



Chapter 14

OUR RESPONSE TO CHASTENING

The reality of the four levels of chastening challenges us to answer a simple question: “Now what?” How will we respond to chastening? The examples we observed from Israel’s monarchy affirm that, like David, Solomon, and Asa, we can respond to chastening in different ways at different times in our lives. By the way, that is consistent with my responses to my Dad’s discipline. I responded differently at different times, and you probably did as well.

How does God want us to respond to chastening? What consistent response can we make? The search for a Biblical answer sends us back to Hebrews 12 where we began this study. The discussion of chastening is in verses 5-11. Notice the context.



Realistic Questions

The writer of Hebrews opened the chapter with a dose of reality. He had just completed the most famous chapter of his book: “God’s Hall of Fame,” Hebrews 11. The men and women in God’s Hall of Fame did not qualify for entrance by their abilities, but by their faith. It is faith that pleases God. In fact, there is no other way to please Him. *“But without faith **it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and **that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him**”* (Heb. 11:6, emphasis mine).

By faith Abel worshiped God, Enoch walked with God, and Noah worked for God. By faith Israel’s patriarchs and matriarchs, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph pleased God. By faith Moses and the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, observed the Passover, and walked through the Red Sea on dry land. By faith the walls of Jericho fell and the harlot Rahab survived to become an ancestor of our Lord Jesus. By faith Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel worked righteousness and won great victories for their nation. By faith many other unnamed saints endured and died in poverty,

afflictions, and persecutions [Does that sound like *Your Best Life Now?*]—“*of whom the world was not worthy*” (v. 38).⁷¹

With these testimonies of faith buzzing in our minds, Hebrews 12 begins,

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [the faithful ones in Hebrews 11 are witnesses to the fact that we too can endure trials and please God by faith], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (vv. 1-2a).

The writer of Hebrews did not look at life through rose-colored glasses. Neither should we. Consider some realistic questions.

Are you facing difficulties, challenges, and hardships in your life? Are you weary or disheartened? If so, why? What is your attitude toward your hardships? Do you look at your problems through eyes of faith?

Troubling Questions

Do you blame God? “Why did God let this happen to me? Doesn’t He love me?”

Do you blame others? “Why won’t anyone give me a break? It isn’t fair. Someone is always on my case.”

Do you blame yourself? “What’s wrong with me? Where did I go wrong? I never do anything right.”



Looking for Answers

If life’s trials create troubling questions, the answer is not within. Look outside yourself; look to Jesus.⁷² “*Consider Him*” (Heb. 12:3).

⁷¹ Hebrews 11 mentions none of the sins of the faithful. We have God’s view of forgiven saints. However, God does record the sins of each Hall of Fame inductee in the Old Testament. Sometimes they walked in the flesh rather than in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26). God also records, for our learning, His chastening/child training of several of His faithful, including Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David. Their response to the Father’s chastening is recorded as well. They all endured, respected and submitted to the Father, and were trained by His chastening.

Jesus Christ suffered far more than you think. He endured the cross and its shame (v. 2).

Jesus' crucifixion-sufferings were spiritual as well as physical. He endured the agonizing, inhuman, searing pain of a Roman scourge and a Roman cross. Worst of all was the spiritual suffering and separation. He "*who knew no sin*" (2 Cor. 5:21) took all of our sins upon Himself. He endured the Father's holy wrath against the sin of the human race. The Father punished the sinless One for the sinful ones; the innocent suffered for the guilty. Jesus Christ's suffering was beyond our comprehension.

You and I, on the other hand, have it far better than we think. True, we have problems and wrestle with temptations (Heb. 12:4), but it is not as bad as we often think. Even though "nothing is more natural for a person than to overestimate the severity of his trials,"⁷³ so far, we have not shed any blood resisting sin. Therefore, do not grow weary; do not lose heart (v. 3).



Responses to Chastening

So, what is the problem? Why are we discouraged when we could be filled with faith? The writer of Hebrews answers, "*You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons*" (v. 5, emphasis mine). And what is the forgotten exhortation? Quoting Proverbs 3:11-12, he says:

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
For whom the Lord loves He chastens,*

⁷² ¹Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons . . . (Heb. 12:1-5).

⁷³Zane C. Hodges, "Hebrews" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 2, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 810.

And scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb. 12:5-6, emphasis mine).

He continued.

*⁷If you **endure** chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected **us**, and we paid **them respect**. Shall we not much more readily be in **subjection** to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they indeed for a few days chastened **us** as seemed **best** to them, but He for **our** profit, that **we** may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been **trained** by it.*

In previous chapters we defined chastening, noted its benefits, and described and illustrated four levels of chastening. Now we conclude with the responses God’s children make when they are chastened.

According to Hebrews 12, we can respond to the Father’s chastening (discipline, child training, education/instruction) in at least six ways. Three of the responses are negative and three are positive.

Negative Responses

Three negative responses are in verse 5. We can forget, despise, and be discouraged by chastening. These responses do not please our Father for obvious reasons.

Forget

We can forget His chastening. “You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons.” “Forgotten” is the translation of the Greek word meaning “to forget completely.”⁷⁴ The believer is indifferent. Other priorities are on his mind. He is facing life’s challenges without considering God’s chastening. God’s purpose is not on his radar. As a result, the believer’s heart becomes insensitive and unresponsive. He or she despises the Lord’s chastening, which is the second negative response.

⁷⁴Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), s.v., “ἐκλανθάνω; *eklanthánō*.”

Despise

“*My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD.*” This is an imperative, a command.

“Despise” means to “care little for, to consider of small worth.”⁷⁵ Imagine a Christian saying, “God is talking, but it doesn’t matter to me. It isn’t significant, so I’m not listening.” As shocking as it may sound, that is exactly what we do when we forget and despise our Father’s chastening.

Discouraged

On the other hand, we can be discouraged when He rebukes. “*Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.*” This too is a command.

“Discouraged” means to be weary, exhausted, or faint.⁷⁶ The word was used to describe an unstrung bow.⁷⁷ The string hangs limply, and the bow is unable to fulfill its purpose. It cannot shoot an arrow. That is a vivid picture of one who is discouraged by chastening. He or she has given up in despair. Emotionally, he has assumed the fetal position under his desk.

The three negative, fruitless responses are not the Father’s plan. They are not the way He intends for us to respond to His chastening, and they will not lead to the benefits of chastening.

Positive Responses

Instead, we can endure, submit to, and be trained by chastening. These are positive responses.

Endure

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” When we endure chastening we persevere; we do not quit. Literally, the word means to remain under a load.⁷⁸ Our Lord Jesus set the example for us. He “*endured the cross*” (v. 2) and “*endured . . . hostility from sinners*” (v. 3).

⁷⁵Ibid., s.v., “ὀλιγωρέω; *oligōréō*.”

⁷⁶Ibid., s.v., “ἐκλύω; *eklúō*.”

⁷⁷H. G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), s.v., “ἐκ-λύω.”

⁷⁸Zodhiates, s.v., “ὑπομένω; *hupoménō*.”

We are glad Jesus did not quit when He faced the cross. He fulfilled His greater purpose, and so can we.

