

# He Corrects Us Like A Father

PAUL CHENG

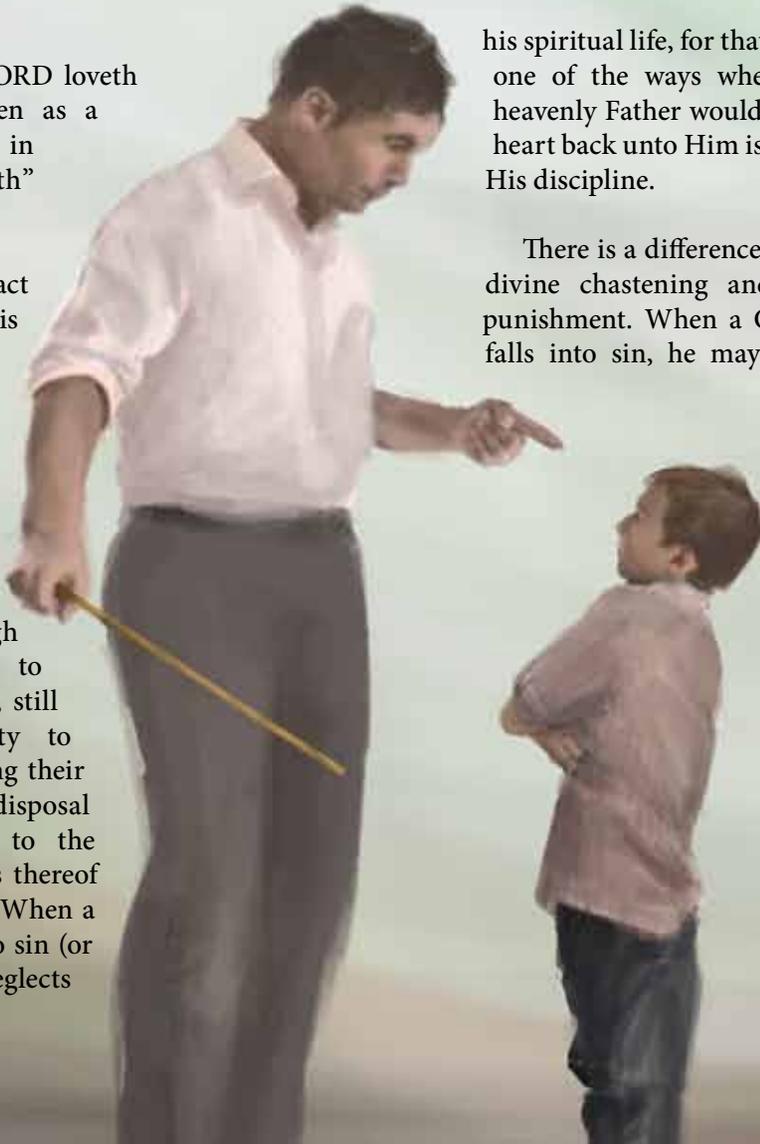
## Introduction

“For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Proverbs 3:12).

It is a biblical fact that believers this side of heaven do get tempted and can be drawn away of their own lusts, and get enticed and fall into sin (cf. James 1:14-15). Christians, though spiritually “dead to sin” (Romans 6:2), still have the capacity to serve sin by putting their bodies at sin’s disposal and by yielding to the flesh and the lusts thereof (cf. Romans 6:12). When a Christian falls into sin (or backslides or neglects

his spiritual life, for that matter), one of the ways whereby his heavenly Father would turn his heart back unto Him is through His discipline.

There is a difference between divine chastening and divine punishment. When a Christian falls into sin, he may have to



suffer painful consequences, but he will never suffer divine punishment. The punishment for his sins was borne by Christ completely on the cross at Calvary (cf. Romans 8:1).

It is often hard for believers to see the good in God's act of correcting us, just as it is difficult for our children to see the good in our disciplining them. But we ought to know that our loving heavenly Father will not do anything to harm us. His discipline will hurt for sure, but it is never meant to cause harm. Thus, if we have a right biblical understanding of God's discipline, we will then be able to appreciate and "endure chastening", and in the process, be profitably "exercised thereby", insofar as our fight against sin is concerned (cf. Hebrews 12:7, 11).

## It is Loving

In discipline, God is portrayed not as a Judge but as a loving Father. Divine discipline is an indisputable sign that we are in a "child-father" relationship with God and thereby being loved by Him.

An undisciplined child is an unloved, neglected and miserable child. No wise and good father would wink at the faults in his own children; how much less our heavenly Father whose love is perfect! All men are subjected to God's punishment except only His children, whom the LORD loves. And "for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth", not punishes.

An earthly father has a special obligation and responsibility to protect, provide and at times discipline his own children because of the parent-child relationship. God has a covenant relationship with His children whom He has redeemed, and He has obligated Himself to love and protect them (cf. Isaiah 54:10). God's loving paternal relationship with His children will not allow

Him to withhold His disciplining of us; His correction is deemed a proof of His love and of our sonship. As believers, we know that we are God's children not only through His leading (Romans 8:14), through the witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15-16) and through our trusting in Jesus Christ (John 1:12), but we also know that we are God's children through His correcting us (cf. Hebrews 12:6-9).

