

- God's discipline does not work automatically

- So how should we respond?

1. We look for the lesson that God wants to teach us

- We look forward to the long-term benefit – with humility and peace

2. We are to realize that we are being 'thoroughly trained'

- A picture of a gymnasium instructor – physical exercise

- We must ask how we have displeased Him

- Confess

- Pray

- Return

How are we to react to God's fatherly chastening? God's discipline does not work automatically. Our growing in godliness is never something automatic. No progress will be made if we expect God to do everything that needs to be done. There is a danger that we should despise the discipline and try to shake it off. Others become extremely discouraged. We begin to complain against God. Yet others become bitter, as our writer says in verse 15. So how should we respond?

1. We look for the lesson that God wants to teach us.
¹¹*And all fatherly correction seems unpleasant at the time. For the moment no discipline seems to have anything joyful in it. On the contrary it is painful! But later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been thoroughly trained by it.* We do not enjoy God's correction! There is nothing pleasant about it. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But it does have a long-term effect, and when we realize that God is dealing with us we can begin to look forward to the long-term effect. Actually it is wonderful to be corrected because it makes us know that God has not abandoned us. Better to be corrected than to experience God's oath of anger in which no further progress is made. So this correction trains us and leads us into ways of humility, meekness and peace.

2. We are to realize that we are being 'thoroughly trained'.
 The word used here (*gymnazo*) is often used with respect to gymnastic exercises. We are the adult sons and daughters of God. We are to be growing in maturity realizing what God is doing. It is God who is dealing with us and that in itself is a very great privilege. ¹²*Therefore lift up your feeble hands, and restore the lame knees,* ¹³*and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is crippled may not be dislocated but rather may be healed.* There is picture-language here. We are presented with the picture of a man who is a physical wreck. He badly needs physiotherapy. So the gymnasium-instructor takes him in hand and starts putting him through exercises. He must raise his hands. He must exercise his knees. He must run up and down a straight track.

What does it mean in practice? It means we must start thinking and doing some work with our minds. Why is God rebuking us? How have we displeased him? We must go to him and confess what we have done. We raise our hands in prayer! They have been slack too long. We exercise our knees – kneeling and doing some more kneeling. We run along the track that God has set before us. If we do not do it our state will get worse. We make a straight path for us to walk up and down and get used to walking again. It means: we come back to the 'straight and narrow'. We come back to the highway of holiness.

3. We pay special attention to certain dangers

- God wants us to be people of peace – as far as possible
- Pursue holiness
- Refuse bitterness

3. **We pay special attention to certain dangers.** The first is the danger of being un-peaceable. ¹⁴*Follow after peace with everyone...* God is a God of peace and he wants us to be people of peace also. Of course it is not always possible. The wisdom from above puts purity first and peaceableness second. It is only 'so far as it depends on you' that you can 'live peaceably with all'¹. But we do our very best to live peaceably. ¹⁴*Follow after peace with everyone and go after the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* We go after holiness. It is a very fierce battle and we are never 100 per cent successful. We are often knocked down in the conflict with Satan. But we get up again and we move on! When we do this we begin to 'see God'. I do not think our writer is talking about heaven. There is only one other place in Hebrews where it refers to seeing God² and that refers to something in this life! But as we become pleasing to God, we 'see' him. We are conscious that he is in our lives. He leads us and guides us and blesses us. We feel the workings of his Holy Spirit. No one can 'see God' in this way unless some progress is made along the highway of holiness. We specially refuse bitterness and we take care that no one in the fellowship around us falls into bitterness. ¹⁵*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God. Let not any root of bitterness spring up and so give you trouble. If that happens many might be defiled.* When anyone becomes so bitter with God that he gives up in despair, it is discouraging to the entire fellowship of God's people who see what has happened.

¹ Romans 12:18

² 11:26

4. We get ready for mighty conflict

- There is nothing passive about sanctification
- We battle

4. **We get ready for mighty conflict.** There is nothing passive about sanctification. The kind of teaching that tells us to 'let go and let God' is entirely mistaken. It is true for justification and atonement. True, we can 'let go and let God **justify** us by the blood of Christ'. To the one who does nothing but believes in God who justifies the ungodly his faith is reckoned as righteousness. But we do not 'let go and let God' do the **sanctifying**. He sanctifies us as we co-operate with him. There is a mighty conflict for us to engage in. We know we are in Christ and have already died to sin. And we do battle with the remaining attacks and temptations that come our way.



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