

The Difference between Chastisement and Punishment

I'm guessing that most of you know what this is...if you don't, it's a ping pong paddle. It's usually used to play the game of ping pong with this little ball. But the game of ping pong isn't the only use for this paddle. In my childhood one of these little babies was used for correction. Some people got the switch, some the belt, some the hand, we got the ping pong paddle. I still might flinch a little if someone said: "Grab your ankles."

Now before you think less of my parental units, you should know that I don't. My parents corrected us because they loved us (and still do), not because they liked to see us cry. We didn't get the paddle for being 'perfect little angels.' We got the paddle for disobedience and rebellion. Still, at the time it wasn't always so easy to see the difference. As an adult and a parent, I understand it better...because I understand the difference between chastisement and punishment.

When it comes right down to it, it isn't the correction itself that matters, but the heart of the one who applies it and his relationship to those He corrects.

In the letter to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit speaks to children of God, to those who have been adopted into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ. He reminds us that even though we are God's children, from time to time we may still need some correction, because we have a sinful nature and are tempted in this sinful world.

When 'bad things' happen – and it's easy to think of the current pandemic as a 'bad thing'; we would do well to ask ourselves whether we have been doing something that our Heavenly Father wouldn't approve of, that might lead him to correct us, to lead us back on the right path.

Hebrews 12:7-11

⁷If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, 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? ¹⁰For they 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.

¹¹Now 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.

When it rains it pours! We've all heard the expression. It simply points out what we have all found to be true...bad things seem – at times - to come in bunches. Shortly after the car overheats and you get back on the road, breathing a sigh of relief and then run over a nail and blow a tire. All you can do is laugh and fix it. No point in getting angry.

Still, we aren't always balanced, right thinking people. So sometimes when bad things happen, we wonder if God is angry with us? Is God punishing me for something I've done wrong? Am I finally getting what I deserve?

Let's remember that the God of the Bible isn't like a grumpy old neighbor hiding in the hedge looking to catch us doing wrong, and then get us.

So, does God punish us for our sins? NO...how is that for a short answer. It's been rightly said, "There is no double jeopardy with God." God has already accepted His Son's payment for our sins. He took the entire punishment for sin on the cross and at the end declared, 'It is finished.' It is finished, and God is not going to extract a second or third or fourth payment for sins from us. Since we trust in Jesus, we can be sure that God is not punishing us. The cross of Jesus is proof that God's heart is kindly disposed toward you.

Why then do bad things happen?

- ✓ **Where do you live?** (I'm not asking what state). We live in a corrupt, fallen world.
- ✓ **What's inside of you?** We have a fallen nature that looks to do what it wants.
- ✓ **Don't forget the enemy?** Satan, that fallen angel, is always working to trouble God's people, so that they turn from Him.

When 'bad things' seem to pile up, we should evaluate our lives and ask whether we have turned away from our Savior Jesus or allowed other things to get between us and Him. Is there a reason why our Father would need to 'get out the ping pong paddle?' Is there a reason why our Heavenly Father might try and get our attention by allowing some difficult circumstance to come upon us?

If there is, then we bow our heads in humble submission and confess our sins. We surely deserve punishment, but God has punished His Son instead. We need to learn to stay close to our Father and our Savior Jesus.

If we take a long hiatus from Him and His Word, we might well expect to be chastised. When we broke the picture window as kids, we expected to be in big trouble...not because our parents 'loved that window' or merely because 'it was expensive' but because it was broken because we did what we were told not to do.

We expected the ping pong paddle. In that case, we didn't get it.

When evil comes upon believers, we should look at it like the ping pong paddle. We need not question our God's Love but look to learn from His gracious instruction.

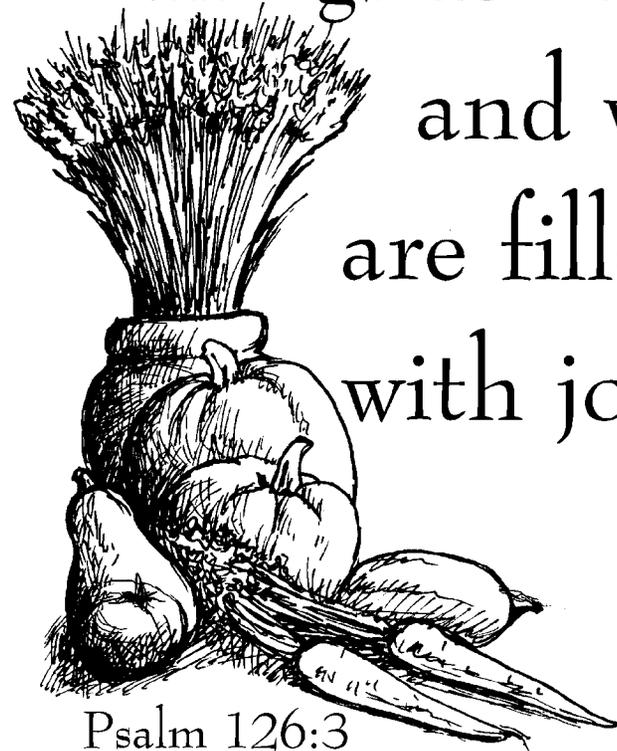
On the other hand, those who don't know Jesus...who aren't living in a state of forgiveness...they have reason to look upon these things as punishment, perhaps even judgment from God.

See why it's so important that we talk to people about Jesus? In the shadow of Jesus' cross, we look at difficult times differently. We won't enjoy the ping pong paddle, but we need not question whether our Father's heart has changed. It hasn't, be sure of it. Do not be afraid, your Heavenly Father still loves you dearly.

Prayer:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, give us strength and willingness to say with your Son, 'Not my will, but yours be done' (Luke 22:42). Make us cheerful and trusting to bear whatever you allow to happen to us. From your hand we are willing to take the good and the bad, the joy and the sorrow. Keep us from sin, gracious Father, and comfort us with your kind Word. Amen.

The LORD
has done great
things for us,
and we
are filled
with joy.



Psalm 126:3