

Sermon 13, This Is My Beloved Son, Proverbs 3:11-12

Proposition: Do not reject or loathe God's chastening, for it is a mark of His love.

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 - B. Don't Loathe It
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Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come this morning to one of the most profound texts in Proverbs, and really, in the entire Bible. I feel hopelessly inadequate to preach this text, for it tells us to be content when suffering. In our culture, which no longer recognizes any difference between discipline and abuse, the message of Proverbs 3:11-12 is radical, and indeed hateful to many. The passage tells us that God inflicts suffering on His children, not as punishment to satisfy His justice, but rather as discipline or chastening, to benefit them and make them into the kind of people they ought to be. God had one Son without sin but He has no sons without suffering! And so, as our passage makes abundantly clear, God's chastening is for sons. It is administered in the context of faith, hope, and love. And you simply must work with it, rather than against it. Don't resist it. Don't reject it. Submit to it, for it is a mark of His love.

I. How to Endure Chastening, vv. 11-12

Our text begins by telling us how to endure chastening — not positively, but negatively. When you are chastened, there are two things you will want to do. You are not allowed to do either of them.

A. Don't Reject It

The first thing you'll want to do is variously rendered "despise" or "reject." What it refers to is simply an attitude of resistance. If you are looking down on the chastening, thinking that it's awful, bad, and terrible, or refusing to accept its presence in your life, then you are rejecting it. Like they tell you in childbirth coaching, don't resist the contraction; work with it. Don't resist the pain; work with it!

How do you do that? How in the world do you endure the pain of chastening without rejecting it and pushing it away from yourself? Most of us stuff pain into a place inside and then

refuse to touch that place. We handle it very gingerly if for some reason we have to touch it. But that's completely the wrong approach. Do not reject the chastening of the LORD.

Brothers and sisters, I don't know how to do this. I'm not good at leaning into the pain, embracing it as a gift from my loving Heavenly Father. Instead, let me tell you about someone who did it perfectly. His name was Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son of God the Father. He suffered worse than anyone else in history, even than Job in the Biblical tradition or Priam, King of Troy, in the classical tradition. And how did He respond to suffering? He went willingly. Yes, He prayed against it. Yes, He was in agony over it and in it. But He endured the cross not in anger, not reviling, not rejecting the pain. Do you remember how He even refused the first-century equivalent of a Tylenol? They offered Him the painkilling wine with myrrh, but He would not take it. Why? Because He wanted to make it clear that He was not rejecting His Father's chastening! Oh, brothers and sisters, gaze on the grandeur and glory of Jesus Christ. He did not reject the suffering of the cross. Indeed, that was not chastening, but punishment. He took God's wrath against our sin so that we would not have to take it. How much more, then, ought we to bear our loving Heavenly Father's chastening!

B. Don't Loathe It

But not only are we called to lean into the pain, accepting it as a gift from God; we are also required not to loathe it, not to be weary of it. If you've ever suffered, there's come a point, usually not too far into the process, at which you said "I'm tired of this!" Well, according to Proverbs 3:11, that's exactly what you're not allowed to say. You cannot say "I'm weary of this chastening. I am sick and tired of my poor health/singleness/financial trouble/marital problems and on and on and on." Don't be weary when God reproves you.

What is a reproof? It is a correction. It's God saying, "Caleb, you are walking in pride. Here's something humiliating that will expose your pride and show how ridiculous it is." How does one respond to such a correction? Our default is to loathe it, to shun it, to hate it, to try to block it. But the biblical response, the one that God wants to see, is to embrace it.

How in the world do you do that? Only by spending time with Jesus, the one who suffered perfectly. Spend time with Him in prayer. Spend time reading the Bible, His letter to you. Spend time in public worship, coming to recognize the dimensions of His love with all the saints. Brothers and sisters, the more you're suffering, the more necessary these things are for you to make proper use of that suffering!

