

## **"It Is For Chastening ..."**

*"It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons"* (Heb. 12:14).

In this section the writer has urged his readers that they wax not weary. He reminded them they have not yet resisted unto blood -- martyred in the long, weary battle they have engaged in. He chides them for having forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with them as sons: *"My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when they art reprov'd of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"* (Heb. 12:5f; Pro. 3:11f).

Few subjects are less understood than the *"chastening of God."* So many view trials and misfortune in the same light as Job's friends: they regarded the evils which befell him came because of gross wickedness on his part. They failed to perceive that sometimes evil comes, not to punish a man for the sins, but to test the man, making him stronger because of the sore trials which come his way.

The writer tells them that the chastening which befell them came because they were God's sons and God dealt with them as such. Does not every father chasten his children? And if there is no chastening, the child is left undisciplined; then it would indicate that the child was illegitimate, unacknowledged by the father as his own.

The writer further showed that obedient children show reverence to their fleshly fathers when they are chastened of them. Should not Christians show the same reverence unto their spiritual Father? *"Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather in subjection unto the Father of our spirits and live"* (Heb. 12:9)? These words merit consideration, especially in view of the truth that discipline earthly fathers give is not always appropriate. *"For they indeed for a few days chastened us as it seemed good to them; but he for our profit that we may be partakers of his holiness"* (Heb. 12:10). Fathers, being what they are, temper the chastening of their children as it seems good to them; but their judgment may be marred -- their punishment may be too harsh, actually harming the child. Not so with the chastening from our Heavenly Father! He always knows what is best and needful and never does He inflict chastening hastily or from a sudden burst of anger: always His chastening is

designed for our good or profit -- to the end that we may be partakers of His holiness -- viz., inherit the joys and glories of heaven.

Nevertheless, "*all chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous*" (Heb. 12:11). When it indeed be punishment for some failure on our part or an assigned task which "robs one" (as he perceives it) of some pleasure duly his, it is momentary and soon passes. "*Yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness*" (Heb. 12:11). So, whether we suffer, justly, patiently, perceptively for some wrong we full-well know we are guilty of; or whether we patiently do the assigned task while everyone else is at leisure and enjoying themselves, if we truly, sincerely reflect on the matter, we are bettered, improved, stronger.

Thus he concludes, "*Wherefore, lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees, and make straight paths for your feet that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed*" (Heb. 12:12f). In short, lift up the idled hands, get busy. Have courage. Let not your knee be palsied, trembling. Be direct in your tasks, don't walk in circles. Be steadfast. Fix your eyes determinedly on your goal. Calling up resolve and determination to press on heals the troubled and fearful heart. Accept chastening what it comes for what it is: the work of a loving Father who not only wants, but also who knows, what is best for His child!

Jim McDonald