

Chastisement

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that God's chastisement is a loving correction for His children, distinct from punishment, meant to bring spiritual growth and should neither be despised nor cause fainting.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:5, Isaiah 53:5, Job 5:17, Revelation 2:10, Proverbs 3:11-12

Topics: "Chastisement", "God's Discipline", "Christian Suffering"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the biblical distinction between punishment and chastisement, emphasizing that God's discipline is a loving act intended for the spiritual benefit of His children. He encourages believers to embrace God's correction with humility and patience, warning against the dangers of despising or fainting under the rod. Spurgeon also highlights the honor found in suffering for Christ and the ultimate purpose of chastisement in sanctification and growth.

Transcript

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."—Hebrews 12:5.

GOD'S PEOPLE CAN never by any possibility be punished for their sins. God has punished them already in the person of Christ, Christ, their substitute, has endured the full penalty for all their guilt, and neither the justice nor the love of God can ever exact again that which Christ has paid. Punishment can never happen to a child of God in the judicial sense, he can never be brought before God as his Judge, as charged with guilt, because that guilt was long ago transferred to the shoulders of Christ, and the punishment was exacted at the hands of his surety. But yet, while the sin cannot be punished, while the Christian cannot be condemned, he can be chastised, while he shall never be arraigned before God's bar as a criminal, and punished for his guilt, yet he now stands in a new relationship—that of a child to his parent: and as a son he may be chastised on account of sin. Folly is bound up in the heart of all God's children, and the rod of the Father must bring that folly out of them. It is essential to observe the distinction between punishment and chastisement. Punishment and chastisement may agree as to the nature of the suffering: the one suffering may be as great as the other, the sinner who, while here is punished for his guilt, may suffer no more in this life than the Christian who is only chastised by his parent. They do not differ as to the nature of the punishment, but they differ in the mind of the punisher and in the relationship of the person who is punished. God punishes the sinner on his own account, because he is angry with the sinner, and his justice must be avenged, his law must be honored, and his commands must have their

dignity maintained. But he does not punish the believer on his own account, it is on the Christian's account, to do him good, He afflicts him for his profit, he lays on the rod for his child's advantage; he has a good design towards the person who receives the chastisement. While in punishment the design is simply with God for God's glory, in chastisement, it is with the person chastised for his good, for his spiritual profit and benefit. Besides, punishment is laid on a man in anger. God strikes him in wrath, but when he afflicts his child, chastisement is applied in love, his strokes are, all of them, put there by the hand of love. The rod has been baptized in deep affection before it is laid on the believer's back. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve us for nought, but out of love and affection, because he perceives that if he leaves us unchastised, we shall bring upon ourselves misery ten thousand-fold greater than we shall suffer by his slight rebukes, and the gentle blows of his hand. Take this in the very starting, that whatever thy trouble, or thine affliction, there cannot be anything punitive in it, thou must never say—"Now God is punishing me for my sin." Thou hast fallen from thy steadfastness when thou talkest so. God cannot do that. He has once for all done it. "The chastisement of our peace was upon HIM, and by HIS stripes we are healed." He is chastising thee, not punishing thee; he is correcting thee in measure, he is not smiting thee in wrath. There is no hot displeasure in his heart. Even though his brow may be ruffled, there is no anger in his breast; even though his eye may have closed upon thee, he hates thee not, he loves thee still. He is not wroth with his heritage, for he seeth no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity—in Israel, considered in the person of Christ. It is simply because he loves you, because ye are sons, that he therefore chastises you.

Peradventure this morning I may have some within these walls who are passing under the chastising hand of God. It is to them that I shall have to speak. You are not all of you in trial, I know no father chastises his whole family at once. It is so seldom that God afflicts people, after all, compared with their faults, that we must not expect to find in this congregation, perhaps, one-half of the children of God passing under the rod of the covenant; but if you are not under it now, you will have to pass under it some time or other in your life, so that what we may say, if it be not profitable to you in present circumstances, yet if treasured up and recollected, it shall be fetched out in some future time, when the wine will not have lost its flavor by keeping, but have improved thereby, and you will find it a bottle of cordial to your spirit, useful to your heart.

