

Practical Christian Living

Lesson 12 – God’s Chastening

As Christians we are to live our lives by the principle of obedience. God has never intended that His children live in sin.

The Bible says,

"My little children, these things I write I to you, so THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN..." (1 John 2:1)

However, Christians do sin, and many of them take sin all too lightly. In this lesson we want to deal with the question: ***What happens when a believer sins willfully?***

The Consequences of Sin in the Life of a Believer

In Lesson 6 we saw one of the **consequences of sin** in a believer's life: Sin breaks our **fellowship** with God. In this lesson we are going to consider **another consequence of sin** in a believer's life: Sin can bring God's **chastening** hand upon us.

It is true that a believer's sins were forgiven when he received Christ as his Savior. But this does not give him the right to live any way he pleases and do anything he wants to do. He must still face the practical consequences of his actions. The Bible says,

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Galatians 6:7

Whatever sin we may have committed, if we go to God and confess that sin to Him and ask for forgiveness, we will be forgiven. Our fellowship with God can be restored very quickly. God is willing to forgive all the sins that we commit when we confess them sincerely. But that does not mean that we will not be chastened for our sins.

David's Chastening

The accounts of the lives of people in the Old Testament are given to us that we might learn from their experiences. There are two very important lessons that we need to learn from the account of David's great sin:

1. Although we may be forgiven of our sins, we must face the consequences of our actions.

2. Some sins have lifetime consequences.

David was not only a mighty man of God but he was also the greatest king that the nation of Israel ever had. Even so, David sinned grievously and he suffered the consequences of his sins.

Chapter 11 of 2 Samuel records the account of David's great sin. David was at home in his palace while his soldiers were away fighting a battle. One evening as he walked on the balcony of his palace, David saw a beautiful woman bathing. Lust entered his heart. He sent for Bathsheba and committed adultery with her.

Some time later Bathsheba sent word to David, informing him that she was with child by him. Since Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, had been away for some time, David realized that his sin of adultery would soon be exposed.

In order to cover up his sin and to enable him to marry Bathsheba, David arranged to have Uriah killed in battle. David seemed to have been successful in covering up his sin, but the Bible says,

"the thing David had done displeased the Lord."

God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David with his sins of adultery and murder. David truly repented of his sins and confessed them to God. Psalm 51 records the depth of David's confession:

"Have mercy on me, O God, because of your loyal love! Because of your great compassion, wipe away my rebellious acts! Wash away my wrongdoing! Cleanse me of my sin! For I am aware of my rebellious acts; I am forever conscious of my sin." Psalm 51:1-3 (NET Bible)

From this we can see that David was truly brokenhearted over his sins. God accepted David's confession, forgave him, and restored him to fellowship with Himself. Nathan told David, *"The Lord has put away your sin: you shall not die."*

But this was not the end of the matter. God is the ruler of the universe and He is holy and righteous. He cannot overlook our sins or pretend that He does not know about them. Although David was king, he nonetheless was chastened by God. The Bible says that God is *"no respecter of persons."*

Because David's sin gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme God's name, God said,

"The sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me."

Even though God had forgiven him of his sins, David had to reap the earthly and practical consequences of his wrongdoing. He suffered many sorrows. The son that was born to Bathsheba died. One of his sons was murdered. Another son led a rebellion against David and was killed in battle. Truly, the sword never departed from David's house.

May we see that, though we may be forgiven of our sins, we, like David, must face the practical consequences of our actions. May we see also that sins often have lifetime consequences.

Some Things we must Not Do

A Christian simply cannot afford to live carelessly. He cannot afford to take sin lightly. Even though God is gracious, and willing to forgive us our sins, that does not mean that we will not be chastened by Him.

There are some things we must not do if we want **to avoid serious consequences:**

1 - We must not sin willfully.

To deliberately disobey God is an act of rebellion, and it can bring God's chastening hand upon us. God does not chasten His children every time they do something wrong. He is not like that. He loves His children, and He is gentle and patient with them. David said, *"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him."* (Psalm 103:10-11) David recognized that God is very gracious and exceedingly patient with His children.

But there is another side to this matter. While recognizing that God is very patient and forbearing with us, we must also realize that **a single act of willful disobedience can have serious and far-reaching consequences.**

It was a single act of disobedience on the part of the first man and woman that brought sin and death into this world, along with all the sorrow, heartache, and tragedy that results from sin. And a single act of disobedience on our part can have tragic and even lifetime consequences.

A young man, the son of Christian parents, went to an immoral woman and had sexual relations with her. From this one-time sexual relationship, he contracted a venereal disease. He received medical attention, but the disease was not brought under control. In less than three years, he was dead.

2 - We must not live after the flesh.

To live after the flesh is to give in to your fleshly desires and appetites. The Bible warns us against this.

Samson is an example of the consequences of living after the flesh. Samson was chosen of God to be a deliverer for his people. He was given special power and abilities by God. He performed many mighty deeds. But Samson did not control his fleshly desires.

Samson had an immoral relationship with a Philistine woman named Delilah. Delilah's actions made it plain that she intended to betray Samson into the hands of his enemies. Samson knew this. He also knew that he was doing wrong; yet he continued to have sexual relations with Delilah. No doubt God spoke to Samson's heart many times concerning his actions.

