

Call to Obedience #477
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Whom the Lord Loves He Chastens

I believe no subject in the Bible draws more attention than God's great love toward all mankind. But what is often left out is the fact that God's love and discipline go together. We need this reminder: *For whom the LORD loves He chastens...* (Heb. 12:6). In other words, the Lord is not only a God of love but also a disciplinarian. In fact, He presents Himself as a disciplinarian from the beginning, saying: *"thou shalt not..."* and He continues to do so to the last page of the Bible, saying: *Blessed are those who do His commandments...* (Rev. 22:14)!

Unfortunately, in our society, we too often look upon disciplinarians with disdain, as being unloving. Understandably so: discipline without love produces harshness, destruction and child abuse. But, on the contrary, God's discipline towards His children is full of love. It is always good and part of His saving grace. David said: *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word* (Ps. 119:67). *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes* (Ps. 119:71). Whom the Lord loves He chastens. The instrument of chastising can be physical suffering, mental anguish, spiritual warfare, men turning against us or the devil trying to do his thing on us (2 Cor. 11:20-30).

What is in the word, "chasten?" We find in it a whole range of things: training, renewal, rebuke, correction, illumination, refinement, as well as punishment for sin. Yet, remember that God never punishes a saint to destroy him but always to restore and rebuild him.

Placing the goal of chastisement into one sentence: **"God desires to change every one of His children forevermore by His Holy Spirit, from glory to glory."** And this training begins the first moment a Christian steps on God's kingdom ground. To use the most dramatic example in the Bible: the day Jesus received Paul and gave him spiritual light was also the day He struck him with physical blindness. Let me ask you: "Would you be willing to trade in your physical sight to receive spiritual sight?" Let me be very clear: God ordained; God *caused* Paul's affliction here. God began Paul's chastisement, his training, on the very day of his conversion. Then, three days later, God restored his sight after revealing to Ananias: *...he is a chosen vessel of Mine...I will show*

him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake (Acts 9:15-16). Would you be willing to trade in your life of comfort for a life of suffering in order to be used as God used Paul? What are you willing to give up to be used by Jesus?

God said Paul *must* suffer. That *must* is for all of God's children. Suffer—what for? Suffer for Jesus' sake because it makes you walk with your Savior, transforms you into His likeness and He is glorified through you. So, the day Jesus receives you, He will take authority over you as one of His chosen vessels. He will begin to work on you and He may put you into places you have not chosen and have you do things that do not make sense. He may have you give up things you hold dear and keep things that you want to get rid of. The day Jesus saves you, He has assignments for you. And if you stay with Him through His chastisements, you will shine with His light and start bringing forth fruit.

But if you turn against God and His chastisements, you will be cut off as a branch and cast into the fire (John 15:6). Indeed it is not pretty when the vine dresser prunes his vine. It appears like the vine will die, but with time, it lives and prospers through the pruning. Job was trimmed severely even though he was a perfect man. In his case, God *allowed the devil to afflict* Job. Why prune or chastise a perfect man? Because God was trying to show us that He keeps polishing even His finest diamonds. He keeps perfecting anyone who is already perfect—no one is exempt. Your goodness will not exempt you. Oh, was Job ever tried. It looked like he was dying, but when it was all done, he shone brighter than before for Jesus' sake. Job's suffering was a gift, not only to Jesus but also to the church universal, to help us all understand suffering.

And while you are being trained, God will also feed you the finest nourishment to help you make it through. You will feast at His royal table! You need a *royal* diet to make it through your trials and battles. When a queen bee dies, the worker bees prepare a special diet that turns an ordinary worker bee into a queen. Keep feasting at His table and then more royalty will enter into you! Keep feasting and your robes will remain washed by the blood of the Lamb and become colored by the Sermon on the Mount! Keep feasting and you shall become more than a conqueror and *...He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence* (Ps. 91:3)! Keep feasting and you will someday get to wear a crown of jewels and you *...will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of [your] Father...* (Matt. 13:43)! Count on it!

Do not fuss about your sufferings no matter how painful they may be, but rather agree with Paul: *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time*

are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). And do not waste time wondering why you are suffering. If God wants you to know, He will let you know; if not, He will not tell you. Just stop asking questions, stick with Jesus and keep your eyes on Him.

The whole program of chastening involves both fighting and feasting combined. But only if you keep feasting at the Master's table will you be able to resist the temptation to complain, to feel sorry for yourself, to degrade yourself or to talk nonsense like Elijah did under a juniper tree (1 Kings 19:4). He entered the city of self-pity there. God responded by feeding him royal bread, by which he could walk for 40 days. But Elijah did not appreciate it, so God fired him and raised up a replacement for him. Do not follow Elijah when you suffer—follow Job when you suffer. He said: *Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...* (Job 13:15); *and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God* (Job 19:26). Think of it! When it was all said and done, Job was not demoted but promoted.

Now let us go even deeper into this subject. Let us read this verse before us in its entirety: *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.* God's discipline is not shallow but deep, holy and effectual. He does not punish His children by slapping them on their fingers, but rather, He punishes His children to a repentance "not to be repented of"—that is a repentance that will endure, that will lead to a turnaround. He does not want you to just be in the race. He wants you to win the crown. Again, that requires severe discipline throughout the whole training process. And Jesus is your coach and will train you all the way to the end when you lay your trophies down at His feet. Remember the Scripture: *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. 12:11). The chastening is painful and much of it is inward, a suffering in the soul. But as your suffering may seem to tear you apart at times, in it the Lord becomes sweeter all the time. As you endure and gain victories, you will continue to be closer to the right hand of your Lord for eternity.

Swallow the pill, drink the bitter cup, take your medicine. Do not spit it out. Endure and conquer through praise. Remember that Paul and Silas were imprisoned with bloodied backs and their feet in the stocks. That was severe chastisement. That was scourging. Yes, admittedly, they had to get inwardly organized and it took them a few hours to regain their confidence and orientation as to what is up and what is down. But by the midnight hour, they

had it together and pulled up real close to the banquet table and they were ready to praise the Lord. *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them* (Acts 16:25). God heard it and the prisoners heard it. Out of the wounds of these men, there sprang forth praise and miracles happened: *Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed* (Acts 16:26). And then the keeper of the prison was saved. The life of suffering has more potential to bring forth fruit for Jesus than a life of ease. Something will happen, something powerful and beautiful will eventually come out of your chastisement. It is a spiritual law that new life will come out of death: *Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy* (Ps. 126:5).

Without discipline love has no content. *He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly* (Prov. 13:24). Or consider this: *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it* (Prov. 22:6). Do not shield your child from suffering. Suffering is a great teacher; it builds character; it refines and purifies the soul; it encourages a servant spirit and it is the gateway to greatness, not through self-assertiveness but through self-surrender.

Rejoice in your sufferings and you will reap both a crown for yourself and glory for Jesus.

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