There are two dangers against which a person under the chastising hand of God should always be very careful to keep a strict look-out. They are these: "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." That is one. On the other hand: "Neither faint when thou art rebuked of him." Two evils: the one is despising the rod and the other is fainting under it. Evils always hunt in couples; sins always go in a leash. It is a marvellous thing that there are always to be found two evils, side by side. We have said sometimes, extremes are dangerous, and for this reason, that one evil has its opposite, which is equally a hurtful thing. Take this: there is a haughty pride which laughs at the rod. On the other hand there is a foolish faintness which faints under it. I have found through life that there is always a Scylla and a Charybdis; a rock on the one side and a whirlpool on the other, between which it is dangerous to steer. On the one hand we are tempted to feel that we can do something, and to trust in our works, and if we try to shun that, we run into sloth and leave off doing anything. At times we get proud of what we have accomplished; and in seeking to avoid that, we become despairing and desponding. There are always two evils on the opposite side of one another. The way of righteousness is a difficult pass between two great mountains of error; and the great secret of the Christian life is to wind his way along the narrow valley. God help us so to do! We will point out the two this morning.

The first evil to which the chastened Christian is liable is this: he may despise the hand of God. The second is, that he may faint when he is rebuked. We will begin with the first: "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord."

I. This may be done in five ways, and in discussing the subject, I shall propose the remedy for each of these as we pass along.

First, a man may despise the chastening of the Lord when he murmurs at it. Ephraim is like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; when a son of God first feels the rod, he is like a bullock—he kicks at it, he cannot bear it. He is an unbroken colt, and when he first feels the collar put upon his shoulders, he rears in the air, and by all manner of ways expresses his aversion thereunto. The first time a child of God receives a blow from his Father's hand he may possibly turn round upon his own tender Father and murmur at him: "Why ought I to have this? Why am I thus punished and afflicted? Why should I be chastised? What have I done to be afflicted and chastened?" "You will wonder, perhaps, that a man who has grace in his heart should talk like this; but in reality we do say so—not with the words of our lips, but with the thoughts of our hearts, for we sit down and say, "I am the man who hath seen affliction—I am the man more tried and troubled than others. No one is ever chastened as I am." And we look around with the eye of jealousy exclaiming, "That man is happier than I—that man has less sorrow and suffering." We are too apt to put our own condition in the worst place, and describe ourselves as being the most afflicted of all God's people. Though we blush to say it, it is true. There are murmurers in the midst of Israel now, as well as in the camp of Israel of old; there are people of God who, when the rod falls, cry out against it, who, instead of kissing the Son lest he be angry, turn round upon him, and speak against the afflictive dispensations of God. We know ourselves what it is when we have a little sickness to be so cross, that hardly anybody dares to speak to us, and if we have a little pain, perhaps in our head, we know what it is to think all the world is going wrong, and to be grieved, and vexed, and melancholy on that account. Many of you have been foolish enough when bereaved of your property, to cry out, "Ah! God takes everything away. He smites me with one stroke upon another. Surely he is an unkind God." And you have felt when you have lost your friends that you could not say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." You have thought, "Oh! wherefore this? Simon is not, and Joseph is not, and now ye would take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." We have murmured, now listen to the exhortation: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." That is despising God's chastening, when we murmur at it. Patience is the only way to receive it. A want of resignation shows we despise God's chastening hand.

A word with thee, O murmurer! Why shouldst thou murmur against the dispensations of thy heavenly Father? Can he treat thee more hardly than thou deservest? Consider what a rebel thou wast once, but he has pardoned thee. Surely if he chooses now to lay the rod upon thee, thou needest not cry out. Hast thou not read, that amongst the Roman emperors of old it was the custom when they would set a slave at liberty, to give him a blow upon the head, and then say, "Go free?" This blow which thy Father gives thee is a token of thy liberty, and dost thou grumble because he smites thee rather hardly? After all, are not his strokes fewer than thy crimes, and lighter than thy guilt? Art thou smitten as hardly as thy sins deserve? Consider the corruption that is in thy breast, and then wilt thou wonder that there needs so much of the rod to fetch it out? Weigh thyself, and discern how much dross is mingled with thy gold, and dost thou think the fire too hot to get away so much dross as thou hast? Why, thou hast not the furnace hot enough, methinks. There is too much dross, too little fire; the rod is not laid on hardly enough, for that proud spirit of thine proves that thy heart is not thoroughly sanctified; and though it may be right with God, thy words do

