

God Sends Correction

(Transcript)

By Warren Zehrung – 9/13/2014

The world continues to believe that God is a harsh God, and that Jesus is so much more understanding. Aside from the fact that the world is all mixed up about the nature of God, they forget that God the Father and Jesus Christ see eye to eye on absolutely everything. God's harshness is a wrong and unbiblical concept.

Sadly, some in the Church of God have adopted that ruthless approach which is commensurate with the wrong understanding that God is cruel and brutal. They forget God's perfect benevolence.

I heard an example this week of how this heavy handed approach is still embraced by some. The conversation centered around the millennial Scripture:

Isaiah 30:

21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

The person who misunderstands God's mercy and compassion responded to this discussion like this: "In the millennium I'll forcefully **hammer** it home on those people – the way they should walk – and I'll be using my **rod of iron** to beat it into them and enforce it."

Somehow he still believes that the people of the millennium will have to be **crushed** into submission. There were ministers in the Church of God who used to rule with the iron fist of authority – sadly driving a significant percentage of the brethren away.

Brethren, that is not how we wish to be handled by God, and I do not believe that is the intent of God's words, because God is not like that.

I like from time to time to share **comments** with you that I have received from those who respond to the Countdown – to the Return of Jesus Christ:

"I have also heard that the staff of God – the rod of iron – is not to hit the sheep with, but the crook/hook on the staff, is to **gently** bring a sheep back into the fold, that is starting to wander off. That it is not normally to hit with.

"I know of two children in the same family. When it came to correction; the sensitive daughter would cry and repent as a result of a frown by a parent.

"The older firstborn...a son, the parent would practically have to use the proverbial two by four across his forehead for him to obey and get the point.

"Basically, God starts out **merciful** in His correction, and uses the most severe, as the last resort, when a person doesn't repent.

"I was kind of appalled, but not particularly surprised of the heavy handed comment by someone in one of the Churches of God.

"That kind of person, needs more training in the area of handling conflict, and dealing with the broken hearted, and those that have lost their way and become disobedient.

"(It reminds me of the parable of the wicked debtor.) Christ forgave the first man, but that man did not pass the forgiveness on.

"We are to grow in grace and knowledge and learn how to become more like Christ, not stay stuck in the gentile's world's way of dealing with people.

"I would guess that this is a reflection of that person's type of personality, conduct, or character, or how he or she deals with people in their own life.

"It is sad, because that kind of behavior causes others to withdraw from that person, rather than drawn to him with happy obedience.

"There is a scripture about when a righteous man is in charge, the people rejoice. This is not a very righteous way to rule. Where are the fruits of the spirit, in that kind of mindset?"

Is God a harsh and cruel God – like so many of the pagan gods of this world? Here is a good definition showing God's tenderness:

2 Corinthians 1:

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.

I'd rather deduce from the Scriptures that God would prefer we let our light shine and lead by example. God is gentle and compassionate and He resorts to sternness only in the case of persistent transgression.

The aim of God's chastisement is always to bring men to repentance. His correction is always entirely appropriate to the wrongdoing – He never goes overboard.

Leaving Hebrews 11 the Faith Chapter where we saw so many of the people of faith, we come to Chapter 12. Paul calls those people of faith – "A cloud of witnesses" – very poetic, I think.

Hebrews 12:

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a **cloud** of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Paul is saying let's get down to business – and join those that God calls the people of faith. They believed God – and they lived and died for God – let's join their number. And to do that (he gives us the Specific Purpose Statement for this next section of Scripture) "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."

We see that it is common to man to have a sin that easily **overwhelms** us, **overcomes** us. That is what 'beset' means. Now Paul is going to address how this sin is dealt with by us and by God's intervention.

Hebrews 12:

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

'finisher of our faith...' Isn't it interesting to note that our faith is not yet finished? The world's faith is an acceptance of certain **historical** facts about Jesus – whom they realize they are supposed to love and worship – but do not know how to go about it.

Brethren, what does it mean – we have to be **faithful** to the end? What is faith? Faith is a personal belief in God the Father. Faith is a personal belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Faith is accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins – that we might live. Faith is believing that God is personally guiding, working and directing His will in us to fulfill His Plan. Faith is doing what God says to do.

