

REMEMBER THE FRUIT-PRODUCING POWER OF DIVINE CHASTENING - Hebrews 12:5-11 - "And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.' [7] It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? [8] If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [9] Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. [11] For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

1) GOD'S FAITH-BUILDING, PURIFYING WORK IN OUR LIVES INCREASES IN INTENSITY AFTER CONVERSION

The principle here is that God doesn't just *finish* a work in our lives when he saves us. He *continues* to work day by day. And the primary goal of that work is to make us holy - to make us more like Jesus Christ, God the Son: Philippians 1:6 - "And I am sure of this, that he who *began* a good work in you will *bring it to completion* at the day of Jesus Christ." Or, Romans 8:28-29 - "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called *according to his purpose*. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Now that work gets carried out in different ways. On the positive side He works in our hearts through prayer, through His word, through the encouragement of the saints, through the inner power of the life of His Spirit in our hearts. But He also uses other means to continue His work in our lives. I can turn a deaf ear to His instruction. Stubbornness can set into my heart. Because God has a strong and infinite love for me, He will not just give up on me. He will adopt other means to work in my heart. Chastisement plays an important role here - Revelation 3:19 - "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." Or, Amos 3:2 - "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." This is striking. Notice, God doesn't punish them more specifically because He *hates* them. He punishes them - *chastises* them - because they, of all the families of the earth, are His unique possession.

2) GOD CHASTENS US BECAUSE HE LOVES US - Hebrews 12:6 - "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Now, we don't measure love by chastisement anymore. We measure love by blessings of personal pleasure and apparent blessing. That's the way small minds think. That's immaturity. But the reason the subject of divine chastisement needs to be resurrected in the church is our whole world no longer believes in any form of solid correction anymore. We conflate *love* with *tolerance*.

3) GOD HAS DIFFERENT WAYS OF CHASTENING US

- a) *Through unpleasant circumstances* - Here's a fundamental conviction for all who believe in the kind of God revealed in the Scriptures. The purpose of all circumstances - however unpleasant - is to further our sanctification. God is so wise and so powerful and so insistent in His loving purposes, that there is absolutely nothing that is going to happen to you for the rest of your life that He can't use for your spiritual good if you'll receive it with trust in His presence.
- b) *Sometimes we are lead through physical suffering* - I don't suppose anybody likes to talk about it very much, but it is dealt with in the Scriptures: Psalms 119:67,71 - "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.....It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." That certainly doesn't mean that every time a person is sick, God is chastening him. Jesus made that perfectly clear. But nothing dulls our spiritual senses like comfort, and nothing awakens them like suffering. And there are times when God will use suffering for our own good.
- c) *Sometimes God withdraws His own presence from our lives* - This happens over and over in the Scriptures: Hosea 5:6,15 - "With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them....15...I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me."

We have all known something of that in our own experience. God hides His face. I *feel* His displeasure more keenly. We become aware of our spiritual drifting. God loves us too much to allow us to continue for too long in a spiritual coma. He works to create a hunger in our hearts.

4) RESPONDING PROPERLY TO CHASTENING

Take note of that word, "*responding*." Chastening is not *automatically* beneficial. There is what God *intends* in His chastening love and there is also the *human factor* in the process. My response to God's chastening must line up with trust in His righteous and faithful purposes for my experience in His discipline.

God's goal we know. We've been told in His Word - Hebrews 12:10 - "...he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." So here's what we know for sure. It's what we must hold on to while the storm of circumstance rages around us. God has *revealed* what

He's up to. His *motive* is *love*. His *goal* is our *holiness*. Usually that's *all* we will know at the moment of trial.

But here's the point. The writer doesn't just talk about what *God* is doing when He chastens us. That is only part of the story. There's a type of *response* that is called for on our part.

a) ***First, there are some things we must not do:***

Hebrews 12:5-6 - "And have you *forgotten the exhortation* that addresses you as sons? 'My son, ***do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.*** [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

i) The writer points to a passage from the only Bible these Hebrew Christians would have, the Old Testament. He points them to **Proverbs 3:11-12** - "My son, ***do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, [12] for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.***"

Whether they had totally forgotten it, or like us, were just in danger of forgetting it, he tells them that God has a word for them. He had already spoken in His Word about where they were right now in their Christian walk. And everything hinges on their taking His word to heart, rather than just looking at the difficulty they're in.

ii) Next, the writer says, "***...do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord...***"(5). Let's consider what he means here. The opposite of "*making light*" of the Lord's discipline is "*weighing it*" - not treating it as though it were nothing more than just circumstances flowing randomly through your life - like having a *bad day*. We are to ***ponder what God might be doing with our lives.*** We are to be giving due thought to what we know are the revealed *divine goals* for God's children in this world.

iii) Finally, he says we are not to "***...be weary when reproved by him***"(5). Notice how he expands on this so powerfully in the following verses -**Hebrews 12:11-12** - "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. [12] Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees...."

In case you've forgotten, this is a series about *spiritual weariness*. And the writer specifically says that we are staring a particular source of weariness right in the face. In fact, it's interesting that these verses on divine chastening come right on the heels of some of the best loved and most quoted verses in the entire Bible: **Hebrews 12:1-2** - "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Look at those words in **Hebrews 12:11** - "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness ***to those who have been trained by it.***" That word "*trained*" or "*exercised*" (KJV) comes from the greek word "*gumnazo.*" It's where we get our English word, *gymnasium*. And that sums it up completely. God has a gym membership for you. And you'll get quite a work-out at times.

But there's reason for it that is deeply profound. Most of our gym work-outs are rooted in little more than *vanity*.

God's gym is different. And it ties in with the picture painted in **Hebrews 12:1-2** - "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." There it is. It's all about the running of a race. And it's all about winning an eternal prize.