not sound like it, and thine actions do not pourtray the holiness of thy nature. It is the old Adam within thee that is groaning. Take heed if thou murmurest, for it will go hard with murmurers. God always chastises his children twice if they do not bear the first blow patiently. I have often heard a father say, "Boy, if you cry for that you shall have something to cry for by-and-by." So, if we murmur at a little God gives us something that will make us cry. If we groan for nothing, he will give us something that will make us groan. Sit down in patience; despise not the chastening of the Lord, be not angry with him, for he is not angry with thee; say not that he deals so hardly with thee. Let humility rise up and speak—"It is well, O Lord! Just art thou in thy chastising, for I have sinned, righteous art thou in thy blows, for I need them to fetch me near to thee, for if thou dost leave me uncorrected and unchastised, I, a poor wanderer, must pass away to the gulf of death, and sink into the pit of eternal perdition." There is the first sense in which we may despise the chastening of the Lord: we may murmur under it.

Secondly, we despise the chastening of the Lord when we say there is no use in it. There are certain things that happen to us in life, which we immediately set down for a providence. If a grandfather of ours should die and leave us five hundred pounds, what a merciful providence that would be! If by something strange in business we were suddenly to accumulate a fortune, that would be a blessed providence! If an accident happens, and we are preserved, and our limbs are not hurt, that is always a providence. But suppose we were to lose five hundred pounds, would not that be a providence? Suppose our establishment should break up, and business fail, would not that be a providence? Suppose we should during the accident break our leg, would not that be a providence? There is the difficulty. It is always a providence when it is a good thing. But why is it not a providence when it does not happen to be just as we please? Surely it is so; for if the one thing be ordered by God, so is the other. It is written, "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." But I question whether that is not despising the chastening of the Lord, when we set a prosperous providence before an adverse one, for I do think that an adverse providence ought to be the cause of as much thankfulness as a prosperous one. And if it is not, we are violating the command, "In everything give thanks." But we say, Of what use will such trial be to me?; cannot see that it can by any possibility be useful to my soul. Here I was growing in grace just now, but there is something that has damped all my ardor, and overthrown my zeal. Just now I was on the mount of assurance, and God has brought me to the valley of humiliation. Can that be any good to me? A few weeks ago I had wealth, and I distributed it in the cause of God; now I have none. What can be the use of that? All these things are against me." Now, you are despising the chastening of the Lord, when you say that is of no use. No child thinks the rod of much value. Anything in the house is of more use than that rod in his opinion. And if you were to ask the child which part of the household furniture could be dispensed with, he would like chairs, tables and everything else to remain but that; the rod he does not think of any good whatever. He despises the rod. Ah! and so do we. We think it cannot benefit us; we want to get rid of the rod and turn it away. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." Let me show thee how wrong thou art. What! doth thine ignorance affect to say that God is unwise? I thought it was written that he was too wise to err; and I did think that thou wast a believer, that he was too good to be unkind. And doth thy little wisdom arrogate to itself the chair of honor? Doth thy finite knowledge stand up before thy Maker and tell him he is unwise in what he doth? Wilt thou dare to say that one of his purposes shall be unfulfilled, that he does an unwise act? O then, thou art impudently arrogant I thou art impudently ignorant if thou wilt thus speak. Say not so, but bend meekly down before his superior wisdom, and say. "O God I believe that in the darkness thou art brewing light, that in the storm-clouds thou art gathering sunshine, that in the deep mines thou art fashioning diamonds, and in the beds of the sea thou art making pearls. I believe that however unfathomable may be thy designs, yet they have a bottom. Though it is in the whirlwind and in the storm, thou hast a way, and that way is good and

righteous altogether. I would not have thee alter one atom of thy dispensations, it shall be just as thou wilt. I bow before thee, and I give my ignorance the word to hold its tongue, and to be silenced while thy wisdom speaketh words of right." "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord" by thinking that it can be of no possible service to thee.

