

DIVINE DISCIPLINE

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WHAT IS DIVINE DISCIPLINE

The relationship of a father and his beloved child is used repeatedly in the Bible to describe the relationship between God and the person who is trusting Jesus Christ. God has promised, “...*I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters...*” II Cor. 6:17, 18. Gal. 3:26 testifies, “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.*” Jesus taught His disciples to begin prayer with the words, “*Our Father, which art in heaven.*”

As our Father, God exercises two blessed ministries in the lives of Christians. (1) He assumes responsibility for providing all our needs. The Apostle Paul wrote, “*My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glorify by Christ Jesus,*” Phil. 4:19. (2) He assumes authority to each and train us in the way of holiness. “*Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it...*” Isa. 20:31. It is that second ministry, the training of his children, which commands our attention in these next five studies.

The child-training which God exercises over Christians is called “chastening” in the King James Version of the Bible. It is called “discipline, correction, instruction, training” in various other versions. The classic discussion of divine discipline is found in (Heb. 12:5-11.)

“...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 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? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peacable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

There are three words of special significance used in that passage. The first is **paideia**, and is translated “chasten” eight times in (Heb. 12:5-11). The second word is **elegko**, and is translated “rebuke” in verse 5. The third is **mastigoo**, and is translated “scourge” in verse 6. An understanding of those three words shed much light on the subject of God’s discipline of His children.

First, consider **paideia**, the term translated “chasten.” It means to teach, to instruct, to train. In classical Greek, the term was used of education with special emphasis on mental culture. It is used commonly in the New Testament with that meaning. Stephen spoke of how Moses was “learned” in all the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). He used the term **paideia**. Paul reported how he sat at the feet of the great Hebrew teacher named Gamaliel and was “*taught according to the perfect manner of the law*” Acts 22:3. He used the term **paideia** to describe his being instructed. Paul wrote afterwards to Titus and reminded him how the grace of God had appeared to all men “teaching” (**paideia**) men how to live holy lives. That is what God is doing when He “chastens” His dear children: He is teaching them to aid their growth to maturity.

The New Testament use of the term **paideia** goes a step beyond the use in secular life. There is a moral element added. “Chasten” is more than child-training. In the New Testament, it is training so as to cultivate a righteous life. It is not mere education, but moral education. Also, the term involves more than intellect. It is that kind of training which improves, molds, strengthens, and perfects character. It is moral education obtained by the enforcement of obedience through supervision and control. In contrast to secular education, it is religious education. In contrast to mere discipline, it is Christian discipline. It is that discipline which regulates character in accord with the will of God.

Divine discipline, as reflected in the term **paideia**, may take any of several forms. The experience of the prophet Jeremiah shows it may come through the

experience of suffering (Jer. 10:24), through the acceptance of verbal instruction (Psa. 16:17), or through observing and learning by a given situation (Jer. 2:30). Whatever contributes to the training of God's child is called His act of **paideia**, translated "chastening" in the King James Version.

Draw a careful distinction between "discipline" and "punishment." Many people think only of punishment when they hear the words "discipline" and "chastening." Punishment is an act of justice, revealing the wrath of the broken law. Discipline is an act of mercy, revealing the love of the Father. The term **paideia** (chastening) is so related to Fatherly training that it is used of God in the New Testament only in reference to His dealings with His children.

Second, consider the term **elegko**. It is to be found in Heb. 12:5 and is translated "rebuke." "*Do not faint when you are rebuked of him,*" the Bible admonishes. The term means to convict, refute, reprove, rebuke. It means to expose by bringing conviction to light. Its noun form is used in (II Tim. 3:16) and is translated "reproof." It differs from child training in that this term refers to exposing and rebuking wrong.

God trains His children like a loving Father. He provides all necessary for their growth to full maturity. That is called **paideia**, "chastening." He goes a step beyond that, however, and shows a person any fault in his life. That rebuking of a fault is not an act of anger, but of love. God reprimands wrong in order to set it right. He shows one a fault in order that He might remedy the fault. That is the way of a loving Father with beloved children.