Faith is being sure positive of the resurrection and certain that God is present through His Holy Spirit. Faith, if it has not works, is dead. Faith is our belief that God will do all that He said He will do – and acting accordingly. That means that Faith is the actual **performance** of the things we are convicted to do. Faith is our willingness to lay our lives down for Christ and His principles.

And then we see in verse 2 that Jesus the **author** and **finisher** of our faith – we do not work it up for ourselves. Then Paul admonishes us to be **fearless** and undaunted as we live out our faith – considering what Jesus personally endured as a man on this earth.

Hebrews 12:

- 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Most of the Prophets shed their blood in defense of the Faith. Jesus Christ shed His blood as He overcame the world – what about us?

Hebrews 12:

- 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Like those saints of old in Chapter 11, that overcoming – that resisting unto blood, dying in defense of their faith – demonstrates such a struggle of overcoming, faith, courage, and determination not to succumb to this world.

Proverbs 3:

- 11 My son, despise not the **chastening** [*'musar'* - discipline, rebuke] of the LORD; neither be weary [**detest**] of his **correction** [*'tokechah tokachath'* – chastisement, restraint, reproof, rebuke]:

The Hebrew word translated as “chastening” refers to all of the tender and gentle **upbringing, education, nurturing, training** and **discipline** properly incorporated in developing a child in every aspect of his budding life.

The word “chastening” does **not** carry the connotation of “beating us into submission.” Or, as I supposed most of my life – very **heavy** corrective measures.

Proverbs 3:

- 12 For whom the Lord loves he corrects [*'yakach'*– justify, make right]; even as a father the son *in whom* he delights.

Deuteronomy 8:

- 5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so **the LORD thy God chastens thee.**

This entire concept is found so early in the Scriptures. God’s correction is in love – it is never too much. Let’s briefly look at some of the adventures of Paul and Barnabas:

Acts 14:

- 21** And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,
- 22** Strengthening [Confirming] the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in **the faith**, and saying, "We must through **many tribulations** enter the kingdom of God."

These disciples undoubtedly counted the cost before committing themselves to Jesus Christ. But, because of the turmoil the church was experiencing, Paul and Barnabas thought it necessary to exhort them to continue in the **faith** which had been given to them.

The apostles had to reassure the brethren that this was not something out of the ordinary, but rather an integral part of their Christianity as they followed Christ. The apostles spelled out to them in no uncertain terms that entrance into the kingdom of God would not happen without many tribulations.

1 Corinthians 10:

- 13** There hath no temptation [trial, chastening, tribulation] overtaken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tested above that ye are able; but will with the test [of your faith] also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

God's moderation is always in perfect balance. Paul had to reassure these disheartened Christians that **chastening**, pressure, hardship and anguish were not elements of life that would suddenly disappear because of faith. There is a wrong belief in the world which asserts that if we were more Godly, we would have fewer hardships and we would have the "good life," as it is commonly called.

Brethren, God is preparing us for the Kingdom – to reign and rule as kings and priests with Jesus Christ. Our final reward is not now – it is yet future.

Along the same lines, Peter writes in 1 Peter 4:12 to "...not think it strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you." In other words, **chastening**, affliction, distress, and various burdens are to be expected as we live our Christian faith.

The Hebrew community that Paul was addressing should certainly have been very familiar with this primary child rearing Scripture in Proverbs. Paul is intimating that they were not applying the principles to their spiritual lives.

Hebrews 12:

- 5** And you have **forgotten** the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the **chastening** of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him:

Chastening is not always a good hard whacking, smacking or whipping as some have surmised. Most of my life I thought that this Scripture was saying that if you get out of line a little bit – you would get a hard smacking from the Lord.

There were Catholic nuns (without mercy) that if we got out of line in the slightest way would **whack** us hard. They ruled by fear – and God is not that way. **Chastening** (Hebrews 12:5) may refer to the mildest training and nurturing on one end of the scale.

Brethren, have you been **chastened** in your Christian walk through life? God has a **wide range** of chastening [*paideia*] that He uses with us. Which, in the range of God's chastening, are these verses?

2 Corinthians 4:

- 16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
- 17 For our **light affliction**, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

I believe that Paul is saying that all chastening from God is **light affliction** compared to the reward of eternal Glory in the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 6:

- 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
- 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)
- 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou may live long on the earth.

Notice how clearly Paul admonishes us to go easy, patiently, and gently with our children.