C. Recognize that it is a mark of love

When you spend time with Jesus, you will recognize that chastening is a mark of God's fatherly love. God corrects the one He loves! You see, love desires what is best for the beloved. And what is best for us, a good part of the time, is to be corrected. The fact that God is chastening you is a sign that you are the son in whom He delights! The fact that the LORD is bringing suffering into your life is not a sign of His disfavor, but the reverse! It is the bastard who is undisciplined. It is the child whom the father hates who gets away with absolutely everything. The beloved child is shaped, formed, chastised, and guided.

Can you receive your cancer as a gift of God's love? Can you receive identity theft as a gift of God's love? Can you receive unexpected home repair needs as a gift of God's love? Can you receive job loss as a gift of God's love? Brothers and sisters, these things are hard, sometimes brutally hard. But they are God's gifts, given to those in whom He delights!

We need a paradigm shift. Too often we think like pagans: "What did I do wrong? What is God getting me for? Why am I suffering?" When something painful happens or keeps happening to us, we think that God is punishing us, that He is trying to change our behavior because we did something He didn't like. But that's not the case at all. God is not vengeful in that way toward His children. Jesus didn't do anything wrong. Job didn't do anything wrong. Adam didn't do anything wrong, not at first. The difficulty came into their lives not as a punishment but as a chastening! God placed those sufferings in their paths so that they could learn to trust Him better, yes — but ultimately, as in the case of Jesus, the sufferings were His ways of accomplishing nothing less than the salvation of the world! Your sufferings, of course, aren't going to save the world. But the Lord's chastening is not Him getting you for your misbehavior. Rather, it is His way of training you to trust Him, training you to share His holiness. It's how He gets your attention and says to you, "Do you trust me? Am I really enough for you? Do you love me, or just the stuff I give you?"

He loves you enough to want your love. He wants you to love and trust Him because loving and trusting Him is the best thing you can ever do. He delights in you enough to want you to delight in Him.

So how do you suffer? Suffer by delighting in Christ. Suffer, not getting weary or rejecting what's happening to you, but rather, trusting completely in the chastening hand of a loving Father.

II. The Context of Chastening

Notice, then, the context in which the LORD's chastening appears.

A. Faith, v. 5

God chastens in the context of faith. When we trust Him absolutely, with our whole hearts, He might direct our life paths right into suffering. Faith is a trustful orientation toward God, the attitude which says "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Do you bless the name of Yahweh? Jesus did. He trusted God from His mother's womb.

In other words, brothers and sisters, for chastening to do you good you need to be the person who manifests faith and indeed all of the character qualities mentioned in the first ten verses of this chapter.

B. Hope, v. 2

Another one of those qualities is hope. Do you have hope for length of days, long life, and peace? Are you looking toward the future and toward the fulfillment of all God's promises? That is what will get you through suffering. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and fix your hope on those things which He has promised you. Suffer hopefully. Be chastened while looking toward what God has for the future.

C. Love, v. 12

God's love leads Him to correct us. Sometimes we will be chastened for a particular sin, not because God is dealing with us in retributive justice but rather because He wants to train us not to commit that sin any more. He loves us enough to discipline us so that we don't sin that sin! Do you recognize the love of God in chastening? Don't overlook it. It is the fundamental factor here. His correction in your life is motivated by His desire for what's best for you, His beloved.

D. Sonship, vv. 11a, 12b

And finally, brothers and sisters, don't forget the gospel context. The LORD chastens *sons*. The Lord chastens all those who have become His children through faith in Jesus Christ. This passage is not for unbelievers. They suffer God's punishment. Their suffering is because of His justice, not for their own good. But if you have become one of his children through faith in Jesus, your suffering is for your profit. It is to teach you holiness. It is not a message of condemnation, but rather of acceptance!

Beloved, if you're a child of God and you're hurting, take it for what it is: God's love. He loves you. He delights in you in Christ. And so though no chastening is pleasant, yet it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it. Amen.