Chastening is not child-abuse. It is God's loving action toward His children. It is the father working in us and training us to fulfill His greater purpose in our lives. "Discipline is an essential element in a father-son relationship: as in human families, so also within the family of God."⁷⁹ Chastening indicates the Father is as deeply involved in our lives as He was in the Lord Jesus' earthly life.

Submit

Further, if we submit to chastening, we place ourselves under His authority. "*We have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid **them** respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*" (v. 9, emphasis mine). "Subjection" is the translation of a military term, meaning to rank under the authority of another. It assumes one is obeying orders.⁸⁰ Also, notice the motivation for our submission. Just as we respected and submitted to our human fathers' correction, we submit to the heavenly Father's chastening because we respect Him. Our response to chastening is a relationship and attitude issue.

Trained

Finally, we can be trained by chastening. "*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*" (v. 11). The Greek word, translated "trained," literally means to train naked, as did the Greek athletes, or simply, to exercise. It also gives us the English word gymnasium, a place to exercise.⁸¹ This definition is initially a surprise. What does "training naked" have to do with our response to chastening? The answer is in Hebrews 4:12-13.

¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and

⁷⁹Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, in *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 649, as quoted in David L. Allen, *Hebrews in The New American Commentary*, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 580.

⁸⁰Zodhiates, s.v., "ὑποτάσσω; *hupotássō*."

⁸¹Ibid., s.v., γυμνάζω; *gumnázō*.

intents of the heart. ¹³ *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

The penetrating power of God's living and active Word is sharper than any double-edged sword. It reaches our innermost being. It critiques our thoughts and attitudes. Nothing can be hidden from God. He knows what we do, what we intend to do, and why. Everything is naked and open to His eyes, and it is to Him we will ultimately answer.

Therefore, to be "trained" by chastening, in part, means to learn to be totally open and honest with God. This training is connected to our devotional lives. When we read and meditate on His Word we become sensitive and responsive to what our Bible says. Like an athlete whose repetitive training has honed automatic reflexes, we can be trained to automatically respond to God's Word. The trained response is a fruit of the Father's child training through His Word.

Our Choice

We have choices. We choose our responses. What choices are you making? How are you responding to the heavenly Father's chastening in your life?

Do not forget, despise, or be discouraged. Rather, endure, submit, and be trained.

How can we be sure to make the positive rather than the negative responses? I believe the answer is in understanding the six responses as a chiasm.⁸² The first and last responses go together, as do the second and fifth, and the third and fourth. The first response is negative and its corresponding response is positive. We can make the second response rather than the first. Instead of (A) forgetting the Father's chastening, we

⁸²A chiasm or *chiastic structuring* is a literary device used by Old and New Testament writers. They use it to build up to their *main point* and then back off from it in the reverse order. For example:

A
 B
 C The main point the writer is making
 C¹ often lies at the center.
 B¹
 A¹

A and A¹ may help to explain each other, as may B and B¹, C and C¹. Commentators note multiple chiasms in the book of Hebrews.

can be (A¹) trained by it. Rather than (B) despising His chastening, we can (B¹) submit because we respect Him. Rather than (C) being discouraged, we can (C¹) endure. With these contrasts, we will conclude our study.



Chapter 15

FORGET *OR* BE TRAINED

First, we can avoid forgetting the Father's chastening. Instead, we can be trained by His chastening.

God created us with perfect memories. Forgetting is a result of our fallen natures.⁸³ I regularly demonstrated my participation in the fall when I was around eight years old. I was forgetful. I did not think my forgetfulness was a problem, but Dad disagreed. He wanted to help me far more than I wanted help.



The Problem: Forgetting

Mom always had supper on the table, hot and ready to serve, at 5:30 PM. When Dad sat down for family Bible reading and prayer before the meal, he expected all of his children to be present.

"Don't forget," Dad would say, "supper will be at 5:30. Be here, ready to eat. What time Truman?"

"I know, Dad. 5:30."

I loved sports. I loved playing outdoors with my friends. We had so much fun I often forgot about the time. I did not have a watch, but it did not matter. I would have forgotten to check the time.

When our game paused and I realized I was getting hungry, reality hit. "O no," I said, "I forgot! I've got to go home." I ran home knowing I was late, but hoping I was not. Several times I ran into the house to find supper over, the food put away, and the dishes washed. My dad was waiting, belt in-hand, and I knew I was in trouble.

I tried to help my dad understand the problem. "Dad," I said, "I'm sorry. I just forgot." As far as I was concerned, that was an irrefutable defense. Had we been in court, I was sure an impartial Judge would say, "Not guilty. Case closed. Go enjoy your supper."

⁸³William Gouge, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1980; reprint of 1866 ed.), 939.

I did not forget on purpose. I did not want to be late. I did not want to miss supper. I wanted to be on time, and I certainly wanted to eat. I was hungry. I just forgot. Surely it is not fair to discipline someone who forgot by accident. At least, that is what I thought.

Dad listened but was unconvinced. “I understand, son,” he said, “and I have something to help you remember.”

Dad believed men should remember and fulfill their responsibilities. He was convinced that responsible men are faithful husbands and fathers, conscientious church members and citizens, and dependable business owners and employees. Responsible men are the future of the family, the church, and the nation.

Dad also believed that responsible boys become responsible men. He embraced his duty to help his son become a responsible man.

When I repeatedly missed supper, I forgot my father’s exhortation. Dad believed discipline would help me remember. He believed it would help me become a responsible man.

I was a slow learner but Dad did not give up. He disciplined me until I was trained to remember his exhortation. And the training process was often painful (compare Heb. 12:11).

My forgetfulness is an example of a universal problem among Christians. The Bible exhorts us to remember, meditate on, and repeat truth—so that we will not forget. Our forgetfulness, however, is a heart problem, not a memory problem.

The Bible says, “*And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons*” (Heb. 12:5). An exhortation is an “admonition or encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in the faith.”⁸⁴ God speaks to His sons and daughters through His Word. He speaks to us to build our faith. His exhortations are both correction and encouragement.

The writer of Hebrews noted, “God spoke to you like a father to his child, but you forgot what He said.” When you think about it, it is astonishing. We would never forget a personal communication from the President or Prime Minister of our country. How can we forget an exhortation from the Almighty? Yet we do. The verb translated “forgotten” (v. 5) emphasizes that we can completely forget His exhortation.⁸⁵ If we do, it is a heart problem, not a memory problem.

When we forget our Father’s exhortations about the significance of our chastening, but remember other things, we reveal our true priorities.

⁸⁴Zodhiates, s.v., “παράκλησις; *paráklēsis*.”

⁸⁵The word “is intensified in Greek by the prepositional prefix as well as being in the perfect tense, implying the notion of ‘completely.’” Allen, 579.

You and I think about the things that are important to us—not what we aspire to think is important, but what we actually think is important. We do not forget priorities. When I said, “But Dad, I just forgot,” he knew suppertime was not my priority. Playing was. That occupied my thoughts. That was most important to me.



