



May 14, 2021

Don't Despise His Chastening

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from our offices here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week too has been blessed.

My wife and I are looking forward to this Sabbath as we have a "double Sabbath" if you will, with the weekly Sabbath, and the next day the Feast of Pentecost. I look forward to having the extra time with brethren and sharing these Feast Days of the Lord together. Our daughter, son in law, and granddaughter will also be here with us, so that is a special treat.

I hope the month of May has begun on a positive note for you. I do know that some have already had challenges and stresses, yet remain faithful to the God who sustains us all.

Have you ever thought about the following Scripture? *"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; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."* (Hebrews 12:5-6)

The words "chastening" and "scourges" sure don't bring to our minds something joyful or pleasant. Most of us have been corrected at one time or another as little children and likely have received a spanking. You might associate the above context with that experience.

I received my share of spankings as a small child. As I grew through my teenage years, I also received correction, encouragement, and teaching as well. Now having been an adult for decades, correction and encouragement sometimes comes in the most unusual ways. I am sure many of you could relate.

So, when God chastens us, is He doing so to punish and correct us for some wrong doing? The above context does not specifically link the chastening with punishment or reacting to wrongdoing. The Greek word translated "chastening" above is *paideia*. The Online Bible Greek Lexicon makes the following comments on the application of the word:

"1] The whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions, now reproof and punishment) It also includes the training and care of the body 2] whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing passions."

We see there is a variety of means to accomplish training and education in regards to *paideia*. Some of them do however involve reproof and punishment. This same word is found in several other writings of the apostle Paul. Notice Ephesians 6:4: "*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*" The Greek word translated "training" is *paideia*. The training that fathers should employ should not be something that provokes and causes an angry reaction.

There are various ways to train children. Verbal instruction, by personal example, and by appropriate responses to misbehavior are some examples.

Here is another comment from the apostle Paul. "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*" (2 Timothy 3:16) The Greek word translated "instruction" is again *paideia*. One could rightly associate all of the facets of using Scripture in this verse with *paideia*.

Returning to Hebrews 12. "*Now no chastening [paideia] 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.*" (v.11) Paul seems to link the "chastening" under discussion with unpleasant and painful experiences. Life indeed brings us the unexpected, trying situations, and events, doesn't it?

Acts 14 records an interesting story with the preaching of Paul at a synagogue in Iconium. A great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. However, trouble was stirred up and a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone Paul and Barnabas, so they fled to Lystra.

Paul was involved in healing a cripple and the populace wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas. The people were restrained from that. However, "*Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. Then, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city.*" (Acts 14:19-20)

Why did Paul have to experience such trying events after making effort to serve God and preach the good news? That's a good question?

In spite of these setbacks, Paul continued his preaching and the calling of additional disciples. He exhorted them to continue in the faith, and saying, "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*" (v.22) Paul accepted the trials and troubles that came upon Him and remained faithful to His calling and commission and continued to care for and serve the

members of the congregations.

Let's continue in Hebrews 12. *"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."*

This, *"Yet once more,"* indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. (Hebrews 12:25-27)

Our loving heavenly Father allows trials, challenges and painful and difficult events to come our way.

How will you and I respond? What will we learn from them? Will our faith be shaken, or will we be steadfast and immovable in spite of the outward circumstances? *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."* (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Stress and difficulties may age and weaken us, but God is growing the *inward* man and our spiritual character, commitment, and faith in Him event by event. This upcoming Feast of Pentecost pictures the miraculous event, where man now has the opportunity to have the indwelling of His dynamic power, that of the Holy Spirit. It's that IN us that makes all the difference!

With that strength, as we grow, the chastening we experience will end as Romans 8:28 so boldly exclaims, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* So, the lesson? Don't Despise His Chastening.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

May you have a blessed and inspiring Sabbath and Pentecost.

-Scott Hoefker

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