Third, consider the term **mastigoo**. It means to administer punishment, and is translated "scourge" in Heb. 12:6. God "*scourges every son whom He receives.*" Consider the usage of the term in the New Testament. Jesus warned His disciples that they would be scourged in the synagogues (Matt. 10:17). He predicted that His death on the cross would be preceded by a scourging (Matt. 20:19). He suffered that abuse at the hands of heartless men (John 19:1). The term always means the presence of suffering caused by afflictions, calamities, or misfortunes.

God permits a part of the training of His children to come in the form of physical troubles. No one is immune from suffering just because he believes in Jesus Christ. There is assurance, however, that a benevolent Father is looking over all. He makes the trial of your faith to work out to praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Even trials become precious when such a goal is in view (I Pet. 1:7).

Now, a moment of review. God is involved in child training (**paideia**) to develop the maturity of Christians and form them into the likeness of Jesus Christ. (1) One aspect of that work is providing all they need for growth. (2) Another part is the reprove anything wrong in their lives (**elegko**). (3) Yet, a third aspect is the administering of punishment where there is any wrong which needs to be overcome (**mastigoo**). Keep in mind that God's whole purpose is to make us full grown in

Christ. We must not rebel against His work in our lives but must rather be available that His will can be done perfectly. Thank God for His great love which is expressed in His discipline experienced day by day.

WHAT FORMS DO DIVINE DISCIPLINE TAKE

God is a Father who is concerned with the growth of His believing children. His blessed work of child-training is called “divine discipline.” It is important that each person be able to recognize God’s discipline so that he may know how to respond most profitably to it.

God’s discipline is fitted to man’s nature. Man is a three-fold being. He is spirit, soul, and body. His spirit makes him God-conscious. His soul makes him self-conscious. His body makes him world-conscious. Man is both physical and spiritual, so God deals with him in physical and spiritual ways.

Many people think of discipline only in terms of punishment. Even a reference to divine discipline calls forth thought of an all-powerful God dealing severely with His creatures. It is not that way! Discipline means “training that develops self-control, character, and efficiency.” That is what God is doing in the lives of His believing children as He makes them into the image of Jesus Christ.

God molds the lives of His children by teaching them, rebuking them, and sometimes by punishing them. His discipline might come in the physical or in the spiritual areas of life. Let us consider divine discipline as it relates to both areas of the life of a Christian.

Divine discipline is expressed often in the physical areas of life.

God is in control of everything. He created the material universe. He created the physical body of man, and established its natural functions. He set man over the earth to subdue it and use it for man’s good and God’s glory. He placed in the universe an orderliness of the seasons and laws of nature that man might see the work of God and find provision for his needs.

God taught men to look to Him for all physical needs. Some of the offerings made to God at harvest time were for the express purposes of man’s acknowledgement of God’s provision of the material necessities of life. God’s blessings are a part of His instruction.

Jesus used the blessing of God in nature, His feeding the birds of the air and clothing the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:26-30), to teach Christians that God will provide for them like a loving Father. Yes, material blessings teach men what God is like.

Man is often a slow learner. Sometimes, he must be taught by withholding blessings. In which instance, God disciplines by what He does not give. There was a divine purpose, for instance, in God permitting Israel to run short of supplies in the

wilderness. Deuteronomy 8:explains, “*..he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna...that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.*” Jonah was disciplined for disobedience by being swallowed by the great fish God had prepared. Job spoke of being chastened with painful sickness upon the bed (Job 33:19). Paul wrote of some Corinthian believers who had desecrated the meaning of the Lord’s supper. God executed discipline in this manner: “*For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,*” I Cor. 11:30. Man’s slowness to learn often causes the discipline to be prolonged.

God is teaching His children and molding their character into the likeness of Jesus Christ. He performs that work by giving material blessings or by withholding material blessings. Each Christian must be alert to what God is doing in his life that he might profit from the training he is receiving.

What is happening in your life now? Are your circumstances prosperous and happy? If so, God is teaching you through them. Are your circumstances difficult and burdensome? If so, God is teaching you through them. The continual ministry of God in the life, whether seeming good or seeming bad, is the reason why the Christian gives thanks in everything (I Thess. 5:18). “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose,*” Rom 8:28. Learn from your circumstances in life, for God is teaching you by object lessons.

