

PUNISHMENT OR CHASTISEMENT?

Hebrews 12:5

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Some wrongly think that once they become a Christian that all is well and their relationship with God is perfect and He'll never get on them again and certainly never punish them anymore. Yet every Christian has felt the hand of God at one time or other very strongly and seemingly in punishment. So does God punish Christians for their sins or not? Just what is the difference between punishment and chastisement, aren't they both the same? Christians can never be punished again for their sins for God has already dealt with their sins at the cross for Jesus suffered the full penalty for all Christians' sins, "...*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin...*" (1 John 1:7) Also justice nor the love of God would permit Him to make Christians pay again for what Jesus Christ has already paid for. What God does to Christians is NOT punishment but chastisement and there is a difference.

I. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND CHASTISEMENT

1. God acts differently in punishment and in chastisement.
 - God acts as Judge in punishment and as Father in chastisement.
 - Punishment can never be given a child of God with God being judge because all the child of God's guilt has been transferred to Jesus Christ.
 - The believer's sins cannot be punished nor can the Christian be condemned, yet he/she can be chastised.
 - The relationship between the Christian and God is that of Parent and child, as a son/daughter he/she must be disciplined for wrongdoing.
2. God punishes His enemies but chastises His Children.
 - As Judge, God will bring vengeance on all His enemies.
 - As the Father of His family, God disciplines all His Children.
3. God punishes in anger His enemies, thus retributive when chastising His Children it is remedial, done in love.
 - Divine punishment is never sent for the "good" of sinners, but for the honoring of His law and vindication of His government.
 - Divine chastisement is sent for the well-being of His children.
 - When the believer is smarting under the rod, it is not God punishing him/her for his/her sins, that can never be, it would be most dishonoring to the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - God is correcting the believer in love, not in wrath/anger.

II. EARLY CHRISTIANS QUESTIONED GOD'S CHASTISEMENT

1. Early Christians were under a misconception of what the Messianic Kingdom was to be like.
 - They were confused, hated by the Gentiles, ostracized by their unbelieving Jewish brethren.
 - They could hardly make a living.
 - Many who had made a profession of belief, went back into Judaism and were prospering.
 - Had they remaining "faithful" been wrong to leave Judaism and become followers of Jesus?
 - Did not their suffering show that God no longer favored them?
2. Paul reminded them of *Proverbs 3:11-12*.

- "...*Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you...*"
- A reminder that the scripture was not only for those under Judaism.
- Written a thousand years before, Paul reminded them that the word is "*SPEAKETH*", not spoke.
 - It still applied.
- The Holy Scriptures are a living Word in which God is speaking every day - today.

3. The early Christians who were struggling had forgotten the Fatherhood of God and their relation to Him as His dear Children.
 - They misunderstood the manner and design of God's dealings with them at that time and they were seeing the events happening not in the light of His love, but regarded them as signs of God's displeasure.
 - They were despondent and in despair.
 - "...*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him...*"

III. MUCH CHASTISEMENT COMES FROM GOD CORRECTING HIS ERRING CHILD

1. Chastisement is in no way a scourging by God of His worst or most misbehaved Children.
 - Some of God's most saintliest, obedient Children have been and are some of the greatest sufferers.
 - Sometimes God's chastenings are corrective, to empty one of self.
 - Sometimes God's chastenings are sent to strengthen one's faith, to bring one into a condition of being more useful.
 - Sometimes God's chastenings are sent as a preventative, to keep one's pride down, to keep one from "bragging" over some success in God's service.
2. Examples of God's divine chastisement:
 - David was chastised for his many, open sins and wickedness.
 - Job tasted just about every kind of suffering a person can and all was so that he should benefit from his sufferings and be a greater partaker of God's holiness.
 - Abraham was chastised for the development of spiritual graces, strengthening his faith and patience.
 - Paul was chastised to prevent pride from overtaking him, to break down self-sufficiency.

CONCLUSION:

1. No Christian is competent to say this or that is why a Christian is being chastisement besides, it's not any of his/her business why or what God is doing with anyone other than him/herself.
2. It seems natural for a Christian to pass judgment on a fellow Christian who is under God's chastisement because of his/her sins.
3. God chastises Christians to correct them to educate them and to prevent them from allowing self, pride and human nature from ruining their lives.
4. God punishes non Christians because He is Judge and they must stand before Him and pay for their own disobedience and sins.