

"The furnace of affliction is a good place for you, Christian; it benefits you; it helps you to become more like Christ, and it is fitting you for Heaven!" (Charles Spurgeon)

In times of great struggle, Christians often may ask:

- Why the hardships? The trials? The afflictions? The difficulties? The unforeseen news? The change of circumstances? The unpleasant moments?
- Is God punishing me? Does God hate me? Why is he doing this to me? Why me? What did I do to deserve this? How long must this go on? What sin did I commit to prompt this?

- Job 5:17 - behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty;
 - Ps 94:12 -- Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O lord; and whom you teach out of your Law;
 - Ps 119:75—And in faithfulness you have afflicted me;
 - Ps 119:71 - it is good for me that I was afflicted that I may learn your statutes;
 - Rom 5:3 - we exult/rejoice in our tribulations;
 - James 1:2 - We can consider it all joy when we encounter various trials;

THESIS — As we look at Proverbs 3:11-12, we will understand a great deal about one of the greatest proofs of God's love -- His Fatherly Discipline. This text guides us in 2 ways.

1. Embrace God's Discipline (11) // the rule // the prohibition
2. Remember God's Love (12) // the reason // the purpose

I. EMBRACE GOD'S DISCIPLINE (11)

1. Verse 11 - it's called the **Discipline ... reproof (NASB/ESV)**

2. Verse 11 - we are not to **reject** nor are we to **loathe** it (NASB); ESV/KJV: despise...be weary of.

❖ **WHAT is God's discipline?**

- The word refers to instruction, Training, Education, discipline (for maturity)
- Simply: it refers to unpleasant experiences; difficult things.
- God's discipline can take the form of: sickness, trials, hardships, unpleasant circumstances, calamity, afflictions, unexpected news, unforeseen hindrances, roadblocks, change of plans.
- S

❖ **A very important note: Discipline is *NOT* punishment!**

- Charles Spurgeon affirmed: God's people can never by any possibility be punished for their sins. God has punished them already in the person of Christ, their substitute. But yet, while the Christian cannot be condemned, he can be chastised. Punishment is laid on a man in anger; God strikes him in wrath. But when he

Proverbs 3:11-12 — "A Great Proof of God's Love: God's Fatherly Discipline: The What, Why And How of God's Discipline"

afflicts His child, chastisement is applied in love. The rod has been baptized in deep affection before it is laid on the believer's back.

•Jerry Bridges affirmed: The purpose of God's discipline is not to punish us but to transform us. He has already meted out punishment for our sins on Jesus at Calvary: "The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him" (Isaiah 53:5). But we must be transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ. That is the purpose of discipline.

❖ **Is God's discipline *only in response to a sin* you committed?**

AW Pink writes: Let us not conclude when we see a fellow-Christian under the rod of God that he is necessarily being taken to task for his sins.

❖ **WHY does God discipline us?**

1. to try/test our faith
2. to work patience in us
3. to inflame our prayers
4. to mortify our worldly desires
5. to break our earthly mindedness
6. to prepare us for heaven
7. to wean us off of self-trust/self-reliance
8. to conform us more to Christ in his sufferings
9. to encourage other saints
10. to magnify God in His sustaining power in you.

I. Embrace God's Discipline (11)

II. REMEMBER GOD'S LOVE (12)

John Bunyan: "In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God"

John Owen: "love precedes discipline!"

- ***God's motive in discipline always springs from fatherly love!***

These disciplines [hardships/trying times/difficulties] are sent to empty us of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness: they are given to show us our hidden transgressions, and to teach us the plague of our own hearts. Or again, chastisements are sent to strengthen our faith, to raise us to higher levels of experience, to bring us into a place of greater usefulness. And, God's discipline is sent as a preventative, to keep us from pride, to save us from being proud over success in God's service.

All that a believer suffers is not penal, arising from vindictive justice, but medicinal, arising from a fatherly love. It is His Fatherly medicine, not His angry punishment; it's His loving chastisement, not His furious sentence; His caring correction, not His condemnation (Samuel Bolton).

Hebrews 12:3-11! - The School of God's Fatherly Discipline.

