) is translated from a word that has to do with "child-training." It is from the same word that is used in Titus 2:11,12, "The grace of God... **teaching** us..." and in II Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction** in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Chastening is not exercised in order to pay for sin. That has already been accomplished, once, completely and forever (Heb. 10:10,14; Rom. 8:1; Titus 2:13,14; I John 2:2). It is "for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10). Therefore, we can understand why we should "despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him" (Heb. 12:6). God's chastisement of the believer may not even be as a result of our sin. Maybe God needs to prepare us and to mold us into something even better for ourselves, others, and for His glory.