The Remedy: Be Trained

Dad disciplined me to change my priorities, and it ultimately worked. Because of Dad’s repeated, consistent discipline, I developed an internal alarm that went off when 5:30 approached. No matter where I was, what game I was playing, or how much fun I was having, when suppertime neared, I would suddenly think, “It must be nearly 5:30. I’ve got to go home.” As a result, I never missed supper again.⁸⁶

Dad’s discipline moved me from my agenda to his agenda. And so it is with the heavenly Father’s chastening.

What is the answer to a forgetful heart? We can be trained by chastening. “*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*” (v. 11). Chastening is often unpleasant, but it is good for us. If the Father’s chastening has trained us, our hearts are naked and open to Him. We do not try to hide things from Him. We open the Word and automatically tune in to His voice. Like fine-tuned athletes, we have an obedience-response to His Word.

Athletes train by repeating their techniques over and over thousands of times. They develop what is called “muscle memory.” A professional basketball player, for example, spends thousands of hours in the gymnasium, repeating moves and shots hundreds of thousands of times. Muscle memory makes their moves automatic. They react without thinking. Their split-second responses make them one in a million. Likewise, those who are trained by the Father’s chastening can immediately respond to the Holy Spirit’s promptings. They have been trained daily in the gymnasium of God’s Word.

⁸⁶My dad died many years ago. I will see him in heaven one day because he trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior. I hope to thank him again for not being too lazy or unloving to train me for manhood. I often remember my dad’s words and smile. Sometimes I laugh when I remember him saying, “I know you don’t mean to forget, but this will help you remember.” He was right and I am thankful to God.

*“For everyone who partakes only of milk is **unskilled** in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, **that is**, those who **by reason of use have their senses exercised** to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:13-14, emphasis mine).*

Those whose hearts are “trained” are not forgetful hearers, but are doers of the Word. As James said:

*²²But be **doers** of the word, and not **hearers** only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a **hearer** of the word and not a **doer**, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues **in it**, and is not a **forgetful hearer** but a **doer** of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does (James 1:22-25, emphasis mine).*

The blessing comes from doing the Word, not just hearing it. Are you a forgetful hearer or a trained hearer? Are you daily opening the Word and allowing the Father to move you from your agenda to His agenda? Are you allowing Him to train you to have a responsive heart?



Chapter 16

DESPISE *OR* SUBMIT

The Problem: Despising

Second, we can either despise chastening or submit to chastening. God said, “*My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord*” (v. 5). Remember that despise means to think little of His chastening, to treat it as an insignificant thing. King Asa’s example warns us that God’s children can have responsive hearts for many years, yet if we begin to drift spiritually, we may despise the Lord’s chastening.



The Answer: Submit

The answer to this negative response is to submit to the Father because we respect Him. “*Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live*” (v. 9, emphasis mine).

We should have complete respect for our heavenly Father. He is spirit and He is perfect (Matt. 5:48). Earthly fathers, in contrast, have moral failures. They are imperfect; they are human. Even the best parents fall short in their correction and child training. Our heavenly Father does not. He chastens us according to His perfect wisdom, love, and purpose.⁸⁷

⁸⁷I believe Hebrews 12:9 assumes that fathers who correct their children will be in submission to God who corrects them. I have counseled many people whose view of God the Father was distorted by their dad’s poor, and sometimes abusive, parenting. They unconsciously assume that God is like their dad. An abusive father will almost certainly influence his children to impute similar moral imperfections to God. This may be one reason that chastening is such a difficult subject for young Christians in this generation. Those who hear that God is a heavenly Father, and desire to seek Him because they have such respect for their earthly fathers, are truly blessed. Such fathers willingly submit themselves to God before they exercised authority over their children. If your view of God is distorted by faulty parenting, ask God’s forgiveness. Look to the God of the Bible; do not create a false god in your own image or in your dad’s image.

When we submit to the Father, we respect His rank and authority. We pledge our loyalty and obedience to Him. We no longer treat His chastening as if it were insignificant.

Remember, the Greek word, translated “submit,” means to arrange under, to subordinate, to obey, to submit to one’s control, yielding to one’s admonition or advice. It was used as a military term meaning, “to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader.” In non-military use, it was “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden”⁸⁸

In the military a Sergeant gives orders to a lower ranking Private. “Private, make your bunk, scrub the latrine, fall down and do 100 push-ups.” The Private obeys the Sergeant because of his position and rank. In many cases, the Private obeys outwardly but chafes inwardly. His attitude is not at all submissive to the one in authority over him. The Sergeant is indifferent to the Private’s attitude; his concern is immediate, unquestioned obedience.

The secular view of submission often leads to abuse. It is often exercised from a position of power and authority over another. Priority is given to the self-interest of the one in authority.

Biblical submission is different. It exercises power and authority for the good of the one who is in submission. Authority and power are used to give servant leadership, not dictatorship. The ultimate model of servant leadership is the Lord Jesus, our good shepherd. His leadership is exercised out of love for those who submit to Him.

Authority Without Submission: King Rehoboam

Consider the example of Solomon’s son, King Rehoboam. He rejected his grandfather’s view of authority and submission. David, his grandfather, was a Shepherd King, Servant King. Rehoboam embraced his father’s example, given during the years when Solomon was not submissive to God. During those years the un-submissive king abused his subjects.

When Solomon’s heart was responsive to God, he was in submission to God and His Word. He was a servant-leader like his father David. However, when his heart was hardened by sin, he became a dictator and abused his God-given position, power, and people.

⁸⁸James Strong, *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001), s.v., “*hupotássō*; submit.”

After Solomon's death, his subjects pleaded with the newly crowned King Rehoboam. "*Your father made our yoke heavy,*" they said. "*Now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you*" (1 Kings 12:4).

Rehoboam rejected the good advice of the older counselors. "*They spoke to him, saying, 'If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever'*" (v. 7). Some of the elders may have remembered King David's leadership. If so, they saw the contrast between David and Solomon's reigns. In effect they said, "If you will love and serve your people, they will love and serve you. They will respect you and be loyal to you because of mutual love, not because of your power-position over them."

Rehoboam fulfilled the old saying, "Like father, like son." His leadership was modeled after his father's poor example. "*Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, 'My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!'*" (vv. 13-14). Let me paraphrase: "I am the King; you are the servants. You will submit whether you like it or not. If you think my father was harsh, you haven't seen anything yet."

Leaders

The Bible contains many examples of leaders abusing their authority. They did not submit to God's authority, and the end result was conflict; people resisted their leadership.

Husbands

Many husbands abuse their authority. They demand that their wives submit to them even though they refuse to submit to God. They forget the exhortation, "*Christ is head of the church; . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, . . . So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies*" (Eph. 5:23, 25, 28). Jesus Christ is the model for husbands. Sacrificial love is the hallmark of His headship. A wife will happily follow her husband when he demonstrates Christ-like headship. In contrast, she will resist her husband's headship if he is like Solomon and Rehoboam. She

knows when he demands submission from her but is not submissive to God.

Parents

Many parents abuse their parental authority for the same reason. Parents demand respect and submission from their children when they do not respect and submit to God's authority over them. Children despise hypocritical child training; they do not respect and submit.