There is a third way in which men despise the chastening of the Lord, that is—we may think it dishonorable to be chastened by God. How many men have thought it to be dishonorable to be persecuted for righteousness sake! A young man for instance is in a situation in business where he has a large number of fellow workmen with him. They are accustomed to jeer him, to call him pretty titles—methodist, dissenter, presbyterian, or some other kind of name most common among the worldly; this young man for a time bears it, but still thinking it a kind of disgrace to him. He does not know how to endure it. So, after a while, teeing beaten by these jeers, and overcome by these insults, he leaves it off, because he discovers that the reproach of Christ is dishonorable to him. My son, if thou dost thus, thou despisest the chastening of the Lord. If thou thinkest that reproach for Christ's sake is a dishonor, thou judgest wrongly of it, for it is the greatest honor that can possibly happen to thee. There are many of you who count that religion is very honorable while you can be respectable in it, while you can walk in respectable society, but if the cause of God brings you into tribulation, if it engenders the laugh and jeer of the worldling, the hiss and scorn of the world, then you think it a dishonor. But my son thou dost not weigh the blessing rightly. I tell thee once again, it is the glory of a man to be chastened for God's sake. When they say all manner of evil against us falsely, we put that down not in the book of dishonor but in the scroll of glory. When they call us by opprobrious titles, we write not that down for loss, but for gain. We accept their jeers as honors, we count the vile things they cast at us in the pillory of scorn to be a donation of pearls and diamonds: we take their evil speaking, we read it by the light of the Word of God, and we discover that in it lie music, notes of honor and chords of glory to us for ever. Now you who faint under a little trouble, and despise the chastening of the Lord, let me encourage you in this way. My son, despise not the persecution. Remember how many men have borne it. What an honor it is to suffer for Christ's sake! because the crown of martyrdom has been worn by many heads better than thine. Oh! methinks it would be the greatest dignity I could ever attain to, if the enemy would place the blood-red crown of martyrdom around this brow! We in these gentle times cannot suffer for Christ's sake. God has put us in evil times because we cannot encounter so much as we wish for him. These times are not good for us. We almost wish for different ones, when we might be more partakers with Christ in his sufferings. We would almost envy those blessed men of yore, who had the opportunity of showing their courage and faith to all men, by enduring more for Christ; and if any of you are in a peculiar place of trouble, where you have more persecution than others, you ought to glory in it, and should be glad of it. He that stands in the thickest part of the battle shall have the highest glory at last. The old warriors would not stand and skirmish a little on the outside of the army; but what would they say? "To the center, men! to the center!" And they cut through thick and thin till they reached the place where the standard was, and the hotter the battle, the more glory the warrior felt. He could glory that he had been where shafts flew the thickest, and where lances were hurled like hail. "I have been near the standard," he could say, "I have smitten the standard-bearer down." Count it glory to go into the hottest part of the field. Fear not, man, thine head is covered in the day of battle; the shield of God can easily repel all the darts of the enemy. Be bold for his name's sake. Go on still rejoicing. But, mark thee, if thou turnest back thou art guilty of the sin of despising the cross, and despising the chastening of the Lord. Do not do so, but rather write it down for an honor and glory to be persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Again, in the fourth place, we despise the chastening of the Lord, when we do not earnestly seek to amend by it. Many a man has been corrected by God, and that correction has been in vain. I have known Christian men, men who have committed some sin, God, by the rod, would have shown them the evil of that sin; they have been smitten and seen the sin, and never afterwards corrected it. That is despising the chastening of the Lord. When a father chastises a son for anything he has done, and the boy does it again directly, it shows that he despises his father's chastening; and so have we seen Christians who have had an error in their lives, and God has chastened them on account of it, but they have done it again. Ah! you will remember there was a man named Eli. God chastened him once when he sent Samuel to tell him dreadful news—that because he had not reproved his children those children should be destroyed, but Eli kept on the same as ever; he despised the chastening of the Lord although his ears were made to tingle, and in a little while God did something else for him. His sons were taken away, and then it was too late to mend, for the children were gone. The time he might have reformed, his character had passed away. How many of you get chastened of God and do not bear the rod. There are many deaf souls that do not hear God's rod; many Christians are blind and cannot see God's purposes, and when God would take some folly out of them the folly is still retained. It is not every affliction that benefits the Christian; it is only a sanctified affliction, It is not every trial that purifies an heir of light it is only a trial that God himself sanctifies by his grace. Take heed if God is trying you, that you search and find out the reason. Are the consolations of God small with you? Then, there is some reason for it. Have you lost that joy you once felt? There is some cause for it. Many a man would not have half so much suffered if he would but look to the cause of it. I have sometimes walked a mile or two, almost limping along because there was a stone in my shoe, and I did not stop to look for it. And many a Christian goes limping for years because of the stones in his shoe, but if he would only stop to look for them, he would be relieved. What is the sin that is causing you pain? Get it out, and take away the sin, for if you do not, you have not regarded this admonition which speaketh unto you as unto sons—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord."