God’s approval or disapproval of one’s life is often expressed in prosperity or adversity in material things. Consider Isaiah 1:19, 20, “*If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*” However, that is not the only area of divine discipline.

Divine discipline is expressed often in the spiritual areas of life.

Man is spirit as well as body. He must have food to live, but he does not live by food alone (Duet. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). He has as great a need in the spirit as in the body. Therefore, God trains His children by ministering to them spiritually and physically.

A part of the divine discipline of child-training is seen in the blessing God gives to his own. The Psalms are filled with expressions of praise to God for His forgiveness, His loving kindness, His guidance, His answer to prayer, His daily presence, and a multitude of other spiritual blessings. In fact, a very profitable study in the field of theology is a study of the doctrine of God in Psalms. A full theology can be developed on the person of God in those songs of Ancient Israel. The people learned of God – Who He is and what He is like – because of His spiritual blessings. They trusted Him, loved Him, and served Him because of what they knew of Him through

spiritual benefits with which He daily loaded their lives.

On the other hand, a part of the divine discipline of child-training is seen in the spiritual blessings withheld from the people of God. Sin was always the cause of His withholding of spiritual prosperity.

Consider God's words in Isaiah 59:1, 2, "*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*" The meaning is evident. Deliverance had been withheld and prayer had gone unanswered because people were living in sin. That teaches clearly that spiritual blessings are sometimes missed as God's way of showing man the error of his life and turning him to the ways of righteousness.

Remember that God never disciplines to harm, but always to help. His discipline (whether in blessing or in withholding blessings) is always for man's good. Sure, the Christian has trouble, but his consolation abounds in Christ. Paul wrote these words of praise to God: "*Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God,*" II Cor. 1:4. True, the Christian experiences weakness, but only that the power of God can be manifest in him (II Cor. 12:7-10). God's discipline is always for the good and growth of His dear children.

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth," Prov. 3:11, 2.

Thank God for His loving concern for us, expressed in his continual child-training in things material and spiritual.

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD DIVINE DISCIPLINE?

Every person must learn to live under authority. The child must be subject to the authority of his parents. The student must be subject to the authority of his teachers and school administrators. The citizen must be subject to the authority of his government and those who are officers of the government. God made man capable of ruling over every aspect of creation except himself. Man needs government exercised over him.

The Christian is not exempt from the need of submission to authority. That is why the Bible speaks of the divine discipline which God exercises in the life of His believing child. The parent's goal is that the child grows to full physical maturity. The teacher's goal is that the student grows to full academic maturity. The Heavenly Father's goal is that the each Christian grows to full spiritual maturity. As discipline is necessary in rearing a child or teaching a student, so it is necessary in

maturing a Christian.

Divine discipline will be exercised in the life of each Christian. It is imperative that the Christian respond properly to God's child-training. An examination of Heb. 12:5-11 will reveal five suggestions in answer to the question, "What should be my attitude toward divine discipline?"

Do not underestimate the value of God's discipline.

The Bible expresses the principle in these words, "*My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord*" (verse 5)

The key to the verse is that word "despise." "Do not despise the discipline of God." It means to think lightly upon it, to undervalue it, to consider it a small thing, to ignore it. Expressed positively, the principle is to consider seriously the discipline which God places in one's life.

Look for God's hand in your circumstances. He is teaching you. He is developing you. He is helping you grow into what you are designed to be. Spiritual child-training (which is what "discipline" or "chastening" means) must not be considered lightly because it is of God.

Heed that admonition. Be alert to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when sin enters the life. Be aware of the approval of God when righteousness prevails. Be dependent on the power of God when temptation arises. Look for God in every circumstance and detail of life. He is teaching you. Experience the good which comes by the ministry of God in your life.

Do not lose heart when God exercises discipline.

The Bible says, "*Do not faint when you are rebuked of him.*" verse 5.

Consider that term "faint." It means to lose heart, become discouraged, feel fainthearted, grow despondent, give up. The purpose of divine discipline is to effect the exact opposite response in the Christian. Discipline aims to produce energetic activity in the right direction, not to cause activity to cease because of a broken spirit. Discipline should cause a person to be renewed rather than to give up.