My Un-Submissive Attitude

Parents have authority over their children. The authority is God-given. Children are to obey their parents. However, it is not a burden too heavy to bear. In fact, the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12) is the first commandment with an added promise: *“that your days may be long on the earth”* (Eph. 6:3). Obedience brings blessings.

While some parents are unworthy of the respect due them, my mother was worthy. She walked with God. When she prayed, God answered. I feared my mother's prayers more than I feared my daddy's belt. I experienced the belt many times, but I knew that God spoke through my mother.

Mother did not lord it over me; she used her position and authority for my good. She exercised her authority with wisdom and love because she was under her heavenly Father's authority.

One day, in the spring of my first grade year, it was a beautiful, warm day, and I wanted to go barefooted. I said, “Mom can I go barefooted after school?”

She said, “No indeed. You've got to wear your shoes. If you take your shoes off, you will probably step on a broken Coke bottle and cut your foot wide open.”

Her answer did not satisfy me; it was not the one I wanted. At first I argued with her, but then I thought, “I'll tell her what she wants to hear, then I'll do what I want to do. She'll never know.”

“OK, Mother,” I conceded, “I won't take my shoes off after school. I'll wear my shoes when I walk home.”

I did not think my mother knew what she was talking about. “I am careful,” I thought. “I can see where I am walking; I know what I'm doing.” So after school I took my shoes off to walk home barefooted. I

planned to put them back on before I got close enough to the house for my mother to see me.

When I stepped into the grass it felt good on my feet. Being barefooted made me happy, but I remembered my mother's final words that morning. "If you take your shoes off, you will probably step on a broken Coke bottle and cut your foot wide open."

I walked a few feet, and I was extra careful. I watched where I was walking. I looked before taking each step, and I can now say my mother's warning did not come true, technically. I did not step on a broken Coca-Cola bottle.⁸⁹ It was a broken RC bottle, hidden by a clump of grass. I did not see it, but I certainly felt it cut into my foot. I could not walk.

A man saw me sitting on the ground bleeding and crying. He brought a towel to wrap my foot, picked me up, and carried me home. By the time we reached my house, his towel was soaked with my blood.

The moment I stepped on the broken bottle, I was thinking about my mother's warning. God also reminded me of my mother's authority over me. He seemed to say, "Your mother is lined up under My authority. When you disobey her, you are disobeying Me." That day, I learned a little more about fearing God and respecting my mother's authority.

The cut left a permanent scar on my foot, and a perpetual reminder in my heart. Since then, every time I put on my socks and shoes, I am reminded that I am under authority. And the reminder has adjusted my attitude. The scar is a mark of ownership that reminds me to submit to, rather than despise, God's child training.

I must admit, however, that I was a slow learner. In fact, the learning process continues. I am still learning submission. Apparently, it is a life-long project.

When I was 12 years old, my dad gave me the weekly responsibility of mowing the lawn. He also gave me specific instructions. He wanted the freshly mown lawn to have a particular, visible pattern. After a few weeks, I decided I knew a better way than my dad's way. So, along with Frank Sinatra and Elvis, "I did it my way." I soon discovered, however, that neither Frank nor Elvis had to answer to my dad. I had no choice but to do it his way.

Soon I was mowing the lawn each week, exactly the way Dad demanded, but I had a grumpy attitude. I was out of fellowship with Dad and I missed out on the joy of serving him. Rather than my work giving a sense of accomplishment, my attitude made the weekly mowing a

⁸⁹Actually, in our vernacular, every soft drink was a "Coke," no matter the brand.

traumatic experience.

Going barefooted and mowing the lawn may not seem like spiritual challenges, but they were for me. I had to learn to submit to rather than despise my parents' instructions. God used my parents to fine-tune my heart and teach me the art of joyfully submitting to my heavenly Father.



Jesus, Our Example of Submission

Our Lord Jesus, of course, did not have a problem submitting to His heavenly Father or to His earthly parents. He is the perfect example of submitting to child training and instruction. *“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”* (Heb. 5:8, emphasis mine). This does not mean Jesus had a tendency toward disobedience. It means His suffering perfectly fitted Him to obey the Father's will. He became our faithful High Priest; He understands all of our pains and needs. We are told, therefore, to *“look unto Jesus”* (Heb. 12:2) and *“consider Him”* (v. 3).

Jesus is fully God. He is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Yet, when He came to earth, He humbled Himself, became a man, and submitted to the Father's will. His humility is described in Philippians 2.

*⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, **and** coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to **the point of** death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and **that** every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5-11).*

Jesus had all authority and power in heaven and earth. He could have done what Rehoboam planned to do to Israel. He could have forced everyone's obedience. Instead, Jesus took on the form of a bondservant. He modeled the kind of submission He commended to His disciples, the submission that makes one great.

²⁵But Jesus called them to **Himself** and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles **lord it over them**, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your **servant**. ²⁷And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but **to serve**, and **to give** His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:25-28, emphasis mine).

Jesus is Lord, but He did not “Lord it over” people. He had a servant’s heart. He willingly gave His life to serve and save others. Biblical submission is revealed by a servant’s heart and a servant’s attitude. Those who are submissive to God are willing to humble themselves to be concerned for others. “**Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others**” (Phil. 2:3-4, emphasis).

Jesus Submitted to Joseph and Mary

Jesus’ submissive heart was first revealed when He was twelve years old. Because He first submitted to His heavenly Father, Jesus willingly submitted to Joseph and Mary. “*Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them*” (Luke 2:51).

The context is important. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the annual Passover. Afterward, the residents of Nazareth returned home in a group. Jesus did not walk with Mary and Joseph during the first day, but they assumed he was walking with relatives or friends. When they camped for the evening, Jesus did not come to their campsite. They looked for Him, but He was not with their traveling companions. Naturally they were alarmed and rushed back to Jerusalem. After three days of frantic searching in the city, Mary and Joseph finally found Jesus in the temple, “*sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions*” (Luke 2:46).

“*So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.” And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”*” (vv. 48-49).

Jesus' question was not whiny, arrogant, or rebellious. It was an honest question. His parents knew who He was. What else did they expect Him to be doing? But notice, He went home with them and submitted to them (v. 51).

The rotation of the earth, the movements of the solar system, and all the tiny atoms in the universe were subject to Jesus (Col. 1:17), yet He submitted to Joseph and Mary. The earth's weather, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the fields, were all subject to Jesus, yet He willingly submitted to Joseph. He was smarter than Joseph, yet he submitted. He was perfect and pure, yet he submitted to an imperfect and sinful father. Consider the One who voluntarily made Himself subject to Joseph and Mary.

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is also the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might come to have first place in everything.

¹⁹For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross whether things on earth or things in heaven (Col. 1:15-20).

The One who created the world submitted to human parents. Why did He submit to them when He was smarter, more powerful, and superior to them in every way? The fifth of the Ten Commandments declares, “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex. 20:12), and He perfectly obeyed God's law. He saw their imperfections in contrast to His perfection. Yet, He humbled Himself and submitted Himself to His earthly parents. He obeyed His parents; He honored their God-given authoritative position over Him.