Once, more, and then we will pass away from that part of the subject. We despise the chastening of the Lord when we despise those that God chastens. You say, "Poor old Mrs. So-and-so, the last seven years she has been bed-ridden, what is the good of her in the church? Would it not be a mercy if she were dead? We always have to be keeping her—one and another giving her charities. Really what is the good of her? "Many will go to see her, and they will say, "Well, she is a very good sort of woman, but it would be a happy release if she were taken." They mean it would be a happy release for them, as they would not have to give her anything. But mark you, if you think little of those whom God is chastising, you are despising the God who chastens them. There is another man, and he frequents the house of God, but he comes there in much affliction, much pain. Ah! you think that weakness of body incapacitates him from being of service to the church. If he is called upon to pray, there is a sweet brokenness of spirit about his prayer, but there is not that pointedness and warmth we could desire. And some will say when they are walking home, "Brother So-and-so, he is always melancholy, and always dealing with the gloomy side of the Word of God, I don't hardly like to talk to him. I would rather mix with the cheerful and light-hearted, and those Christians who are happy on the mount of assurance. I don't think I shall walk home with him, for he is so miserable, it makes one feel so dull to be in his company." My son, my son, thou art despising the chastened ones of the Lord. That man is being chastened; be sure and keep his company, for though thou dost not know it, beneath the habiliments of mourning he wears a garment of light. There is more in those chastened ones, very often, than there is in any one of us. I can speak from experience. The most tried children of God have been those that I have picked up the most from. Sometimes I go and see a poor much-tried countryman that I have told you about. You remember one saying of his. "Depend upon it, if you or I get an inch above the ground we get that inch too high." Well, I heard another the other day, and I

will give it to you. "I have been troubled," he said, "with that old devil lately, and I could not get rid of him for a long while, until at last, after he had been conjuring up all my sins, and bringing them all before my remembrance, I said to him, 'You rascal you! did not I transfer all my business to Jesus Christ long ago, bad debts and all? What business have you to bring them here! I laid them all on Christ; I made a transfer of the whole concern to him. Go, tell my Master about them. Don't come troubling me.'" Well, I thought that was not so bad. It was pretty rough, but it was gloriously true, and I have thought many times of it. We transferred the whole, bad debts and all, to Christ. He took the whole concern, the whole stock, and everything. All our sins were given up into the hands of Jesus, so why need we be troubled? When Satan and Conscience come, we will tell them to go to our Master. He will settle all the accounts with them. Do not be ashamed to talk with the chastised ones; shun them not because of their poverty. I would walk with a true saint if he had a ragged coat and a hat without a crown.

II. The second evil, upon which we shall have to be rather more brief, is this; "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." We, on the one hand, must not despise it, and say, "I care not for the rod," and act like the stoic; and on the other hand we should not faint and give up everything because the Lord pleases to correct us in a measure, and to chastise us in love. There are two or three different ways whereby we may faint under the afflicting hand of God.

