



"It is by those who have suffered that the world has been advanced."
—Leo Tolstoy

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God's Correction of His Children

It seems that ample correction is occurring in the Body of Christ. Perhaps it might be said another way: There is currently a lot of illness in the Body of Christ. Correction of God's people seems to come in two broad, overlapping forms: illness and adverse circumstances. A problem with both of these is that we cannot be sure if what we are going through is divine correction, our lousy judgment, or just being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

At the very least, our trials provide an opportunity to inspect our attitudes and actions, enabling us to make adjustments to them, avoiding further, harsher correction from the Almighty. If our trials do come from [God](#), they are blessings in disguise, as [Job 23:10](#) informs us: "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."

Sometimes God uses trials to put us back on the right path. [Psalm 119:67](#) speaks to this: "Before I was [afflicted](#) I went astray, but now I keep Your word." When we go astray, God does us a great favor by redirecting our paths, so instead of griping about our sad lot, we should feel blessed. Notice [Job 5:17](#): "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty." This admonition is amplified in [Proverbs 3:11-12](#), quoted in [Hebrews 12:5-6](#), and reinforced by Christ

Himself in [Revelation 3:19](#). Once we are chastened by God and learn [wisdom](#), as [Proverbs 2:9](#) suggests, "Then [we] will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path."

If He sends correction, the Almighty does not abandon us. Notice how Eliphaz, Job's friend, follows his counsel about not despising God's chastening: "For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole" ([Job 5:18](#)). When the divine discipline has run its course, and the desired effect has been achieved, then He restores us, improved by the experience.

Sometimes, when the trial seems endless, we assume that God has forgotten us. In [Psalm 13:1](#), David wonders if the Almighty had overlooked him: "How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?" The same feeling of being forgotten appears in [Psalm 119:82](#): "My eyes fail from searching Your word, saying, 'When will You comfort me?'" In those times, we need to remember God's encouraging promise, "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" ([Hebrews 12:5](#); see [Deuteronomy 31:6](#); [Joshua 1:5](#)).

Certainly, receiving chastisement from God is not pleasant, but it does have its benefits. The author of [Hebrews 12:11](#) writes, "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." [Psalm 92:12-15](#) promises:

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright. . . .

A characteristic of the righteous is that they do not often go off-track. Job says, "Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger" ([Job 17:9](#)). The word underlying "hold" (Hebrew *'ahaz*; *Strong's* #270) means "to seize, to grasp firmly." Our spiritual strength increases as our tenure on the path lengthens and strengthens. It is not a great leap of logic to conclude that someone who has

been in spiritual harness for five or six decades should be spiritually stronger than someone relatively new in the [faith](#).

When a brother or sister of great age dies, though, the collective faith of the church becomes weakened or diluted. Today, the church is aging, and with so many already in their eighties and nineties, another few years could bring momentous changes to the fellowship in this church and in other churches of God.

This situation should make us consider Christ's words in [Luke 18:8](#): "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" The coming "time of Jacob's trouble" ([Jeremiah 30:7](#)) will be an extreme trial of faith for the church. The answer to Jesus' question is, "Yes, He will find faith, as long as the church exists on the earth, for the gates of the grave will not prevail against it" ([Matthew 16:18](#)).

However, the question then becomes, "Of what quality will that faith be?" Will it be like Peter's weak and fickle faith in [Matthew 14:28-31](#)?

And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to [Jesus](#). But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Or will it be more like Stephen's in [Acts 7:59](#): "And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

We need to realize that, even if we are doing everything right, trials are to be our lot. Suffering is critically essential to our growth, as Peter instructs in [1 Peter 5:10](#): "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish,

strengthen, and settle you." In other words, suffering puts us in the appropriate condition, fixes us firmly in place, builds our strength, and grounds us in God's way.

None of the improvements come until "after you have suffered a while." Peter's statement helps us to see why suffering is so important to God's work in each of us. [II Timothy 2:12](#) illuminates why it is so important to us: "If we endure [suffering; see verses 9-10], we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us." Without suffering and enduring, we will not enter God's Kingdom. But Paul also says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" ([Romans 8:18](#)).

Suffering is part and parcel of our calling, so we had better make [peace](#) with the fact: "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" ([Philippians 1:29](#)). But we are not alone because our High Priest suffered far more, overcame, and ascended to glory. At God's right hand, He can now give us aid in our sufferings. So, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" ([Hebrews 4:16](#)).

- Mike Fuhrer

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[Whom the Lord Loves He Chastens \(Part One\)](#)

by Martin G. Collins

We often fail to see that the chastening we receive may be what God uses to sanctify us, preparing us as His spiritual children. When God starts a project, He finishes it; we must assiduously emulate that trait. If we are not receiving God's correction or chastisement, we should be alarmed. As Job was chastised by God, he learned submission and acquiescence, humility, silence, repentance, and that he had not seen the omnipotence of God. Chastisement focuses more on discipline and training than punishment. God uses circumstances such as financial loss or illness to steer us toward

sanctification. Without godly chastisement, we may succumb to spiritual pride, self-confidence, self-satisfaction or smugness, but with godly chastisement, we attain humility, meekness, strength under control, and patience.

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

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