Joseph was a carpenter. Jesus worked with him and learned the trade from him. But think about it. Can you imagine Joseph teaching Jesus how to build furniture when Jesus had built the universe? This is a form of submission that we know nothing about. Jesus was wiser than His stepfather, but He submitted. He could have introduced better methods and tools for carpentry, but He kept a joyful, submissive attitude as He worked for and with Joseph. He restrained Himself. He did not

exercise His power to miraculously create furniture. He could have, of course. A few years later, He proved His authority over nature when He multiplied loaves and fish to feed 5,000, walked on water, and calmed a raging storm with a single command.

Jesus' ministry to Israel began when John the Baptist baptized Him in the Jordan River and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. He was fully God, full of the Holy Spirit, full of authority, and full of power. Even so, He did all His heavenly Father led Him to do, but only what His heavenly Father led Him to do. As Jesus had submitted to Joseph and Mary, so He submitted to His heavenly Father. Jesus did not act independently. He lined up under the Father's authority. He submitted with a perfect attitude of love and joy. He is our perfect model of submission.

At the end of Jesus' ministry on earth, Jesus presented Himself to the Father. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He faced the torture of the cross and the contradiction of Holiness being made sin. Still, He submitted to the Father for the sake of our salvation. He prayed, "*Not My will, but Yours, be done*" (Luke 22:42).

How can we submit? We can "look to Jesus" and "consider Him." He endured hostility from sinners and submitted to the Father's will. By the way, neither hostility nor submission stole His joy, and neither will steal our joy. Do not despise the Father's chastening; submit to His child training. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of submission (Heb. 12:2-3).



Chapter 17

ROYAL SUBMISSION

According to conventional wisdom, an ancient King was sovereign over his realm. The King submitted to no one; all of his subjects submitted to him. His word was law. His will was unquestioned. His commands were obeyed. Criticism of the king was a capital offense. On the spot decapitation was not an unusual sentence—no trial, no appeal, no mercy. Such was the practice of ancient superpowers such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia.⁹⁰

Conventional wisdom did not apply to Israel’s monarchy. Kings of Israel served at God’s pleasure and under God’s sovereign authority. God’s Word was law in Israel; His will was to be obeyed without question. Israel’s king was to remember that he too was a man in need of forgiveness and grace. Therefore, he was to balance law with grace and mercy as he ruled and related to God’s people. Of all the kings of Israel, none understood this fact more clearly than David.

We have noted that David’s grandson, Rehoboam, misunderstood the purpose and plan for Israel’s monarchy. He thought he had the right to “chastise” his subjects “with scourges” to force their submission to him (1 Kings 12:11). He did not understand that the Father’s intention was to chasten him. The Father wanted to train Rehoboam to be a wise, compassionate, Spirit-filled ruler of Israel. Instead, Rehoboam demanded submission without being submissive.

David, however, recognized the uniqueness of Israel’s monarchy. He realized that his reign was but a preparation for his Messianic descendant who would someday come to redeem sinners and reign over the whole world (2 Sam. 7:12, 16; 1 Chron. 17:10-12). We now know the coming redeemer is none other than Jesus Christ, the “Son of David” (Matt. 1:1) who came to “*save His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31-35).

David understood his greater purpose and that chastening was the Father’s process of training and equipping him. He knew he was responsible to co-operate with the training. The Scriptures record several

⁹⁰For example, Daniel said of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, “All peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive” (Dan. 5:19).

examples of King David submitting to the Father's chastening. In this brief chapter, we will consider one unusual account.



No Conventional Wisdom

A weary, disheartened caravan of refugees trudged along a dusty road leading away from Jerusalem. David was at the center of the refugees. Fortunately for a man named Shimei, David's heart was tuned to the Father's heart; he did not bow to conventional wisdom. The story is a vivid example of David's insight into God's work in his life.

⁵*When King David got to Bahurim, a man belonging to the family of the house of Saul was just coming out. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he was yelling curses as he approached. [Remember, according to conventional wisdom, this was a capital crime. To make matters worse,]* ⁶*He threw stones at David and at all the royal servants, the people and the warriors on David's right and left.* ⁷*Shimei said as he cursed: "Get out, get out, you worthless murderer!"* ⁸*The LORD has paid you back for all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you became king, and the LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. Look, you are in trouble because you're a murderer!"*

⁹*Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut his head off!"* [It was the expected sentence. But notice David's answer.]

¹⁰*The king replied, "Sons of Zeruiah, do we agree on anything? He curses me this way because the LORD told him, 'Curse David!' Therefore, who can say, 'Why did you do that?'"* ¹¹*Then David said to Abishai and all his servants, "Look, my own son, my own flesh and blood, intends to take my life—how much more now this Benjaminite! Leave him alone and let him curse me; the LORD has told him to.* ¹²*Perhaps the LORD will see my affliction and restore goodness to me instead of Shimei's curses today."* ¹³*So David and his men proceeded along the road as Shimei was going along the ridge of the hill opposite him. As Shimei went, he cursed David, and threw stones and dirt at him.* ¹⁴*Finally, the king and all the people with him arrived exhausted, so they rested there (2 Sam. 16:5-14 HCSB).*

David had the authority to send one of his loyal soldiers to cut off Shimei's head. Abishai (who, by the way, wanted to kill Saul in his sleep, 1 Samuel 26:8) volunteered to dispense with Shimei. He said, "Let me go over and cut his head off!" Abishai's advice was common sense. He had "observed that people without heads do not curse."⁹¹

David, however, had been humbled by the Father's chastening. It had yielded "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" in his life; he had "been trained by it" (Heb. 12:11). His heart was again responsive. It was in tune with the Father's heart and his eyes were on the Father's eyes, so he spared Shimei's life.

Shimei was a member of Saul's family (2 Sam. 16:5). Like Saul, he was a pawn in Satan's hand. His vicious cursing was unjustified. Even so, sometimes God uses the Devil as His messenger boy. David understood that God was using Shimei in his life, and he submitted to the chastening.

As David left Saul in God's hands, both in the cave and in the slumbering camp, so he left Shimei in God's hands. He did not avenge himself.



Wise Submission

If we are unaware of the context, this is a strange story to say the least. Why did David and his loyal followers flee Jerusalem? How did David know God was chastening him? The story, in its context, answers these questions. It reveals how David knew and submitted to the Father's discipline. It also points to helpful reminders as we submit to, rather than despise, our Father's child training.

Notice how you and I can submit to our Father's chastening?

Accept God's Word

First, accept God's Word. Do not argue with your Bible. It will always guide you to the truth about God and about yourself. Be willing to listen. Accept what God says, even if it is surprising or uncomfortable.

¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and

⁹¹Davis, 2 Samuel, 165.

intents of the heart. ¹³*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account* (Heb. 4:12-13).

When Nathan the prophet confronted David with his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah, God's Word cut David to the heart. He did not argue, deny, or defend himself. David accepted God's Word. Nathan said:

¹¹*“Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give **them** to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹²For you did **it** secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’”*

¹³*So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die”* (2 Sam. 12:11-13, emphasis mine).

God was gracious. David repented and confessed his sins, and God forgave him. He will do the same for you and me.

If we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7, 9). Forgiveness is complete, total, and absolute. Fellowship with the Father is fully restored when we confess our sins.