- ✓ The context of Hebrews 12 is not chastisement because of a sin.
- ✓ The context of Hebrews 12 **IS** enduring hardship in the Christian life (v.3)
- ✓ they are tempted to grow weary and lose heart (v.3b)
- ✓ they are striving against sin (v.4)
- ✓ the goal is endurance in the Christian walk (v.7a)
- ✓ All children are those who are in discipline (v.8)
- The goal? — **So that you may share His holiness (v.10b)**

SOME THOUGHTS ON DISCIPLINE – from

Hebrews 12:4-11:

- Discipline is LOVING
- Discipline is MATURING
- Discipline is PURPOSEFUL
- Discipline is UNPLEASANT
- Discipline is GOOD
- Discipline is PURIFYING
- Discipline is TRAINING
- Discipline is INEVITABLE
- Discipline is FREQUENT
- Discipline is SANCTIFYING!

The Puritans Give Great Counsel As To Bearing Up Under God's Fatherly Discipline:

HOW DO WE BEAR WITH IT?

1. LOOK TO **GOD'S PROMISES!** — Look to God's promises (John Owen); Christ has a way of curing our OUTWARD afflictions by INWARD COMFORTS (Flavel)
2. LOOK TO **YOUR SONSHIP!** — Affliction is a sign of Sonship (John Bunyan); "If ye were not Christ's wheat, appointed to be bread in His house, He would not grind you."
3. LOOK TO **JESUS' LOVE!** — Everything that comes to you comes from the love of Jesus (John Flavel) - "in all the evils and afflictions that befall you, eye Jesus Christ!" (Flavel)
4. LOOK TO **GREATER MATURITY!** — all hardship is the school of education as we journey to heaven (Anon); Luther: Affliction is the best book in my library. You cannot sneak quietly into heaven without a cross. Crosses form us into His image. (Rutherford)
5. LOOK TO **GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY!** — everything that comes to you is from God's hand (Thomas Watson); Whoever brings an affliction, it is God who sends it. (Thomas Watson)
6. LOOK TO **HEAVEN'S SWEETNESS!** — it prepares us better for heaven (Richard Sibbes); The winter prepares the earth for the spring, so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory. (Richard Sibbes)

8 helps to cope with afflictions

By Arthur Hildersham

1. Think about affliction, expect it, and prepare for it before it comes.
2. Wean your heart from loving earthly things so that when losses and crosses come, you will be able to bow under them in sweet submission.
3. Acquaint yourself thoroughly with the Scriptures, for they prepare people for affliction, and teach us patience and comfort in affliction, like no other book can.
4. Labor to realize how sinful you really are, so that you will understand that what you are enduring is nothing compared to what you deserve.
5. Before the trial comes, make sure you get a true and living faith, and a comfortable assurance of your reconciliation with God through Christ, for faith in Christ and assurance of your soul's well-being in Him will enable you to drink "the bitterest potion from His hand."
6. Remember that you possess the hope of eternal glory if and when you die.
7. Before affliction comes, be careful "to lead a godly life, and to get a good conscience."
8. Let prayer strengthen you in every trial.

WHEN TRIALS COME

When trials come no longer fear
 For in the pain our God draws near
 To fire a faith worth more than gold
 And there His faithfulness is told
 And there His faithfulness is told

I turn to Wisdom not my own
 For every battle You have known
 My confidence will rest in You
 Your love endures Your ways are good
 Your love endures Your ways are good

When I am weary with the cost
 I see the triumph of the cross
 So in its shadow I shall run
 Till He completes the work begun
 Till He completes the work begun

One day all things will be made new
 I'll see the hope You called me to
 And in your kingdom paved with gold
 I'll praise your faithfulness of old
 I'll praise your faithfulness of old"

I ASKED THE LORD

I asked the Lord that I might grow
 In faith and love and ev'ry grace,
 Might more of His salvation know,
 And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
 And He, I trust, has answered prayer,
 But it has been in such a way
 As almost drove me to despair.

Yea, more with His own hand He seemed
 Intent to aggravate my woe,

Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
 Humbled my heart and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this," I trembling cried;
 "Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?"
 "Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
 "I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ
 From self and pride to set thee free
 And break thy schemes of earthly joy
 That thou mayst find thy all in Me."

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
 Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
 What more can He say than to you He hath said,
 To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
 For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
 I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
 Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand."

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
 The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;

For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
 And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress."

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
 My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
 The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
 Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
 I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
 That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
 I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!"