A good teacher will check a wrong answer on the student's paper that he might recognize the error and learn the right answer. The correct answer becomes a part of his store of knowledge and aids him in gaining further knowledge.

I remember receiving my first text book in algebra, when a high school student. I turned through the book and saw the complicated and seemingly meaningless combination of numerals and letters forming the various equations. I remember thinking, "I will never be able to understand that." But rather than giving up, I attended class and learned the subject day by day. When I got to the latter pages of the book, they were very intelligible.

God is working a plan in your life, of which you may not how be aware. Do not give up. Trust His perfect work. Don't lose heart. Even His rebuke is

profitable. Remember that His rebuke is never prompted by anger, but always by love. It is His act of exposing the wrong and bringing it to light in order that it may be corrected. He wounds to heal as the surgeon performs surgery to restore health. Yield in assurance to God's work in your life, and you will profit greatly by it.

Endure bravely the repeated disciplines of God.

Here is the admonition of God: "*If ye endure chastening, god dealeth with you as with sons*" v. 7

The key term in verse seven is "endure." It is the same term translated "patience" in other portions of the Holy Scripture. It means to endure, to persevere, to submit, to be patient, to stand under the load without giving up. The discipline of divine child-training must be borne to be profitable. "Endure!"

It would be easy for the Christian to give up. His life is contrary to the whole course of human society. Jesus has called him out of the world and made him different from the world (John 15:18, 19). He is like a fish who must constantly swim against the current. The whole course of unregenerate society (its books, its music, its morals) is below the level on which a Christian should live. He could relax and drift and be like everyone else. He could, but he must not. God never promised the easy way for believers.

God is at work molding us in the likeness of Jesus Christ. That makes us different and identifiable from the world. The Christian must bear up under the training of God like an athlete bears up under the rigor of his training for the game. Endure bravely the training of God, for it has a worthy goal.

Expect the best to come from God's exercise of discipline.

Holy Scripture admonishes, "*He (disciplines) for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness*" (verse 10).

The best thing that could happen in the life of any believer is for God's great purpose to be fully realized. He corrects us all the days of our lives for our true benefit. His discipline is always right and for our best good. It is the greatest good that could come to our lives. God's discipline enables us to share in Him by partaking of His own holiness.

Cultivate the good which comes from God's exercise of discipline.

"*It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby*" verse 11. What are the ends of divine discipline? Purity of life, righteousness, correct thinking and feeling, likeness to Jesus Christ in one's inner spirit and outer conduct, all these and more are blessings brought when the discipline of God has done its perfect work. Cultivate those qualities in day by day experiences as God guides your life. There could be no greater accomplishment than for the will of God to be done perfectly in you.

Remember that discipline does not mean punishment. It means child-training. God is committed to producing spiritual maturity in His children. He works through circumstances good and bad to produce full spiritual manhood in each Christian.

Take care how you respond to the discipline of the Lord. Do not undervalue it. Do not become discouraged by it. Receive it with patience. Expect profit from it. Cultivate the good of it. *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons”* Heb. 12:7a.

WHAT GOOD COMES FROM DIVINE DISCIPLINE?

PART 1

Every Christian experiences the discipline of God. Each must remember that God’s discipline has love at its heart, wisdom in its plan, and profit as its goal. *“Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of thy law”* Psa. 94:12

How could we possibly say that a man is blessed when he is chastened by the Lord? If blessing and chastening seems a contradiction of terms, it is only because we have not understood the true nature of divine discipline.

Discipline (or “chastening” as it is called in the King James Version of the Bible) does not mean punishment. It rather means child-training. It may come in the form of suffering or in the form of rewards, but it is always an act of God training His children in holiness. To say the chastened man is “blessed” is to say a man is “blessed” when God is ministering in his life. (Psa. 94:12) relates the chastening of the Lord to His teaching out of the divine law. Indeed, divine discipline is a blessing in view of the good which comes from it.

