

The fellowship of chastening and training

Luke Pomery

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An initiative of the Father

- Throughout our lives we experience chastening and training in many different ways. Every one of these painful experiences, whether perceived by us as helpful or harsh, is an initiative of the Lord toward a son whom He loves. Pro 15:10. As stated in Deuteronomy, 'You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so *the Lord your God chastens you.*' Deu 8:5. Before we consider how these experiences can be effective for our formation as sons of God, we firstly need to understand the Father's initiative to chasten Christ, for our sake. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, 'The chastisement for *our* peace was *upon Him.*' Isa 53:5.
- The Father's chastening upon Christ was the full expression and fulfilment of all chastening and training. As Christ received the chastening of the Father, He learned and perfected the obedience of our sonship. Heb 5:8-9. Chastening is therefore fundamental to sonship. The chastening of the Lord upon us is an expression of His love and delight for us! Pro 3:11-12. The Psalmist describes a person, who receives the chastening and instruction of the Lord, as 'blessed'. Psa 94:12.

Christ was beaten with rods

- Christ was chastened by the Father in the third wounding event of His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. In this wounding event, Christ was beaten repeatedly with rods in the courtyard of Caiaphas' house. Mat 26:67. Luk 22:63. The Lord spoke of this event through the prophet Nathan, saying, 'I [the Lord] will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, *I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.* But My mercy shall not depart from him.' 2Sa 7:14-15. This prophetic word, spoken firstly concerning Solomon the son of king David, was fulfilled by Christ in this wounding event. We note that it was the Father's initiative to chasten Christ, even though He suffered under the hands of men.
- The teaching of Moses nominated that a wrongdoer could be beaten with a certain number of blows as a means of discipline, measured according to his guilt. Deu 25:1-3. The harsh punishment that Christ endured, before Caiaphas the high priest, was not a measured chastening for the consequences of justice. Rather, as described by the prophet Jeremiah, this was '*the chastisement of a cruel one*'. Jer 30:14. Christ was under inquisition by the chief priests, scribes and elders as they endeavoured to 'break Him down' and 'beat' Him into submission.
- In this wound, Christ fully suffered the abuse and harsh punishment that is dealt to a person through an overpowering relationship, including that of an abusive father or mother. Christ endured that abuse through the resurrection life that was multiplied through the shedding of His blood. As a result, every person can find healing and recovery from an abusive dynamic towards them in their upbringing. After speaking of the chastisement of a cruel one, the Lord said, 'For I [the Lord] will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds.' Jer 30:17. When we suffer harsh

punishment, it is still the initiative of the Father to chasten us as sons of God and to heal us. Job 5:17-18.

Judgement commuted to chastening

- The sufferings we experience throughout our life, including the vanity of ‘time and chance’, are common to mankind. Ecc 1:14. Ecc 9:11. 1Pe 5:9. These sufferings are part of the judgement of God on the whole world because of sin. By the grace of God, Christ fully partook of the sufferings that are the manifestation of the judgement of God upon each person. Heb 2:9. As He died our death, by *exanastasis*, the judgement of God upon Him was *commuted to a chastening* and a circumcision.
- The Scriptures teach that instead of the judgement of God leading to our eternal death, it can be commuted to chastening through our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. The apostle Paul expressed it this way, ‘But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.’ 1Co 11:32. We note that the judgement of God is either commuted to chastening, or it leads to condemnation.
- In the Scriptures, condemnation does not refer to our ‘feeling of shame’ but, rather, it refers to the sentence of punishment that has already been passed upon a person’s guilt. There is no deliverance from condemnation for anyone outside of the fellowship of Christ’s offering. However, for those who are conformed to the likeness of Christ’s death, this judgement is being changed into a discipline for our benefit. Hence Paul’s rejoicing proclamation, ‘There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.’ Rom 8:1.

Chastening is a fellowship

- How is the judgement of God, of which the whole world has become a recipient, commuted to a chastening in our lives, so that we are trained as sons of God? The Scriptures teach us that chastening is a *fellowship*! Without our participation in the fellowship of the Father’s chastening in our lives, the sufferings that we experience remain as the judgement and punishment of God upon us.
- In the book of Hebrews, we read, ‘But if you are without chastening, of which all have become *partakers*, then you are illegitimate and not sons.’ Heb 12:8. The apostle Paul explained that to become a genuine son of God, we have to become a partaker of the Lord’s chastening through participation and fellowship. We cannot presume that we are maturing as sons of God simply because we are suffering.
- Hebrews Chapter 12 teaches us that each chastening involves a painful season requiring patience. Heb 12:7,11. The word of the Lord, ministered to us throughout the season, is essential for our training because it grants faith and illumination for our participation. Heb 12:5. We firstly learn that submission is an essential aspect of fellowship. Heb 12:9. By faith, we submit ourselves to the Lord’s chastening hand, forsaking the desire for retribution for any perceived ‘injustice’ or harsh punishment. As we endure the chastening by faith, we yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness as we are trained as sons of God. Heb 12:11.

A change of behaviour

- The Scriptures teach three fundamental elements that are necessary for behavioural change and sonship maturity. These are the pain of the chastening, the word of rebuke and the relational context of a loving parent or friend. We note all three elements in the book of Proverbs, 'The *rod* and *rebuke* give wisdom, but a child *left to himself* brings shame to his mother.' Pro 29:15.
- Let's firstly consider the relational context of a parent with a child. Parents are accountable to extend the chastening hand of the Father towards their children, as an expression of the love of God. The chastening and admonition of the Lord enables the child to put off immaturity and learn the obedience of their sonship. Eph 6:4. Alternatively, James teaches that any punishment motivated by anger does not produce the righteousness of God, because it is not an expression of fellowship towards the child. Jam 1:20. For this reason the Scripture states, 'Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction'. Pro 19:18.
- In regards to the word of rebuke, king David testified, 'Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it.' Psa 141:5. The recognition of sin, and of the behaviour that needs to change, requires a word of rebuke from a loving parent or friend. As we read, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.' Pro 27:6. Although the interaction may be unpleasant, or painful, the word of rebuke aligns a person to their sanctification.
- In regards to the pain of the chastening, it is helpful to note that we cannot be trained by instruction only. As Proverbs teaches, 'A servant will not be corrected by mere words; for though he understands, he will not respond [or obey].' Pro 29:19. Hence, the 'momentary' pain of the chastening is essential for teaching the consequences of our actions. Pain is a warning system, built into our mortality, that arrests our attention. If heeded, we avoid the 'long term' damage caused by sin. If not heeded, we suffer the pain of the consequences of our actions. This kind of suffering is a result of our foolishness, or stupidity, because we repeat the activity that is causing us and others an injury. The fruit of our sin is death; thus, resurrection life is needed for our recovery. Jas 1:15.