

## 30. God's discipline

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A.W. Tozer was a pastor and a phenomenal author of over 40 books. He was blessed with such capabilities to have deep insights of God's heart and was able to write with the words and phrases that you and I would say, "Woo," and "Ahh."

One of his books is "The Root of the Righteous" which was published in 1986. In this book, Tozer talks about trials in this way:  
"Praise God for the hammer, the file, and the furnace. The hammer is a useful tool, but the nail, if it had feeling and intelligence, could present another side of the story. For the nail knows the hammer only as an opponent, a brutal, merciless enemy who lives to pound it into submission, to beat it down out of sight and clinch it into place. That's the nail's view of the hammer, it is accurate except one thing: The nail forgets that both it and the hammer are servants of the same workman.

Let the nail but remember that the hammer is held by the workman and all resentment toward it will disappear. The carpenter decides whose head shall be beaten next and what hammer shall be used in the beating. That is his sovereign right.

The file is more painful still, for its business is to bite into the soft metal, scraping and eating away the edges until it has shaped the metal to its will. But it is the master and not the file that decides how much shall be eaten away, what shape the metal shall take, and how long the painful filing shall continue.

As for the furnace, it is the worst of all. Ruthless and savage, it never relaxes its fury till it has reduced it all to shapeless ashes. All that refuses to burn is melted to mass of helpless matter. When everything is melted that will melt and all is burned that will burn, then and not till then the furnace calms down and rests from its destructive fury."

Then after hearing this, a question may come up: How could anyone praise God for the hammer, the file, and the furnace of our life? It is because of love for the hand that wields the hammer, works the file, and stokes the furnace – the loving hand of our Heavenly Father.

No one wants to go through discipline or chastening. But whether we like it or not, it is the only way for us to learn what to do and what not to do next time. Additionally, when the Lord disciplines us, He has complete control of His discipline – the methods and the length of time. But it is completely up to us to learn it for the first time or extend the time of chastening and go over it again.

### **A. DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD**

*Hebrews 12:5-6 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."*

The author of the Book of Hebrews was quoting these verses from the Book of Proverbs 3:11-12. Some parents, especially those who subscribe the humanistic educational psychology and liberal parenting methods would argue that maximum love and freedom for each child make discipline unnecessary.

I can tell you for sure that if you raise your children with those concepts, you will have pure monsters in your home. I know a young man who was raised by his grandparents because he was abandoned by his parents when he was an infant. The grandparents felt sorry for the baby, so they allowed him to do whatever he wanted without any restrictions or guidance. The child grew up with no respect for anyone. Now he is a 36 year old man, still living in his grandma's home and going from job to job, a drug and alcohol addict with an attitude of a raging maniac.

You might say, "That might be an isolated case." No. Look at the American society now. Since 1990's it subscribed the liberal humanistic education logic with less guidance and practically no discipline for our children at school, we have the young men and women who expect free entitlements and handouts, but no work ethic and morality.

The Bible says otherwise about child education:

*Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*

When the Lord created humans, He added extra layers of paddings on the child's bottom so that he or she can take a little hand of correction. The truth of the matter is that children long for boundaries. They give them a sense of security, a feeling that they are watched over and cared for.

*Psalms 23:4b Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

You see, the shepherd's staff is that long, crooked stick he used to pull a wayward sheep back into line. But the rod is a shorter, but thicker stick. And sometimes the shepherd would use the rod to break a sheep's leg, if that particular sheep continually wanders away from the flock. It may seem too drastic, but it is better to have a broken leg than to become a leg of lamb.

In the same way, when we are going the wrong direction, the Lord will discipline us. This is the purpose of correcting storms in our lives.

## **B. GOD'S DISCIPLINE THAT ASSURES US OF SONSHIP**

*Hebrews 12:7-8 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

From time to time, I mentioned that though God is the Creator of all humans, but He is not the Father of them all. The true children of God are the ones who are born-again in Christ Jesus. These two verses clearly support my reason.

I want you to notice two important things here:

### **1) If you endure God's chastening, it proves that you are His.**

God's chastening should never be taken as a sign of His rejection of us. Rather it is a sign of His love and care to correct our misbehaviors and sins. We should strive to endure God's discipline that will transform our character to His.