Eventually, Delilah succeeded in her plan. She delivered Samson into the hands of his enemies. Samson thought that he could use his mighty power to overcome his enemies as he had done before. But the Lord had left him, and he was no stronger than any other man. The Philistines put out his eyes, bound him in chains, and put him in a prison house, grinding corn.

The accounts of the experiences of David and Samson, as well as those of others in the Old Testament times, are recorded that we may learn from them. The Bible says,

"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition [for our warning]." 1 Corinthians 10:11

The lesson to be learned from the story of Samson is this: **We must not live after the flesh.** The Bible says,

"For if you live according to the flesh you will die..." Romans 8:13

We have listed some specific sins, but these are not the only sins that can bring God's chastening hand upon us. Any unconfessed and unforsaken sin can bring us under God's chastening.

God Wants us to Judge Ourselves

When we are doing something that is displeasing to God. He first speaks to us through our conscience. By His Word and by the Holy Spirit, God seeks to show us the error of our ways. God may send a faithful Christian friend to warn us. God wants us to confess and forsake our sins so that He will not have to judge us. The Bible says,

"For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." 1 Corinthians 11:31

If we will not judge ourselves, then God must judge us. God chastens us because He loves us too much to allow us to go on in disobedience. The Bible says,

"But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." 1 Corinthians 11:32

CAUTION: *We must not make the mistake of assuming that ALL sickness is God's chastening. Many times, sickness is the result of natural causes.*

How does God chasten us? God has many ways of chastening His children. He may bring sickness upon us, or let us be involved in an accident. He may allow us to suffer financial losses or even the loss of a loved one. God has many ways of dealing with His children. We cannot say how God will chasten us, but we can be sure that He will chasten us when we need it. The Bible says,

"For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Hebrews 12:6

God's Purposes in Chastening Us

God has His purposes in chastening His children. Let us consider three of them:

1 - God chastens us that we might learn obedience.

Our heavenly Father knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows that we are not naturally obedient. We are like children who do not obey their father unless they see the paddle in his hand. God knows that only through chastening will we learn to obey Him. David said,

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes." Psalm 119:67, 71

Even after God has chastened us, we may still be disobedient and rebellious. This is indeed tragic. It means that we have not learned to obey God and to be in subjection to Him. This grieves God's heart because He does not like to see His children suffer. Yet He must continue to deal with us until we learn to submit to Him. It is most important that we learn to accept God's chastening in the right spirit. The Bible says,

"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?" Hebrews 12:9

May we learn to agree with God quickly and to say to Him, *"Lord, Your judgments are true and righteous. I am willing to be in subjection to You."*

2 - God chastens us that we might be partakers of His holiness.

God does not chasten us because He is angry with us and wants to punish us. All of God's dealings with us are for our profit. He is "**child-training**" His children. God's purpose in chastening us is that we might be "*partakers of His holiness.*" The Bible says,

"For they (our human fathers) 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." Hebrews 12:10

God incorporates His holiness in us through His chastening. When He chastens me, I should say, *"Lord, what is it that You are teaching me in this?"* Each chastening should cause us to learn more of God's ways and to become more like Him.

3 - God chastens us that we might bring honor to His name.

Through God's chastening and His discipline, David became a man after God's own heart. David's name is listed in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. This is God's "**Hall of Fame.**" It lists those who brought honor to God's name by their faith and by their deeds.

Names like Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, Samuel...YOU!

Samson repented of his sins, and in his death, he destroyed more of God's enemies than he did during his whole lifetime. Samson also is listed in God's "*Hall of Fame*."

God disciplines and chastens us that we, too, might bring honor to His name.

4 - God chastens us that He may vindicate His name.

We bear Christ's name. A Christian is a "*Christ-one*." What we do reflects upon Him. If we disgrace His name, God will chasten us. By His actions in David's situation, God showed that He had nothing to do with David's sin. He did not condone it nor would He overlook it. God will do the the same with us if we bring disgrace upon His name. During the time of such chastisement, let us bow our heads and worship God saying,

"Lord, I gladly accept Your chastening in this matter. I acknowledge that this is due to my sin. I will gladly let Your people, the world, and Satan know that You had nothing to do with this, but it is all my fault."

The more we submit ourselves to God's discipline and acknowledge that it was all our fault, the quicker God's discipline will pass away. On the other hand, the more we excuse ourselves and blame others the longer it will be with us.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"

Every Christian should have a holy reverence for God that causes him to be afraid to disobey God. God has said that He will chasten us if we willfully disobey Him, and we know that He keeps His Word. If we truly love God and respect Him, we will not want to disobey Him. This kind of loving respect for God makes us wise and thus enables us to make right choices. This is why the Bible says,

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 9:10

May we learn to love righteousness and to hate sin. If for any reason we do bring God's chastening hand upon us, let us accept it in the right spirit. We should say,

"Lord, I know that I was wrong. You are altogether right in what You are doing. What would I have been had You not dealt with me? I thank You and praise You for Your love and Your faithfulness to me."

Discovered Gem:

Even though God forgives us of our sins, we must still face the practical consequences of our actions.

Questions

1. What does sin do to our fellowship with God.
2. Does our sinning really bother God?
3. Does forgiveness remove the consequences of our sins?
4. What does it mean to live after the flesh
5. Does God chastens us when we sin because He is angry with us?

6. When is a believer's sins forgiven?
7. Some sins have lifetime consequences. Explain
8. How does God handle things when we willfully disobey Him?
9. Does God want us to judge others? Why or why not?
10. Why does God chasten us?