On-Going Consequences

Some sins, however, have on-going consequences even after we are forgiven. A terrible disease contracted through a sinful lifestyle is an example. One will have the joy of forgiveness, but the disease may remain.

Forgiveness of sin and the on-going consequences of sin are not the same things. God forgave Adam and Eve for eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:21), but they were still expelled from the Garden of Eden (vv. 22-24) and humanity was still plunged into sin (Rom. 5:12).

Some people, because of their positions, experience greater consequences for a sin than others experience. *“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required”* (Luke 12:48). A Pastor or Bible teacher, for example, will “receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1). And so it was with King David.

Because David was the nation's leader, he became “object lesson #1” that no one is above God's law. Sin has consequences no matter who you are. David had to endure public chastening for years.



David's Family Consequences

After David yielded to his lust for another man's wife, Satan seemed to have greater access to his family. One of the on-going, heartbreaking consequences of David's sin was an adversary among his own sons (2 Sam. 12:11). The adversary was Absalom, the firstborn of his wife "*Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur*" (2 Sam. 3:3). David was not innocent in Absalom's rebellion.

Amnon's Rape

David's son Amnon, by another wife, Ahinoam, lusted for his gorgeous half-sister Tamar (2 Sam. 13). Tamar was Absalom's full sister. Amnon's lust led to rape. David was angry when he heard about it. He fussed and fumed, but did nothing.

David's inaction planted seeds of disrespect and bitterness in Absalom's heart. Since Dad did nothing, Absalom took matters into his own hands. He took Tamar into his home and swore vengeance on Amnon. After about two years, he arranged Amnon's murder. Once the murder was carried out, Absalom fled to his mother's homeland for refuge.

Absalom's Coup

David allowed Absalom to return to Israel three years later. By then, Absalom's bitterness had grown into rebellion. He began a successful campaign of winning the hearts and the support of the people. When the time was right, he led a coup against his father. Surprisingly, most of Judah supported Absalom.



David's Responsive Heart

Absalom gathered an army and marched into Jerusalem. There was little resistance because David and his loyalist fled the city to lessen the bloodshed. During the flight from Absalom, Shimei attacked David with stones, dirt, and curses: "Get out, get out, you worthless murderer!"

David's responsive heart recognized what his soldiers did not. They saw and heard a wicked man, but David submitted to the Father's

rod. He saw it as a part of the long-term consequences of his sin. Whereas David “*despised the commandment of the LORD*” (2 Sam. 12:9) when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, now he humbly submitted to the Father’s rod, even though it was in the hand of a wicked man.

David accepted God’s Word. He listened, learned, and submitted to God’s discipline. You and I will be wise if we do the same.



Yield Your Rights

Second, yield your rights rather than demanding your rights. Christians are free from sins bondage, but we are not free to live any way we choose (Gal. 5:1).⁹² We are free to submit our lives to Jesus Christ’s Lordship. We are free to live Spirit-filled, victorious lives. We are free to die to our old life of sin and have the resurrected Lord Jesus live His life through us via the person and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:1-2, 11-14). The Bible says, “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Do you realize that God lives in you? As a result, you do not own yourself. Jesus paid the price to purchase you. He died in your place. You belong to Him. So, submit to God; glorify Him with your body. Surrender your rights to Him.

David yielded his rights. He yielded his right to be treated with *respect*. Shimei cursed him and threw stones and dirt at him (2 Sam. 16:5-6, 13). David yielded his right to immediately *execute* Shimei (vv. 9-10). He yielded his right to *defend himself against false accusations*. Shimei accused David in one area that he was blameless.

“*The LORD has paid you back,*” said Shimei, “*for all the blood of the house of Saul*” (v. 8). David could have defended himself. He could have reminded Shimei and his loyal supporters of how he spared Saul’s life many times. He left Saul in God’s hands when he could have shed Saul’s blood. That weary day, David could have called many eyewitnesses to confirm his righteousness toward Saul and his house.

David knew that God had taken Saul’s life in His time and His way. David could have screamed back, “I’m not guilty of Saul’s blood.”

⁹²Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1).

Shimei was wrong and David was right. Case closed. But submitting to God is not always about being right; it is about being responsive and humble before God.

David knew a secret that Shimei and his men did not know. Though not guilty of Saul's blood, David was guilty of faithful Uriah's blood. David deserved death for his sin against Bathsheba's husband, yet God forgave him.

We can learn a great lesson on humility and grace from David's response to Shimei. If we are accused of something of which we are not guilty, we know we were guilty of other sins, even though they are now long forgiven. A self-righteous defense and a submissive heart are incompatible. Like David, our hearts should be humbled in deep gratitude to God for His eternal grace and tender mercies toward us.

Why did David yield his rights? He accepted God's Word and submitted to the Father's chastening, even when the Father's rod was in the hands of a wicked man. David willingly allowed God to work in his life. He wanted to receive all of the benefits from his child training.

God may use a Shimei in our lives as well. If we accept God's Word and yield our rights, we can submit to God rather than react to the person. We can trust God to work all things together for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28). Sometimes the question is not who is right or wrong, but will we yield our rights to God for the sake of His will and training. David did, and we can too.



Humility Required

Yielding our rights requires humility. We humble ourselves before God and the people He uses in our chastening. Submission and humility are inseparable. We cannot have one without the other. Further, we cannot be submissive and humble before God if we are unwilling to humble ourselves to the people He uses in our lives. The Apostle Peter said,

*“You younger people, submit yourselves to **your** elders. Yes, all of **you** be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’”* (1 Peter 5:5, emphasis mine).

Humility precedes exaltation. When God intends to promote one to an exalted position, He first humbles that person. God wants to use His children mightily without them becoming proud and taking credit for

their own success in ministry, business, or government. He will not share His glory with you or me or anyone else. He said,

“I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images (Isa. 42:8, emphasis mine). “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6).

Humility like David’s was rare among ancient monarchs. He humbled himself to God and to man. He submitted to the Father’s rod in Shimei’s hand. King David said to Abishai, *“Leave him alone and let him curse me; the LORD has told him to”* (2 Sam. 16:11). The end result was that God defeated the coup and restored David to Israel’s throne.



Expect Misunderstanding

Do not be surprised when your submission to the Father is misunderstood. Most will interpret it as “doormat theology.” Well meaning friends will say, “Don’t let people walk all over you. Stand up for your rights.” Your priority, however, is not being understood. Your priority is pleasing God.

David’s men misunderstood him. David said to Abishai, *“Sons of Zeruiah, do we agree on anything? He curses me this way because the LORD told him, ‘Curse David!’”* (2 Sam. 16:10). Apparently, Abishai’s brother, Joab (1 Sam. 26:6) agreed with him, and Joab was the commander of David’s army (2 Sam. 8:16). Notice David said, “Sons of Zeruiah,” not “son.” Most, if not all, of the loyalist with David seemed to agree with Abishai’s solution as well, for David spoke *“to Abishai and all his servants”* (2 Sam. 16:11). Humility and misunderstanding often go hand in hand. They are by-products of yielding our rights. David focused on submitting to the Father’s chastening, not on satisfying his friends. We will be wise to do the same.