What good comes from divine discipline? Heb. 12:6-11 speaks of two great benefits: assurance and holiness. Verse six speaks of assurance of God’s love: *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”* Verses seven and eight speak of assurance of divine sonship: *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”* Verses ten and eleven speak of the benefit of holiness which comes from divine discipline: *“He (disciplines us) for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”* Now, let us look a little more carefully at the benefits which come through God’s child-training discipline in His believing children.

Divine discipline produces assurance of Sonship.

*“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons,”*verse 7.

Remember that there is a special word used by the writer to refer to divine discipline in (Heb.12). It is the Greek work **paideia**. The term refers to the education of a child and includes all the teaching, instruction, and training. It is used in the Bible to refer to all that happens in the life of a Christian which improves, molds, strengthens, and perfects him in Christ.

Paideia is used a dozen times in the Greek New Testament. Every time it is used in regards to the work of God, it always refers to God’s work in the life of a Christian. God does not do child-training in those who are not his children by faith in Jesus Christ. The very fact that one experiences divine discipline, therefore, is a proof that he is a child of God.

Suppose I was driving down a street in the city. I saw some child misbehaving in playing with his friend. I would not stop the car and seek to correct the youngster. I would feel no right to do so, because he is not my child. On the other hand, if the child misbehaving were my child, I would be in complete order to stop and correct the improper conduct.

God’s discipline is a fatherly discipline. He deals with Christians as with His own dear children, which we are. Divine discipline is a proof that one belongs to God.

What does it mean if one does not experience God’s chastening? What if a person can live in sin without seeing discipline? What if one can be a nominal Christian indefinitely without experiencing God’s chastisement? What does it mean? Heb. 12:8 answers, *“If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then ye are bastards, and not sons.”* Lack of divine discipline indicates a person is not a true child of God at all- such a person does not belong in God’s family.

Thank God that you are under His child-training. It proves you are one of His family.

Divine discipline produces assurance of love.

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (verse 6). Three times in Holy Scripture, God states that discipline is a proof of His love. Prov. 3:12, reads *“For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth,; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”* Heb 12:6 repeats that statement, *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* Rev. 3:19 states it once again, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”* The principle must be very important for God to record it three times in the Bible.

A philosophy in child rearing became prominent a few years ago which was in direct opposition to that Bible principle. It held that a child should not be corrected or disciplined, lest it restrict his freedom to assert himself and warp his development. A few years later the group of undisciplined youth which grew up showed the error of

the philosophy.

The Bible is quite clear on the matter of parental discipline. Pro. 13:24 expresses it this way: *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”* Discipline is proof of love. Lack of discipline is proof of lack of love. God disciplines His children because they are His children and He is their Heavenly Father.

There is no need to fear the discipline which is ministered because of loving concern for the welfare of its recipients.

Divine discipline produces Holiness.

“It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” v. 11. God’s great design is that His dear children should partake of His holiness. The principle is set forth in the Old Testament in these words: *“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God”* Lev. 20:7. The New Testament declares that no person without holiness will ever see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). All of the discipline of God in the lives of His children is for the purpose of cultivating holiness in them.

No experience of discipline seems particularly pleasant at the moment. The Christian must be aware of its determined end, however, and persist in it. The end of divine discipline is to produce the fruit of peace which results from an upright and righteous life. The end is so great it is will worth the training along the way.

Now, let us look back over the journey we have traveled in this brief study. We have seen three aspects of the answer of the question, what good comes from divine discipline. (1) Divine discipline assures the believer that he is God’s child: *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons,”* verse 7. (2) Divine discipline assured the believer that God loves him: *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,”* verse 6. (3) Divine discipline enables the believer to grow in a life of holiness: *“He (disciplines) for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness,”* verse 10. These three benefits from God’s discipline make us thankful to be partakers of His ministry of child-training.

What a privilege to be God’s believing child!

WHAT GOOD COMES FROM DIVINE DISCIPLINE? PART 2

“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth,” Pro. 3:11, 12.

Does God really discipline His children? The Bible answers, “Yes.” Why does God discipline His children? The Bible answers, “To help them grow to spiritual

maturity.” What possible good comes from God’s discipline of His children? The Bible answer to that question is the subject of this Bible study.

