

• Difficulties are part of the Christian life

The Hebrews were going through many difficulties. But there is nothing unusual about God's children going through tough times. It is an essential element in the Christian life that painful things happen to us.

1. Our danger is that we forget an essential part of the Christian life

• Sometimes troubles are God's fatherly correction

• Growth in holiness is not optional!

• We should not forget this or be discouraged

1. **Our danger is that we forget an essential part of the Christian life.** ⁵*And you have forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as sons and daughters: 'My son, do not despise the fatherly correction of the Lord, nor become discouraged when you are rebuked by him.'* Sometimes – although it is not the only explanation of our troubles – the troubles that come upon us are God's fatherly correction. God is determined that his children should share his holiness. Any Christian who refuses God's correction because he does not want to share God's holiness is either not a Christian at all or has somehow picked up a very peculiar idea of what a Christian is. Growth in holiness is not optional! God is determined to get us to be more like himself. The quicker we co-operate with him the better, and if we are truly Christian people we should know that this is what the Christian life is all about. Our problem is that we tend to forget! We somehow get hold of the idea that the Christian life is all about God's making things easy for us! Well, God knows how to mix troubles and joys in the right mixture! But don't forget: fatherly correction is part of his plan. We should not be discouraged when it happens. It is a sign of God's love towards us. ⁶*'For the Lord corrects the one he loves, and punishes every son whom he receives.'*

2. God disciplines us when he sees it is necessary

• The easy way is to respond to God's word

• The tough way is chastening

• Sins that invite God's chastening...

2. **God disciplines us when he sees it is necessary.** The easy way to grow in holiness is to respond to God's word! But when we do not do that God has a tough way. His hand comes upon us in discipline! If we will not learn the easy way we must not be surprised if we have to learn the hard way. Yet it happens to all of us sooner or later. When God uses tough methods we must let him have his way and learn as quickly as we can. ⁷*It is for reasons of training that you must endure.* He uses difficult circumstances, maybe financial loss, maybe failure. Loss of health can sometimes be (but is not always) God's discipline (as 1 Corinthians 11:30 makes clear). God can even bless us by taking us to heaven prematurely (as is also clear in 1 Corinthians 11:30)! Persecution may be allowed to purify the church. Or God may 'hide his face'.

What kind of sins invite God's chastening? Anything that displeases God! But we have to be specially careful about spiritual pride, self-confidence, worldliness, laziness and self-satisfaction. When God sees that we are drifting this way, he speaks to us. But if we will not hear his voice, he is likely to take action! It is because he loves us! *God is treating you as sons and daughters*

3. We are to regard God's chastenings as entirely reasonable

3. **We are to regard God's chastenings as entirely reasonable.** *For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?* ⁸*And if you are without fatherly correction, in which all participate, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.* ⁹*In addition to this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and come alive [recover our spiritual life]?* ¹⁰*For*

• God's correction is not cruelty but great love

• Proof that we are His children

• God wants us to share His holiness

• This correction is temporary and training for the future

• Unlike earthly parents God makes no mistakes

• Let God teach you in this way

• Submit to God

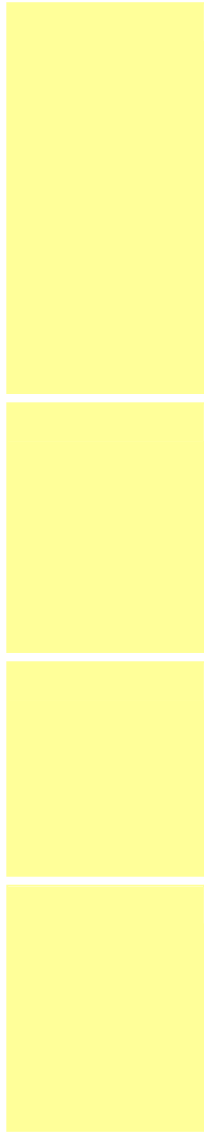
• Ask for wisdom

they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. This fatherly correction is not harshness in God or any kind of vindictiveness. God is not taking revenge upon us. Jesus has died for our sins. God has nothing but love in his heart towards us. But sometimes he sends his fatherly correction upon us. It is a proof that we are his children! If he took no action when he sees us going astray it would be a bad sign. God lets the world get away with many sins. Their day of judgement will come later. If you are allowed to sin and sin and sin and nothing happens to you, are you one of God's children at all.

God wants us to share his holiness. He demands that we grow in humility, in heavenly-mindedness, in purity, in meekness and patience. When our troubles are the result of God's determination to produce godliness in us, then they do not go on for ever. Even Job's troubles came to an end. This fatherly correction is temporary. It does not go on for ever. And it is training, preparation for the future. It is getting you ready to be used by God.

Our earthly parents often made mistakes. They disciplined us perhaps 'as it seemed best to them' but sometimes they were not very skilful! God is different. He makes no mistakes. It will not go on too long. It will not stop prematurely. The discipline will end when you have truly learned what God wants to teach you. If you will not learn it might go away and then come back in another form.

Let God teach you in this way. Rejoice in what is happening to you, not because you are enjoying it, but because you know what God is doing. Stay steady. Submit to God. Don't panic. The testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Don't try to run away or escape. If you lack wisdom, ask God to give it to you, and it will be given you.



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