Trust God’s Grace

Third, when we are chastened we can trust God’s grace. Even if our chastening is a correction for past sins, we never know how God may demonstrate His grace. Submitting to and learning from His child

training is wise. David said to his loyal followers, “*It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day*” (v. 12).

Here . . . is the secret of David’s peace. Not in having Shimei’s head on a platter but in . . . a deep-seated confidence in a God of unguessable grace, who has a tendency to replace cursing with goodness! He assumes that Yahweh has this strangely wonderful way of looking upon guilt and yet returning blessing instead of a curse. He senses that though the mouth of God has declared his punishment (12:10-12), the eye of God may long to spare him from it.⁹³

Notice, however, that while David trusted God’s grace, he did not presume upon God’s grace. He did not act as if God owed him. He said, “It may be” or “perhaps.” For one who trusts in grace, it cannot be otherwise. The essence of grace is that it is God’s unearned, undeserved favor.

Where did David get such a radical idea? David had a personal relationship with God; he knew God’s character. Even though his enemies were vicious, His God was gracious, and David trusted His grace. He said:

“O God, the proud [Saul, Nabal, Shimei, and Absalom, to name just a few] have risen against me, and a mob of violent men have sought my life, and have not set You before them. [Their hearts were against God’s king because they did not seek God with all their hearts.] But [in contrast to the enemies] You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (Ps. 86:14-15, emphasis mine).

Likewise, you and I can trust God’s grace, even though some have little hope that God would ever be gracious to them again. Do you know some Christians who,

believe they’ve made a royal curse-job of their lives, [because] . . . with open eyes, [they] have smashed God’s commandments and defied his standards, and then suffered miserably for it? [They have genuinely repented and been forgiven] . . . yet they are sure God only regards them with grudging toleration, and sometimes

⁹³Davis, *2 Samuel*, 167.

they doubt the toleration. They are, they think, doomed to the junkyard of Christian existence.⁹⁴

If you not only know someone like that, but you are someone like that, here is great news. You can trust David's God. He had grace on the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15), and He will have grace on you. He is the God who reverses curses. In fact, "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')*" (Gal. 3:13).



Rest in the Lord

Finally, rest in the Lord. We do not want to be guilty of over-spiritualizing an event, but notice how David's encounter with Shimei ended. "*And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust. Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there*" (2 Sam. 16:13-14, emphasis mine). David demonstrated the reality of Psalm 23:5, "*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*"

You and I can have the same experience with our gracious God. We are invited to:

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret [worry] because . . . of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off [in God's way and in God's time]; but [in contrast] those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. . . . And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Ps. 37:7-9, 11b, emphasis mine).

Do you want to rest in the Lord, be free from worry and anger, and enjoy peace overflowing in your life? Then respond to Jesus' invitation: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt. 11:28).

⁹⁴Ibid.



Conclusion

David did not despise his chastening. Rather, he endured chastening. He accepted God's Word, yielded his rights, and trusted God's grace. As a result, he was able to rest in the Lord in spite of his enemies. You and I can do the same. We too can submit to the Father's chastening.

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⁹⁵A few additional lessons on submission come to mind. We learn from David:

- One who has authority over you does not have to be perfect, or always right, before you submit. Look beyond the earthly authority. Submit to God, your ultimate authority. He controls all things.
- Our submission to the Father is an example to those who are under our authority. God gives fathers circumstances where their children see them submit to God and to others. Dad's submission is a life-lesson that submission is part of the Heavenly Fathers child training.
- David's submission was a foreshadowing of Christ's submission to the Father's will. As David did not open his mouth to Shimei's mocking and cursing, Jesus faced far greater mocking and cursing, yet "opened not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 26:62-63; 27:12, 14; John 19:9; Acts 8:32). It was in our Lord Jesus' power to destroy the mockers, but He submitted to the Father to become our Passover Lamb. Unlike David, however, Jesus was sinless.
- Unless our hearts are sensitive and responsive to our heavenly Father, we will despise His chastening. We will count it to be of little value in our lives. We will see our circumstances as mere accidents, and fail to ask if He is instructing, correcting, or seeking to prevent us from going in the wrong direction. A sensitive heart will be in the Word daily, discerning and submitting to God's will.



Chapter 18

DISCOURAGED OR ENDURE

The Problem—Discouraged

Third, chastening can discourage us, or we can endure chastening. Our heavenly Father does not want us to be discouraged. Hebrews 12 commanded, “*Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him*” (v. 5). He does not want us to be spiritually weary, exhausted, and defeated. He does not want us to respond to his rebukes, saying, “I can’t do anything right. Someone’s always on my case. I give up.” He does not intend for chastening to make us as emotionally defeated as an unstrung bow.

How do we avoid discouragement?



The Answer—Endure

The answer to discouragement is endurance. We can endure chastening. We can persevere. We can remain under the load, refusing to quit. “*If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons*” (vv. 7-8).

The Father’s chastening is a reminder that you are His child. You are a member of the royal family. Just as my dad never disciplined any of the neighbor’s children, only my sisters and me, so God trains His children and only His children. He does not train the Devil’s children.

How does our heavenly Father relate to unsaved people? He convicts them of their sins and warns them to repent. He invites them to trust His Son as their Savior. He invites them to be born again into His family, but the unsaved are not in His family and do not receive child training. So, if you are chastened, rejoice and endure.

Endure by Faith

Endurance is the heart of Hebrews 12:1-11. Endurance is the central point of the chiasm and the dominant theme of the passage. Just before unveiling “Faith’s Hall of Fame” (Hebrews 11), the writer of Hebrews stated, “*For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise*” (10:36). All of the people listed in Hebrews 11 did just that; they endured by faith.

Our Example—Jesus Christ

In Hebrews 12, the writer focused on our ultimate example of endurance—Jesus Christ. We are encouraged to “*run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus . . . who . . . endured the cross . . . [and] endured such hostility from sinners*” (vv. 1-3). The mocking, the scourge, the crown of thorns, and the cross did not discourage Him. He endured the cross and the hostility for the Father’s glory and our good.

Jesus did not quit when He faced the cross. When He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He told Peter to put away his sword. Jesus did not need Peter’s protection. He asked, “*Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?*” (Matt. 26:53). But Jesus did not call the angels. He chose to endure the shame and the pain. He remained under the load. He did not quit. He submitted to the Father’s will and fulfilled His life’s purpose; He paid the penalty for all of our sins.

Jesus is our example. We look to Him. You and I are encouraged to endure chastening “*lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls*” (v. 3). When we endure, good things happen; our hearts are tuned to the Father’s heart and He is pleased.

Jesus not only endured the cross, He also endured Israel’s rejection. They refused to acknowledge Him as their promised Messiah. Yet, because His eyes were always on His Father’s eyes and His heart was always responsive to the Father’s heart, He was never discouraged in His ministry or mission.

Isaiah foresaw Jesus’ atoning suffering and sacrifice (Isaiah 53). He also foresaw that Jesus would never be discouraged in His ministry or overwhelmed by His mission. “*Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. . . . He will not fail nor be*

discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth” (Isaiah 42:1, 4, emphasis mine).

The Father delighted in the Son. The Son was not discouraged because pleasing the Father was His delight.