The first way of fainting is when we give up all exertion under the rod. You understand what I mean better than I describe to you, for you have seen some such. I must give you a picture; I cannot tell you what I mean unless I do. There is a good woman there. She always attended the house of God regularly. She strove for her Master; was busy in the Sabbath-school, in the distribution of tracts, and every other way. Suddenly she lost that excellent gift, the fullness of assurance; her faith began to totter, and she now trembles, and fears, lest she is not accepted in the Beloved. And do you know what she has done? She has given up going to the house of God, she has given up attendance at the Sabbath-school, she does just nothing for her Master at all. And if you ask her why it is, she says that God's hand is heavy on her, and she cannot do anything, she has given it up. She is like a person in a fainting fit that cannot move; she is motionless, she does nothing. Many I have known in this state. Because they cannot enjoy all the comfort they wished, they will not do anything. I have seen some with eyes starting from their sockets, who have said to me "Oh! I am under such horror of darkness, so terribly am I afflicted, I have lost all evidence of Christianity—I never was a child of God. I must give it all up: I cannot keep on. I faint under it. I can do no more. Though I go to God's house, I feel as if I could not pray. As for singing, I dare not. I dare not read my Bible. I think I must give it up." My son, faint not when thou art corrected of him. God does not like sulky children, and there are many of his children fainting out of pure sulkiness, and nothing else. Because God does not please to do as they like, they will do nothing at all, "I must be top sawyer," says he, "and I will not be at bottom to shove the saw up. If I cannot be where I like I will be nowhere at all." We have many of these. Because they have to be shaft horses now and then, they will not pull. If they could always be in front and wear the ribbons, it would be well, but when they have to go behind all, they "jib" as you say, and will not go at all. Instead of fainting, we should go forward when we have the lash; we should say, "Am I smitten? I will turn to the hand that smote me. Did my Father strike me? Then I will take care, by more ardent duty, that he does not strike me again, and I will go my way the more swiftly and get away from the rod. Does he send a cross every day out of love to me? I will seek to work all the more, and so, if it be possible, I shall have my prayer fulfilled. "Forgive my debts, and pardon my transgressions."

Again, the man faints when he doubts whether he is a child of God under chastisement. Too many of the children of God have the blow of the Father's rod, and they at once conclude that they are not the Father's

children at all. Like one of old they say, "If it be so, why am I thus?" forgetful that it is "through much tribulation" they must "enter the kingdom of heaven," and unmindful that there is not a son whom the Father does not chasten. Thou art saying this morning, "I cannot be a child, or I should not be in poverty and distress." Talk not thus foolishly, that trial is more a proof of adoption than it is that thou art not his. Remember the passage: "If we be not partakers of chastisement then are we bastards, and not sons." Say not he has forgotten thee, but look upon thy trial as a proof of his love. Cecil once called to see his friend Williams, and the servant said he could not see him because he was in great trouble. "Then I would rather see him," said Cecil; and Williams hearing it was his old pastor, said, "Show him up." Up he went, and there stood poor Williams, his eyes suffused with tears, his heart almost broken, his dear child was dying. "Thank God," said Cecil; "I have been anxious about you for some time, you have been so prosperous and successful in everything, that I was afraid my Father had forgotten you, but I know he recollects you now. I do not wish to see your child full of pain and dying; but I am glad to think my Father has not forgotten you." Three weeks after that Williams could see the truth of it, though it seemed a harsh saying at first.

