

DIVINE DISCIPLINE REJECTED

While the Christian cannot lose his salvation, divine discipline remains a powerful reality for all Christians. As a matter of fact, divine discipline is a product of His love. True love always seeks the good of the object and this good necessarily includes correction. The question is not if we are ever objects of divine chastisement, but how we respond to it.

Hebrews 12:6, “For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

All divine discipline is related to violation of right relationships—with God, other human beings, marriage, family, church (see divine triangle of objective justice at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/Justice-divine-triangle.pdf>), and nation.

The issue is not the kind (e.g., health, finances, relationships—however, not every problem in these areas is a result of divine discipline) or amount of discipline that all believers receive. It is how the believer responds. The worst thing a believer could ever do is fail to respond properly to divine discipline.

Divine punishment on the believer is never retributive, to impose penalty in consequence of wrongdoing. Christ paid the price for all sins and we are never punitively judged for those sins as such.

The divine intention is rather (1) deterrent, to discourage transgressions by fear of punishment; and (2) reformatory, to repair, to refine, to make pure by affliction. God’s purpose of divine discipline in our lives is not to destroy but to purify (Isa 27:7-8; 28:29), “to purge away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy; . . . afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city” (Isa. 1:25-26).

However, many times Christians do not respond to His discipline—they do not move into right relationships with fellow members of the human race, with spouses, with family, with church, with society/government, with God—they remain obstinate and set on their own independent ways as so continue to reject His living grace.

A powerful example of this is in the prophets. The prophets discovered that suffering does not necessarily bring about purification, nor is punishment effective as a deterrent. The futility of chastisement was a problem that occupied the minds of the prophets. Jeremiah, for example, bemoans the fact that the children of God in his time did not respond.

O Lord, do not Thy eyes look for truth?
Thou has smitten them,
But they felt no anguish;
Thou hast consumed them,
But they refused to take correction.
They have made their faces harder than rock;
They have refused to repent
In vain have I smitten your children,
They took no correction.

Jeremiah 5:3; 2:30

Every Christian must ask himself if he is properly responding to divine punishment for not growing in the common good in the divine triangle of justice with respect to others, spouses, families, and nation--which are all part of being rightly related to God.

In His Marvelous, Matchless Grace,

Pastor Don