David's Discouragement

Often, however, we are more like King David than we are like our Savior. David was a man after God's own heart, but he battled discouragement. After being delivered from Saul many times, David took his eyes off of God's promises. He became discouraged and pouted, "Someday I will perish at Saul's hand, therefore I will flee to the land of the Philistines and Saul will no longer seek my life" (my paraphrase of 1 Sam. 27:1).

Notice his next move. "*Then David arose and went over with the six hundred men who were with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow*" (vv. 2-3, emphasis mine). Ironically, David sought security in Goliath's home region (1 Sam. 17:4).

David ran from his problems into a spiritually dark period in his life. He lived with Israel's enemies for a year and four months (v. 7). He was unequally yoked with unbelievers and became backslidden. David no longer needed daily deliverance from Saul, but he no longer depended on God daily.

It appeared David made a wise choice. *Physically* and *emotionally*, things were better for David and his followers when they lived among the Philistines. A huge stress was lifted from their shoulders because "*it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more*" (1 Sam. 27:4). Perhaps they got their first full night of sleep in many months.

Financially, things were better. The King of Gath gave David a city, Ziklag, and he and his men prospered by raiding nearby settlements of other raiders. He took "*away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel*" (v. 9). I am sure most of his loyal followers felt their lives were better after David compromised his convictions and used good common sense.

Yet, *spiritually*, things were worse; the Father was not pleased. During this time period, David did not endure, he did not submit, and he

was not trained by the Father's chastening. His flesh dominated his faith. His emotions ruled him and his flesh almost ruined him. Lies, deceit, and cruelty characterized him during this dark period (vv. 8-12).

The depth of his spiritual decline was revealed as the Philistines armies prepared to go to war against Israel. The Philistine troops marched in review before their kings. David and his men marched behind Achish's troops (1 Sam. 29:2).

That day, David faced a huge dilemma. God anointed him to be Israel's King. Was he now willing to fight against Israel? Would he be loyal to his benefactor, Achish, or would he return to the Lord and submit to God's greater purpose for his life?

How did David entangle himself in this dilemma? Hebrews 12 gives the answer. The pattern is universal for God's children. It was the same for David and it will be the same for you and me.



The Path to Discouragement

First, David *forgot* the purpose and value of the Father's chastening. Second, he *despised* his child training. He treated it as if it were insignificant. As a result, third, he became *discouraged*. He thought God was working against him instead of for him.

Of course, discouragement was not the Father's plan. He intended for David to *be trained* by his chastening. He gave repeated reminders of His greater purpose for David's life. He used both friends and enemies to confirm and reconfirm Samuel's original proclamation that God had appointed and anointed David as Israel's future king (1 Sam. 16:1, 13).

Earlier we have noted dramatic scenes from David's child training in the wilderness. After each recorded scene of chastening, someone reconfirmed God's plan for David's life.

Scene One—You Shall Surely be King

Saul and 3000 of his best troops searched for David. Saul intended to kill him. Saul entered a cave where David and his men were hiding. David spared Saul's life.⁹⁶ He cut off the corner of Saul's robe when he easily could have cut off his head. When Saul discovered David's mercy, he said, "*And now I know indeed that you shall surely be*

⁹⁶See Chapter 4, "The Father's Look."

king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand” (1 Sam. 24:20).

Scene Two—Appointed Ruler Over Israel

The next confirmation came after Nabal insulted David, and David reacted in the flesh (1 Sam. 25).⁹⁷ He would have killed many innocent people if he had not heard and responded to God’s rebuke through Abigail.

A part of Abigail’s rebuke reconfirmed God’s future plan for David. She reminded David why he should not avenge himself. She said:

“And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself” (vv. 30-31).

Abigail was a wise friend. She reminded David that he was destined for Israel’s throne.

Scene Three—You Shall Do Great Things and Prevail

When David *endured* and *submitted* to Abigail’s rebuke (1 Sam. 25:32-35), his responsive heart was restored. Fortunately for both Saul and David, His faith and faithfulness flourished. David soon faced another trial from King Saul.

Saul received fresh intelligence about David’s latest hideout. *“Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, ‘Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?’”* (1 Sam. 26:1). In spite of his repentant words and tears a few weeks earlier (1 Sam. 24:16-21), Saul’s hypocritical and rebellious heart was revealed. He immediately launched another massive manhunt. *“Then Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph”* (1 Sam. 26:2).

Since God’s promises were fresh in David’s mind, he was not afraid of Saul or his army. He understood that his daily trials with Saul were part of his child training. “The LORD,” his “shepherd,” was preparing him for greater things, and he knew it.

⁹⁷See Chapter 6, “The Father’s Rebuke: Needed.”

Once again, David's wilderness experience served him well. He and his men were not taken by surprise. They watched Saul's camp, knew when they ate and when they slept. They knew where Saul was sleeping among his troops, and they saw the last watchman doze off.

As Saul and his elite soldiers slept, David boldly walked into Saul's camp, stood by Saul's bed, and took his spear and jug of water from beside his head. David spared Saul's life a second time, in spite of Abishai's protest. Notice how the scene unfolded. David said:

"Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?"

And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

⁷So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him.

*⁸Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not **have to strike** him a second time!"*

⁹But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?"

*¹⁰David said furthermore, "**As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish.** ¹¹**The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed.** But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go." ¹²So David took the spear and the jug of water **by** Saul's head, and they got away; and no man saw or knew **it** or awoke. For they **were** all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them (1 Sam. 26:6-12, emphasis mine).*

"We are watching not merely David's daring but Yahweh's hand at work. Saul is helpless because Yahweh made him that way."⁹⁸ David proved he was not seeking to kill Saul. He left Saul in God's hands. David's words were full of faith. In fact, they were prophetic (vv. 10-11). God's appointed day for Saul to die in battle was only months away (1 Sam. 31).

David stood at a safe distance from the camp and called out to Saul and his bodyguards. Saul realized that God had delivered him into David's hand once again. He also realized that David had spared his life

⁹⁸Davis, *1 Samuel*, 272.

a second time. Saul was alive because of David's mercy, so he called out to David.

²¹Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly."

²²And David answered and said, "Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it. ²³May the LORD repay every man **for** his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into **my** hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed. ²⁴And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."

²⁵Then Saul said to David, "**May you be blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail.**"

So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place" (1 Sam. 26:21-25, emphasis mine).

Wisely, David's faith was not in Saul's fickle promises. His faith was in his Lord. It did not matter whether Saul valued David's life as long as his life was "valued much in the eyes of the Lord" (v. 24).

The responsive heart receives God's promises, no matter who confirms them. Saul confirmed, "*You shall both do great things and also still prevail*" (v. 25).



Conclusion

At every major turn in David's life, he received confirmation of God future plans for him. Why the repeated reminders? God was *training* David to remember the purpose and value of His chastening. He did not want David to *forget, despise, or be discouraged* by chastening. He wanted trust and obedience to become David's default response in every difficult situation. He wanted David to think, "This difficulty is the Father preparing and equipping me to fulfill His purpose for my life." He wanted David to be *trained, submit to, and endure* His chastening because he respected the Father. He wants the same for you and me.