### **2) If you don't receive God's chastening, it doesn't matter what you think about your relationship with God, you are NOT His.**

Have you ever encountered an unruly child who was screaming and acting wild in the grocery store checkout line while you were standing behind the child and the parent? You thought about doing a few things to the child, but you didn't. Why? The foremost reason is that the child was not yours, not your responsibility, and you are absolutely grateful that you don't have to take that monster to your home.

## C. GOD'S DISCIPLINE LEADS US TO HIS HOLINESS

*Hebrews 12:9-10* 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? 10 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.

Some of us may have a hard time relating to our Father in heaven, because of our earthly fathers. Your father might be one of those who was very harsh and abusive when you were a kid. The memory about your father may not be a very good one.

V9 introduces an argument from the lesser to the greater. If we submit to our earthly fathers, how much more should we submit to our Heavenly Father. Why do good earthly fathers correct their kids? So that their children may show them respect and obedience. For the same reason, our Heavenly Father corrects us – He wants us to be respectful and obedient to Him because He has our best in His mind. Our Lord God cares more about our godly characters than our comfort.

When we resent our Heavenly Father's chastening, it is considered that we are virtual equals with Him instead of being His children. Resentment at chastening shows how we see Him and how we see ourselves. It becomes defiance to our God.

There is a Christian classic "Where is God when it hurts?" by Philip Yancey. I highly recommend it to you to read, especially if you are going through God's discipline now.

## D. GOD'S DISCIPLINE THAT YIELDS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Hebrews 12:11* 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.

Many times we bring storms on ourselves when we do the wrong thing and then experience the consequences like what happened to the runaway prophet Jonah. And sometimes God allows the evil things to come our ways to pound any ungodly thing out, file our characters into the shape of Jesus, and stoke the fire of the furnace to burn or melt away anything that is not holy so that we may become more pure and righteous for His work.

As I was studying this, I remember what our parents used to tell us as they punished us, "This is going to hurt me more than you." We were thinking, "Then, by all means, stop." Our Lord doesn't enjoy punishing us or allowing us to go through difficult times. But He knows that they are necessary.

If you are going through a difficult time without an apparent sin in your life, it is easy to ask a question to God, "Why?" Is it a sin to ask Him for the reason? No, as long as you don't ask Him in defiance. Jesus asked the Father at the cross and He was sinless. But don't expect an answer from the Father in heaven. Most likely you won't get it.

*James 1:2-4* My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

James is not suggesting that we should necessarily be experiencing some all-encompassing emotion of joy or happiness in our times of hardship. Nor is he demanding

that we must necessarily enjoy our trials in life. James is not saying that trials themselves are a joy, because usually they are not. But yet James says, "Count it all joy." He is saying, "Make a deliberate and careful decision to experience joy in your troubles and trials." It is not easy, but it is possible.

You see, there are lessons to be learned during times of trial. And there are lessons that can only be learned through times of trials. Just remember, they won't last forever.

Another aspect of our time of chastening is that it brings us to the perfect position to minister to someone who is going through the similar situation as long as we keep our trust in the Lord.

*2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

It seems that when we are in need, when we are facing crisis and going through that stormy sea, the world should just stop what it is doing and think about us. We think that we need to be cared for, encouraged, even catered to. But the reality is that when you are hurting, if you will reach out to someone else, you yourself will be replenished and helped. You may say, "What kind of logic is that?" Jesus' logic.

*Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

When you minister to others who are in turmoil, please heed a couple of my suggestions:

**1) Please don't say or sing that stupid song, "Don't worry, be happy," to them.**

**2) Don't quote a bunch of Bible verses to show off your spiritual intellect.**

I have a very deep theological phrase for those who do these kinds of things: "Shut up."

Rather, just be there with them. The less words spoken, the better it is. A gentle hug, a time of weeping with them, doing some housework or yard work for them will minister to them far more than anything else you and I can do or say.

As C.S. Lewis put it in his book "The problem of pain", "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." This is where faith comes in. To endure, we have to trust that the discipline of God is motivated by His love and His use of pain is to reassure us that we are indeed His children.

## **E. APPLICATIONS**

**1) Our Lord God cares more about our godly characters than our comfort.**

**2) God's chastening for us is a proof that we are indeed His children.**

**3) The Bible may hurt you with the truth, but it will never comfort you with a lie.**