## It is Corrective

There are times when God's children undergo His corrective discipline that comes directly from His love. The word correcteth can mean to chasten, discipline, rebuke or reprove. The basic meaning is to make right the wrong; the purpose is to show truth and virtue to the one being corrected, and to turn him away from things that are bad, sinful and destructive. It is something that parents would do to train, instruct, cultivate and educate their children in order to help them develop, grow and mature as they ought. It is also to cause the child to understand that there is a consequence for sin and if he does not want to pay the price, then he has to avoid it.

A classic example would be King David who committed the sins of adultery and murder. God corrected David, not out of His wrath or judgment, but out of love. Though His discipline was severe and cost David dearly [in the loss of an infant son by Bathsheba and in the numerous scandalous heartaches posed by some of his other sons' vile conduct (cf. 2 Samuel 12:11-14)], it was nonetheless for a corrective purpose. God's corrective discipline was for the purpose of restraining David from repeating the sin, to draw him closer to God and to help him grow and mature. David did learn from it and grow in grace. Consider the psalmist's words: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word... It is good

for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Psalm 119:67, 71). These could very well reflect the sentiments of the much-chastened David!

### It is Preventive

There are times when God’s children are made to undergo hardships, by the providence of God. This is to prevent their falling into sin. Our illness, loss of job, lack of business opportunity and other struggles may just be God’s way of preventing us from falling into some situation that is far worse. What appears to be a terrible inconvenience and privation may be God’s loving protection. Just as an earthly father would set up restrictions and limits around their children to shield them from danger, our heavenly Father similarly would use His preventive disciplining to serve as spiritual boundaries to safeguard His children.

Incidentally, God allowed the apostle Paul to suffer a “thorn in the flesh”, not because Paul was proud but to keep him from becoming proud and conceited due to the great revelations he had received (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). It was certainly not pleasant for Paul to experience the “thorn in the flesh”, which he had earnestly prayed to be removed. Yet he later thanked God for that ordeal as he realized how it had actually protected him from

falling into the subtle but ensnaring sin of spiritual pride (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)!

### It is Educational

It is instructive to note that there are also times when God’s children experience afflictions not because they have sinned or are on the verge of sinning. On the contrary, they may be doing well in their spiritual walk. Job was such an example and the Bible has this to say about him: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). Since Satan’s accusation insinuated that Job loved God purely because of material blessings and a trouble-free life, God, in His permissive will, permitted Satan to bring misery to Job. Yet through it all, Job came out “with flying colours” (Timothy Tow), and Satan was defeated by Job’s refusal to renounce his faith (cf. Job 19:25-26). In a sense, God allowed Job to be tried and maligned so as to demonstrate His point (cf. Job 2:3, 6). Indeed, this “educational” aspect of God’s discipline can help us to gain deeper insights into God’s holy majesty,

“His discipline will hurt for sure, but it is never meant to cause harm. Thus, if we have a right biblical understanding of God’s discipline, we will then be able to appreciate and “endure chastening”, and in the process, be profitably “exercised thereby”  
(cf. Hebrews 12:7, 11)

His unerring deliverance, His unfailing love, His immaculate power, His inscrutable counsel and His irrefutable defence.

### It is Beneficial

It is incomprehensible how a good earthly father could possibly love his child and

not correct him for his wrongdoings. If submission to the discipline of one's earthly father brings forth good things, how much more good will be wrought through submission to the discipline of the heavenly Father (cf. Hebrews 12:9-11)? God's primary desire for His children is that they be holy as He is holy (cf. 1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 19:2; 20:7). Thus, His divine discipline is always perfect, "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10b).

## It is Righteous

Every earthly father will admit that he has ever meted out unrighteous discipline at times. Sometimes, earthly fathers might have been too severe or too lax, or have shown favouritism, or even punished the wrong child. But the heavenly Father never makes such mistakes. Being absolutely needful for His children, His discipline is always right and perfect. Needless to say, it is always righteous because it is administered by a righteous heavenly Father.

## Conclusion

Appreciating these biblical facts about divine chastening will help God's children to dispel an undue dread or worse, an antagonistic attitude towards God's correction. In order to reap "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" that it ultimately yields (Hebrews 12:11b), we must submit willingly to it. Our focus must not be fixated only on the current unpleasant experience, but rather on our heavenly Father and His sovereign purpose in disciplining us. As John Owen put it, "Love precedes discipline." God loves and corrects us like a Father and His discipline is immensely beneficial for our spiritual life and growth. Thus, our response to His discipline should be: "Thank you, Lord, for sweet discipline – for You have reminded me that You love me and I am Your child!"



# Bible Witness

## Media Ministry

"...ye shall be witnesses unto me..." Acts 1:8

Spreading the Gospel  
throughout the world and  
edifying the body of believers

*A ministry of  
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church*



**Bible Witness Web Radio**  
on your laptop, iPad, iPhone or  
Android device  
*24 hours everyday*

[biblewitness.com/webradio](http://biblewitness.com/webradio)



**Lunchtime Bible Study**  
LIVE on Wednesdays  
*1.15 pm*  
*(GMT + 8.00)*

[biblewitness.com/bookroom/  
lunchtime-bible-study](http://biblewitness.com/bookroom/lunchtime-bible-study)



**Lord's Day Worship Service**  
LIVE on Sundays  
*10.30 am – 12.30 pm*  
*(GMT + 8.00)*

[gethsemanebpc.com](http://gethsemanebpc.com)