

(Proverbs 3:11–12, NIV84)

“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”

There is a huge difference between breaking the will and crushing the spirit. Look back to the example of Joseph, son of Jacob (You can read all about Joseph beginning in Genesis chapter 37 to the end of Genesis). Whether it was true arrogance on Joseph's part or simply naiveté, he got under the skin of his older brothers. Jacob had twelve sons and Joseph was the eleventh. That's a lot of annoyed brothers!

Because Joseph's brothers had grown to despise him, Joseph was sold into slavery -- not exactly the kind of thing you'd expect loving brothers to do. The details of all that Joseph went through as a result are too numerous to recount here, but suffice it to say that God intended it for good. That, in fact, was the assessment of Joseph himself. After all was said and done and all the wrongs forgiven, Joseph announced to his brothers: "God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done..." (Genesis 50:20).

Just think of it, Joseph being sold as a slave and taken into Egypt set the stage for Moses and the ten plagues, the Passover (with the vivid picture of the saving blood of the lamb), the Exodus, the passing through the Red Sea and the release from slavery for God's people. It was kind of a big deal. Yet at the time, for Joseph, it certainly seemed unpleasant.

At times in our life God may allow us to go through difficult periods, not because He wants to beat us down and crush our spirits, but instead because He wants to break our stubborn will and lead us to understand that what God ordains (what He designs and wills) is always good, and always for OUR good. Take St. Peter's divinely inspired advice: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Safe with you in God's perfect plan in Christ,
Pastor Golm

April 30

My Father's Chiding

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He

will not always chide. Psalm 103:8-9

Are my crosses, my sicknesses, my disappointments and reverses, sent to me as punishments from the heavenly Father? Are they the cruel demonstrations of his anger? Frequently these questions rush in upon the troubled heart of a child of God when he is called upon to walk through the valley of adversity.

In moments like that we must always remember: God never punishes his children! He may visit them with chastening sorrow. He may correct them with the painful rod of bitter disappointment. But the rod is always in the hand of him who loves us; and behind that hand is the heart which seeks our eternal bliss and glory. God chastens his children in love; he does not punish them in anger.

The punishment which satisfied God's wrath was borne for us once and for ever by our Savior. We need endure nothing to appease his righteous anger. No penances, no sufferings, no sicknesses or disappointments, indeed, nothing that we could possibly endure could ever meet the demands of divine justice; the Savior drank that cup for us. God's anger has been satisfied.

Whatever comes into our lives as Christians comes to us only from God's love. My illnesses, my losses, my disappointments, my misfortunes, are not the evidences of his righteous wrath toward me, but are the tokens of his mercy. What a difference this assurance makes when I am called upon to bear the burdens of this day! No matter what the burden, I can always share the comforting assurance of the hymn Writer:

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

O Lord, grant that, no matter what the circumstances, I may remember that
You are my loving Father through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.