In our previous study, we saw three great benefits which come to a Christian who is discipline of God. (1) Divine discipline assures him that he is a child of God. (2) Divine discipline assures him the he is the object of the love of God. (3) Divine discipline helps him grow in holiness according to the plan of God. The present study will seek out four more benefits to be received from God’s discipline, according to (Heb. 12:5-11).

Divine discipline encourages spiritual strength and health.

The end of all discipline of god upon His children is that they might “*lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for you feet.*” Heb. 12:12.

Christians sometimes grow weary in the way. They let their hands relax and grow slack. Like an athlete who has used up all of his energy, they are prone to drop by the way. But they must not. The athlete who persists beyond the exhaustion of his energy finds his “second wind” and continues in the contest. The Christian who does not stop when his natural strength is abated, but who persists in the strength which God gives, is responding properly to the training of God. Like Paul, he learns, “*when I am weak, then am I strong*” II Cor. 12:10.

Divine discipline sees that we have the proper spiritual exercise, and live by the rules which assure spiritual health and strength. God’s goal is to produce Christians who are “*ready to every good work*” Titus 3:1. Thank God for the spiritual vitality He produces in believers by means of His blessed ministry of discipline.

Divine discipline makes possible spiritual victory.

Heb. 12:13 sets out the goal of spiritual growth as two-fold. (1) The Christian must walk straight forward without wavering from the path. (2) Those who are feeble can follow his example and be led aright as a result.

It is very important that the Christian set the right example. He is to be always “*blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation...holding forth the word of life*” Phil 2:15, 16. “*Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed*” II Cor. 6:3. That is the kind of daily victory which God produces in the lives of Christians who submit to His blessed discipline.

People have a tendency to follow a strong leader. That is true in the spiritual, as well as in the natural, realm. If a Christian falters in his way, some weaker brother is sure to be injured by a wrong example. The discipline of God is designed to enable the stronger to help the weaker. Victory of the one aids in victory for the other.

God wants the best for His children. That is why He trains them by divine discipline day by day. It is a good thing to be judged and chastened of the Lord, for thereby one will not be condemned with the world (I Cor. 11:32).

Divine discipline produces maturity in the Christian.

Thank God such maturity is possible. Thank God also, that He is producing it in us. Consider this work of I Pet. 5:10, "*But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*" Did you catch it? God's purpose in discipline is to make the Christian "*perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle*" him. What does that mean? It means God gives him mastery, makes him steady, settles him on a firm foundation, and strengthens him in good works. Peter learned by experience, and passed the information on to us, that discipline produces maturity.

Job went through much trials. He is an example of enduring hardships with unwavering faith in God. He has become an inspiration to multitudes who suffered. There is a key to Job's victory over suffering. It is stated in Job 23:10 in these words, "*He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*" Consider these facts. (1) Job recognized that God was aware and involved in all that was happening to him. (2) Job knew the trial was under the supervision of a good God. (3) Job knew he would come through the trial. (4) Job knew when the trial was over, he would be greatly improved by the dross being taken away. Job is a proof of how divine discipline produces maturity in a Christian.

Divine discipline brings spiritual joy.

Not at the moment of its experience, of course, for "*no chastening for the present seems to be joyous*" Heb. 12:11. Joy follows the trial.

The Psalmist understood that truth and wrote in Psa. 94:12, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.*" "Blessed" is used in the Bible to refer to the spiritual joy which comes upon receiving the favor of God. It is an appropriate description of the man whom God is training through divine discipline.

Job expresses the truth more clearly, saying, "*Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty*" Job 5:17.

Divine discipline produces Christ likeness in the Christian.

That is God's ultimate goal. "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*" Rom. 8:27. "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" II Cor. 3:18. The realization of that idea is the desire of every true

Christian. T.O. Chisholm wrote, “Oh, to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer; Gladly I’ll forfeit all of earth’s treasures, Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear. Oh, to be like Thee! Oh, to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; come in thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.”

No wonder the Bible stresses the fact and the importance of divine discipline. No wonder the Christian is admonished to recognize it, yield to it, and profit from it. It is the key to the highest and purest ambitions of the believer’s heart.

Hear this word from the lips of Jesus, recorded by the pen of John, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent*” Rev. 3:19.