Ephesians 6:

- 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the **nurture** [same Greek word as **chasten** in Hebrews 12] and admonition of the Lord.

Another example of God's gentle, peaceful and tender approach toward us.

2 Timothy 3:

- 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction** [same Greek word as **chasten** in Hebrews 12] in righteousness:

But God knows when to turn up the heat of His chastening – to reproof and **warning**. And then if we still will not repent after being warned of God – He can turn up the heat of His chastening to the point of **rebuke** and **severe** discipline on the other end of the scale.

God is merciful and He knows just how to deal with each of us in perfect moderation. First, God in His compassion will pique our conscience to get our attention and awaken us. But after repeated admonitions the increased severity of God's chastening could lead to illness and even death. Paul tells us that God will finally pull the plug of His chastising and close the book.

1 Corinthians 11:

- 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

God certainly knows how to precisely mete out His correction. In verse six we see where it is necessary for God to **turn up the heat** and apply increased pressure to get positive results.

Hebrews 12:

- 6 For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and **scourges** every son whom he receives.

This verse reveals that not everyone is included in this process. 'For whom the Lord loves,' leaves out those with whom God is **not** working – doesn't it? God deals differently in separate situations.

The latter part of verse 6 does, however, apply to a recalcitrant person who has an **obstinately** uncooperative attitude toward God's authority or His discipline. The Greek word translated as "scourges" is a much stronger term, meaning to thrash, flog, or beat severely with a belt or whip.

Hebrews 12:

7 If ye endure chastening, God deals with you **as with sons**; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?

Paul is following the outline of Proverbs 3 and comparing and contrasting how God deals with converted Christians – with how a responsible parent deals with his children. To 'endure chastening,' means that we have responded to God's corrective action, and gotten our life back in order.

Discipline or chastisement is a proof of God's love and involvement in our spiritual life. God is a loving father who **not** only blesses us, but also chastens us when we go wrong. As a loving father, God monitors our every thought, action, and intent.

When we are **disobedient** to Him we are placing ourselves in jeopardy. That is when God the Father steps in and chastises and disciplines us to return to Him. God deals with us that way. When a converted Christian lets down in his obedience to God, our Heavenly Father brings chastening upon him to restore his spiritual integrity.

Hebrews 12:

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards [*illegitimate*], and not sons.

When someone is living a lifestyle of unrepentant sin and begins to think that God is somehow approving of his misconduct, then that person is not a legitimate child of God – but an imposter. If God is not chastening us when we miss the mark and sin – we have fallen into the separate category that does **not** include true sons. This is a really **scary** verse.

When someone engages in wrongful behavior – and God does not discipline him for it – he is in big trouble. If we are letting down and God does not bring His chastisement down upon us – it does **not** mean that God is okay with what we are doing – but that He has cut us loose so that we are **no longer His children**.

Hebrews 12:

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days **chastened** us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his **holiness**.

11 Now no **chastening** for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Our trials – now – are to learn how to reign in the Kingdom of God. We see how God's way works – and we also see that disobedience to God never works out well. So our pain and suffering now is very profitable for the knowledge we'll need in the world tomorrow. Paul says, "Get with the program – stand up – buck up – take it – shake it off – be a man!"

Hebrews 12:

- 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;
- 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is
- 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Revelation 3:

- 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Here are some points on chastening and correction

1. Without chastening and correction we do not gain **Godly Wisdom**.

It is of the utmost importance that we **think** like God, **act** like God, **be** like God – and **put on** the wisdom of God.

2. Without chastening and correction we do not achieve **spiritual growth**.

This is why - We should be grateful – even for trials, chastening and correction.

Proverbs 3:

- 14 For the merchandise [*her proceeds* -results of Godly chastening and correction] of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Spiritual growth is better and more important.

3. Without chastening and correction we will not live long.

Proverbs 3:

- 16 Length of days is in **her** [Wisdom personified, from God's chastening and correction] right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

4. Without chastening and correction we would live lives of misery.

Proverbs 3:

- 17 Her ways [God's wisdom from chastening and correction] are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

The main point here:

5. Without chastening and correction we cannot find the way to eternal life.

Proverbs 3:

- 18 She is a **tree of life** [Genesis 2:9] to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retains her.

Godly wisdom from chastening and correction will eventually lead to immortality – for those who are exercised by it.

End: God Sends Correction