

God Loves Us Enough to Chasten Us

Proverbs 3:11-12 cf. Hebrews 12:5-11

The truth of our text is emphasized in five different books of the Bible. In addition to our text, it is also found in...

- Job 5:17—"*Happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.*"
- Psalm 94:12—"*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord...*"
- Revelation 3:19—"*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*"
- **Hebrews 12:5-11 (READ).**

➡ The main message of these verses is: **God loves us enough to temporarily hurt us in order to help us.**

On May 12, 1998, a Norfolk Southern freight train was rolling down the tracks of Indiana at 24 miles per hour. Suddenly Robert Mohr, the conductor, spotted a child playing on the tracks roughly 150 yards ahead.

The child was 19-month-old Emily Marshall, who had wandered away from home while her mother planted flowers in her yard.

The engineer, Rod Lindley, hit the brakes, but there was no way they could stop the 6,200 ton train in that short of distance.

Mohr bolted out the door of the engine room and raced along a catwalk to the very front of the locomotive. He realized there was no time to jump ahead of the train and grab Emily. So he got down and squatted at the bottom of the engine grill, and hung on.

As the train drew closer and was about to run over Emily, Mohr stretched out his leg like a field goal kicker, and booted her off the edge of the track down an embankment. Mohr then jumped off the train, picked up the crying little girl, and cradled her in his arms. Emily ended up with just a cut on her head, a chipped tooth, and a swollen lip.¹

➡ Sometimes, like this train conductor, **God must temporarily hurt us to keep us from great harm later.** The willingness to administer pain to prevent greater pain in the future is a mark of true love!

I. The ASSURANCE in chastening (Heb. 12:5-8).

¹ <http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20125421,00.html>

- This Scripture is an "*exhortation*," (literally, "encouragement"). Evidently the Hebrews, who were undergoing severe trials and persecution, forgot it and were discouraged and tempted to quit.
- God assures us of two truths that should help keep us from despair and detesting God's chastening rod.

A. Chastening assures me **I AM GOD'S CHILD** (cf. references to "children" and "sons" in vs. 5-8).

1. God's chastening is a FAMILY MATTER. He only chastens His children.

When my Dad caught me and my buddy setting the field on fire at the end of our street, he spanked me. He didn't spank my friend. Why? Because I was his son and my friend wasn't.

- It is not as a school principal / teacher disciplining a misbehaving student. It is not our judicial system punishing a criminal for a crime. Believers are not His students. They are not criminals to Him. They are His beloved children.
- It is the discipline of a loving Father who delights in his children—Who is willing to take the rod in hand—willing to hurt them—in order to help them.
- One of the greatest assurances believers can have of their salvation is God's chastening.

2. **Lack of God's chastening should be cause for alarm** (v. 8).

B. Chastening assures me **GOD LOVES ME** (v. 6).

- Revelation 3:19—"*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*"
- Sometimes God's love letters come in BLACK envelopes.
 1. God does not chasten His children because He is angry with them. GOD IS NOT MAD AT YOU! He may be grieved, but not mad at you.
 2. He does not punish us to vent His frustration.
 3. He doesn't wield His wrath against us. God's wrath is reserved for unbelievers.

3. Love regulates everything God does—It was God’s love that sent Jesus to redeem us. And it is God’s love that sends discipline to correct us.
4. God chastens us to correct us—**He has our best interests at heart.** God loves us too much to allow us continue on a course that would cause us more pain later than the pain of chastening today.
5. Love does not overlook disobedience. “Leniency is not love.” To ask God stop chastening us when we need it would be to ask God to love us less.

II. **The AIM of chastisement** (Heb. 12:9). Purpose of chastening.

A. God chastens us to PUNISH us— *“If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him...”* (Ps. 89:30-33).

C. S. Lewis noted that some of us have a shallow view of God’s corrective love:

We want, in fact, not so much a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven... whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, “a good time was had by all.”... I should very much like to live in a universe which was governed on such lines. But since it is abundantly clear that I don’t, and since I have reason to believe, nevertheless, that God is Love, I conclude that my conception of love needs correction.²

- B. God chastens us to PROTECT us (2 Cor. 12:7— *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”*)
- ➡ Paul was not suffering because of the sin of pride, but was given this “thorn” to PROTECT him from becoming proud!

² C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 31– 32,

C. God chastens us to PURIFY us (vs. 10-11).

➤ The root word of “chasten” is “chaste” which means clean or pure. God wants His children to be clean and pure. Chastening is a means of making someone pure by discipline, punishment, or affliction (Webster, 1828).

III. The **AGONY of chastisement** (Heb. 12:11).

➤ God doesn't whitewash chastening: *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.”*

A. No one enjoys chastening — It is endured (v. 7). Who likes being laid up sick in bed? Who enjoys the news that your child has been injured in an accident? Who enjoys being laid off from your job? Who wants to hear your doctor say, “It's cancer?”

B. If chastening was enjoyable, it wouldn't be chastening. It is painful! It hurts!

➤ I don't get up in the morning and pray, “Lord, I know trials will make me a better Christian, so hit me with a big one today!”

➤ However, within every child of God, there must be a strong determination that says, “I'm not going to like it, but I'm going to take it. God loves me and knows what is best for me. So, why fight the rain that makes flowers grow?”

IV. The **ATTITUDES towards chastisement** (Heb. 12:5, 9)

A. Attitude of **DESPITE** (v. 5). The word “despise” means “to think lightly of,” or, “to make light of.”

- “It happens all the time to everybody. You have to take the good with the bad.”
- Grin and bear it without learning what God is trying to teach you.”
- Jonah never learned the real cause of his chastening. Instead he wallowed in self-pity.

B. Attitude of **DISCOURAGEMENT** (v. 5 — Want to just give up).

1. Christians often grow weary of God's corrective measures (v. 3).

2. It helps to remember chastisement is not God's judgment—It is His correction, protection, or prevention.
- C. Attitude of DEFERENCE (v. 9). You can SUBMIT to it and give God reverence (v. 9).

V. The AFTERWARD of chastening (Heb. 12:11).

- Chastening is profitable (vs. 10-13), but not realized until “*AFTERWARD*.” Like football practice... study... exercise... and diet.
- This requires a measure of FAITH and TRUST that God cares and loves us enough to give us what we need.
- A. Faith “sees” past the present pain of chastening to the loving hand of God who administers the correction, even when His hand is heavy upon us.
- B. Faith “sees” past the present pain of chastening to the design of the chastening for our profit (vs. 10-11).
- C. Faith looks beneath the surface of things and sees the sweet orange beneath the bitter peel.
- D. Faith sees past the medicine to the health it produces— Faith is occupied not with the painful rod, but with the peaceable fruit of righteousness in which it produces (v. 11).

SUMMATION: Chastening is a test of our heart and a challenge to our faith—our faith in God's wisdom, His faithfulness, and His love.

A preacher once asked a despondent friend, "Why is that cow looking over the wall?" And the answer was, "Because she cannot look through it."

The illustration may be crude, but it speaks to an important truth: Look over those things that distress you, and see the Father's loving smile. Look above the dark clouds of your circumstances, and see the sunshine of God's never changing love.

Let us resolve to endure whatever chastening God sends because it is God's way of saying, “**You are Mine, and I love you.**”