



29 Take It As Discipline

Why would God allow His children to suffer? Why does He lead them down roads that call for perseverance? Those are questions the writer of the Book of Hebrews addresses in verses 5 to 13 of chapter 12 when he brings up the subject of chastening.

"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."

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

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."

It's important to remember that the word translated "chasten" or "chastening" in the NKJV doesn't have the idea of punishment in it. It does include corrective discipline but it can be broader in meaning than that: it can mean to train or educate. It's a word that would have been used when talking about bringing up children.

- ◆ *What's the difference between punishment and chastening? Why is that an important distinction to make?*

The implication of these verses is that when God's children are faced with suffering and when endurance and perseverance are called for it is for their training or discipline. They should take it as that.

- ◆ *Do you agree that all of our hardships should be taken as discipline from God? What other purposes might they serve?*

Nine Things About God's Discipline

We are told nine things about God's discipline of His children: nine things we should take into account whenever we are faced with any kind of hardship.

God's discipline mustn't be taken lightly (12:5).

- ◆ *In what ways do people take God's discipline lightly? What happens when they do?*

God's discipline shouldn't cause us to lose heart (12:5).

- ◆ *Describe what it would be like to lose heart under God's hand of discipline.*

God's discipline is a mark of His love (12:6).

- ◆ *How would you go about explaining to an unbeliever that your suffering is a mark of God's love?*

God disciplines all His children (12:6 – 8).

- ◆ *In the light of this, what would you say to someone who has had an "easy" Christian life?*

God's discipline can be severe (12:6).

- ◆ *The NKJV is accurate when it uses the word "scourge." What does this verse have to say about your expectations for the future?*

God's discipline is meant to teach us endurance (12:7).

- ◆ *Does hardship always teach endurance? What must happen if it is to have that effect?*

God's discipline should be received in a way that shows proper respect for Him (12:9).

- ◆ *Thinking of some specific hardships you have faced recently, what would be a respectful way to receive our hardships from the hand of God?*

God's discipline is for your own good — it's meant to make you more holy (12:10).

- ◆ *In what ways can discipline make you more holy?*

God's discipline "yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (12:11).

- ◆ *Explain the meaning of the phrase "the peaceful fruit of righteousness."*

Pull Yourself Together

The writer's conclusion from all this is that you should:

"Strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."

Hebrews 12:12 – 13

- ◆ *Put these two verses into your own words.*