Again, many persons faint by fancying that they shall never get out of their trouble. "Three long months," says one, "have I striven against this sad trouble which overwhelms me, and I have been unable to escape it." "For this year," says another, "I have wrestled with God in prayer that he would deliver me out of this whirlpool, but deliverance has never come, and I am almost inclined to give the matter up, I thought he kept his promises, and would deliver those who called upon him, but he has not delivered me now, and he never will." What! child of God, talk thus of thy Father! say he will never leave off smiting because he has smitten thee so long? Rather say "He must have smitten me long enough now, and I shall soon have deliverance." If a man is in a wood and cannot see his way out, he goes straight on, for he thinks he shall come out some day or other; and if he is wise he will climb the highest tree he can find, in order to discover the right way. That is how you should do, climb one of the promises, and thou wilt see the other side of the wood with all the sweet fields, beyond where thou shalt feed in green pastures, and lie down under your Saviour's guidance. Say not thou canst not escape. The fetters on thy hands may not be broken by thy feeble fingers, but the hammer of the Almighty can break them in a moment. Let them be laid on the anvil of providence and be smitten by the hand of omnipotence, and then they shall be scattered to the winds. Up, man! up. Like Samson, grasp the pillars of thy troubles, and pull down the house of thine affliction about the heads of thy sins, and thou thyself shalt come out more than conqueror.

I had intended to finish up by referring you to the succeeding verses; but instead of doing so, let me ask, what son is there whom the Father chasteneth not? Ye ministers of God who preach the gospel, is there amongst your ranks one son whom his Father chastens not? Unanimously they reply, "We all have been chastened." Ye holy prophets who testified God's word with the Holy Ghost from heaven, is there one amongst your number whom God chastened not? Abraham, Daniel, Jeremy, Isaiah, Malachi, answer; and unanimously ye cry, "There is not one among us whom the Father chasteneth not." Ye kings, ye chosen ones, ye Davids and ye Solomons, is there one in your high and lofty ranks who has escaped chastisement? Answer David! Wast not thou obliged to cross the brook Kedron in the darkness? Answer Hezekiah! Didst not thou spread the letter before the Lord? Answer Jehoshaphat! Hadst not thou thy cross when thy ships were broken that were sent to Tarshish for gold? Oh ye starry host above, translated out of the reach of the trials of this world, is there one amongst you whom the Father chastened not? Not one; there is not one in heaven whose back was unscarred by the chastening rod, if he attained to the age when he needed it. The infant alones escapes, flying at once from his mother's breast to heaven. There is one whom I will ask, the Son of God, the Son par excellence, the chief of all the family. Thou Son of God Incarnate, didst thou escape the rod? Son without sin, wast thou a Son without punishment? Wast thou

chastised? Hark! the hosts of earth and heaven reply—the church militant and triumphant answer: “The chastisement of our peace was even upon him: he suffered; he bore the cross; he endured the curse as well as any of us; yea, more, he endured ten thousand-fold more chastisement than any of us can by any possibility endure.” “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him.”

In closing, let me ask those who are afflicted and have no religion, where they get their comfort from. The Christian derives it from the fact that he is a son of God, and he knows that the affliction is for his good. Where do you get comfort from? It has often puzzled me how poor tried worldlings get on. I can somewhat guess how they can be happy, when the glass is full, when hearts are glad and joyous, when hilarity and mirth sparkle in their eyes, when the board is covered, and the family is well. But what does the worldling do when he loses his wife, when his children are taken away, when his health departs and he himself is nigh unto death? I leave him to answer. All I can say is, I wonder every day that there are not more suicides, considering the troubles of this life, and how few there are that have the comforts of religion; Poor sinner, even if there were no heaven and hell, I would recommend to thee this religion; for even if in this life only we had hope, we should be of all men most happy, really, in our spirits, although we might seem to be “of all men most miserable.” I tell you, if we were to die like dogs, if there were no second world, so happy does the Christian religion make the heart, that it were worth while having it for this life alone. The secularist who thinks of this world only, is a fool for not thinking of Christianity, for it confers a benefit in this world as well as in that which is to come. It makes us bear our troubles. What would break your backs are only feathers to us; what would destroy your spirits are to us “light afflictions which are but for a moment.” We find light enough in our hearts, in the depth of darkness. Where you find darkness we have light; and, where you have light we have the brilliance of the sun. May God put you in the number of his saved family, and then if he chastens you, I ask whether you will not think his rod light when compared with that sword which you deserve to have smitten you dead. God give you, if you are chastened now, that you may be chastened and not killed, that you may be chastened with the righteous, and not condemned with the wicked.

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